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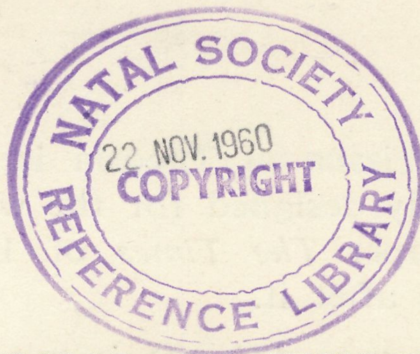
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EDITORIAL COMMENT

We specially welcome in this Number the brief article by Dr. William T. Blackstone, of the University of Florida, Gainesville, U.S.A., not only for its own sake but also as a symbol of the international status of "Theoria".

The absence of the abler of the two Editors on leave has been compensated for by the wealth of material sent to

THE SURVIVING EDITOR

THE THEME OF PERSONAL INTEGRITY IN *OTHELLO*

by R. RAPPOPORT

OTHELLO, a play of dynamic contraries, fair and black, appearance and reality, honesty and betrayal, devil Iago and angel Desdemona, seems, for all its length, to be controlled by a central unity. But what is this unity? What is it that holds in the same play Iago and Bianca, the Duke and Roderigo, Othello and Emilia?

Is it jealousy? In spite of the doubts that have been cast on Othello's jealousy by Dostoievsky and others, he would seem to be jealous. Emilia charges him with jealousy, Iago warns him of it and Desdemona tries to deny that he can be jealous.

It is in seeing how this jealousy is given contour in the play that we can see its relation to Bianca's jealousy, to Roderigo's, to Brabantio's; and that we can see how this jealousy is a unifying focus of the play.

In the case of Othello and Desdemona it seems to be, as jealousy usually is, a distortion of something fundamentally true. Specifically, it seems to rotate on the obedience which Desdemona owes Othello. It is necessary, for ordered life in society to be possible, that degrees of obedience should be given, at times, by one man to another. It is essential for the conduct of war that one man should be the general, another his lieutenant, another his ancient, and others even more subordinate. Loyal obedience is an admirable and noble quality. Othello, the soldier, is ordered to Cyprus the very night of his wedding and, with no demur, is ready to leave. The same obedience he gives the Duke and Signiory he expects of the men under his command. He is deeply shocked and angered by the irresponsibility of Cassio.

What in a town of war,
Yet wild, the people's hearts brim-full of fear,
To manage private, and domestic quarrel?
In night, and on the Court and Guard of safety?
'Tis monstrous: . . . (Act II, sc.ii.)

The propriety of commanding, and the dignity which a commander is assumed to have in his personality which enables him to command, are firmly established in the play. When Othello is set upon by Brabantio, his serene control is manifested in his unhesitating knowledge of the decorum by which society is ordered.

Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them.
Good Signior, you shall more command with years,
Than with your weapons.

Othello's greatest security lies in the knowledge that he has given himself fully to the service of the state. He knows that the command given him is a sign of the trust he has merited. The commander cannot be a man whose character is irrelevant to his occupation. That is why, when Othello fears that his integrity is being destroyed and his confidence in the coherence of the values by which he lives is being betrayed, he knows that

Othello's occupation's gone. (Act III, sc.iii.)

As the state may legitimately command a man, so may a family relationship. Brabantio sees his claim on Desdemona as her duty of obedience. She recognises that the bonds created by love are greater than any others, and goes to her husband. As in the relationship with the state, the obedience given in family relationships implies the recognition of a bond which benefits the man who recognises it. Othello, for example, takes some of his security from the acceptance of his origins.

I fetch my life and being,
From men of royal siege. (Act I, sc.i.)

It is in the acceptance of bonds, of orders, of duty, that valour may flourish. War, which is frequently evoked in this play as glorious and noble, is possible because of the power to command which is given officers. We should not be surprised when Othello greets Desdemona

O, my fair warrior. (Act II, sc.i.)

He recognises her as part of himself, he acknowledges her spirit and courage in braving the whole hostile world of human society and dangerous elements for love of him. He also recognises that, like a soldier, she will know when to command and when to obey. She has not betrayed duty by acknowledging love. When Othello does think that Desdemona has betrayed him and her duty by an improper love, he becomes jealous.

I had rather be a toad,
And live upon the vapour of a dungeon,
Than keep a corner in the thing I love
For others' uses. (Act III, sc.iii.)

We might hardly expect Othello to invite the general use of his wife, but it is the imagery in which Othello's feeling is expressed which seems significant. Desdemona is "the thing" that Othello loves—these are his own words. Later, Desdemona is seen as the place where Othello's love is fixed. When he is excluded from this place he becomes loathsome to himself and terrible to Desdemona.

But there where I have garner'd up my heart,
Where either I must live, or bear no life,
The fountain from the which my current runs,
Or else dries up: to be discarded thence,

Or keep it as a cistern, for foul toads
To knot and gender in. (Act IV, sc.ii.)

Even when most moved by a sense of her value, he sees her as comparable to

one entire and perfect chrysolite

whom it would be possible to barter. Unless the refusal of exchange is a reality to Othello, his passionate realisation of Desdemona's beauty and worth is radically dishonest.

If Heaven would make me such another world,
Of one entire and perfect chrysolite,
I'ld not have sold her for it. (Act V, sc.ii.)

Desdemona is Othello's most precious possession. Possessions, however, do not demand the flexibility and changing response which people, especially in relationships of any intimacy, demand. In the army static relationships are possible and even necessary. An officer must be obeyed, whatever his subordinates may think of him. But the hold which an officer has over his men is incomplete. It extends as far as the soldier's need to obey. To that extent he can be used as though he were owned by his superior. But, as Iago well knows, there are limits to this obedience. Desdemona's obedience is total. Othello's assumption that she can be wholly possessed, as in a more limited relationