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EDITORIAL COMMENT

WE HAD DECIDED not to invite contributors to celebrate the fourth Shakespeare centenary in *Theoria*, because we dislike what has been cruelly called 'The Shakespeare Industry'. Nevertheless, when three interesting articles on Shakespeare (or about his influence) spontaneously presented themselves, we welcomed them for their own sakes, and they appear in this number along with a variety of essays on other subjects, some of which we hope will prove interestingly controversial.

In our Correspondence Column we have this time only one letter, which we hope will be replied to.

THE EDITORS.

THE PATTERN OF PLAY IN *TWELFTH NIGHT*

by E. ROYLE

THE IDEA that a firmly-traced pattern exists in *Twelfth Night* is probably distasteful to lovers of the play who ask only to surrender themselves to its delicate romanticism and its hilarious clowning without asking if, how or why these two *motifs* are connected. They are content to enjoy it as consisting of episodes, gay and wistful, tender and robust, lightly stitched together to form an unusual patchwork of shot-silk and brightly-coloured hessian. They shudder with horror at any attempt to show that the play has a coherent and significant theme and fastidiously complain of heavy-handed critics intent on crushing a butterfly upon a wheel. Yet, is it not an obvious truth that dissection of a butterfly can fill us with awe and admiration for the workings of Nature, and that careful analysis of a play by Shakespeare can deepen our appreciation of the work itself and of Shakespeare's art in general? When dealing with *Twelfth Night* commentators and producers alike seem to feel the necessity of considering the play not as a fantasia but as a coherent symphony, and have sought to link episode and main plot to subplot in an endeavour to place the pattern of the play clearly before us. But no attempt to separate the different strands and to explain how they have been woven together has yet proved entirely satisfactory. Is it sufficient to say with Professor Alexander that 'Viola's tenderness for the lovelorn Orsino, and the fantasy of the imperious Olivia, provide a perfect excuse and contrast for the ongoings of Sir Toby and his cronies and their feud with Malvolio.'?[1] Is it even true that 'the lovers . . . seem less phantasmal from their association with "that half Falstaff", Sir Toby, or with Malvolio'?[2] Viola *phantasmal*? She is far more concerned with reality than any other character in the play.

Professor Dover Wilson's view of the plot and its relation to the sub-plot comes much closer to the spirit of the play. At 'the poles of the Illyrian world' he sees 'the opal-minded lover of love and the cypress-clad lover of sorrow', and, passing between them, Viola, who 'acts as a foil to both and a touchsome to their unrealities.'[3] The sub-plot 'reflects in a kind of distorting mirror the emotional

[1] Peter Alexander, *Shakespeare's Life and Art* (Nisbet 1946) pp. 136-7.
[2] Op. cit. p. 137.
[3] J. Dover Wilson, *Shakespeare's Happy Comedies* (Faber 1962) p. 172.

situation of the main plot'. Malvolio 'is a dreamer, after his kind; . . . like both Orsino and Olivia he mistakes dreams for realities'.[4] This is true, it is central, but it is not the whole pattern.

In order to trace the pattern it would, I feel, be useful to take as a starting-point the title of the play itself and to examine its implications. Though there is no conclusive evidence to support Leslie Hotson's conjectures about the first performance of *Twelfth Night*,[5] it is still likely that this title was given to the play when it was presented to the Queen on Twelfth Night, 1601, as part of the entertainment to honour her distinguished visitor from Florence, Don Virginio Orsino, Duke of Bracciano and cousin ot the new Queen of France. The feast of Twelfth Night was one of the greatest of the year, celebrating the Manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles and the advent of spring to the frozen earth. Eating, drinking, music and dancing, masquerading and practical joking were the order of the day with the Lord of Misrule holding court over all, spurring on the revelry and humbling the exalted. Now all these activities are found in great abundance in the play, while, to quote Professor Dover Wilson once again, 'the spirit of the whole is embodied in the Fool, whose name, Feste, is the contemporary French for "fête" '.[6] However, we are further off the mark than ever if we see in *Twelfth Night* nothing more than an organised presentation upon the stage of traditional merrymaking with a few topical allusions thrown in to flatter the Queen and amuse her courtiers. Though aware of his audience and the burning interests of the day, Shakespeare was not a writer of clever revues.

Now, if the way we respond to *Twelfth Night* suggests that it is not a series of episodes or an amusing revue but a coherent work of art, and one in which the spirit of festivity is so much to the fore, can it be that festivity is the central theme of the play? Can it be that Shakespeare is making a comment, both serious and comic, upon the very nature of festivity, entertainment and play? A study of the text reveals in fact that this is so, for we see Shakespeare casting a satiric though not unkindly gaze upon the devotees of play and censuring rather more severely those who will have no truck with the spirit of festivity. We see, too, how he uses an atmosphere of fun and frivolity as a frame and foil to what is deepest and most significant in the play. At this point it might seem as though I am placing the theme of the *subplot* at the very centre of the whole play, so I must hasten to point out that words such as 'play' and 'frivolity' refer not only to Sir Toby and his minions but also to Orsino and Olivia. For their dreams, fancies and illusions are but another sort of play, a kind of sophisticated sport of the imagination, a more subtle form of escapism.

The pattern thus begins to take shape. Two sorts of play, revelry and reverie, are set one against the other and each in turn is con-

[4] Op. cit., p. 172.
[5] Leslie Hotson, *The First Night of Twelfth Night* (Rupert Hart-Davis 1955).
[6] J. Dover Wilson. Op. cit. p. 164.

trasted with reality. In order to see how this is done it would, I think, be useful to consider in some detail the first three scenes of the play. In these scenes we have the exposition of the plot, we are introduced directly or indirectly to most of the main characters, and the potent charm of Illyria begins to work its spell upon us. Now any description of Illyria always contains epithets such as 'romantic', 'illusory', 'evanescent', 'unreal', and Watteau's Cythère is frequently invoked as a sister state. This, I suggest, is because Illyria, until the arrival of Viola at Orsino's court, is the land of perpetual play. When we are first introduced to the Duke, we meet no Vincentio, whose conscience is pricking him about the welfare of his dukedom, but a young man indulging in the romantic pastime of fancying himself in love. The very atmosphere of this opening scene, the soft enervating music, the image of eating to excess, the play of the Duke's fancy, the development of the hunting image, the Duke's departure to languish in 'sweet beds of flowers', all suggest that for him life is a perpetual feast and that love is the finest sport of all.

His cruel fair seems no more serious than himself; the phrase '*like* a cloistress'[7] is very revealing. Her love for her brother is as exaggerated as Orsino's love for her, since what is foremost in the mind of both is not so much the person they love as the idea they have of the roles in which they have cast themselves: Orsino playing the romantic lover, and Olivia, the melancholy recluse. They are both engaged upon a 'shadow-dance', 'practising behaviour to their shadows'.[8] And subtly comic though this is, we also become uneasily aware of the egotism inherent in this sort of play.

Riotous play is such an obvious element of Act I, sc. iii, that it hardly seems necessary to discuss it apart from mentioning that the 'shadow-dance' of Orsino and Olivia finds its counterpart in the grotesque capering of Sir Andrew, the feasting on melancholy in the very material swilling and guzzling of Sir Toby, Orsino's ecstatic adoration of Olivia in Sir Andrew's ridiculous wooing of the lady, Orsino's picture of himself as one of Fancy's votaries in Sir Andrew's pathetic image of himself as a dashing playboy. Yet despite the fun and laughter, Sir Toby's contemptuous gulling of Sir Andrew, fool though he is, reveals a certain callousness which makes us somewhat uneasy.

In striking contrast to these two scenes, illuminating them both and illuminated by them is Act I, sc. ii, where Viola finds herself upon the seashore after having narrowly escaped drowning. *Pace* Professor Charlton, shipwreck is not necessarily 'a strange and stirring episode that man has dreamed may come true'.[9] Viola has found it a very unpleasnat experience made even more painful by the fact that her brother might be drowned. To her, living is not a game of make-believe in which she is the chief actor, but something very real, fraught with sorrows and perils which must be faced with

[7] My italics.
[8] J. Dover Wilson. Op. cit. p. 712.
[9] H. B. Charlton, *Shakespearian Comedy* (Methuen 1945), p. 279.

courage, common sense and even gaiety. This certainly does not mean that she lacks feeling. We are obviously meant to draw the comparison between Olivia, mentioned in the preceding scene, and Viola whom we see before us. How much more extravagant does Olivia's behaviour seem when contrasted with the depth, yet simplicity, of Viola's affection for her brother, her real concern for his safety and her readiness to believe that he is not dead! Olivia, we feel, would have used the occasion as an excuse for lamenting like a bereaved sea-nymph. There is a strong contrast, too, in mood between this scene and Scenes i and iii. For a few moments, between the scent-drenched atmosphere of Orsino's palace and the ale-drenched atmosphere of any room occupied by Sir Toby, we catch a whiff of sea air as natural and refreshing as Viola herself. It would be a ridiculous mistake, however, to think of her as heartily going about the business of living. Her little quibble on 'Illyria' and 'Elysium' (which is not merely a frivolous play on words, since the repetition of the first two syllables powerfully suggest her sorrow that she and Sebastian should find themselves in places so alike in name and yet so far apart) and her ability to 'sing and speak . . . in many sorts of music' reveal in her a lyrical strain, a feeling for play and fantasy which delicately complement her strong sense of reality. In terms of the action, what is significant in this scene is, of course, Viola's decision to disguise herself as a boy and offer her services to Orsino. It is delightfully, often movingly, ironic that the only person in disguise at the Illyrian dream-carnival (apart from Feste with his brief impersonation of Sir Topas), the only person who is consciously playing a part, is yet the person who stands out from all the rest as constant and true, however deeply this might make her suffer. Finally, there is a marked contrast between Orsino's highly artificial protests of love, the spontaneous affection that exists between Viola and the sea captain, and Sir Toby's rather heartless ridicule of his friend.

This, then, is the basic pattern which is elaborated and modified as the play develops. An important complication of the theme is introduced by Feste and Malvolio, but of this I shall speak later. At this juncture, however, I would like to make it clear that *Twelfth Night* is not a heavy homily based on the text. 'Those that are in extremity of either (melancholy or laughter) are abhominable fellows, and betray themselves to every modern censure worse than drunkards.'[10] Direct, didactic satire, as has been so often pointed out, is not Shakespeare's way. More often than not, criticism is suggested by juxtaposing situation against situation, one sort of character against another so that the spectator chuckles amusedly, and quietly draws the conclusions Shakespeare wishes him to draw. The criterion against which the more ridiculous characters are

[10] *As You Like It*, Act IV, sc. i. Professor Dover Wilson's note in the New Cambridge Edition (1948) p. 147, is worth repeating. 'F. "abhominable"—the usual spelling. Clearly the word is here used with a suggestion of the false etymology *ab homine* in which everyone believed at this period.'

measured is not the abstract theorising of a *raisonneur*, however sensible he may be, but against a warm, living creature. Both Rosalind and Viola 'serve as standards whereby degrees of worth and worthlessness in other characters are made manifest'.[11] There is a sort of two-way action in this kind of satire. In *As You Like It* Rosalind and her very real love for Orlando make pastoral conventions seem shallow and ridiculous, while she herself is enhanced by comparison with them. In the same way Viola and her love for Orsino acquire greater truth and substance, attaining a kind of tragic quality, when set against the background of unreal play in Illyria. The egotism and frivolity of so many of the characters, charming and lively as they are, seem reprehensible at moments when contrasted with Viola's fine unselfishness.

Let us return, however, to the elaboration of the pattern. Although Orsino and Olivia are so entangled in a web of illusion, we would be quite wrong to dismiss them as idle, contemptible daydreamers. Apart from their personal charm, they have three things in common which suggest that they will outgrow the adolescent phase through which they are passing. In the first place they both have a sense of order and good government. Olivia's description of Orsino as

> . . . virtuous . . . noble
> Of great estate, of fresh and stainless youth;
> In voices well divulg'd, free, learn'd, and valiant;
>
> (Act I, sc. v)

and the fact that he must have been present at the encounter between his fleet and the enemy's (see Act V, sc. i) suggests that he has many of the qualities of an energetic ruler. As for Olivia, the bewildered Sebastian, in trying to discover whether she is mad or not, comes to the conclusion that she cannot be, for

> . . . . . if 'twere so
> She could not sway her house, command her followers,
> Take and give back affairs and their dispatch,
> With such a smooth, discreet and stable bearing
> As I perceive she does.
>
> (Act IV, sc. iii)

Here Sebastian merely clinches for us what we have been able to observe throughout the course of the play. Olivia is no staid matron, but the cool dignity that is so essential a part of her character quite belies the recent, all-too-prevalent view of her as an idiotic little goose.

Secondly, both Olivia and Orsino reveal a sense of humour, and a pleasing flexibility in all their dealings with Feste, for though they too 'taste with a distemper'd appetite' at times, their enjoyment of the Fool shows them to be essentially 'generous, guiltless and of free disposition'.

Thirdly, they both respond (though in different ways) to Viola, to 'this youth's perfections'. Olivia's violent passion and Orsino's

[11] H. B. Charlton. Op. cit. p. 288.

affection for his page need only be touched upon at this point. That they both appreciate Viola for all that is warm, true and noble in her is a sign of their real humanity; that they both cause her to suffer is a sign of the selfishness bred in them by their over-indulgence in unreal dreams.

And yet, despite all these saving graces, as the action develops, as Viola becomes more and more a 'touchstone to their unrealities', so do we become more and more conscious of the intrinsic egotism of their sort of play which can sometimes lead to real cruelty. Hence the almost tragic quality mentioned above. The great scene (Act II, sc. iv) where Viola, under cover of her disguise, declares her love for Orsino, has been so often discussed that I do not intend to dwell on it except to underline that Orsino once more is insensitively luxuriating in his role of connoisseur in love, as his bombastic utterances reveal only too clearly. How tawdry and meretricious it all seems next to Viola's quiet simplicity, the sad seriousness of her tone! Yet even here Orsino is not altogether self-centred, for he can suspend his romantic moonings—though not for long—to ask 'Cesario' affectionately if he has ever loved and to enquire with real concern about the fate of his 'sister'. Poignant though this scene is, it cannot match for real painfulness the terrible interview in Act V, sc. i, between Orsino and Olivia, where Orsino, in an attempt to convince Olivia of his violent passion for her, dallies with the idea of killing her, and then threatens to

> . . . . sacrifice the lamb that I do love
> To spite a raven's heart within a dove.

What is so painful and terrible in the Duke's threats is the discrepancy between his real feelings and the actions he is contemplating. He is no Othello; he is too cool and articulate. The threat is too well thought out to be a cry of jealous rage. Orsino has cast himself in a new role, or rather he has extended the former. No doubt he *does* feel a certain jealousy, but the words 'like to the "Egyptian thief" ' show a conscious desire to model his behaviour on an exotic hero's, while the phrase 'a savage jealousy that sometimes savours nobly' indicates a complacency in this new role that is little short of revolting. In order to strike a new attitude he is quite prepared to sacrifice Viola even though he has no reason as yet to doubt his page's loyalty. Orsino's cruel silliness is rendered even more ugly by Viola's earnest, almost happy assurance that she 'to do you rest a thousand deaths would die'. In the lines that follow:

> After him I love,
> More than I love these eyes, more than my life
> More by all mores, than e'er I shall love wife.
> If I do feign, you witnesses above
> Punish my life for tainting of my love,

not only the sense of the passage but the urgency of the rhythm, the repetition of the strong monosyllables 'love' and 'more', and the clinching effect of the rhyme indicate the steadfast, wholehearted quality of Viola's love for Orsino, and convey at the same time her

sense of relief at being able, after so long, to say plainly and openly what has been feeding on her 'like a worm i' th' bud'; relief, too, at being able to give Orsino positive proof of her love. When, however, Orsino is really hurt by what seems like Viola's disloyalty, he abandons his lurid play to speak with natural, manly resentment:

> Farewell, and take her, but direct thy feet
> Where thou and I henceforth may never meet.

Stupid and ugly though his behaviour may be at moments, he never quite loses our respect and we do not begrudge him his delightful fate though we might smile a little at the irony of it all. For it is no 'marble-breasted tyrant', no inaccessible beauty decked out in the trimmings of his Fancy that he finally marries but someone who has been his friend and companion, someone for whom he has a *real* affection and regard, not a fancied passion, and someone to whom *he* has seemed inaccessible. By referring finally to Viola as his 'fancy's Queen', Orsino seems to suggest that Viola is to become the new idol of his imagination, though we might twist his words to mean that Viola with her sweet common sense will gently control and govern his disordered dreaming.

Olivia's selfishness, too, becomes more obvious when compared with the sympathy and understanding that Viola feels for her. Olivia's passion for the page is undoubtedly sincere, yet we still suspect that out of it she is creating a new drama in which she figures as the heroine fated by Destiny to love, and to love without restraint:

> Fate, show they force, ourselves we do not owe,
> What is decreed must be and be this so.
>
> (Act I, sc. v)

Again, how embarrassing (comic, too, after her vow to abjure the sight of men) are her declarations of love to Viola, who is in much the same position herself as regards Orsino, yet tells him of her love only by innuendo and when she is in disguise. Olivia is always trying to force Viola's hand; Viola quietly submits to Orsino's wishes even to the extent of carrying out well and faithfully the difficult and painful task of wooing for him Olivia, who is, in a sense, her rival. Olivia throws herself with a strange mixture of anguish and relish into a dramatic role—she is a poor creature at the mercy of Fate; Viola patiently commits herself to time. By trying to force the issue, Olivia actually puts Viola's life in jeopardy, as we have already seen. If she had had any consideration for Viola, if she had tried for a second to see the situation from Viola's point of view, she would have realised to what an extent she was straining the loyalty that exists between master and man. Viola, on the other hand, shows a most delicate understanding of Olivia, even to the point of instinctively covering up for her, witness her lie about the ring to Malvolio. (Act II, sc. ii.) She speaks of Olivia with real compassion:

> Poor lady she were better love a dream;

and

What thriftless sighs shall poor Olivia breathe?

Comic irony is naturally as attendant upon Olivia's fortunes as upon Orsino's. Her resolution to mourn the loss of her brother for seven years does not withstand one interview with an attractive 'young man'. Her image of herself as fated to love is even funnier when we consider that she is in love with a shadow, a 'dream', a woman! However, the fact that Sebastian is quick to note her better qualities, her dignity and her sense of order, augurs well for their marriage. If she forgoes day-dreaming and also remains 'generous, guiltless and of free disposition', she will make a most charming wife.

Just as Olivia and Orsino often reveal a certain indifference to others, busy as they are in fostering unreal emotions, so do Maria and Sir Toby display a certain callousness in their creation of unreal situations. For the benefit of Sir Toby and Sir Andrew, Maria stage-manages a little sketch in which Malvolio unwittingly plays the leading role, and no sooner is this piece of sport under way than Sir Toby is busy engineering a duel between Sir Andrew and Viola for the amusement of himself, Fabian and possibly Maria. Sir Andrew's delight in Malvolio's discomfiture is but short-lived; poetic justice decrees that he shall be the next to fall victim to his friends' 'love of mockery'. Again one can contrast Maria's remorseless ridicule of Malvolio, and Toby's gulling of Andrew, both of whom they are so consciously deluding, with Viola's pity for Olivia whom she deludes quite unintentionally. There is also something rather unpleasant in the exultation of Sir Toby and company when they have Malvolio almost at their mercy and bait him as a madman (see Act 3, sc. iv). Although we may laugh and consider that he is being well paid for his vanity, his officiousness and his inhumanity, yet they savour their revenge in too heartless a fashion. (The scene between Malvolio and Feste dressed as Sir Topas stands rather apart, but this I shall discuss later.)

It is not only Viola but also, to a lesser degree, Sebastian, her twin and male counterpart, and the sea captain, Antonio, who set up a criterion of human warmth and common sense against the unrealities so prevalent in Illyria. They too are strangers and come from the sea; they too are acquainted with the real world, the world of action. The difference between Sir Toby's friendship for Sir Andrew and Antonio's for Sebastian is strongly underlined in Act III, scenes ii and ii. In scene ii we find a very neat summing-up of Sir Toby's cynical attitude to Sir Andrew:

Fabian: This is a dear manakin to you Sir Toby.
Sir Toby: I have been dear to him lad, some two thousand strong or so.

In the very next scene we find Antonio putting himself in danger of arrest, perhaps execution, in order to protect Sebastian who is 'skilless in these parts'. Again it must be added that poor old Andrew is a natural gull while Sebastian is naturally lovable. But

a distinction can still be drawn between Sir Toby's all too light-hearted outlook on life, his use of Sir Andrew for his own fun *and* profit, and the whole-hearted generosity of which Antonio gives proof in pressing his purse upon Sebastian in case 'your eye shall light upon some toy You have desire to purchase'.

It is amusing to see that Sir Toby, responsible for the discomfiture of Sir Andrew and Viola (and in part Malvolio) is finally hoist with his own petard.[12] Sir Toby's last two statements belong to the realm of high comedy. Small wonder that he hates a drunken rogue when his drinking has impaired his fighting prowess and has indirectly been the cause of his 'bloody coxcomb'. Sir Andrew makes this point clear: '. . . if he had not been in drink, he would have tickled you othergates than he did'. Sir Toby's bitter repudiation of Sir Andrew after the latter's fatuous but kindly-meant offer of assistance: 'Will you help, an ass-head, and a coxcomb, and a knave: a thin-faced knave, a gull?' is not merely a question of *in vino veritas*, he is not just telling Sir Andrew a few home truths. He is angry with himself since his attempt to render the foolish knight still more foolish has finally made *him* look just as stupid. But, of course, he will not directly accuse himself of taking advantage of a gull, he rounds on Andrew and accuses him of *being* one! And that is all the thanks poor silly Sir Andrew gets for providing Sir Toby both with entertainment *and* cash. This is not the last of Sir Toby, however. He might have done much worse than marry Maria, who no doubt will keep a stern eye upon 'that quaffing and drinking'.

Up till now I have dealt only with those characters who overindulge in play of various sorts and those whose worth and humanity stand out in relief against the frivolity of the former. Feste and Malvolio have been but barely mentioned and they are both key figures in the comedy. The shadow of Feste hovers over the whole play; he is the very spirit of festivity, the very spirit of *play*, entertaining both those who feed on melancholy and those whose grosser diet is cakes and ale. This is his job as it is also his pleasure, and he generally insists—very rightly—on being paid for his services. Yet under cover of his foolery he does not hesitate to point out to Olivia that her excessive grief for her brother is unnecessary and to Orsino that his 'mind is a very opal'. Feste is the spirit of music, laughter and good cheer. Like all Shakespeare's more refined clowns he is a conscious 'corrupter of words', using them not in an every-day

[12] J. Dover Wilson, in a note on this scene in the New Cambridge Edition (1949) p. 165, points out that 'this second affray between Sebastian and the Knight is not lead up to in any way and is spoken of in the dialogue as if it were a first encounter . . . In a word, Shakespeare himself has not troubled to relate the two incidents or noticed that they needed relating—a pretty sure indication of revision or adaptation.'

This seems to indicate too that Shakespeare felt it necessary to round off the Sir Toby—Sir Andrew episode with a very comic scene in which Sir Toby should come in for *his* share of poetic justice.

sense to communicate matters of fact but in a strange, holiday fashion which, far from debasing the currency of speech, rather enhances it.

So we begin to see that besides subtly making us aware of the dangers that lurk in over-indulgence in play, *Twelfth Night* is also in a sense an apology for festivity and foolery, in a word, for Twelfth Night. Those who, in their excessive wit or melancholy, curtain themselves off from reality may be 'abhominable fellows', but they are still far more human than the stiff-necked Puritan who regards all laughter as 'the crackling of thorns under the pot', and for whom *dulce est desipere in loco* is a vile pagan precept. The man who refuses to be refreshed by play is a close relative of the one 'that hath no music in himself'. He too, one feels,

> Is fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils,
> The motions of his spirit are dull as night,
> And his affections dark as Erebus.

The civilising quality of play, enjoyed at the proper time and in the proper place, is hinted at several times: first by Olivia (Act I, sc. v) when she takes Feste's part against Malvolio, and more overtly in that curious scene between Viola and Feste (Act III, sc. i) set in the very heart of the play. It is curious because it in no way helps to advance the action and yet we feel it to be important. And so it is, for it marks the meeting between the central characters of the play who, as it were, hold the balance between the votaries of excessive reverie and those of excessive revelry. Viola's greeting, 'Save thee friend and thy music' is no conventional opening gambit but a spontaneous expression of her delight in Feste. And though everyone in the play, with the significant exception of Malvolio, enjoys Feste's singing and wit, it is left to Viola to give an express appreciation of the Fool and his function. Her final couplet:

> For folly that he wisely shows, is fit;
> But wise men folly-fall'n, quite taint their wit,

constitutes a kind of touchstone against which almost all the characters of the play can be measured.

And chiefly Malvolio. For what is his position in this pattern of play besides that of providing sport for Sir Toby and his friends? His behaviour does in a way reflect the unreal play of the imagination in which Orsino and Olivia are engaged. He, too, has his daydreams. But the reflection is not only 'distorted', it is hideously distorted. Orsino's and Olivia's sort of play, however much method there may be in it, has still a vague, fanciful quality. Malvolio is in deadly earnest. The cavorting of his imagination is all the funnier since every caper is worked out to the last detail: '. . . having been *three*[13] months married to her'; '. . . having come from a day-bed, where I left Olivia sleeping'; '. . . *seven*[13] of my people'; '. . . perchance wind up my watch, or play with my . . . some rich jewel'. Yet funny though this is, it does strike a slightly sinister

[13] My italics.

or affection becomes for him a serious matter of policy. There is no place for Malvolio in Illyria.

But whence the elusive sense of wistfulness which pervades the whole play and which is made almost manifest in the Fool? It is to be found, I think, in the very nature of Twelfth Night, festivity and play. Man is ephemeral, ('Youth's a stuff will not endure'); his reverie and revelry are even more so. Ever-present are those sterner realities: 'the wind', and 'the rain that raineth every day'. We should not forget, however, that play in itself is good and as much part of the fabric of our daily lives as the hostile elements. Twelfth Night, the day and the play, are over, but there will be another Twelfth Night next year and a new play to-morrow.

> But that's all one; our play is done
> And we'll strive to please you every day.

SHAKESPEARE AND CLAUDEL

by M-L. TRICAUD

> 'Quel est le poète dramatique chez qui le nom de Shakespeare n'ait provoqué un sentiment d'envie et presque de désespoir'[1]
>
> P. Claudel

FOR THOSE accustomed to Shakespeare, who open Claudel's works for the first time, particularly *Tête d'or* and the *Soulier de Satin*, the comparison with the Elizabethan dramatist comes to their minds immediately. This comparison had already been made by the first readers of the poet's works, which had the reputation of being unreadable at the end of the XIXth and even at the beginning of the XXth century. Thus, Alain Fournier, writing to his friend J. Rivière on the 22nd January, 1906, said:

> 'Claudel dont je n'ai lu que le quart de *Tête d'or* est ici superbement pour moi, superbement incomprehensible. On pense à Shakespeare, il en a la brutalité, le *naturalisme* voulu, les immenses laïus sans raison apparente, les images très precises, brutales toujours, belles souvent, qui arrivent encore sans raison apparente.'[2]

Elsewhere, he writes again, to J. Rivière:

> 'J'ai eu envie de te copier par plaisanterie du Shakespeare traduit mot à mot. Tu aurais certainement cru que c'était du Claudel.'[3]

So, one can see that, from the start, in the minds of the contemporary fellow-writers of P. Claudel, there was a close association between the poet and Shakespeare.

To understand this association, it is necessary to place the two writers in their proper perspectives.

In France Shakespeare was considered as a typical Anglo-Saxon author. Up to the present day he and his works have seemed to

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[1] 'What dramatic poet is there in whom the name of Shakespeare has not provoked a feeling of envy and almost of despair?'

[2] 'Claudel, of whose *Tête d'or* I have only read a quarter, is here, for me, superbly incomprehensible. One thinks of Shakespeare. He has his brutality, his deliberate *naturalism*, his huge speeches, with no apparent reason, his images—very precise, always brutal, often fine—that come, too, without any apparent reason.'

[3] 'By way of a joke—I nearly sent you Shakespeare translated word for word. You would certainly have believed it was taken from Claudel.'

stand for the opposite of the Latin temperament and, in French eyes, of the classical rules. In his works we see a mixture of Comedy and Tragedy, earthiness and fantasy, realism and a fairy-like atmosphere, a certain lack of taste, as the French conceive it, an extraordinary lyricism. Everything seems exaggerated, 'outré', stronger or greater than nature. For the French mind these characteristics, however attractive they may be, imply a lack of balance, and of unity. And it is precisely these characteristics that we find in the works of P. Claudel, particularly those we have already named.

When P. Claudel started writing at the end of the XIXth century, the appearance of his plays brought a revolution in the French theatre of the time. With their lack of unity, their indifference to all rules, their style and language, which were so strange and so individual, that one could find no name for them, except 'claudélien', they were like a bombshell thrown into a theatrical world which appeared to have stagnated since the beginning of the XVIIth century. It is this Revolution that I propose to analyse, with the aim of showing how we can bring Shakespeare and Claudel together.

From the very outset of his literary career, Claudel seems to reject all the French tradition as far as theatre is concerned. He does not write plays to be acted, or even to be read, but to relieve his soul of religious or intimate preoccupations. From the first, his plays are a dialogue with himself, and all the characters are different aspects of his own personality. Thus, *Tête d'or* is meant to deliver him from his mystical struggles, and *Partage de midi* from his personal inner problems, while *Le Soulier de Satin* tries to sublimate human love. Not writing for the public, he is free to choose any form of expression he likes, and his own temperament inclines him to a Shakespearean type of play. We can briefly say that his temperament and his tastes bring him towards Shakespeare. He himself explains how Shakespeare had influenced him when he was young:

> 'J'avais une admiration sans bornes à ce moment là pour Shakespeare, admiration que j'ai conservée, et cela m'a été extrêmement utile et formatif d'ailleurs, quand on voit ma première version de *Tête d'or* on retrouve partout l'influence de Shakespeare, cette caractéristique de son répertoire d'images, son mouvement, ses procédés de composition. Tout cela est shakespearien on le retrouve dans ce drame de *Tête d'or.*'[4]

This Shakespearean aspect we find again in the *Soulier de Satin*

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[4] 'I had a boundless admiration at that time for Shakespeare, an admiration which I have kept, and it has been extremely useful to me and formative, however. When you see my first version of *Tête d'or*, you find the influence of Shakespeare everywhere, that characteristic influence of his repertory of images, his movement, his devices of composition, all that is Shakespeare, and you find it in this drama *Tête d'or*.'

and in many other plays, particularly the first one he wrote when only fifteen: *L'endormie.*

Let us try to analyse the points of resemblance between Shakespeare and Claudel.

First of all Claudel comes back to the long-forgotten device of mingling comedy and tragedy in one play. The French mind, essentially logical and classical, is opposed to the mixture of the tragic and the burlesque in the theatre; it sees the two types as clearly distinct, and, in spite of the anti-classicist movement of the Romantics, the theatre, at the beginning of the XXth century, was still classic in spirit, stressing the psychology of the characters and the study of souls. For Claudel, the theatre is no longer purely psychological. Nor is it a 'slice of life' in which man only is important. It is a world in which man and his problems are only one thing among other things equally vital; about them is the animate and inanimate world of life and matter, and another one, spiritual and mysterious. Man is not considered alone, but in the Universe, forming a harmonious whole with everything surrounding him. He is not limited but unlimited, assuming his own functions in a very precise mechanism divinely created. So, man being part of God's plan, is intimately linked with nature. But nature does not choose. In it everything is closely linked: beauty and ugliness, good and evil, happiness and suffering. To divide them goes against the divine intention and, since the work of Art must be the image of nature, it will not make any artificial distinctions but will unite, as in nature, the comic and the tragic, joy and sadness. Life is like this and such must be the theatre, if it is to reflect life. Shakespeare had already grasped this. In his works, the most comical passages follow and sometimes accompany the deepest tragedy. In *Macbeth* the porter's scene comes immediately after the murder of Duncan. In *Hamlet* the gravediggers joke as they unearth skulls and bones. In the same way, in the *Soulier de Satin*, the most pathetic and dramatic moments are immediately relieved by the jokes of clowns and jesters. This comic aspect of Claudel clearly shows a kinship with Shakespeare, and presents a dual aspect as does Shakespeare.

First of all, the farcical aspect. In Claudel, as in Shakespeare, we have a 'gros rire', a sort of loud and sometimes gross Rabelaisian laugh. Falstaff and the innumerable grotesques and drolls of Shakespeare have all their counterpart in Claudel. The comic characters in the *Soulier de Satin* are very much like them. This drama in which two lovers are constantly torn apart by circumstances and by their own guilty passion, never cease thinking of each other, searching for each other over four continents, on land and sea, struggling with men, god, saints, as well as the Virgin, the moon, the sun, the stars. Comic and tragic scenes constantly alternate, the former underlining the latter and emphasising them.

But there is also another comic aspect in Claudel, as well as in Shakespeare, a finer one, more ethereal, a fairy-like aspect that we find in both playwrights. Certain pages of the *Soulier de Satin* and

of *L'endormie* seem to have been copied from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *As You Like It* and *The Tempest*. The figures of 'Musique' and the 'vice-roi de Naples' in the *Soulier de Satin*, for example, seem to come directly from Shakespeare.

Not only does Claudel bring together the tragic and the comic but, like Shakespeare, he completely ignores the unity of place. In the *Soulier de Satin* he takes us round the world. And, from one scene to another, we travel from Spain to Morocco, then to Brazil, then to Japan, and back again to Sicily. Land is not enough, half the action of the play takes place on the sea. Automatically we think of *Antony and Cleopatra* which also carries us from Rome to Egypt, from Alexandria to Syria, from land to sea. Claudel goes still further, Earth is not enough, he needs the whole Universe, and the sun, the moon, the stars play a great part in all his plays, as they do in Shakespeare's. The sun, for instance, is the emblem of *Tête d'or*, as it is of *Richard II*. Timon of Athens and Cleopatra ask him to hide his rays when they no longer rule, and *Tête d'or* implores it at the ultimate moment of his death.

The moon, in P. Claudel, is not only present, it is one of the characters of the play. It is personified. In the *Soulier de Satin* the moon fills the whole of one scene: a friend, soothing, appeasing, directing. In *L'ours et la lune* the whole play is dedicated to the moon.

In Shakespeare the moon is also always present, in the *Merchant of Venice*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Antony and Cleopatra*. Shakespeare writes hymns to the moon, and so does Claudel in *La Ville:*

> 'Ovation à la resplendissante lune, oeil de la gloire! Tu manifestes sans le détruire le mystère du ciel avec son étendue.'[5]

Like Shakespeare, Claudel accords great importance to the Supernatural world. But, whereas Shakespeare gives a considerable place to witches, spirits, phantoms, Claudel uses the supernatural of the Christian faith, a 'merveilleux chrétien' bringing the Virgin, the Saints, and angels to intervene in the affairs of men. And there Claudel is clearly different from Shakespeare.

Whereas the theatre of Shakespeare is dominated, in the tragedies at any rate, by doubt and by an emphasis on the misery of man, Claudel's theatre is dominated by a certainty, the certainty that man is made by God, responsible only to God, and will ultimately be united with God. Man is never alone, even in the most desperate straits. There is always a light which shines and guides him.

For Shakespeare's Prospero,

> '. . . we are such stuff
> As dreams are made on, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep.'

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[5] 'An ovation to the glamorous moon, the eye of glory. Thou manifest makest, without destroying it, the mystery of the sky in its vast extent.'

Hamlet does not know what comes after death:

> ' . . . to die, to sleep;
> To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub;
> For in that sleep of death, what dreams may come . . . '

Shakespeare has read Montaigne, as we know from *The Tempest;* he is a man of the sceptical Renaissance. If Claudel has had doubts, in *Tête d'or* for instance, when he says:

> 'Quelle différence y-a-t-il entre un homme et une taupe
> qui sont morts
> Quand le soleil de la putréfaction commence à les
> mûrir par le ventre?
> . . . Ainsi après avoir reçu nous rendons dans le même
> néant sans nom
> Notre ame humaine gonflée d'amour et de malédictions' [6]

very soon in *La Ville* he will reaffirm his conviction in a life after death.

> ' . . . Je crois en un seul Dieu vivant, je crois en un
> seul Dieu éternel . . .
> Et dans la résurrection de la chair, et dans la vie
> éternelle.' [7]

For him, God has created the world and his creatures are there to adore him and pay him homage.

Towards the end of his life, Claudel, though retaining his admiration for Shakespeare, will reproach him with this scepticism and this insistence on the plight of man. In a criticism of *King Lear* played by L. Olivier and his company in Paris in 1946, Claudel regrets this aspect of Shakespeare. It probably explains, he goes on, the curse which weighs so heavily on certain of his tragic figures: Macbeth, King Lear, Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet.

But, in spite of these differences, there are many other analogies between the two poets. We may cite the part played by Fate. It is Fate which guides or urges characters like Ophelia, Cordelia, Desdemona, Juliet, Romeo, Antony, Cleopatra. So, in Claudel, Marthe in *L'Echange* is entirely in the hands of Fate. This Fate takes her from France when she marries an Indian from America, brings her to the shores of the New World, obliges her to follow her husband who vilely sells her to a wealthy American for a handful of dollars. It is also Fate which brings Violaine into the path of P. de Craon, inspires her to kiss him on the eve of her own wedding to J. Hury, causes her to contract leprosy and to give up for ever her fiancé, her home, her family. It is again Fate which attracts Prouhèze to Rodrigue, Pensée to Orian, Yse to Mesa; and one comes finally to a conception of love very similar in Shakespeare

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[6] 'What difference is there between a dead man and a dead mole,
when the sun of putrefaction begins to ripen them by the guts?
. . . So, after having lived, we give back to the same nameless nothingness
Our human soul heavy with love and malediction.'

[7] 'I believe in an only living God, I believe in a single eternal God
And in the resurrection of the flesh, and the life everlasting . . . '

and in Claudel. In both writers love is total, uncompromising, and most of the time it can only end in death. But whereas in Shakespeare love and death are a finality, in Claudel, love and death are but the first step towards an eternal spiritual love. Though Prouhèze dies of love for Rodrigue, her love does not mean death but resurrection. Whereas in Shakespeare Fate is final, in Claudel it is shaped and directed by God; in fact it is the will of God.

In Claudel, as in Shakespeare, we can see throughout the importance given to nature. Claudel sees nature as made by God, and, hence, it is worthy of admiration, glorification, as part of the divine system. In Shakespeare, for other reasons, its place is as important.

Both poets also attach importance to music. To understand the transformation brought by Claudel, we must remember that, in France, the different types of plays were strictly divided. Thus, music was accepted only in opera and comic opera. Claudel refuses to be subjected to rules. For him, music is essential to a play, as a background, and as one of the most vital elements

> ' . . . Elle est chargeé de donner le sentiment du temps qui s'écoule . . . elle est le mouvement tout pur à ma disposition.'[8]

In the *Soulier de Satin* it plays a capital part. Furthermore, it is personified, and 'Musique' appears on the stage. In *l'Histoire de Tobie et de Sara* the poet tells us in a series of brilliant metaphors how he conceives its roles.

> ' . . . Viens à mon secours Musique! comme le fil que la fileuse de la quenouille retire inépuisablement.
> C'est ainsi, lien, regard, c'est ainsi lien, regard
> Que du bout de la main gauche à ma gauche.
> Jusqu' à cette extrémité inépuisable de la main droite.
> Je te tire fil d'or ,fibre d'eau, rai de feu, raie sur l'air, trait du trait, et brin trois fois tressé.
> . . . Je te tire inépuisablement fil de l'âme.'[9]

This is not really different from the language of the Duke in the opening lines of *Twelfth Night* or in the famous speech in *The Merchant of Venice:*

> 'The man that hath no music in himself
> not is not mov'd with concord of sweet sounds
> Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils.'

As in Shakespeare we have not only instrumental music, but also

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[8] 'Its task is to give the feeling of time passing by . . .
it is pure movement and I can dispose of it . . . '

[9] 'Come to my help, Music, like the thread that the Spinner from the distaff withdraws inexhaustibly
Thus, at once, a tie and a look, and thus, at once, a tie and a look,
From the tip of the left hand, my left hand,
To the inexhaustible extremity of the right hand
I draw thee, thread of gold, fibre of water.
Ray of fire, division traced on the air, line from line, and thread thrice twisted,
. . . I draw thee inexhaustibly . . . thread of the soul.'

vocal. Songs have a great importance in Claudel's plays, folklore songs, peasant songs, as in Shakespeare.

Last, but not least, the correspondence between Shakespeare's and Claudel's language is striking. In this domain, too, Claudel brought about an immense change. Most plays in France, at the beginning of the century, were written in prose; where verse was used, the lines rhymed. P. Claudel gives up altogether prose and rhymed verse. He condemns most severely the alexandrine which was the classical line, he calls it a 'Mécanique' and condemns all kind of rhyme:

> 'La rime superstitieusement respecteé met la
> doublure à la place du vêtement.
> Elle ne permet jamais à la phrase de déboucher.
> Sur l'estuaire splendide d'une Syllabe sans pair.'[10]

He starts using the unrhymed verse, so original in France that it has since been given his name: 'verset claudélien'.

In reality it is no other than the Shakespearean blank verse, and Claudel goes back to the past, to the use of the iambic metre:

> 'Le vers des psaumes et des prophètes, celui de
> Pindare et des choeurs grecs, et aussi, somme
> toute, le vers blanc de Shakespeare.'[11]

It was an innovation for which he has never been forgiven, and which brought him the reputation of a 'hermetic writer'.

Claudel recalls Shakespeare again by his style, by the constant use of repetitions, accumulations, interrogations, interjections, and A. Fournier was certainly right when he told J. Rivière that Shakespeare translated into French looked absolutely like a page of Claudel. In both poets we can find the same principles, the same constructions, the same type of images, often the same words. Of this, perhaps, no play can offer a better example than *Tête d'or*, which bears a definite likeness to *Coriolanus*. Tête d'or is the young man full of ardour and ambition, the valiant warrior who wants to conquer the world, who wins victories, kills the king, sets himself at the head of the country, makes new conquests, then dies miserably, vanquished, at the foot of the Caucasus. A brilliant general, he is a poor head of state, and finally loses both crown and kingdom. *Tête d'or* is a Shakespearean character because of the strength of his urge, of his 'outrance', his ideals, as well as the force of his language and imagery; by his uncertainties and his doubts too.

When Claudel wrote *Tête d'or* he had not yet attained religious certitude. Tête d'or is obsessed by the enigma of the world, the problems of death, and of another world. In certain aspects he is not without a resemblance to Hamlet.

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[10] 'Rhyme superstitiously respected puts the lining in the place of the garment
It never allows the phrase to debouch
On the splendid estuary of a peerless syllable.'

[11] 'The Verse of the Psalms and the Prophets, that of Pindar and the Greek choruses, and also, taking everything into account, the blank verse of Shakespeare.'

For all these reasons, P. Claudel has not been and is still not understood in France, as a man of his stature ought to be. His genius is certainly more akin to what Madame de Staël would have called the 'Northern' temperament, as opposed to that of the Latin peoples. Most of his plays had been performed in the most important theatres and by the greatest actors in Germany at a time when, in France, they are absolutely unknown. Even nowadays, the public often reacts violently to such unorthodox French plays, in spite of the fervour and the talent of J. L. Barrault, who has produced most of Claudel's important plays over the last ten years.

But, as we have briefly indicated, there are many common points between the theatre of P. Claudel and that of Shakespeare. If there are many differences, they are not so numerous or so important as to prevent one of our most influential critics from saying recently, in the course of an article in which he deplores the poor quality of the French translations of Shakespeare, that one man, and one man only, would have been able to render Shakespeare adequately in French, and this man was P. Claudel.

SHAKESPEARE IN THE GERMAN-SPEAKING WORLD WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO *HAMLET*

by M. SCHMIDT-IHMS

THE HISTORY of Shakespeare in Germany spans three-and-a-half centuries. Shakespeare plays—though not in their authentic form—have been known to the Germans since the early 17th century when English strolling players came to seek their fortune on the Continent. The first record of a performance takes us back to Shakespeare's own lifetime, namely, to the year 1603 when he was still active and creative. Shakespeare's name, on the other hand, is not mentioned before 1682, and it is only the 18th century which sensed Shakespeare's significance.

However, in the early 18th century, German men of letters could not really cope with the phenomenon Shakespeare, because they imported the criteria for literary judgement almost exclusively from French neo-classicism. They were fascinated and repelled by Shakespeare. They were fascinated by the vitality and the vigour of his plays; they were repelled by his complete disregard of the rules of dramatic writing, as established by the neo-classicists. In their opinion the grandeur of tragedy demanded alexandrine verse. Comic elements had no place within a tragic play, and observation of the three unities of time, place and action was not merely a poetic necessity but a natural claim of common sense.

The first defence of Shakespeare was attempted by two German-speaking Swiss scholars, Bodmer and Breitinger. They welcomed the inclusion in his work of all those forces of life and nature which cannot be explained rationally, and backed their argument in favour of Shakespeare by references to English writers like Addison, but they did not contribute much to the discussion of the form of Shakespeare's plays.

This discussion began in earnest when, in 1741, the first Shakespeare play, namely *Julius Caesar*, appeared in a German translation. The translator had chosen the alexandrine verse but this was not enough to camouflage Shakespeare's obvious neglect of the basic rules for classic theatre.

However, in due course Shakespeare found first defenders (for example, Lessing) and then protagonists (for example, Herder) until at the time when the student Goethe entered the literary discussion

of his age, Shakespeare's works were regarded as the model for creative writing for the stage. One no longer regarded any rules as sacrosanct but wanted to see on the stage the whole of life with all the predictable and unpredictable, rational and irrational, forces which constitute it, and in a form which is true to life too. In their enthusiasm Goethe and his friends exhort the German playwrights: Write prose as Shakespeare does! (Compared to the rigid German alexandrine verse, Shakespeare's blank verse sounded to their ear like natural speech.) They invite the German theatre-goers: Listen to the wisdom of the fool, and experience how tragedy deepens when it appears side by side with the comic elements. They ask the neo-classicists: Is it not ridiculous to demand that Shakespeare should lace the panorama of life into the straitjacket of the three unities?

This almost feverish enthusiasm for Shakespeare also explains why, when Garrick organised the first Shakespeare Festival in Stratford-on-Avon in 1769, the Germans followed suit and in 1771, under the leadership of the then twenty-two year old Goethe, celebrated their own "Wilhelmstag", that is, "William's Day".

Since that time the discussion of Shakespeare's work has never ceased. In its course the pendulum has swung from the adulation of Shakespeare as a natural creative force right to the other extreme, to the admiration of Shakespeare as a craftsman and a master of language and dramatic form.

It can be said that from the 18th century to the present day there has been no German playwright of ambition and ability who was not inspired by Shakespeare's dramatic art. Shakespeare's works together with the works of Sophocles provide the standard for the serious critic of drama, even though German drama may only rarely approach such greatness. In this connection is appears relevant to mention that I personally became acquainted with Shakespeare in the course of my German—not English—lessons at school when our teacher tried to show us Shakespeare's influence on our own great dramatists, Schiller, Kleist, Büchner and the Austrians, Grillparzer and Hofmannsthal, and even the contemporary and controversial B. Brecht.

But the interest in, and the knowledge of Shakespeare is not limited to creative writers and to specialists interested in creative writing. Shakespeare, in the original English but more so in translations into German, has left his mark on all Germans who go to the theatre—and Germans love the theatre and take it so seriously that nearly every town maintains its own municipal theatre. On the German stage Shakespeare is the leading playwright among the classics. Even during the theatre season of 1958 to '59 which marked the beginning of the centenary of Schiller, our greatest dramatist, 2,674 performances of twenty-seven Shakespeare plays outnumbered Schiller performances by 600.[1]

It is therefore not surprising that some of Shakespeare's formulations have become part of the general store of sayings on which

everyone can draw. The Germans use the Homeric phrase 'winged words' for formulations which have become detached from their author and taken wing to start a life of their own. I looked up a collection of such 'winged words' and found that seventy were listed under the name of Shakespeare, while Goethe, the greatest of German poets, could boast not more than one hundred and sixty-eight and Schiller, the greatest of the German playwrights, two hundred and fifty-seven. Of the seventy Shakespearean quotations twenty-two came from *Hamlet*, a fact which faithfully reflects the special interest the Germans take in this tragedy.[2]

Although my introduction cannot possibly touch upon all relevant aspects of the German attitude to Shakespeare, I must mention the German Shakespeare Society, which is the oldest Shakespeare Society outside England. It was founded exactly one-hundred years ago, on Shakespeare's birthday in 1864.

German Shakespeare scholars, mainly university professors representing the departments of English, were very active in the founding of the society. But the main force behind it was a politician and industrialist—Wilhelm von Oechelhäuser. Today still many of the benefactors, sponsors and members come from industry and commerce, and its present patron is the Roman Catholic Archbishop and Cardinal Theodor Frings.

The Society publishes a Yearbook which presents the results of current Shakespeare scholarship, reviews relevant books, and gives critical appraisals of Shakespeare productions in Germany, Austria and Switzerland.[3]

The sad fact that Germany is split into two parts with two totally opposing political structures and ideologies has also led to a split in the Shakespeare Society. But whatever the difference may be between the ideologies of the West and the East, East Germany will not give up its discussion of Shakespeare. East German theatres perform Shakespeare and East German scholars further the study of his work.

The seat of the West German Society, quite characteristically, is not in a university town, but in the big industrial city of Bochum, and the offices and library of the Society are in the City Hall. The East German Society has kept its library and headquarters in Weimar.

When the Shakespeare Society was founded there was no problem about where the home of this Society would have to be. It could only be at Weimar, the town which is so closely linked with our own classical poets, Goethe and Schiller. Shakespeare, so the founders of the Society felt, had become one of the classical writers.

By that they did not want to give to Shakespeare a kind of honorary German citizenship. They merely followed the lead of Goethe, who in 1827 coined the word *Weltliteratur*. With this word, World Literature, he wanted to name something which for him and his contemporaries was an exciting experience, namely, the influence of great creative minds across all barriers of language and nationality

and time. Goethe was thinking of Homer and Sophocles, of Dante and Calderon, and of Shakespeare, of course. To Shakespeare he felt the greatest affinity, and of the poets mentioned Shakespeare left the deepest impression on German imaginative writings.

Goethe read Shakespeare in the original. He knew English well. Although he never travelled to England he was very well informed about England and he read all the latest English journals and books. Nevertheless, Goethe pays great tribute to the translations of Shakespeare into German.

At this point is it necessary to say something about these translations because through them the Germans became really familiar with Shakespeare's work. We can omit the alexandrine translation of *Julius Caesar* because it was almost a chance work of a Prussian Ambassador to London, who had been impressed by the performance of this tragedy on the stage. The first attempts at a translation of a representative number of Shakespeare's plays were made in the years 1762-66 by the poet Wieland. He used the Warburton Edition and for his footnotes and comments he drew largely on the commentary by the French author, Voltaire. He translated altogether twenty-two of Shakespeare's comedies and tragedies, replacing Shakespeare's verse by prose for all plays, with the exception of *Midsummer Night's Dream*, where he ventured into verse. In spite of a first impact Wieland found critics, and a younger man by the name of Eschenburg attempted to improve upon and to complete his translation.

But it is the translation by A. W. Schlegel which gives the Germans their very own Shakespeare (1797-1810). This translation was an event in the history of German writing. Inspired by Shakespeare, Schlegel, a highly gifted critic, one of the forefathers of present-day literary criticism and a master of the German language, found ways and means of recreating Shakespeare's imagery, the musicality of his language, the rhythmical flow of the blank verse, and often even the richness and wonderfully balanced tension of Shakespeare's phrases. And this in spite of the fact that German does not, as English does, draw on two sources of words, the Norman French and the Anglo-Saxon Germanic one. By his translation Schlegel created the poetic language for the German stage and could claim with justification that Schiller was his pupil.

Schlegel, unfortunately, did not complete the translation of the whole of Shakespeare's works. Tieck took up where Schlegel left off and encouraged his daughter Dorothea and Count Baudissin to translate the other plays. This is reflected in the very uneven quality of the translation which goes by the name *Schlegel Tieck Baudissin.*

Throughout the 19th century attempts were made to improve on this German Shakespeare. Although no really new understanding of Shakespeare was gained, these efforts nevertheless had a distinct and positive effect; they helped to spread the knowledge of Shakespeare in Germany. Within a span of six years, four publishing houses offered five different German translations of Shakespeare's

complete works and in 1891 the Shakespeare Society succeeded in producing an inexpensive 'people's Shakespeare'. However, Shakespeare's work attained its widest circulation through the paper-back editions of the publishers, Reclam, who from 1867 to 1908 sold almost four and a half million copies of individual Shakespeare plays.[4]

In the 20th century efforts continued to bring the German Shakespeare closer to the original. Unlike Schlegel translators no longer have to go back to a very inadequate 18th-century English edition but have at their disposal carefully edited texts which are based on meticulous scholarship. To mention just one example: Schlegel translated Gertrude's words: 'he is fat, and scant of breath' by 'er ist fett und kurz von Atem'. The result is that even Goethe imagined Hamlet as a stout man with a bit of a paunch and panting. Modern translators know that 'fat' must mean 'sweaty-hot' and allow Hamlet to arise in our imagination as beautiful in face and figure. Above all, however, attempts were made to bring Shakespeare closer to a contemporary understanding. Prominent among these translators was Friedrich Gundolf who saw Shakespeare in the light of Nietzsche's philosophy.[5] For him Shakespeare has all the qualities of a post-Renaissance man. Gundolf senses in his plays a new order and a new system of values where the old distinction between morally good and morally bad is replaced by the distinction between strong, i.e. admirable, and weak, i.e. despicable. There is no need to emphasize that Gundolf was wrong in his understanding of Shakespeare, but his view may be quoted as an example of how Shakespeare is a challenge to the Germans and how they keep on trying to understand him not as a foreign writer of a particular age but as one who speaks to them in a contemporary idiom.

The various translations so far mentioned were undertaken by scholars and intended in the first instance for the reader, but Shakespeare is a playwright and, I repeat, one of the most important playwrights for the German stage.

German producers find it difficult to persuade their actors, who are used to the glib patter of the drawing room play or the realistic every-day language of the kitchen sink drama, to speak the Schlegel blank verse as it must be spoken, if it is to have an impact on the audience.

Producers find it equally difficult to educate their public—and the German theatre-goers are by no means all highbrow—to attune their ears to the flowing phrases, and to concentrate so sharply that the sense emerges even if the final full-stop is reached only after a great number of lines.

It is not surprising then that annually new German versions of Shakespeare are prepared for the stage. To quote a characteristic example: in 1961 producers chose from a large number of possible translations the work of ten different translators. Two theatres produced two 18th-century pre-Schlegel versions, one of which, namely, *The Taming of the Shrew*, was particularly successful. The

majority of producers fell back on Schlegel, although most of them regarded it as necessary to make radical changes in the text. Of the seven contemporary translators Richard Flatter and Rudolf Schaller were represented by seven plays in ten productions each, while Hans Rothe led with seven plays for eleven productions. The other four contributed one play each.[1]

Flatter, who died in 1960, was an Austrian scholar, respected as an expert on the Elizabethan theatre and a Shakespeare specialist, but he was also a creative writer and an actor trained by the famous producer, Max Reinhart.

Schaller, who lives in East Germany, was, before his retirement, a journalist and free-lance writer. He combines scholarship in Germanistics and Anglistics with a good knowledge of the requirements of the stage.

Rothe is the most controversial of these three. He maintains, against all evidence of contemporary scholarship, that we do not know enough about the true and final form of Shakespeare's plays to have to keep literally to the text. He claims that Shakespeare himself would have regarded his text simply as a script for a performance and that the actual presentation would depend on the stage, the actors available, and the audience. Consequently Rothe arranges Shakespeare for the contemporary theatre. He cuts out sections, invents a new sequence of scenes and, where necessary, he provides new links and transposes Shakespeare's language into the language of our day. The result is that people flock to see these plays and rave about the theatrical experience. But the smaller group of discriminating theatre-goers, who know Shakespeare's text in the original or in a more faithful translation, are furious about such misrepresentation and concerned about the harm this—because of its popular appeal—may do to the understanding of Shakespeare who, they claim, has much to give us in the unadulterated form.

The battle pro and contra Rothe, pro and contra a true Shakespeare is being fought on so broad a front that even daily papers take up the polemic in their literary supplements or on their literary page and neither side minces its words.

After this introduction where, with a rather wide-meshed net, I have tried to catch some of the most obvious facts about Shakespeare in Germany, I would now like to attempt a more detailed analysis of the role of Hamlet in Germany.

I have to limit myself to a brief sketch of two aspects only, namely, Hamlet on the German stage and Germany's Hamlet image. Much to my regret I cannot refer to the many German Shakespeare scholars and Hamlet specialists. In any case, as a teacher of German —not of English—literature I would not feel qualified to give an adequate account of their contribution.

On the 24th of June, 1626, for the first time, a version of *Hamlet* was presented in a German town—Dresden. The English strolling players billed the play as *Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark.* We must assume that the script was very much like that of *Der*

bestrafte Brudermord, of which we have a copy from a rather later date (1710).

The title already reveals that *Hamlet* was presented as a straightforward play of revenge. Such interpretation and simplification was not a concession to the crude German taste. It reflects an understanding which was current in England too in the early phases of the 17th century, as we know from the quotations collected in the Allusion Book.[6] Hamlet is neither introvert nor melancholic. His madness is feigned. His difficulties are external. Progress in the action is at all stages explicable and explained. There is nothing of what later times called the Hamlet mystery, but instead we find a good deal of slapstick comedy, for instance when the irate ghost boxes the ear of the sentry, or when Hamlet, in danger of being killed by the pirates, ducks so that the pirates kill one another.

The first performance of *Hamlet* based on a translation from Shakespeare's text took place in 1761, in Biberach in a kind of master singer theatre. Wieland, the translator, was the producer.

Vienna saw its first *Hamlet* in 1773 in the Burgtheater. This production (by Heufeld) was based on Wieland's translation but introduced far-reaching changes: apart from the cutting of scenes and characters, there was a new non-tragic ending: Hamlet kills the King. His mother, who has drunk of the poison cup, prevents the Danes from avenging the King by revealing her share in the murder of Hamlet's father. To make up for what this version of Hamlet must have lacked as a tragedy, the curtain closes on a heavy thud of thunder.

Three years later, that is, in 1776, Friedrich Ludwig Schroeder created a new *Hamlet* for the stage. This version was first seen in Hamburg and then in all the big German cities and in Vienna too. Schroeder chose Eschenburg's prose translation, an improvement on Wieland's first attempt, which the Viennese producer had to use. For the rest, Schroeder took over most of the changes of the Vienna production, including the optimistic end.

He later played the title part himself, and from the echo in the contemporary literature it becomes quite clear that he succeeded in giving to his German audience a glimpse of the profound tragedy of the situation in which Hamlet finds himself. That this was possible in spite of the optimistic ending should not surprise you. David Garrick (1716-1779), who did so much to revive Shakespeare in England, also performed *Hamlet* with his own ending.

But Schroeder, who knew the original English text, would have liked to present a more faithful version. So he restored some of the parts that had been cut out, notably the gravedigger scene. The public, however, wanted none of it, and to avoid financial ruin Schroeder had to fall back on the adaptation. One can say that Schroeder's *Hamlet* determined the image of *Hamlet* on the German stage for almost five decades; even Goethe had to face this fact.

Goethe was for many years responsible for the Court Theatre of Sachsen Weimar. In 1792 he announced that he intended to stage

Hamlet in a form entirely faithful to the original. But the fact that he, like the other producers before him, used a prose translation already means a great deviation from the original. Even more astounding, in view of his claim to faithfulness to the original, which is re-stated on the handbills, is the fact that Goethe follows Schroeder very closely in all his cuts and in the optimistic ending. Three years later Goethe produced *Hamlet* again and included some of the scenes which had previously been left out.[7]

In the meantime A. W. Schlegel's verse translation had become available (1800). In 1809 Goethe decided to produce A. W. Schlegel's text. He took great care and over many weeks he personally coached his favourite actor for the title part. The public, however, did not react favourably. Goethe had to take the performance off after three nights. Goethe was inclined to put the blame for this not on his audience but on Shakespeare who, in his own view, at that moment, was a truly great poet but a very poor playwright.

It took some time before August Wilhelm Schlegel's translation established itself as the basis for the stage script. But the search for a true Hamlet did not stop there, in fact it had only begun.

As for the present I am confining myself to *Hamlet* on the stage, I want to mention here two rather strange dramatic efforts to solve what became known as the Hamlet mystery. In an attempt to understand what kind of experiences might have determined Hamlet's thought, speech, and action at the Danish court, a writer by the name of Gutzkow presented us in 1835 with a play *Hamlet in Wittenberg*. Wittenberg, as you may recall, is sometimes named as the birthplace of Dr Faustus. In Gutzkow's fantastic creation Dr Faustus is a sorcerer who casts his evil spell over Hamlet so that Hamlet is doomed to inactivity and ultimate destruction before he sets foot again on Danish soil.

A hundred years layer a very well-known and successful German playwright Gerhart Hauptmann again sought the solution to Hamlet's otherwise inexplicable attitude and action in his stay at Wittenberg. Hauptmann also wrote a play *Hamlet in Wittenberg*. For him Wittenberg is the home of Martin Luther and of a great university where the spirit of the high Renaissance prevails. Hamlet has gone there to seek a new understanding of nature and life. We see him side by side with a great Renaissance thinker, Melanchthon. But he is also passionately involved in friendship and love. We are reminded all the time of the fact that he is the crown prince of Denmark, and that Denmark is in a sorry state and will need him. But in Wittenberg Hamlet is in the first instance a human being, who, in the Renaissance sense, tries to live his own life to the full. The more we approach the end of the play the more urgent becomes the call of Denmark until in the end his father's apparition beckons him twice to leave the land where he feels at home spiritually and to do this duty in the country of his birth.

These two plays, though they may be looked upon as somewhat

eccentric, nevertheless reflect faithfully that the Germans felt at a loss to give a binding answer to the question: 'What sort of a man was this Hamlet?' The question is, of course, wrongly put, because Hamlet is not a man but a figure from an imaginative work of art. On the other hand, on the stage Hamlet has to appear as a human being, as a character. Nearly every producer, and nearly every Hamlet actor—and it was the ambition of every actor of ability to play Hamlet at least once in his career—tried to put across his own understanding of Hamlet.

In this way the 19th century gave us refined, sensitive, sentimental Hamlets who ultimately could only be played by women.

The turn of the century showed us a Hamlet tragically torn between his deep insight into the nature of life and his inability to face reality in the political and social world.

We watched one and the same actor in 1936, interpreting Hamlet as the powerful superman in Nietzsche's sense whose tragic end was due to the hopeless inadequacy of the world, and then again in 1949, during the crisis of reorientation after the lost war, as a human being torn between the lure of suicide and the command of the spirit to risk life in spite of everything.

There has been an angry-young-man-Hamlet, and, in a most recent and skilful production, Hamlet was placed into a world which in Brecht's sense and technique had been made foreign and alienated.

German Hamlets have worn tail-coats and dinner jackets, dock-workers' garb and historic costumes. They have moved among battlements, in drawing rooms, before velvet curtains, and on stark, empty stages where posters, with inscriptions like 'Castle', 'the Queen's closet' or with abstract patterns serving as signals, were the only props for our visual imagination. [1]

Europe is small, and theatrical techniques travel fast. Therefore much that has been described here could be reported of English productions too.

Much more specifically German than what I have said about *Hamlet* so far is what I intend to briefly sketch now, namely the identification of the German character and even the German nation with Hamlet.

The first German who (between 1750 and 1760) grappled with the problem of an adequate translation of the 'To be or not to be' soliloquy, Moses Mendelssohn, already emphasises Hamlet's intro-version and introspection, qualities, thus, which make possible a comparison of Hamlet and the image which the Germans have of themselves. Generally speaking, Germans have more sympathy for the introvert than for the extrovert. They are inclined to see in him a finer and profounder being than in the extrovert, whom they tend to despise as a superficial hail-fellow-well-met.

The emergence of a German Hamlet image is most closely linked with Goethe, not with the producer whose interpretations we have already discussed, but with the poet and the man. As we shall see

now, Goethe as a producer and Goethe as a person take up two entirely different attitudes towards Hamlet.

As a man Goethe comes so under the spell of Hamlet that he appears to forget that Hamlet is the product of a creative mind and a figure in an imagined world. Goethe sees in Hamlet a real human being. He recognises his twin brother in him. Goethe's first novel—consisting mainly of letters written to a friend Wilhelm—*The Passion of Young Werther* lives from this encounter with Hamlet. It shows in Werther the sensitive youth of creative ability who is destroyed by the world he must, but cannot, master.

Goethe's second novel is *Wilhelm Meister's Calling to the Stage.* I hope, you notice the recurrence of the name Wilhelm, which, of course, is German for William. This novel was not published; it was, however, almost completely absorbed into *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, which was printed much later. In *Wilhelm Meister* Goethe tried to come to grips with the fascination of Hamlet for himself. Goethe in the novel, through Wilhelm Meister, asks two questions: 'Who is this Hamlet?' and 'How is it possible that he must fall a prey to an ineluctable destiny?'

To answer the first question Wilhelm speculates about the kind of human being Hamlet was before the murder of his father. Closing his eyes to all other facets of Hamlet's character, he sees in him a promising, gifted young man with a taste for the beautiful, the good and the true, an exquisitely delicate soul who shuns all extremes of joy and sorrow, of passion and action.

The answer to the second question begins with an analysis of the events which tear from him everything that gave his life significance and security: he loses not only his father but, through the hasty marriage of the queen, his mother also, and, in addition, his right to ascend to the throne. Bowed down under the weight of this experience, and sad and melancholy, he is struck by the final blow: the supernatural revelation of the ghost and his firm and unambiguous demand.

Wilhelm Meister saw the key to Hamlet's situation in his words:

> The time is out of joint: O cursed spite,
> That ever I was born to set it right.

In Carlyle's translation Goethe's famous Wilhelm Meister's words on Hamlet are:

> To me it is clear that Shakespeare meant, in the present case, to represent the effects of a great action laid upon a soul unfit for the performance of it. In this view the whole piece seems to me to be composed. There is an oaktree planted in a costly jar, which should have borne only pleasant flowers in its bosom; the roots expand, the jar is shivered.

Hamlet then must end tragically because his very own nature resists the demand for revenge and for the restoration of a better order, and this in spite of the fact that he accepts the command as just and binding:

> I was born to set it right.

Hamlet is not a hero but a victim of fate. It even crossed Goethe's mind that he might write a Hamlet who kills an eavesdropping Claudius instead of Polonius so that Acts IV and V become superfluous.

More than Goethe the German Romantics detached Hamlet from the work of art to which he belongs. Even more than for Goethe, Hamlet is for them a mythological figure in which they recognise themselves with their noblest aspirations and in whose fall they resignedly accept their own failing.

Through Friedrich Schlegel, the translator's equally gifted brother, Hamlet became the prototype of the romantic who is cursed with his finest gift: forced to reflect, he is unable to act. Schlegel writes in a letter: The reason for Hamlet's death lies in the greatness of his intellect.

The philosopher Schopenhauer understands Hamlet essentially under the aspect of death. Hamlet's deep insight into life carries him to the point where he surrenders the will to live. Formulated in Schopenhauer's language: Hamlet is the saint who fulfils the secret intention of life: to destroy itself.

Nietzsche in his *Birth of Tragedy* sees Hamlet very much in the same light as Schopenhauer did. Hamlet experiences the moment when his insight into human existence kills in him the desire to live and makes it impossible for him to act. Nietzsche too, to a certain extent, identified himself with Hamlet, but unlike Schopenhauer did not see in him a saint, an example to emulate. Nietzsche sought a way out of the Hamlet situation, and in *The Birth of Tragedy* it seems that he found this way out in man's creative ability in the realm of the aesthetic, the work of art. He certainly did not envisage a Hamlet engaged in social or political reform.

Something of this can be found in the Hamlet discussion by Hegel's disciples. Simplifying a little, one can say that the Hegel school saw in Hamlet an individual, who, wrapped up in his thoughts and reflections, however noble these may be, fails in his duty to life, because life demands the realisation of thought in action.

Throughout the 19th century there were critics of Hamlet who blamed him as a negative example of a sentimental dreamer, an idealist who shrinks back from action. These critics came mainly from the ranks of politicians or politically engaged men of letters.

Already in 1808 Adam Müller, impatient with German Romantics and their hankering for the sky and the clouds and their complete lack of any sense of the realities under their feet, pointed to Hamlet. Where Goethe had seen in Hamlet the 'exquisitely delicate soul' Adam Müller saw only the decadent. He told the Germans in no uncertain terms that the hopeless situation in which they found themselves after the defeat by Napoleon demanded men of action not hesitant Hamlets.[8]

In 1844 much the same is said by Rötscher, an art critic and philosopher. He sees Hamlet as Shakespeare's prophetic picture of Germany. Hamlet's strength is his weakness, and the same is true of the German nation. Intellectual ability, reflective power, creative imagination, great idealism are the source of the inability to act in the harsh world of reality.[8]

Five years later Gervinus, an historian of literature, made the same point with even more vehemence:

> 'We feel and see our own selves in Hamlet, and in love with our own deficiencies, we have long seen only the bright side of his character, until of late we have had a glimpse of his shadows also. We look upon the mirror of our present state as if this work had first been written in our own day; the poet, like a living man, works for us and in us in the same way as he intended to do for his own age.'[8]

The harshest words, however, came somewhat earlier from Boerne, a journalist, who seems to want to blame Shakespeare for the fact that the German Romantics have made Hamlet their own. He claimed that Hamlet was ruined by too much German philosophy from the University of Wittenberg. Befogged, groping in the dark without sense of direction, Hamlet is Germany's double on the eve of the July revolution. Boerne expressed surprise that Shakespeare, an Englishman, should have written Hamlet:

> 'If a German had made this Hamlet, I should not have been surprised. A German only needed a legible hand. He merely had to give an account of himself—and there you have Hamlet.'[8]

The often quoted phrase 'Hamlet is Germany' was coined in 1844 by Freiligrath in a political poem which compares point for point Hamlet's character and the events of the first four acts of the tragedy with the German people and the contemporary German political situation. The last three—of altogether nine stanzas—call upon the Germans to prevent Act V from becoming reality for them too. It is a thoroughly bad poem, yet behind it one can feel the outrage of the poet who had just refused to accept a pension from the Prussian king, because he hated and despised him as a suppressor of liberty and human dignity.[8]

The political misappropriation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* fortunately stopped during the last quarter of the 19th century though not without one last blunder: Fr. Th. Vischer announced that fate in real life meted out justice where fiction only knew the tragic end. Germany experienced the victory of 1870/71 and thus was spared the Hamlet death through the baited sword.[8] I need not point out how much scorn a later age poured on such chauvinistic pomposity. During the 19th century men seemed to have been less embarrassed by this attitude, because in 1877 the American editor of the *Variorum Shakespeare* prefaced the *Hamlet* volume with the following inscription:

To the
GERMAN SHAKESPEARE SOCIETY
OF WEIMAR
REPRESENTATIVE OF A PEOPLE
WHOSE RECENT HISTORY
HAS PROVED
ONCE FOR ALL
THAT
GERMANY IS NOT HAMLET
THESE VOLUMES ARE DEDICATED
WITH GREAT RESPECT[8]

In spite of this unambiguous declaration by the American authority, Horace Howard Furness, the identification of the Germans with Hamlet did not stop then. It has continued until our day. Perhaps it does not show itself in the same crude forms as in the 19th century, yet now as then it follows and starts new interpretations of Hamlet. To quote only one example from the time after the second world war: in 1947 the philosopher, Karl Jaspers, in a discussion of truth demonstrates one aspect of the problem by referring to Hamlet. For him Hamlet is called upon to reveal the truth in a world of deception and lies, and Hamlet does so although he remains inactive in our ordinary understanding of the word. Behind such an interpretation one senses, not a widely read author who shows off his knowledge of literature, but the moralist who chooses the example of Hamlet because of its evocative power for a people in a crisis.

Space does not permit me to mention more examples, but I feel that I cannot conclude without having answered a question which may have occurred to you, namely, how is it possible for the Germans to see themselves both in Hamlet and in Faust?

I have to admit that I can only deal with one aspect of this question. I do not know why the Germans feel the need to project themselves with their virtues and vices into mythological figures. I do not even know whether such an attitude is characteristically German or whether other nations too tend to recognise themselves in mythological figures as in a mirror.

The other aspect of the question, namely, 'What do Faust and Hamlet have in common?' is easier to answer. Once again I must begin with Goethe. He too was, at one and the same time, under the spell of both these mythological figures. To the one—Faust—he was able to give a valid poetical form, although it took him the better part of his life to do so. The other—Hamlet—occupied his mind as a challenge, which he never met to his own satisfaction.

Goethe placed his Faust between meditation and action, and watched him carry both to their extremes. His Faust, so great in his thought and noble in his intention, becomes involved in guilt,

whenever he acts. Much as he wished and tried, Goethe could not save his Faust through his own human power, he had to invoke divine grace. Hamlet, on the other hand, becomes involved in guilt, although, or rather because, he shrinks back from action. For him there seems to be no grace.

Seen in this light there is no pretence, but much resignation, if the Germans find their image in Faust and in Hamlet. They think of themselves as a people of poets and philosophers, and like Hamlet they realise that their insight into life demands action, and like Faust they experience that they cannot translate their dreams into deeds without being involved in guilt.

I wish to conclude by making one final comment which will take us from the mythological figure, Hamlet, back to Shakespeare, the poet. It may have occurred to you, that the history of *Hamlet* in Germany is—if one leaves out the contribution by German Shakespeare scholars and professors of English—a history of misinterpretations of Shakespeare. There is a great deal of truth in this.

But I have a suspicion that the same could be said of the history of Shakespeare in England. This should not really surprise us, for the great work of art is a challenge not only to our intellect, but to the whole person with everything that is of deep and passionate concern to us.

It is surely a measure of Shakespeare's greatness as a dramatist and poet that he forces us by the power of his words and across the span of time and circumstances, to try to understand the creations of his imagination in terms of our own experience and of our own groping for self-awareness. That he has done this even across the barriers of language, with truly remarkable consequences for the stage of another country, for the creative writing in a language other than his own, and for the clarification of the self-image of another nation, this is what I have tried to convey to you.

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A NOTE ON THEME AND STRUCTURE IN *HARD TIMES*

by A. E. VOSS

DR F. R. Leavis, in 'An Analytic Note' on *Hard Times* in *The Great Tradition*,[1] ascribes the success of Dickens' handling of the circus people partly to

> the fact that, from the opening chapters, we have been tuned for the reception of a highly conventional art—though it is a tuning that has no narrowly limiting effect.[2]

One of the striking aspects of the conventional nature of Dickens' art is his manipulation of his role as novelist. The *persona* is always present, only seldom obtruding as narrator, but always setting up responses in the reader, guiding his judgment of the action, and organising his sympathies. Yet the effect is in no way to diminish the independent vitality of the action; '. . . the irresistible richness of life that characterizes the book everywhere'.[3]

It is my intention to suggest an explanation for the responsiveness in the reader which Dickens achieves. Dr Leavis says:

> To describe at all cogently the means by which this responsiveness is set up would take a good deal of 'practical criticism analysis'—analysis that would reveal an extraordinary flexibility in the art of *Hard Times*.[4]

In this paper I shall offer some practical criticism of what seem to me to be important passages in the novel, hoping by this means to offer an interpretation of the theme of *Hard Times*, and to outline its structure. I shall try to show that one of the means whereby Dickens sets up the responsiveness is by a poetic consistency of theme, and a corresponding integrity of structure. By making the reader aware of a consistent theme, Dickens is able to maintain within the structure of the novel a great variety of tone and presentation. The process is parallel to that, I think, whereby Shakespeare incorporates, for example, the porter scene into *Macbeth*. I shall attempt to explain the significance of the circus people, and to justify the role of Stephen Blackpool in relation to the interpretation offered of the novel's structure and theme.

'Sleary's Horse-riding' first appears in Chapter Three ('A Loop-

[1] F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition* (Penguin Books, 1962), p. 249.
[2] Leavis, p. 257.
[3] ibid., loc. cit.
[4] ibid.

hole') of the novel. The reader is to some extent prepared for the appearance by the ironical picture of his children's education on which Mr Gradgrind is musing as he walks home from school 'in a state of considerable satisfaction'. A paragraph such as the one beginning 'No little Gradgrind had ever seen a face in the moon . . .', with its insistent presentation of the innocently fanciful and imaginative, helps to build up the necessary ironic strain, so that the first appearance of the horse-riding comes as a positive relief:

> He had reached the neutral ground upon the outskirts of the town, which was neither town nor country, and yet was either spoiled, when his ears were invaded by the sound of music. The clashing and banging band attached to the horse-riding establishment which had there set up its rest in a wooden pavilion was in full bray. A flag, floating from the summit of the temple, proclaimed to mankind that it was 'Sleary's Horse-riding' which claimed their suffrages. Sleary himself, a stout modern statue with a money-box at its elbow, in an ecclesiastical niche of early Gothic architecture, took the money. Miss Josephine Sleary, as some very long and very narrow strips of printed bill announced, was then inaugurating the entertainments with her graceful equestrian Tyrolean flower-act. Among the other pleasing but always strictly moral wonders which must be seen to be believed, Signor Jupe was that afternoon to 'elucidate the diverting accomplishments of his highly trained performing dog Merrylegs.' He was also to exhibit 'his astounding feat of throwing seventy-five hundred-weight in rapid succession backhanded over his head, thus forming a fountain of solid iron in mid-air, a feat never before attempted in this or any other country, and which having elicited such rapturous plaudits from enthusiastic throngs it cannot be withdrawn'. The same Signor Jupe was to 'enliven the varied performances at frequent intervals with his chaste Shakespearean quips and retorts'. Lastly, he was to wind them up by appearing in his favourite character of Mr William Button, of Tooley Street, in 'the highly novel and laughable hippo-comedietta of The Tailor's Journey to Brentford.'

The humour of this passage does provide relief from the grim thoughts of Mr Gradgrind, but there is throughout an amvibalence of attitude on Dickens' part. The whole passage to some extent bears out the idea of the first sentence, that ' . . . the neutral ground . . . was neither town nor country . . . yet was either spoiled'.

The irony at this stage seems to operate against both Gradgrind and Sleary. Sleary is a 'statue', who only comes to life to take the money. The music, which makes articulate what had been dumb under the influence of Mr Gradgrind, whose ears it must 'invade', is shortly contrasted with 'clashing and banging' and 'bray'. The spiritual suggestions of 'temple' and 'ecclesiastical' (and even of 'suffrages') are at once offset by the repetition of 'money'. Similarly

all the positive aspects of the Horse-riding (entertainments, graceful, pleasing, moral, diverting, etc.) are offset by the stilted language and patent contradictions, as for example, in the announcement of Signor Jupe's 'fountain of solid iron' performance. The climax of the passage comes with Signor Jupe 'appearing' as Mr Button, thus exercising the wildest powers of fancy and imagination by transforming himself into another person.

But Dickens has, in this passage, by contrast with Gradgrind, associated the circus people with imaginative values, and with ideas of order and balance. Gradgrind dismisses the various acts as 'trivialities'.

In the next chapter, Mr Bounderby is introduced. From the start, Dickens' attitude to him is explicit. He is 'the Bully of Humility'.

Chapter five is entitled 'The Key-note', and in striking the key-note, Dickens points to the significance of the circus people. Coketown is the key-note, and Dickens describes it as a dark, unreal, mechanical place. It is apparently an over-ordered town:

> It contained several large streets all very like one another, and many small streets still more like one another, inhabited by people equally like one another, who all went in and out at the same hours, with the same sound upon the same pavements, to do the same work, and to whom every day was the same as yesterday and to-morrow, and every year the counterpart of the last and the next.

The town and its inhabitants are organised to such an extent that they are without individuality and without life. Ironically not even time maintains its order for the people of Coketown. It is an 'unnatural' place, which beneath its ordered exterior hides the melancholy madness of the steam-engines, which Dickens likens to elements. It is against this background that the significance of the circus-people, whose attributes were ironically presented by Dickens on their first appearance, must be seen. As the moral significance of the circus people is closely related to their work, so with Coketown:

> These attributes of Coketown were in the main inseparable from the work by which it was sustained; against them were to be set off, comforts of life which found their way all over the world, and elegancies of life which made, we will not ask how much of the fine lady, who could scarcely bear to hear the place mentioned.

The second appearance of the circus company together begins with a similar ambivalence of attitude on the part of Dickens to that which was apparent in his first description of them. But the second appearance follows the description of Coketown, and thus we are able to see the circus people in relation to the 'key-note'.

> Meanwhile, the various members of Sleary's company gradually gathered together from the upper regions, where they were quartered, and, from standing about, talking in low voices to one another and to Mr Childers, gradually in-

> sinuated themselves and him into the room. There were two or three handsome young women among them, with their two or three husbands and their two or three mothers, and their eight or nine little children, who did the fairy business when required. The father of one of the families was in the habit of balancing the father of another of the families on the top of a great pole; the father of a third family often made a pyramid of both these fathers, with Master Kidderminster for the apex, and himself for the base; all the fathers could dance upon rolling casks, stand upon bottles, catch knives and balls, twirl hand-basins, ride upon anything, jump over everything, and stick at nothing. All the mothers could (and did) dance, upon the slack wire and the tight-rope, and perform rapid acts on bareback steeds; none of them were at all particular in respect of showing their legs; and one of them, alone in a Greek chariot, drove six in hand into every town they came to. They all assumed to be mighty rakish and knowing, they were not very tidy in their private dresses, they were not at all orderly in their domestic arrangement, and the combined literature of the whole company would have produced but a poor letter on any subject. Yet there was a remarkable gentleness and childishness about these people, a special ineptitude for any kind of sharp practice, and an untiring readiness to help and pity one another deserving often of as much respect, and always of as much generous construction, as the every-day virtues of any class of people in the world.

In this passage, from Chapter Six ('Sleary's Horsemanship') of Book One, the sense of order, and the spiritual and imaginative values with which the circus company has already been associated, are strengthened.

Firstly in the construction of the paragraph, which gives a strong impression of the order and unity of the company. In the first sentence, they are dealt with as a group of individuals, 'the various members of Sleary's company'; next as families; women, husbands, mothers and children. Next Dickens isolates successively the fathers and the mothers. The final two sentences, in which Dickens contrasts their appearance ('They all assumed . . . ') with their reality ('Yet . . . '), return to the idea of the company as a group.

The unity and order of the company are similarly reflected in the description of the various activities of the performers. Spontaneity (as Leavis points out) and dexterity are hallmarks of their work. At the same time the images of balance and inter-dependence reflected in the gymnastic pattern ('. . . balancing . . . pyramid . . . apex . . . '), look forward to the virtues of inter-dependence and mutual trust which the final sentence describes. The rhythm, particularly of the third and fourth sentences, gives an appearance of disorder and haphazardry, while the activities described point to precision and order.

This tension between appearance and reality is paralleled in a gradually fading undertone of irony, with regard to the moral judgment of the group, which runs through the paragraph. In the first sentence, they 'insinuate' themselves into the room. In the second sentence there is some doubt as to who is married to whom. This irony reaches a climax at the end of the third sentence, in the ambiguity of 'stick at nothing'; the phrase conveys a sense of both daring and desperateness. The strain continues in the reference to the mothers' legs, and in the references to the group's 'domestic arrangements', 'private dresses' and 'literature'. But the ambiguity is completely dispelled in the final sentence.

Thus, against the background of Coketown, whose apparent order hides a real disorder, the circus people represent a group whose apparent chaos is really ordered in a human, organic way. Whereas in their first meeting the confusion was striking, and the imaginative qualities were offset by the excess of false exoticism, on the second occasion on which they appear together, the sense of order and unity is strong, the contrast between appearance and reality unequivocal, and the imaginative qualities are more genuinely realised because of a sparing reference to the exotic (for example the Greek chariot). Already Dickens is talking in the terms of the circus people themselves ('the fairy business').

The circus people represent physical, moral and social order; in their dexterity and balance; in their viable family relationships; and in their inter-dependence and mutual trust as a group. (The contrast between Sleary and Bounderby as employers is sharply made.) Dickens seems to suggest that in a society of Bounderbies the extravagant circus people are the norm ('the every-day virtues of any class of people in the world'). Stephen Blackpool receives a similar emphasis. The chapter which bears his name, Chapter Ten of Book One, opens:

> I entertain a weak idea that the English people are as hard-worked as any people upon whom the sun shines. I acknowledge to this ridiculous idiosyncrasy, as a reason why I would give them a little more play.

It seems to me, then, that the central themes of *Hard Times* are on the one hand the contrast of order and disorder, and on the other the contrast of appearance and reality. At the climaxes of the novel these ideas seem to emerge quite clearly. For instance, in the scene which sees the collapse of Louisa at the end of Book Two, there is a tremendous tension between the apparent order and determination of the dialogue between daughter and father and the real chaos which underlies it. The themes are strikingly realised in the final sentence:

> And he laid her down there, and saw the pride of his heart and the triumph of his system, lying, an insensible heap, at his feet.

The final degradation of Tom in Chapter Seven—'Whelp-hunting'

—of Book Three is a particularly striking instance: a complex image in which appearance has become reality.

Throughout the novel, the Bounderby-Sparsit-Harthouse group reflects an appearance of order over a reality of disorder. In Chapter Seven—'Gunpowder'—of Book Two, Tom and Harthouse are talking in the garden of Bounderby's country house:

> They had stopped among a disorder of roses—it was part of Mr Bounderby's humility to keep Nickit's roses on a reduced scale—and Tom sat down on a terrace-parapet, plucking buds and picking them to pieces; while his powerful Familiar stood over him . . . (Tom) took to biting the rose-buds now, and tearing them away from his teeth with a hand that trembled like an old man's . . .

The association of Tom and Harthouse with inhuman disruption and 'unnatural conduct' is quite clear. Tom's career from subjection to weakness and corruption is contrasted with that of Sissy. In Chapter Eleven—'Lower and Lower'—of Book Two, the images of disorder are at once less explicit and more far-reaching: Mrs Sparsit is trailing Louisa, hoping to trap her with Harthouse:

> The tremendous rain occasioned infinite confusion, when the train stopped at its destination. Gutters and pipes had burst, drains had overflowed, streets were under water . . .

Here the apparent order of which Mrs Sparsit is one part collapses; confusion and disorder extend throughout the bastion of the Hard-Fact school, Coketown. Similarly, Mrs Sparsit, in possessed pursuit of Louisa, undergoes a transformation.[5] Beneath the apparent order imposed on her actions by Dickens' image of the staircase, down which she watches Louisa's descent to apparent damnation, a real disorder is revealed.

It seems to me that the themes of order and disorder, appearance and reality, can be seen to give a closely ordered structure to the novel. In the first book, 'Sowing', the Gradgrind-Bounderby camp is shown to be building a life of apparent order, reflected in the constant ironic reference to weights and measures, facts, and in the confusion of immeasurables with fungibles of all kinds. The climax of the apparent ordering of this life comes at the end of Book One with the marriage of Louisa and Bounderby; but Dickens points to the corruption of Marriage, in itself a strong image of union, order and love:

> Love was made on these occasions in the form of bracelets; and, on all such occasions during the period of betrothal, took a manufacturing aspect.
>
> (Book One: Chapter Sixteen—'Husband and Wife')

During the course of Book Two, the apparent order of this life is breaking down. It collapses completely with the flight of Louisa from Bounderby to her father at the end of Book Two. For the

[5] Dorothy van Ghent in an essay on 'The Dickens World' (*The Dickens Critics*, ed. Ford and Lane, p. 213) gives an analysis of Dickens' use of this figure.

Bounderby group, Book Three serves as an epilogue, with Bounderby and Sparsit reduced to complete ridicule and moral condemnation. For Gradgrind, Book Three covers his slow and painful, and often ironic, attempts to build up a new order on the ruins of the old disorder, to re-integrate and re-unify by apparent destruction and isolation.

Contrasted throughout the first two books with the apparent order of Bounderby and Gradgrind is the real order of the Sleary group. Similarly contrasted, and giving a further dimension to the idea of order, is Stephen Blackpool.

Dr Leavis[6] refers to Blackpool as a 'martyr', and it seems to me that the effect of Dickens' creation of him is to give an ironic dimension of spiritual significance to the theme of order. In Book One, Blackpool's situation is an image of apparent disorder; he is the victim of a broken marriage, and in him Bounderby sees an instrument of rebellion against the industrial system. Yet it is Blackpool who sees through the appearance to the reality:

> ' 'Tis a muddle', said Stephen, shaking his head as he moved to the door. ' 'Tis a muddle'.'
>
> (Book One: Chapter Eleven—'No Way Out')

Significance is given to the idea of order by Stephen's dream in Chapter Thirteen—'Rachael'—of Book One. He dreams 'a long troubled dream':

> He thought that he, and someone on whom his heart had long been set—but she was not Rachael, and that surprised him, even in the midst of his imaginary happiness—stood in the church being married . . . darkness came on, succeeded by the shining of a tremendous light . . . He stood on a raised stage, under his own loom; and, looking up at the shape the loom took, and hearing the burial service distinctly read, he knew that he was there to suffer death. In an instant what he stood on fell below him, and he was gone.

Thus, in the midst of his disorder, Stephen realises in his imaginary, spiritual marriage, the potentials of that bond which the Bounderby-Gradgrind union lacks. At the same time, the dream prefigures his own death and its meaning. It is this added spiritual dimension to his life which gives Blackpool his significance in the novel. He fulfils a function which it would have been difficult, if not impossible, for Dickens to assign to the other protagonists of order and humanity in the early stages of the novel, the circus company and Sissy.

In Book Two, the significance of Blackpool develops further. The apparent disorder and isolation of his life continue; he moves from silent isolation into exile, branded as a rebel. Once again, the imagery which Dickens employs to reflect the idea of order in Blackpool becomes less explicit and yet more significant. As he leaves Coketown, he muses:

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[6] *The Great Tradition*, p. 259.

> So strange to have lived to his time of life, and yet to be beginning like a boy this summer morning.
>
> Book Two: Chapter Six—'Fading Away')

So Dickens contrasts Blackpool's age and impending guilt with his real innocence. Similarly young Tom's hand '. . . trembled like an old man's'.

From this point on, Blackpool becomes, even in his absence from Coketown, an important instrument of the plot, carrying, as he does, Tom's guilt. At the same time, we are prepared for the realisation that Bounderby will be guilty of Blackpool's death. The spiritual burden of the theme of the novel, which Blackpool bears, naturally extends Bounderby's guilt for this responsibility.

On a number of occasions after Blackpool's departure from Coketown, Dickens refers to the old disused coal-shafts which stretch across the country-side between Coketown and Bounderby's country house.[7] By association, and as a champion of industry, Bounderby can be seen to be responsible for them, as if he had laid a trap for Blackpool. In one of these, Old Hell Shaft (laboriously named perhaps), Blackpool dies. But it is from the bottom of this shaft that he has his vision of the symbolic star.

Thus, it seems to me, three aspects of the theme of order are reflected: personal, emotional order in Sissy; social order in Sleary and the circus people, and spiritual order in the person of Blackpool. Gradgrind is perhaps the pathetic hero, who comes to insight via moral error and suffering, and Louisa the hapless victim. Bounderby and Sparsit are condemned. It is perhaps only the explicitness of moral attitude which limits the tragic significance of the novel.

I have tried to point to one aspect of Dickens' achievement in *Hard Times*, a close interaction of theme and structure. Perhaps this results in commission of the intentional fallacy, glaring as are the limits of Dickens' vision of some aspects of society,[8] but I have tried to explain the continued relevance of the novel, in spite of the fact that many of the explicit issues raised are no longer closely felt. It may be argued, of course, that the themes of appearance and reality, order and chaos, are at the centre of all great art.

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[7] Book Two:
Chapter Seven—'Gunpowder'—'a wild country undermined by deserted coal-shafts.'
Chapter Nine—'Hearing the last of it'—'the wild country of past and present coal-pits.'
Chapter Eleven—'Lower and Lower'—'the land of coal-pits past and present.'

[8] Dr Leavis points particularly to the political and the religious. Orwell in 'Inside the whale' is clear on the limits of Dickens' political vision.

THE *OEDIPUS TYRANNUS*: SOPHOCLES AND MR VELLACOTT

by W. H. HEWITT

IN A RECENT BBC broadcast, reprinted in *The Listener* of March 26, 1964, Mr Philip Vellacott offered a new interpretation of the *Oedipus Tyrannus* of Sophocles. Mr Vellacott's eminence as a sensitive translator of Greek plays would entitle him to be taken seriously as a critic even if his talk were not as stimulating as it is. To a casual reader he might appear to offer a convincing case. But I believe his interpretation is wrong, and dangerously wrong, just because it appears so plausible. Not only is his conclusion wrong, but, I believe, his method of argument is at fault; one is inevitably reminded of the ingenious interpretations of Euripides propounded by the late A. W. Verrall, which swept a generation of students off its feet but are now universally rejected. It seems to me important, therefore, that an attempt should be made to answer Mr Vellacott.

Mr Vellacott tells how, when he first read the play as an undergraduate, he was left with feelings of uneasiness, first, about the improbabilities in the play, and, more important, about the moral and religious value of the play. 'If Oedipus sinned in innocence', he asks, 'if the gods deliberately contrived parricide and incest, is there any meaning in goodness? Can anything like Justice be found in this story, or is the message total pessimism? This last seemed to be the common conclusion'. His own interpretation attempts to show that Oedipus sinned deliberately, with full knowledge of what he was doing. I shall show later why I think he is wrong, but at this stage I think it should be pointed out that what he apparently takes as the common interpretation is not necessarily the only one or the correct one; in fact, I doubt whether it is the common interpretation today. In order to answer Mr Vellacott as effectively as I can, it seems to me necessary to show how I understand the play, and then deal with his arguments in more detail.

Mr Vellacott contrasts his own new view with 'the general assumption that Oedipus is innocent'. He does not explicitly state the crime or sin of which he is said to be innocent, but it appears from the discussion that Mr Vellacott is thinking of the murder of Laius and the incestuous marriage with Jocasta. Oedipus committed both these crimes in ignorance, and it is difficult for the modern reader to feel that there is any justice in his punishment if this is what he is punished for. But Sophocles nowhere tells us that this is his crime. Oedipus

is guilty of something much more fundamental than parricide and incest, and he shares his guilt with Laius and Jocasta, and all three are punished for it. An oracle came to Laius once to the effect that he was fated to be killed by his son. Instead of accepting the oracle and resigning themselves to the will of the gods, Laius and Jocasta tried to avoid the fate promised them by giving their infant son to the shepherd to be exposed on Cithaeron. Speaking of this years later to Oedipus, Jocasta denies that oracles delivered through mortals have any truth: 'naught of mortal birth is a sharer in the science of the seer' (709),[1] she says, and suggests that the oracles which came to Laius came 'I will not say from Phoebus, but from his ministers'. Nevertheless, they have sufficient belief in the oracle to try and avoid its fulfilment. What they are in fact doing is trying to outsmart the gods, though they deceive themselves and justify their action by their claim that there is no truth in the servants of the gods. They may believe that they are not disobeying the gods, but there can be no doubt that they are doing so; if men do not trust oracles, how can they know the will of the gods? This sin—trusting in their own human wisdom and trying to avoid the decrees of Apollo—is what destroys them, just as it destroys Oedipus years later. In the play we see Oedipus making the same mistakes, and in his turn being destroyed by them.

Just as Laius and Jocasta have preferred to trust their own human wisdom rather than accept the will of the gods as expressed in the only possible way, through the word of their ministers, so Oedipus, blind to his own fallibility, trusts the light of his own reason. It is in his character to do so, and Sophocles takes pains to show us what sort of man he is. He is a good king; he is like a father to his people, the 'new brood' who need to be cherished, as they once were by Cadmus and are now by Oedipus; he feels for their sufferings, and suffers more than they do, for they feel as individuals, while his soul mourns for the city, for myself and for thee (63-4). Like a good king he has already taken action, the only action he can think of—to send his brother-in-law Creon to Delphi.[2] But even in the *prologos* there are indications of features in his character which are to play a part in his downfall. He is excessively proud of his own achievements—'I, Oedipus, renowned of all men'; the Priest knows that the way to win his support is to remind him of his past successes and appeal to him to repeat them (46-51). He is self-reliant; when Creon brings the response from Delphi, Oedipus reacts as a king and a man of action should; he will make dark things plain. With a rather patronising word of praise to Phoebus and to Creon (sharing one line, 131), he promises to take vengeance on the murderer of Laius on behalf of the land—and for the god (136).

[1] All line references are to Jebb's second edition (Cambridge, 1887), from which the translations, too, are taken, unless otherwise stated.

[2] Did Oedipus really hope for help from Delphi? In the prologos we are not told, but subsequent utterances may make us look back at this passage and wonder.

Surely we are meant to feel his presumption? Would not a Greek audience feel, as we do, that the god could very well look after his own affairs? Further, Oedipus is suspicious. After hearing Creon's account of the murder of Laius he immediately suspects treachery at Thebes (124-5); once this suspicion is planted in his mind he shows himself later to be ever ready to jump to conclusions. All this is indicated in the prologue; and these are the features of his character which we see in action in the play. His self-reliance and trust in his own wisdom, together with his concern for the city, make him undertake the search for the murderer; his unreasonable suspicions involve him in his quarrels with Teiresias and Creon. The chorus is wiser than Oedipus; in the *parodos* it expresses its fear of what the message from Delphi may bring in its train; it declares that 'thought can find no weapon for defence' (170-1), and ends with a prayer to the gods for relief.

Their prayer is heard and answered, not by the gods, but by Oedipus: 'Thou prayest, and in answer to thy prayers, if thou wilt give a loyal welcome to my words, and minister to thine own disease, thou mayest hope to find succour and relief from woes' (216-7). Oedipus, that is, is confident of his own ability to find a solution. He specifically denies knowledge of the death of Laius or of any subsequent report of it at Thebes, and goes on to appeal to any Theban to report any other Theban, to confess himself, or report any foreigner whom he knows to be guilty. The irony is apparent: Oedipus is the only one present who fits into all three categories; he is a Theban who could be reported (by at least one other Theban, as we discover later—the shepherd); he could himself confess; and he is an apparent stranger, an immigrant from Corinth.

No one comes forward, and Oepidus goes on to pronounce a solemn ban: no one is to have communication with the source of the pollution. He declares himself the ally of the god and the murdered man in this, in what appears almost an offer of help to the god. In a passage full of dramatic irony, he then goes out of his way to include himself in the effects of his ban if he should harbour the guilty man. He has a word of blame for the Thebans for not taking proper steps to investigate the death of Laius, but all will now be well, for he is going to do what they should have done, as is right for the successor of Laius both as king and husband: 'I will uphold this cause, even as the cause of my own sire,' (264) and adds solemnity to this utterance by recalling the names of the kings of Thebes, the ancestors of Laius—and of himself. The speech ends with a curse on those who disobey, and a prayer that 'Justice our ally' and all the gods may be gracious to those who approve his words.

At this point the Chorus suggests that since Oedipus has said 'no man on earth can force the gods to what they will not' (280-1), they should at least try to obtain information from the representative of the gods, Teiresias. Oedipus, with characteristic foresight, has already sent for him, and shortly afterwards Teiresias enters. His

first words are a warning to Oedipus: 'Alas, how dreadful it is to have wisdom where it profits not the wise'. He applies the words to himself here, but their relevance to Oedipus is obvious. Teiresias at first refuses to disclose what he knows, and this brings out another feature of Oedipus's character which has already played and is again to play an important part in his life—his quickness of temper. As we are to learn later, it was this which made him kill Laius (801); now it drives him to taunt Teiresias and, combined with his readiness to suspect treachery, to suggest that Teiresias was involved in a plot against Laius. Oedipus has no ground for this suspicion, but it does not come as a surprise to the audience which has been prepared for it by the hint in lines 124-5. Here it is sufficient to make Teiresias come out with his accusation against Oedipus (353), which he repeats and expands (362, 366-7). Mr Vellacott finds difficulty in believing that Oedipus could 'listen to the repeated words of Teiresias and not recognise the truth', and concludes that 'the only answer that makes sense is the possibility that he knew it already'. In fact, the reason is much simpler: Oedipus is in a blind rage and is not even listening to Teiresias; his mind, already full of thoughts of plots, is busy with the conclusion to which he has, quite unjustifiably, jumped, that Teiresias and Creon are conspiring against him. Structurally, this scene leads on to the confrontation of Oedipus with Creon: from the point of view of character it develops what we have already been shown of Oedipus, for example, his pride in his own wisdom (396ff) and his political suspicions (380ff); and poetically it is remarkable for the play of light-darkness, blindness-sight imagery with which it is shot through (371, 374-5, 412ff). Oedipus, for all his boasted knowledge, cannot see and does not know the first and most obvious things about himself: who he is, where he was born, who he is married to.

In the ode which follows, the Chorus is worried by the words of the prophet, but it shares the doubts of Jocasta about the efficacy of prophecy, and its faith in Oedipus is unshaken.

The next episode brings Oedipus face to face with Creon, who has heard the charges and come to answer them. Oedipus's first speech shows in an even stronger form all the characteristics which have already been foreshadowed. What had been a mere suspicion, a suggestion, has now become a certainty in Oedipus's mind: 'Hast thou a front so bold that thou hast come to my house who art the proved assassin of its master?' (533-4). Oedipus refuses to listen to Creon's explanations, and by his unwillingness to listen to reason provokes a quarrel, which is only ended by the entrance of Jocasta and the intercession of the Chorus; and with a final word on the character of Oedipus, Creon goes in: 'Sullen in yielding art thou seen, even as vehement in the excesses of thy wrath' (673).

The scenes with Teiresias and Creon have two functions: to show us the character of Oedipus in action, and to lead up to the important scene Oedipus-Jocasta, in which Jocasta seeks to comfort Oedipus by disparaging seer-craft; once in her life seer-craft had

been shown to be very wrong, when it had prophesied that Laius would die at the hands of his own son; but that son had perished on Cithaeron, and Laius had been murdered by foreign robbers. Apollo did not bring about what his oracles had promised, so there is no need to regard oracles. The speech is full of dramatic irony, which is summed up in its last sentence, 'Whatever needful things the god seeks he himself will easily bring to light'.

Jocasta's attempt to comfort Oedipus has exactly the opposite effect; Oedipus is filled with anxiety, and eagerly questions Jocasta further about the circumstances of the death of Laius. Jocasta, seeing him troubled, asks the reason; and it is then that Oedipus tells the story of his departure from Corinth, in a speech to which I shall return later. The scene ends with Oedipus, determined to find out the truth about the death of Laius, sending for the shepherd who had been the sole survivor of Laius's party.

The choral ode which follows is important. In the first strophe the chorus prays that it may always live in accordance with 'the laws that live on high'; 'laws begotten in the clear air of heaven, whose only father is Olympus; no mortal nature brought them to birth, no forgetfulness shall lull them to sleep; for God is great in them and grows not old' (865-71). The ode should leave us in no doubt about the interpretation of the play. Oedipus (not to mention Laius and Jocasta) has not regarded the laws, and 'nowhere is Apollo glorified with honours; God's service perishes' (910).[3]

The Corinthian messenger arrives and delivers his news of the death of Polybus. For a moment, when he hears it, Oedipus's confidence is restored, and it is his turn to pour scorn on oracles, as Jocasta has done (964ff). Jocasta, too, puts herself further in the wrong when she states (in contrast to what the chorus has just said) that it is best to live at random. But this is incidental, and the interest is concentrated on Oedipus. His momentary relief is soon destroyed by the remembrance that Merope is still alive and the second part of the prophecy may yet be fulfilled. In a previous scene, Jocasta tried to comfort him and produced exactly the opposite effect; here, too, the messenger tries to comfort him, by revealing that Polybus and Merope were not his parents, and again the effect is the opposite of what is intended, though this time the roles are reversed and it is Jocasta who is shattered by the revelation. She warns Oedipus not to go on with his quest, but anger and pride—pride at the favour of fortune—make him blind to what Jocasta has already seen. She rushes off to her death, but Oedipus stays to search out the truth, full of confidence.

There is no need for further detailed analysis. The shepherd arrives, and Oedipus angrily forces his story from him. The god has indeed brought all things to light; Oedipus's clear sight has been shown to be blindness to every truth, factual and moral; there is nothing left but for him to end his days in darkness.

[3] Translated by David Grene, (Univ. of Chicago Press, 1960).

It will be seen that Mr Vellacott's views are very different from those I have outlined above. His article deserves, of course, to be read in full, but for the convenience of readers to whom it is not easily available I shall attempt to give a brief summary. His main point is that Oedipus knows, even before the play opens, that there is at least a strong possibility that the man he has killed is his father and that the woman to whom he is married is his mother; Oedipus therefore sins with full knowledge, and this gives point and meaning to the play. Other points which lead up to or support this conclusion are as follows. The reason given for Oedipus's visit to Delphi—the taunt of a dinner companion that he was not the son of Polybus and Merope—is an innovation of Sophocles; Oedipus goes to Delphi to learn the truth about his parentage, but, contrary to the general assumption by modern critics, this problem was not put out of his mind by the oracle's response that he was fated to kill his father and marry his mother; rather, 'the question and the prophecy were so obviously and frighteningly connected that I do not believe Sophocles could imagine that Oedipus would fail to connect them'. For this reason Oedipus realises that even if he turns back on Corinth he may still meet his father anywhere in the world. When, therefore, with the oracle's warning still fresh in his mind, he meets an old man at the point where three roads meet, he realises that this may be his father, but in his anger kills him nevertheless, so that 'he is no longer the innocent victim of malevolent powers, he is guilty'. This, according to Mr Vellacott is the sin needed to justify the catastrophe. Oedipus then goes on to Thebes (making a detour to avoid entering by the road from Delphi), and must have realised soon after his arrival that the man he has killed is the King of Thebes, Laius. He must also have heard soon about the Sphinx, 'learnt that the reward for delivering Thebes was to succeed Laius as King of Thebes and husband of Jocasta'. Oedipus must then have seen that it was quite possible that the man he had killed was his father and the woman he was about to marry was his mother; in spite of the oracle's warning, however, he must have decided to take the risk. Jocasta, too, must have seen the danger, but decided to keep quiet. Oedipus then 'had to do two things to preserve his sanity. First, to build up for his public life a facade, and for himself a fantasy world, in which he was the innocent son of Polybus of Corinth and the deliverer of Thebes. Second, to atone for his sin by being a good king and a good husband'. All is well till the outbreak of the plague, when Oedipus realises that the truth can no longer be concealed, and to save Thebes, at whatever cost to himself and Jocasta, starts on the course which sets in motion the action of the play as we have it.

Now this story might have made a very interesting background to a play, and any dramatist, even Sophocles, might well be grateful to Mr Vellacott for suggesting it. But there is no evidence for any of it in the play which Sophocles wrote. Sophocles does not tell us what was in Oedipus's mind when he heard the response of the

Delphic oracle, or when he met the old man at the crossroads, or when he reached Thebes, or when presented with the prospect of marrying Jocasta. The whole theory is built up on supposition; on thoughts which are attributed to the characters at times and in situations which Sophocles did not choose to put into his play; it is built up by treating the *Oedipus* as though it were a detective story and not a poetic drama. Mr Vellacott's own words betray him: 'What thoughts *would Sophocles imagine* to be in Oedipus's mind as he left Delphi? He *would be thinking* . . . '; 'this would be *the probable preoccupation* of Oedipus' thoughts as he left Delphi . . . '; 'Pursuing the factual pattern of the story as the thoughts of Sophocles *may well have pursued it*'. 'May well'—but there is not a word of Sophocles to prove it.

At this point Mr Vellacott seems to have had doubts. 'To present such a story on the Attic stage involved insuperable difficulties', he says. 'If this was the real inner story of Oedipus, the whole drama now took place within one man's consciousness. Neither Oedipus nor Jocasta could speak one unveiled word; then how could the truth be conveyed to an audience?' Here Mr Vellacott has had to out-Verrall Verrall, and argue that we are not to try to interpret Sophocles's plays on the basis of the words he gives his characters to speak, but after stressing the importance of one incident, the taunt at the banquet (an incident not portrayed but merely described by one character to another), to throw overboard everything that is said in the play and rely instead on the unspoken thoughts which we may suppose to have been in the character's minds. 'I suggest', he says, 'that Sophocles in the end decided to write his play on the basis of the popular concept of an innocent Oedipus lured by Fate into a disastrous trap; but that, in order to record for ever his own deeper perception, he embodied in the play certain features, notably the incident at the banquet, which, if rationally examined, would suggest what the real story of Oedipus was'. To isolate this suggestion is to refute it. It has yet to be proved that any ancient dramatist, or any modern one, ever adopted such a technique. Can we seriously believe that Sophocles was prepared to risk a complete misunderstanding of his play by his contemporaries and by posterity, or that he was such an incompetent playwright that, if he wanted to portray an Oedipus conscious of his guilt throughout the play, he was incapable of doing so?

Mr Vellacott devotes his final paragraphs to a sort of mopping-up operation, explaining away in the light of his theory difficulties which he finds in individual scenes. Most of the difficulties he feels seem to me to fall away if the view I have suggested above is accepted; in any case, his explanations are only tenable if his theory as a whole is regarded as proved. I hope I have offered sufficient grounds for rejecting that interpretation as a whole; but as he has placed considerable emphasis on the banquet incident, I think it is necessary to say something about it. Mr Vellacott believes that it was an innovation of Sophocles to make Oedipus go to Delphi for the

specific purpose of finding out about his parentage. It may very well be that this reason was not in earlier treatments of the myth, and was invented by Sophocles; I do not think it matters. Sophocles had to give a reason for the visit, and the reason he gives is entirely plausible. More important, Mr Vellacott has difficulty in accepting the general assumption 'that the horror of the new prophecy drove clean out of Oedipus' mind this question about his parentage which he had come to ask'. How far this difficulty is shared by others I do not know; if it is a serious one, I think it is possible to suggest another way of getting round it which does not do violence to the words of the play. I suggest tentatively that Oedipus did not worry further about the question of his parentage because he was satisfied that the taunt of the drunken banqueter was unfounded; he was convinced that he was in fact the son of Polybus and Merope. When the drunken man cast doubts on his parentage, Oedipus questioned his supposed parents, and was satisfied by their angry assurance: 'so on their part I had comfort' (784). Why then did he go to Delphi? Not, I suggest, because Oedipus himself still had serious doubts, but because the rumour was spreading in Corinth (786), and Oedipus wanted the authority of the Delphic oracle to quash it. That he had no doubts is, I think, confirmed by his action after hearing the response. He is quite sure that Polybus and Merope are his parents; the oracles had neither confirmed nor denied this, merely warned him that he is fated to kill the one and marry the other. He determines to shun Corinth, because he still believes that that is where his father and mother are to be found. There is no suggestion that he does not believe he is the son of Polybus and Merope till the scene with the Corinthian messenger; to Jocasta he shows no sign of doubt, 'My father was Polybus of Corinth, my mother the Dorian Merope' (774-5)—not 'I thought my father was Polybus'; and when he hears of the death of Polybus he still fears that the second part of the oracle may come true: Merope is still alive, and 'Surely I must needs fear my mother's bed?' (976). These lines alone are sufficient to dispose of the whole foundation of Mr Vellacott's argument; if we do not accept their plain meaning we can take any line in the play and say that it means the exact opposite of what it says.

There are other points of detail which could, I believe, be refuted; but it is not necessary to do so here. On a play as subtle as the *Oedipus* there can be no final judgement; but at least the view of it which I have offered has, I believe, the merit of sticking to the words of the play and presenting an Oedipus who has sinned through his reliance on human reason, has been brought to a realisation of his sin, and faces the expiation of it; a play, in short, such as Mr Vellacott wants, which 'gives an honourable role both to the justice of the gods and to the heroism of man'.

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY FRENCH RATIONALISM AND THE ETHICAL REVOLUTION

by P. ROYLE

ONE OF THE things which distinguish modern Western man from his medieval forbears is his view of the relation between truth and goodness: this is the almost exact antithesis of the medieval conception. In discussing these views, I shall not concern myself with their philosophical value, all the more since they are often not explicitly formulated and consciously held, but implied by an attitude of mind: I shall, however, concern myself with their human implications.

The French eighteenth century is generally regarded as an age of rationalism. In fact, it was an age of two competing rationalisms: the one the potentially arid, other-worldly rationalism of the Church, and the other the humanist, scientific, this-worldly rationalism of the *philosophes*; and in the clerical camp there was a further split between the scholastics and the disciples of Descartes. The rationalism of the Church was based on deduction from allegedly self-evident first principles; that of the *philosophes* on induction from scientifically established facts.

The eighteenth century was also an age which was intensely preoccupied with the problem of evil and suffering and how to reconcile them with the existence of an infinitely good, omnipotent God; and some of the answers this question evoked were shallow in the extreme, while others represented an advance, if not on the traditional Christian explanations, then at least on the time-honoured Christian attitude in this matter. Christianity has, of course, always recognized the problem, has always admitted that individual men are not, in this world at least, always treated according to their deserts. Its explanation of this state of affairs is enshrined in the doctrine of the Fall and original sin; according to which we are all somehow involved in the sin of Adam, and have therefore no right to complain when things go badly, but should thank God for having been merciful enough to grant us moments of happiness as well as the misery we merit. The Christian explanation is not, however, the only one religion has advanced; and the eighteenth century opens in Western Europe with the Huguenot Pierre Bayle having just expounded in his *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1697),

the view that the Manichean hypothesis, however absurd and contradictory it may be, 'explain(s) experience a hundred times better than the orthodox do, with the so just, so necessary, so uniquely true supposition of a first principle which is infinitely good and almighty'. Briefly, the Manichean explanation is this: that there is not one God, but two, one of whom is good and the other evil, a God of Light and a God of Darkness, and that they are engaged in eternal struggle (in Christian theology the Devil is not co-eternal with God, but was created—as an angel—by Him, and can function only with God's permission). This view is represented in Voltaire's *Candide* by Martin.

> 'You must be possessed of the devil,' said Candide.
>
> 'He meddles so much with the affairs of this world,' replied Martin, 'that he may be living inside me, as well as everywhere else. But I confess that when I survey this globe, or rather this globule, I am forced to the conclusion that God has abandoned it to some mischievous power, though I make an exception of Eldorado, of course. I have scarcely seen a town which does not seek the ruin of a neighbouring town, nor a family that does not wish to exterminate some other family. You will find that the weak always detest the strong and cringe before them and that the strong treat them like so many sheep to be sold for their meat and wool. A million regimental assassins surge from one end of Europe to the other, earning their living by committing murder and brigandage in strictest discipline, because they have no more honest livelihood; and in those towns which seem to enjoy the blessings of peace and where the arts flourish, men suffer more from envy, cares, and anxiety than a besieged town suffers from the scourges of war, for secret vexations are much more cruel than public miseries. In short, I have seen and experienced so much, that I am forced to believe that man's origin is evil.'[1]

Martin, it must be confessed, is a somewhat heretical representative of Manicheism, being far readier to discern the hand of the evil God in everything than to allow for the possible effectiveness, in a given situation, of the efforts of the good God to make life tolerable. He seems to be an almost total pessimist.

Bayle's views on the practical superiority of the Manichean solution of the problem of evil were challenged in 1710 by Leibnitz in his *Essais de Théodicée* (written in French). In this work Leibnitz put forward the view that, although there are many evils which cannot be satisfactorily explained as good in disguise, or as contributing to the greater good, nevertheless this world is, because God is infinitely good, the best of all *possible* worlds. In other words, there are some things which even God, omnipotent though

[1] All quotations from *Candide* are taken from the Penguin translation by John Butt.

He is, is unable to do. He cannot, for example, make 2×2 equal anything other than 4: God Himself is subject to the laws of reason. At the moment of creation, therefore, He had a choice between possible worlds, and chose to create the best, or, if one prefers, the least bad. Being omniscient, He foresaw the Fall and all the evil consequences which would flow from it, but He foresaw also the even worse state of affairs which would prevail in any other world He chose to create (for example, one in which man would not be free and therefore free to sin). Leibnitz's philosophy of evil springs, then, from his desire to justify, in the only way which seemed to him open to philosophy, the traditional Christian explanation of the phenomenon.

There were, however, other forms of optimism current in the eighteenth century: and one of them was the optimism of the conservative this-worldly rationalists, of the scientists: and let it be said immediately that their explanation of the phenomenon of evil was infinitely more shallow, from a human point of view, than those put forward by the other-worldly rationalists. It consisted simply in denying the reality of evil, which, it was claimed, would be seen to be good if only we were in a position to see individual phenomena in relation to the great whole of which they are a necessary part (and, it was implied, we *would* one day be in such a position owing to the inevitable advance of science, which every day was discerning new laws where before there had seemed to be only chaos). This view, although scientific in origin and inspiration, was also advanced in the name of religion: it was the view of the Deists. And because England was the home of the new science, the country of Newton, and because in England science and religion were not at each other's throats, it became more specifically the view of the *English* Deists, and was not infrequently associated with otherwise orthodox Christian belief. This is how Pope puts the case in the First Epistle of his *Essay on Man:*

> Cease then, nor order imperfection name:
> Our proper bliss depends on what we blame.
> Know thy own point: this kind, this due degree
> Of blindness, weakness, Heav'n bestows on thee.
> Submit.—In this or any other sphere,
> Secure to be as blest as thou canst bear:
> Safe in the hand of one disposing power,
> Or in the natal, or the mortal hour.
> All nature is but art, unknown to thee;
> All chance, direction, which thou canst not see;
> All discord, harmony not understood;
> All partial evil, universal good;
> And, spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,
> One truth is clear, Whatever is, is right.

Here we see how science, nowadays thought of rather as providing a means of *improving* man's condition, as an instrument of change, could be harnessed to the ends of a complacent middle class who

asked nothing better than that things should stay as they were. This is the attitude of 'cosmic Toryism', and it combines the optimism of faith in man's rational powers and capacity for scientific progress, for progress in 'understanding', interpreting the universe (as opposed to changing it), with the optimism of political self-satisfaction.

As I have said, this is a shallow view of reality. But it is not, generally speaking, the view of the French rationalists, not even of those among them, like Voltaire, who otherwise incline to Deism (although Voltaire may have entertained it for a time). It did, however, gain a certain vogue in some circles towards the middle of the century, when respect for English scientific achievements and political *nous*, incessantly lauded by the Anglomaniacs, was followed by an exploration of English philosophy and literature; and it was then, in 1758, three years after the terrible Lisbon earthquake, that Voltaire wrote *Candide*, which I propose to use in illustration of my thesis.[2]

Candide or *Optimism* is a *conte philosophique*. Now, a *conte philosophique* is the *reductio ad absurdum* of, an attempt to bring into disrepute, a philosophy of which one disapproves; but it is not, of course, itself abstract philosophy. It is, therefore, a vindication of the human at the expense of the abstract. But if it is not philosophy, neither is it a novel. Whereas in the novel we expect verisimilitude, in the *conte philosophique* fantasy is an indispensable ingredient. But it must not, of course, degenerate into *pure* fantasy: it is not a fairy-tale. It must, therefore, strike a balance between the fantastic and the credible. In the novel, too, we expect our emotions to be deeply engaged; but the *conte philosophique* must never engage our emotions too deeply: we must always remain amused observers, lucidly alive to the more philosophical implications of what is going on; there must be no real self-identification with any of the characters. But because the *conte philosophique* must, if it is to be art, vindicate the human at the expense of the abstract, it must, at its highest, create *almost* real characters and not merely recognizable ones, characters who, if we cannot identify ourselves with them, at least awaken our sympathetic interest. The author of this sort of *conte* is therefore walking a tight-rope: he must not be too human, neither must he be abstract. (The point of these remarks will, I hope, become clear later.)

Now, in *Candide* it is the philosophy of Leibnitz of which Voltaire is concerned to demonstrate the absurdity; and Pangloss is its representative.

> Pangloss taught metaphysico-theologo-cosmolo-nigology. He proved incontestably that there is no effect without a cause, and that in this best of all possible worlds, his lordship's country seat was the most beautiful of mansions and her ladyship the best of all possible ladyships.

[2] For a concise discussion of the impact of philosophies of optimism on the eighteenth-century French reading public, see *Voltaire: Candide*, by W. H. Barber, in the Studies in French Literature series.

> 'It is proved,' he used to say, 'that things cannot be other than they are, for since everything was made for a purpose, it follows that everything is made for the best purpose. Observe: our noses were made to carry spectacles, so we have spectacles. Legs were clearly intended for breeches, and we wear them. Stones were meant for carving and for building houses, and that is why my lord has a most beautiful house; for the greatest baron in Westphalia ought to have the noblest residence. And since pigs were made to be eaten, we eat pork all the year round. It follows that those who maintain that all is right talk nonsense; they ought to say that all is for the best.'

It will be noticed that Pangloss is a very *poor* representative of Leibnitz's philosophy. For him 'all is for the best' is a stronger expression of optimism than 'all is right', of which he presumably conceives it to be the superlative; whereas, as we have seen, in Leibnitz's formulation it is the word 'possible' which must be made to bear the stress (*this* world is not the best *of all possible worlds*: it is the best of all *possible* worlds). In fact, in Pangloss, despite the ill-understood Leibnitzian terminology in which his pronouncements are couched, and despite the fact that Voltaire was himself a Deist, it is rather the smug optimism of English Deism, much discussed around this time, that is being attacked. It is also, as a matter of fact, Leibnitzianism as it was commonly understood from the writings of Leibnitz's disciple Wolff, the two doctrines having been confused in the public mind. And it is also—and this is not commonly appreciated—Christianity, and, in particular, Catholicism. For if Catholicism makes allowance for evil in its cosmology, in its practical approach to the manifest evils of the century it was not a whit less reactionary—in fact it was more so—than English Deism. Original sin had commonly been degraded into the Jesuitical notion that social, moral and political abuses were inevitable, and that it was pride, smacking of heresy, to try to make the world a better place than it was. Pangloss, dunderhead though he may be in other respects, understands very well the affinity between *his* philosophy and that of the Holy Inquisition.

> A little man in black, an officer of the Inquisition, who was sitting beside Pangloss, turned to him and politely said:
>
> 'It appears, Sir, that you do not believe in original sin; for if all is for the best, there can be no such thing as the fall of Man and eternal punishment.'
>
> 'I must humbly beg your Excellency's pardon,' replied Pangloss, still more politely, 'but I must point out that the fall of Man and eternal punishment enter, of Necessity, into the scheme of the best of all possible worlds.'
>
> 'Then you don't believe in Free Will, Sir?' said the officer.
>
> 'Your Excellency must excuse me,' said Pangloss; 'Free Will is consistent with Absolute Necessity, for it was ordained

that we should be free. For the Will that is Determined . . .' In attacking Leibnitzianism, Voltaire is in fact denouncing all optimistic doctrines which would deny us the hope of improving our lot, of progressing morally and politically as well as scientifically; and the chief of these doctrines, as far as he was concerned, was Catholicism. In other words, he is criticizing *static* optimism in the name of *dynamic* optimism, *other*-worldly optimism in the name of *this*-worldly optimism, rationalism (in the strict philosophical sense) in the name of humanism.

Candide is, in fact, the story of the conversion of a young man from other-worldly rationalism to this-worldly rationalism, in other words, from abstract scholasticism to humanism. It opens with his naïve acceptance of the philosophy of Pangloss and ends, after he has undergone a whole series of ordeals in widely scattered parts of the world, with his wise recognition that a man's abstract, theological beliefs are completely irrelevant in every possible way, and that the belief that they *are* relevant is liable to lead to misery. *Cultivons notre jardin*—this is Candide's philosophy at the end of the story; and it is this philosophy, a philosophy of work, or meaningful human activity, exemplified so admirably in many ways in Voltaire's own life, which the author, in the interests of human happiness, would have us embrace. In Candide, the hero of the *conte*, it is tempting to see a symbol of eighteenth-century man, as he was seen by the *philosophes*. He begins his travels a good-hearted but naïve adolescent, which was the somewhat supercilious way in which the *philosophes* viewed most of their Catholic contemporaries, and ends a mature man whose relation to his erstwhile mentor, for whose philosophy he now has no time at all, is strongly reminiscent of Voltaire's own relations with those clerics whom he so charitably offered the hospitality of his country estate (to which he retired in 1758).

Now, the question inevitably arises: why should 'optimism' (or pessimism) have been such an issue? After all, the problems raised by evil are perennial; and the eighteenth century, although it had its share of disasters, including some of the effects of the rise of capitalism, was not vastly more unfortunate than, say, the age of the Black Death; and neither, for that matter, was it vastly more *fortunate* than other ages. The answer I propose to give to this question may seem somewhat abstract. (Let me hasten to say, however, that it will not be abstract in the way scholasticism may be said to be abstract.) But however much the contrary may sometimes appear to be true, abstract philosophy is by no means divorced from reality: and, at its highest, it represents the refined (some might say rarefied) conceptualization of the profoundest movements of the spirit. Although, therefore, what I am about to say may appear abstract, I must make it clear that it purports to be a description of a very real phenomenon.

Let us take the proposition: 'God is good'. Now, what does this mean? If we define good in terms of the will of God, as medieval

man was apt to (some Christians would still so define it), and make 'This man is good' equivalent to 'This man does what God wills', then to say that *God* is good is simply to say that God does what God wills. In other words, 'God is good' becomes either the most meaningless of tautologies or another way of saying 'God is omnipotent'. If 'God is good' is to be a synthetic proposition (I should say: a *sort* of synthetic proposition), in other words, if it is to be anything more than a pious noise, then 'good' will have to be defined in some other way, without any reference to God's will. Now, 'God is good', in the mouth of a medieval, was by no means *always* a tautology. On the contrary, its status was so problematical that, if one had been alive at the time and had been aware of the distinction between analytic and synthetic propositions, one would have been often at a loss to say which it purported to be. In moments of joy 'God is good' would be a synthetic proposition, in which 'is good' would mean 'does what suits me', or 'does not prevent me from doing what suits me', or something of that nature. In moments of distress, on the other hand, it would immediately become analytic or equivocal: *'I* don't like it, but it is God's will, and God is good, so it must be good'. This proposition had a status, in fact, like that of the Marxist's 'The real cause is economic', where 'economic' means what we all mean by 'economic' when the real cause *is* economic, and where, when the real cause is *not* economic, the word 'economic' is redefined to be so all-embracing that, as with 'sexual' in Freudianism, it is emptied of its content, and sentences in which it appears become meaningless. Let me illustrate what I am talking about from *Candide.* Candide, after escaping from the Bulgar army, has made his way to Holland.

> At last he approached a man who had been addressing a big audience for a whole hour on the subject of charity. The orator peered at him, and said:
>
> 'What is your business here? Do you support the Good Old Cause?'
>
> 'There is no effect without a cause,' replied Candide modestly. 'All things are necessarily connected and arranged for the best. It was my fate to be driven from Lady Cunégonde's presence and made to run the gauntlet, and now I have to beg my bread until I can earn it. Things could not have happened otherwise.'
>
> 'Do you believe that the Pope is Antichrist, my friend?' said the minister.
>
> 'I have never heard anyone say so,' replied Candide; 'but whether he is or he isn't, I want some food.'
>
> 'You don't deserve to eat,' said the other. 'Be off with you, you villain, you wretch! Don't come near me again or you'll suffer for it.'
>
> The minister's wife looked out of the window at that moment, and seeing a man who was not sure that the Pope

> was Antichrist, emptied over his head a pot full of . . ., which shows to what lengths ladies are driven by religious zeal.
>
> A man who had never been christened, a worthy Anabaptist called James, had seen the cruel and humiliating treatment of his brother man, a creature without wings but with two legs and a soul; he brought him home and washed him, gave him some bread and beer and a couple of florins, and even offered to apprentice him to his business of manufacturing those Persian silks that are made in Holland. Candide almost fell at his feet.
>
> 'My tutor, Pangloss, was quite right,' he exclaimed, 'when he told me that all is for the best in this world of ours, for your generosity moves me much more than the harshness of that gentleman in the black gown and his wife.'

As will be seen, Candide's *first* expression of Panglossian optimism, if we translate it, as I think it is legitimate to, into 'God is good', would make of that proposition a tautology, a tautology, moreover, liable to breed a spirit of passive acquiescence in its expounder. In his *second* expression of optimism, however, 'God is good' is a synthetic proposition. In the words: 'your generosity moves me much more than the harshness of that gentleman in the black gown and his wife' we see, however, the risk inherent, from a theistic point of view, in making 'God is good' a synthetic proposition, and we may already see a hint of developments to come. For what makes a synthetic proposition meaningful is the fact that it is not impossible, on *a priori* grounds, for it to be proved wrong. As long as 'good' is defined in terms of the will of God, the proposition 'God is good', although empty of content, cannot be proved false. But if once it is defined in purely human terms, 'God is good' becomes a synthetic proposition, and therefore admits of the possibility of disproof. If, in other words, James's generosity had *not* moved Candide more than the harshness of the gentleman in the black gown and his wife, if, on the contrary, he had been more appalled by the harshness of the latter than moved by the generosity of the former, either the proposition 'God is good' (i.e. 'all is for the best') would have been disproved for him, or else it would have reverted to its status as a tautology.

We are now in a position, I think, to see why optimism versus pessimism had become such a crucial issue in eighteenth-century France. For the first time in the history of Christian Europe God was being seriously asked, by large numbers of intelligent people, to justify Himself. But God *can* be asked to justify Himself only if we have already adopted a this-worldly, humanist morality; and this is what had happened, consciously or unconsciously, in the case of thousands of Europeans, Christians included.

Why had this occurred? The answer is simple. If you define 'good' in terms of the will of God, it then becomes imperative to ascertain what the will of God is. The Middle Ages had no problem: the will of God was interpreted for them by the Church, and preached

at them from the pulpit. But there had been a Renaissance and a Reformation since then, the astronomy of the Church had been disproved by Galileo, giving rise to fears of a *Dieu trompeur*, a *mauvais génie*, who took pleasure in leading His creatures to believe that the sun went round the earth when the reverse was true; and men were becoming increasingly sickened by religious wars and persecution. What more natural, then, than that they should be inclined to question the Truth represented by the Church? It may be noted here that what precipitates Candide's final conversion to humanism is a loss of faith in Pangloss himself as the interpreter of reality. And what could be more Catholic than Pangloss's attitude when he says:

> I still hold my original views, . . . for I am still a philosopher. It would not be proper for me to recant, especially as Leibnitz cannot be wrong; and besides, the *pre-established harmony*, together with the *plenum* and the *materia subtilis*, is the most beautiful thing in the world?

But if the Church may be questioned, there is still the divine revelation of the Bible; and this, of course, was more or less the Protestant position. But ultimately there is no escape. For if the Church's interpretation of the Bible is not sacrosanct, who *is* to interpret it? The answer can only be: I, the conscience of the individual seeker; and we know where that is likely to lead. Nevertheless, Protestantism does represent a sort of half-way house between Catholicism and humanism: it shared with humanism the belief that men must discover the truth for themselves, in the light of their own consciences, and with Catholicism the belief in the need for grace before that truth could be discovered; and it is undoubtedly more than coincidence that in England, a predominantly Protestant country, the philosophical temperature should have been so much lower.

But if *revelation* is questioned, possibly on the grounds that so many peoples claim to have had their own special one, possibly on account of its inner contradictions and vagueness, how are we to know the will of God, i.e. the nature of the good? The answer can only be: man himself is the measure of the good. If we will only rid ourselves of superstition and examine things in the light of pure reason, we shall soon be able to distinguish good from bad. This is the great reversal which has taken place in our conceptions of the relations between truth and goodness: modern man *knows* what is good, knows also the way to truth, but is unsure of his ability to arrive at it; medieval man *knew* what was true, knew also the way to goodness and virtue, but was doubtful of his capacity to attain them. Whereas medieval man, thinking, in his authoritarian way, of virtue in terms of obedience, and sin in terms of disobedience, attempted to found 'ought' on 'is', axiology on ontology, modern man is inclined rather to reverse the process and base 'is' on 'ought', and for him the quest for truth is necessary in the interests of the good. It is a striking fact that, whereas the eighteenth century began on the continent of Europe with the predominance of

Cartesianism, with its ontological proof of the existence of God, it ended with Kant refuting all the traditional proofs of God's existence and demonstrating the impossibility of metaphysics at the same time as he expounded his categorical imperative and *moral* proof of the existence of God (attempting, in other words, to found 'is' on 'ought'). This metamorphosis is all, of course, a part of the revolt against authoritarianism; and no doubt what made it psychologically possible was the belief that it was in accord with the wishes of God, as men had now come to conceive of Him; no longer, that is, as a kind of absolute monarch of the universe, distributing His grace with the arbitrariness of kingly favours, and intent on putting down sedition wherever it reared its head, but rather as a benevolent despot who would welcome rational discussion, even if it led to disbelief in Himself. (In Goethe's *Faust*, so full of the spirit of the eighteenth century, although it was not completed till well into the nineteenth, God looks with favour on Faust's conversion from the intellectual arrogance, so typical of theology, of striving after the absolute, to the view, symbolized by his ability to look at the sun, and his perception, in a waterfall, as he turns his gaze from it, of its refracted rays, that it is in the relative that we have our being. And in *Zadig*, another of Voltaire's *contes*, the angel Jesrad reveals himself to the hero on account of his moral pre-eminence, which springs precisely from his humanist refusal to indulge in futile and dangerous speculation on metaphysical problems.)

Let me now quote from Voltaire's description of Eldorado, the Utopia that Candide and his servant Cacambo come upon by chance.

> . . . At last Candide, whose taste for metaphysics was insatiable, told Cacambo to ask whether any religion was practised in the country.
>
> The old man blushed slightly. 'Religion!' he exclaimed. 'Why, of course there's a religion. Do you suppose we are lost to all sense of gratitude?'
>
> Cacambo humbly asked him what the religion of Eldorado was. The old man blushed once more.
>
> 'Can there be two religions, then?' said he. 'I have always believed that we hold the religion of all mankind. We worship God from morning till night.'
>
> 'Do you worship only one God?' asked Cacambo, interpreting Candide's doubts.
>
> 'Of course we do,' said the old man. 'There is only one God, not two, three, or four. What odd questions you foreigners ask!'
>
> Candide was indefatigable in plying the good old man with questions. He wanted to know how prayers were offered to God in Eldorado.
>
> 'We never pray,' said this good and venerable man; 'we have nothing to ask of God, since He has given us everything we need. But we thank Him unceasingly.'

> Candide was curious to see some of their priests, and told Cacambo to ask where they could be found.
>
> The old man smiled. 'My friends,' said he, 'we are all priests; the King and the heads of each family perform solemn hymns of thanksgiving every morning, with an orchestra of five or six thousand musicians to accompany them.'
>
> 'Do you mean to say you have no monks teaching and disputing, governing and intriguing, and having people burned if they don't subscribe to their opinions?'
>
> 'We should be stupid if we had,' said the old man; 'we are all of the same opinion here, and we don't know what you mean by monks.'
>
> Candide was delighted with all he heard, and said to himself: 'This is quite different from Westphalia and the Baron's mansion: if our friend Pangloss had seen Eldorado, he would not have kept on saying that Castle Thunder-ten-tronckh was the loveliest house on earth; it shows that people ought to travel.'

No priests, then, in the perfect society.

But this reversal in our conception of the relation between truth and goodness can be shown to go much further. In the Middle Ages truth, it was believed, was in the possession of the Church, whose individual members could graduate to a more perfect understanding of it, even perhaps to a rapturous communion with God, the very source of truth, through the good life, i.e. the *vita contemplativa*, the life of the ascetic. This is what Thomas à Kempis, who represents the medieval spirit at its profoundest, has to say in his *Imitation of Christ*:[3]

> The more a man is at one within himself, and becometh single in heart, so much the more and higher things doth he without labour understand; for that he receiveth the light of the understanding from above. A pure, sincere, and stable spirit is not distracted in a multitude of works; for that it worketh all to the honour of God, and inwardly striveth to be at rest from all self-seeking. Who hindereth and troubleth thee more than the unmortified affections of thine own heart?

In the eighteenth century, however, truth was not possessed but sought. And, as the quest for virtue had enabled the individual medieval man to acquire truth (truth which, collectively, man already possessed), so, conversely, according to the *philosophes*, the quest for truth, by cooling the passions, dispelling fanaticism and

[3] The fact that, as Gilson points out in *Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages*, this book represents only one aspect, viz. the fideistic as opposed to the rationalistic aspect of medieval religious thought, does not, it seems to me, prevent it from expressing admirably the vision which underlay both fideism and rationalism; and it certainly expresses the attitude of ordinary, unphilosophical medievals.

intolerance, and demanding the substitution, in resolving differences, of rational persuasion and argument for war and violence, would help to make men good (according to Rousseau in his *Emile* to *keep* men good). (This idea could be expressed by some superficial modern psychological or sociological determinists in this way: find the psychological or sociological *causes* of crime, *understand* it, and it will disappear.) Let me quote once again from Voltaire's description of Eldorado.

> . . . Candide asked to see the Law Courts and the Court of Appeal, but was told that there were none; court cases, in fact, were unknown. He enquired whether there were any prisons, and his guide answered No. What surprised and delighted him most of all was the Palace of Science, where he saw a gallery two thousand feet long filled with mathematical and scientific instruments.

Voltaire is not, however, an out-and-out modern in this respect. His dictum that if God did not exist, He would have to be invented, his belief, in other words, in the need for religion *whether it be true or not* could be seen as standing half-way between medievalism and modernism. (Even the atheist d'Holbach had reservations about the wisdom of spreading his philosophy among the uneducated.)

Again, just as the good life, on account of original sin, had been conceived by the medievals as demanding an initial effort to free oneself from vice, so eighteenth-century rationalism had first to attack religion as a source of error; for whereas evil living, for the medievals, had excluded one from the understanding of higher things, so, conversely, superstitious error came to be represented as a prime source of evil (as we have seen in the account given by Voltaire of the perfect society). And in the same way as the pursuit of goodness had been a collective endeavour (the monk had sacrificed himself on behalf of everyone), so the quest for truth came to be seen as a corporate effort (science has no fatherland: it is 'man' who is conquering space). This effort would require humility, which is fast becoming an intellectual rather than a moral virtue, many people nowadays preferring the ideal of honesty, integrity, even allied to pride where this seems justified, to that of moral humility, which seems often too like the honesty of the masochist, and which, being ultimately a self-defeating aim, is likely to lead to pharisaism.

Because goodness was something to be aimed at, a goal, not a possession, moral lapses were not considered as important in the Middle Ages as heresy; whereas, to the eighteenth century and to us, dissent, the prerequisite of scientific progress, is not as bad as immorality (such as racialism and the will to enslave).

And, paradoxically, because sin somehow entered into the divine scheme of things (perhaps evil temptation, to which men, being fallen creatures, would inevitably sometimes succumb, was necessary to the attainment of virtue), because sin was necessary, it had to be tolerated; and yet it was a source of heresy, which could not be

tolerated. Whereas for the eighteenth century the paradox must be inverted: because truth is important and dissent is necessary for its attainment, untruth must be tolerated; but error is a source of evil, which cannot be tolerated. This is what Félicité de La Mennais, in his *Essai sur l'indifférence en matière de religion* (1817), has to say:

> To reduce the question to its simplest form, there are only three hypotheses possible: all religions are true; all religions are false; or there is only one true religion.
>
> The hypothesis that all religions are true is obviously absurd. Contradictory dogmas, one thing and its opposite, cannot be true simultaneously. That is sheer common sense: 'Amongst so many diverse religions which are mutally exclusive, each anathematizing the other, only one can be the true one, if indeed there *is* a true one,' says Rousseau.
>
> The hypothesis that all religions are false overthrows the very foundation of the system constructed by the author of *Emile*. For, in his system, religion is necessary to society and to all the members of society. For—I quote—'it is everyone's duty to follow and to love the religion of his country'. Now, error, which, as Rousseau, Chubb, and Diderot admit, is by its very nature harmful, and which cannot but deprave every reasonable, logical being, is certainly not necessary either to man or society. To love what is false and, by that very fact, pernicious, cannot be anybody's duty. Therefore, if all religions are false religion, far from being obliged to love and follow any one of them, they should all be despised, hated, and banned as the greatest scourge that could be inflicted on humanity. Who indeed would dare make a reasonable being feel obliged to love error which cannot but deprave him? And what would become of the other principle that the obligations of morality are the only essential ones? The hypothesis that I am discussing here is therefore incompatible with Rousseau's system. To accept the one is obviously to reject the other.

It happens to be Rousseau that La Mennais is here discussing; but, as far as the general principle is concerned, it could be practically any of the *philosophes*. While he here fails to recognize that there is a similar paradox (contradiction, he would have to say) at the heart of the Christian attitude (he was later to renounce the priesthood and fall foul of the Church), what he says of the modern attitude is certainly not devoid of truth. (Of course, the very word 'tolerate' involves something of a paradox: for it means both to *reject* the right to exist and to *accept* the right to exist.)

I have said enough, I think, to absolve the this-worldly French rationalists from the charge of shallowness which is sometimes levelled against them. In fact, in their passionate desire to stamp out evil they were streets ahead of the Church. They hated war, intolerance, persecution, and political repression with a loathing

born of a genuine feeling of the brotherhood of man, and of the recognition that evil was evil, and should be eradicated.

Let me quote what Voltaire has to say on the subject of slavery.

> As they were approaching the town, they noticed a negro lying full length at the side of the road and wearing nothing but a pair of blue canvas drawers. The poor fellow had no left leg and no right hand. Candide addressed him in Dutch:
>
> 'What are you doing here, my friend?' he asked. 'And what a dreadful state you are in!'
>
> 'I am waiting for my master, Mr Vanderdendur, who owns the famous sugar-works,' replied the negro.
>
> 'Did Mr Vanderdendur treat you like this?' asked Candide.
>
> 'Yes, Sir,' said the negro, 'it's the custom. For clothing, we are given a pair of canvas drawers twice a year. Those of us who work in the factories and happen to catch a finger in the grindstone have a hand chopped off; if we try to escape, they cut off one leg. Both accidents happened to me. That's the price of your eating sugar in Europe. My mother sold me on the coast of Guiana for fifty Spanish shillings. When she parted with me, she said: "Always honour and adore your fetishes, my dear boy, and they will make you happy; you have the honour of being a slave for milords the white men, and that is how you will make your parents' fortune." I don't know whether I made their fortune,' he continued, with a shake of his head, 'but they certainly did not make mine. Dogs, monkeys, and parrots are much less miserable than we are. The Dutch fetishes, who converted me, tell me every Sunday that we are all children of Adam, black and white alike. I am no genealogist; but if these preachers speak the truth, we must all be cousins. Now, you will surely agree that relations could not be treated more horribly.'
>
> 'Oh, Pangloss!' cried Candide. 'A scandal like this never occurred to you! But it's the truth, and I shall have to renounce that optimism of yours in the end.'
>
> 'What is optimism?' asked Cacambo.
>
> 'It's the passion for maintaining that all is right when all goes wrong with us,' replied Candide, weeping as he looked at the negro. And with tears in his eyes, he pursued his way to Surinam.

And this is his description of war:

> Those who have never seen two well-trained armies drawn up for battle, can have no idea of the beauty and brilliance of the display. Bugles, fifes, oboes, drums, and salvoes of artillery produced such a harmony as Hell itself could not rival. The opening barrage destroyed about six thousand men on each side. Rifle-fire which followed rid this best of worlds of about nine or ten thousand villains who infested

its surface. Finally, the bayonet provided 'sufficient reason' for the death of several thousand more. The total casualties amounted to about thirty thousand. Candide trembled like a philosopher, and hid himself as best he could during this heroic butchery.

When all was over and the rival kings were celebrating their victory with Te Deums in their respective camps, Candide decided to find somewhere else to pursue his reasoning into cause and effect. He picked his way over piles of dead and dying, and reached a neighbouring village on the Abar side of the border. It was now no more than a smoking ruin, for the Bulgars had burned it to the ground in accordance with the terms of international law. Old men, crippled with wounds, watched helplessly the death-throes of their butchered women-folk, who still clasped their children to their bloodstained breasts. Girls who had satisfied the appetites of several heroes lay disembowelled in their last agonies. Others, whose bodies were badly scorched, begged to be put out of their misery. Whichever way he looked, the ground was strewn with the legs, arms, and brains of dead villagers.

Candide made off as quickly as he could to another village. This was in Bulgar territory, and had been treated in the same way by Abar heroes. Candide walked through the ruins over heaps of writhing bodies and at last left the theatre of war behind him.

Surely there is no shallowness here.

The fact is that whereas modern man is tolerant of evil deeds on the part of the individual (provided he holds the right views) but not on the part of the state (whose duty it is to take cognisance of 'natural' individual shortcomings and therefore uphold democratic institutions lest too much power should corrupt), medieval man was on the whole more tolerant of evil in the state than in the individual (in relation to whom, as we have seen, he was not intolerant). In fact, an evil monarch would often be seen by the medievals as a sign that God, the bestower of all authority, had seen fit to punish them for their wickedness. And whereas the medievals had performed their works of mercy for essentially *spiritual* reasons (because God wished it), the eighteenth-century *philosophes* advocated a *social* approach.

The disturbing fact remains, however, that the French eighteenth century, although not the age of cold reason it is sometimes made out to be, is not an age rich in literature. The reason, I think, is this: whereas, existentially speaking, the other-worldly rationalism was a rationalism by virtue of its hostility to the passions, the this-worldly rationalism of the eighteenth century was a rationalism in its hostility to the imagination. For imagination was one of the *puissances trompeuses*, causing men to believe in miracles and hence enslaving them. (It will be appreciated that Coleridge's distinction

between 'imagination' and 'fancy' had not been elaborated.) And, alas, poetry was sometimes held to be the language of children, and consequently inferior to prose. Furthermore, passion, although theoretically condemned by religion, had also become suspect to the *philosophes*. And it could not have been otherwise. They had fought superstition with its own weapon, reason, and were fast carrying the day. Should they have followed it, then, when it took the plunge into irrationalism (which has become such a prominent feature of religion today)? This would have been to defeat their own object, which was, among other things, to replace war and violence by rational discussion and the negotiated settlement of differences; and however passionately one may pursue these aims (and Voltaire's dictum *Ecrasons l'infâme* shows how intensely he felt on these matters), one must never give one's passion free rein or one has lost the battle. When the enemy, defeated in rational debate, decides to change his weapons and to shift his ground, the logic of one's own position makes it impossible to follow him: all one can hope to do is sweep him away on a gale of laughter. Nevertheless, just as it contained the seeds of the French Revolution, that passionate revolt against the *ancien régime* and all its works, the eighteenth century did have within it (witness Jean-Jacques Rousseau) the seeds of the romantic explosion of the imagination that was to follow (if truth is desirable, is not 'sincerity' also?). And it is highly appropriate that it should at least have seen the birth of the *conte philosophique*, that *genre* from which passion and imagination are certainly not absent, but in which they are kept firmly in check by a satiric intellect.

Three final remarks:

1. Whereas absolute humility, the goodness demanded by Christianity, is ultimately unattainable, so is the truth sought by science: all that can be seen in each case is the next step required. Just as an increase in goodness had led the medievals to a greater awareness of their moral inadequacy, so increase in knowledge now leads to an ever-growing awareness of the extent of our ignorance.
2. Whereas the medieval Church had forced its flock to accept 'truth', the modern state is trying more and more to force people to be good. (Whether this is good or bad depends on how it is done.)
3. Whereas the medieval quest for goodness led, ironically, not to truth but to the *necessity for dispelling error*, the modern search for truth has led not so much to virtue as to the *need* to make progress in morality commensurate with our potentially destructive scientific knowledge.

CUSTOMARY AND STATUTORY TENURES AND EMERGING LAND-PATTERNS IN THE BANTU AREAS OF SOUTH AFRICA

by B. M. JONES

BANTU CONCEPTS OF THE CUSTOMARY TENURES

Evidence indicates that, under traditional Bantu land tenures, accepted membership of a community entitles an individual to a share in the lands of the community and the natural resources of the land. Land is regarded as being for the use and benefit of the community, and individual property rights in land are not conceived. In theory, the chief, as representative of the tribe, holds all land, and in him is vested the power of allotting land to his subjects. In practice however this power is often effectively exercised by petty chiefs and headmen.

Accepted membership of a community carries with it the right to allocations of residential and arable land, the right to make use of grazing, water, firewood, game, forest produce, pot clay and other natural products of the land. Household heads may acquire only as much land as is necessary for the reasonable wants of that household. No one is expected to accumulate land beyond the point of effective domestic utilization, and agricultural production other than for subsistence requirements is a relatively new development which is often actively discouraged.

Although all rights to land and its natural resources vest in the community, in order that rights may be effectively utilized, certain rights, such as rights to reside and to cultivate, are temporarily allocated to members of the community to the exclusion of the community as a whole. Other rights, such as the rights to water, firewood, game and other natural products of the land, are never allocated. Products which result from individual effort, such as water from a well or fruit from a non-indigenous tree, do not fall within this class, and the individual responsible for the construction of the well, or the planting of the tree, enjoys exclusive rights.

Among the Bantu tribes of Southern Africa two distinct political and social units with fixed territorial limits may be distinguished, namely, the chiefdom and the ward. The chiefdom, under the administrative control of a chief, who may be subject to a paramount chief, contains several wards, each of which is controlled by a headman or sub-chief. The chief delegates certain administrative

functions to the ward headman, including the power to allocate land in the ward. Among many tribes a third political unit is distinguishable, namely, the kraal or village, under a village headman who has authority to allot land within the area assigned to the village.

These are the broad divisions, but further intermediate political units, such as the sub-ward, may sometimes be distinguished.

The ward is usually demarcated by well-defined natural features such as rivers, streams and hills. Within the ward exclusive allocations are made to family groups for the purposes of residence and cultivation, but over the remaining area of the ward communal rights operate. Within the family group, or within the kraal in those tribes where the kraal is the smallest political unit, allocations of land are made to the individual family units or households by the family head or the kraal headman. In turn, allocations are made to the various individual members of the family, so that all members of the community enjoy individualised rights in addition to communal rights.

A certain degree of flexibility characterizes individualized and communal rights. The exclusive use of arable holdings, for example, is seasonal. Once crops are reaped and removed from the fields individual claims fall into temporary abeyance, and the community may resume grazing and gathering rights until the start of the next planting season, when individualized rights once again are exercised. The situation may be compared to a tidal lagoon dotted with islets, the sea representing communal rights, and the islets, enclaves of individual rights. At the start of the planting season the individualized islets expand upon cultivation, and the ebb in the tide of communal rights uncovers large islands of exclusive individual usage. After harvest, the tide of communal rights flows back and engulfs the islands, reducing them once again to islets which represent individualized rights, now largely confined to residential sites.

In traditional Bantu agriculture, assuming a sufficiency of land, families or kraals are apt to cultivate the areas round the residential sites until all the surrounding land has been exhausted. When no more arable land is readily available nearby, a move is made to another area, preferably within the same ward. Thus the pattern followed is one of shifting subsistence agriculture. Abandoned fields may be cultivated at a later stage by other members of the community, but, in the event of their return, the original cultivators may press their preferential claims to use the abandoned fields. Shifts may take place freely within the ward, provided that sufficient land is available and the existing rights of fellow ward members are respected. Where land is plentiful these agricultural practices seldom call for exact demarcation of boundaries, because of the mobility of the holdings. However, in those areas where, owing to expansion, opposing interests approach each other, a definite boundary is drawn by mutual consent to provide for security and to avoid impending conflict.

Thus under the traditional system of agriculture there is mobility of holdings and flexibility of boundaries, but if for some reason mobility is curtailed, definite boundaries will emerge, and thus this pattern will tend to become crystallized for the sake of security of tenure.

Western and Bantu concepts of security of tenure differ radically. Security of tenure is conceived in Western thought as individual rights over a specific parcel of land, secured by a cadastral system. Traditional Bantu thought conceives security of tenure, not as rights to a specific parcel of land, but as the fundamental right of a member of the community to participate in a reasonable share of the land available to the community, and its natural resources.

Recognition of membership does not necessarily imply continuity of residence, since membership rights may be kept alive by relatives during absence from the community. For such an absentee membership to remain effective it is necessary that some meaningful contact between the individual and the community be retained. The individual must continue to participate in the affairs of the community, if only by correspondence, gifts, occasional visits or even by the payment of taxes to the tribal authorities.

Western thought conceives land as a negotiable and economic asset since it is the producer of agricultural produce which possesses an economic value and which acts as an incentive to increased production. Thus the Western concept of land is one of economic productivity which is foreign to traditional Bantu thought. Incentives to develop land agriculturally are lacking under the traditional tenures, since the object of all cultivation is the satisfaction of subsistence requirements only. Increase in the yield of the soil, owing to increased fertility brought about by progressive farming techniques, may result in a reduction of the area of arable land set aside for the satisfaction of subsistence requirements. Progressive agricultural methods are thus discouraged. It is for this reason that economists and agriculturalists favour individual tenure, since progressive Bantu farmers are protected against traditional custom under which increased productivity results in reduced holdings. Despite the protection afforded by the individual tenures, however, very powerful pressures can be brought to bear to discourage deviations from the traditional practices. One of the causes which contributed to the failure of the Glen Grey system of individual tenure was the congestion which resulted from the landless members of families squatting on individualized holdings. Although legally entitled to evict these squatters, such an act on the part of the land owner would have resulted in social ostracism.

Fundamentally the difference between western and Bantu concepts of security may thus be attributed to the differing concepts in relation to the role of land, and whereas, in the first case, the precise demarcation of the boundaries and the registration of rights is essential to ensure security, in the latter case, given a sufficiency of land, precise and permanent demarcation is anomalous in a

system of shifting cultivation. At any given time, actual cultivation and occupancy of an allotted holding is sufficient protection against infringement of an individual's rights, while generally speaking, the retention of membership of a community ensures his right to share in the land.

THE STATUTORY POSITION AND THE BANTU AREAS

It is an interesting fact that legislation in South Africa has never specifically recognised the traditional system of land tenure. In the British High Commission Territories of Bechuanaland, Swaziland and Basutoland, the British authorities adopted a policy of laissez-faire with respect to land matters, and the indigenous systems were allowed to operate in the Bantu areas with little or no restriction.

From the earliest days of European settlement in South Africa, when land at the Cape was granted to settlers and severe inroads were made into the lands of the Hottentot tribes, European administrations appear to have shown a marked disregard for the land rights of indigenous tribes. In general this may be attributed to two factors, namely, imperfect understanding of traditional Bantu land tenure and its ramifications, and the application of the legal principles of Roman-Dutch law to subject Bantu tribes.

It has been shown that under traditional tenures, individualized rights exist over relatively small areas of tribal territory, and communal rights over the remainder. However, under Western concepts, all land over which no individual rights exist is considered to belong to the State, which possesses exclusive individual rights over these areas. Although the Bantu consistently applied their customary system of land tenure, the Bantu areas were always considered, by administrations which existed before Union, as Crown land.

Prior to Union, similar patterns emerged in all four provinces with regard to land rights. Definite areas were set aside as reserves in which the allocation of land, which formerly had been carried out without restriction by tribal authorities, was controlled by the administration, sometimes indirectly through tribal authorities, and sometimes directly by government officers.

After Union the Natives Land Act consolidated the position by dividing the total land parcel of the country into two parts, for European and Bantu occupation. This measure prepared the way for the Native Trust and Land Act which extended the Bantu areas and established the South African Native Trust for the administration and control of the Bantu areas. The main features of the system which operates over Trust-owned land are summarized in the Tomlinson Commission Report as follows:

(i) Except in the cases of the British Bechuanaland reserves and the mission reserves in Natal, land is settled on a tribal basis, that is, the boundaries of the area or reserve occupied by each tribe or community have been defined, and new settlers are admitted within these boundaries only by per-

mission of the Bantu Commissioner. Each tribal area is divided into wards or locations under headmen who represent the chief.

(ii) Land is divided into allotments for residential purposes, allotments for cultivation purposes, and grazing areas. Residential and arable allotments are occupied individually; the pasture is used communally by all members of the tribe. The regulations make provision for the setting aside of areas for each of these three purposes; the power to do this vests invariably in government officers.

(iii) The acquisition of rights of use and occupation is controlled by officials, usually the Bantu Commissioners. They either have the sole right to allocate land, or, where in deference to Bantu custom the tribal authorities are given a share in the allocation of residential and arable allotments, the Bantu Commissioner or the Chief Bantu Commissioner has an overriding authority. In practice the Bantu Commissioner confirms allocations made by his field staff and, further, whether it is obligatory or not, the tribal authorities, usually the chief or local headmen, are always consulted.

(iv) The average extent of a residential site is one acre, and that of an arable allotment, from eight to ten acres, although in practice, owing to the shortage of land, many allotments are smaller than the prescribed areas.

(v) The principle of 'one man one lot' is enforced, due provision being made for polygamous households and other special cases. So far as polygamous households are concerned, the principle is that each wife is entitled to an arable allotment.

(vi) Married men, or single women with family obligations, are entitled to land.

(vii) The allotment holder usually receives a document which is a copy of an extract from the Bantu Commissioner's register, testifying to his right to use and occupy land in the location, but which does not embody conditions of occupation.

(viii) No charge is generally made for the right to use and occupy land but an annual hut tax is payable by married men.

(ix) An allotment holder has the right to use and occupy his allotment for the purpose for which it was granted. Alienation, when it is allowed, is subject to the consent of the Trust, given or refused by the Bantu Commissioner or the Chief Bantu Commissioner; the rights are not heritable, but widows and heirs have a first claim to re-allotment. Protection is afforded against trespassers. Rights on commonage are included, the allotment holder generally having the right to appropriate the natural products and amenities of the land for his own use, and to graze his stock on the commonage, but subject to certain safeguards.

(x) In regard to security of tenure, the right to use and occupy land may be terminated by the Trust, either under circum-

stances over which the allotment holder has no control, or as a result of an act or omission on the part of the allotment holder. In the first category the usual grounds are that the land is required for public purposes or in the interests of public order and welfare; or is so situated as seriously to interfere with the interests or convenience of others; or for administrative reasons. The allotment holder is usually entitled to a new allotment and compensation. The allotment holder's own acts may furnish grounds for forfeiture as in the case of default in the payment of local tax, absenteeism, failure to occupy an allotment beneficially, or convictions for stock theft.

(xi) The allotment holder's rights under the communal system of land tenure may be described as a right to use and occupy the land; this right is precarious being liable to cancellation or forfeiture; it is also personal, the right of free disposition inter vivos or mortis causa not being conceded.

(xii) All allotments are subject to the provisions of the Betterment Areas Proclamation and Proclamation No. 77 of 1952.

Thus the customary system of land tenure has been replaced by statutory measures and regulations which endeavour to define the traditional tenures within a legal framework, controlled by administrative officers, who either assume direct responsibility or operate through, or in consultation with, tribal authorities. Despite these measures, there are indications that the Bantu still consider the customary system of land-rights as the only lawful system.

Thus there are in fact two systems in operation in the Bantu areas. Officially the statutory position applies, but underneath exists the traditional system of land tenure. These systems are not, however, legally equivalent. Statutory legislation is binding on both the government and the judiciary and is thus legally the only valid system. In many instances, however, it is unacceptable to the Bantu since it clashes with customary concepts. Where the two systems impinge on each other the result is often disturbance and unrest.

Emerging patterns in the Bantu areas and the need for a cadastral system

Patterns very different from the traditional pattern of Bantu agriculture are evolving in the Bantu areas of Southern Africa. These changes may be attributed to two major causes, namely: the changing role of land in the Bantu areas and the evolution of a dual rural economy; and statutory implementation of the agro-economic concept of a self-supporting rural economy in the Bantu areas.

It is interesting to examine the change in the role of land in traditional Bantu society which regarded land primarily as a means of subsistence. Social and economic contact with Western society induced needs in traditional Bantu society, the satisfaction of which

caused more and more Bantu to make ever-lengthening sojourns in the sphere of Western wage economy. Many families in the Bantu areas have become dependent for their subsistence on periodic wage earnings. The rural economy of these areas has become compounded on increasing reliance on wage earnings from without and decreasing reliance on subsistence production from within, and among migratory Bantu labour there is a tendency to regard the Bantu areas less as a means of subsistence and more as a place where dependants may be left in security during periods of absence.

In the Republic of South Africa, statutory legislation empowering the administration to enforce regulations governing cultivation, grazing and absenteeism in the Bantu areas has had an important effect in changing and stabilizing the shifting pattern of Bantu agriculture. Breaches of regulations are punishable, in many instances, by confiscation of holdings, so that not only is the traditional pattern of agriculture being modified and restricted, but severe inroads are being made in security of tenure from the traditional Bantu point of view.

The Natives Land Act and the Native Land and Trust Act had the effect of setting definite limits to the Bantu areas. Increasing Bantu population and the consequent demand for land, combined with the fixed area of land available for Bantu development, further tend to restrict mobility and produce a trend towards stabilization of holdings. Thus, pressure of population, coupled with the changing role of land and the resulting tendency to regard land for residential rather than subsistence purposes, facilitates, if it does not actually foster, a trend towards smaller and smaller holdings, while the restriction of mobility results in the evolution of a pattern of holdings with definite boundaries.

A different pattern emerges when it is sought to implement the concept of a self-supporting rural economy in the Bantu areas as contemplated in the recommendations of both the East African Royal Commission and the Commission for the Socio-economic Development of the Bantu Areas within the Union of South Africa. In the implementation of this concept the Bantu population is regarded as being divided into an agricultural class, who earn their living exclusively from farming, and an urban class, who find their means of subsistence outside farming. Thus it follows that rural land must be subdivided into viable farming units and all further subdivision restricted. As a result it will become necessary to remove a large portion of the rural population to urban areas where provision must be made for the establishment and development of residential townships and small holdings.

The patterns which emerge in the Bantu areas of Southern Africa will depend to a large extent on the policy pursued by the respective administrations. In order to obtain security of tenure, a growing need for the accurate identification and registration of holdings will manifest itself, whatever pattern emerges. A cadastral system will be necessary to fulfil these needs which must meet two

fundamental requirements, namely: the ability to handle the identification and registration of holdings resulting from the "crystallization" of any pattern; and the flexibility to cope with the market in land rights which must inevitably result. The design of such a system is a problem which is facing Southern Africa, and the Republic of South Africa in particular, and which will face the emerging nations of Africa in the near future, if it has not already done so.

CORRESPONDENCE

MEDIEVAL CONCEPTS OF LOVE

TO the Editors of *Theoria*,

Dear Sirs,

I have read the long letter of Mr Royle's in your June number of this year, in which he appears anxious to continue our discussion. Nowhere in it do I find that he has withdrawn his disgraceful insinuations against my honesty (or 'ingenuousness'). I must therefore withdraw from this correspondence which must be as distasteful to your readers as it is to me, and leave Mr Royle's methods of argument to speak for themselves against him.

Yours sincerely,

Jerome Smith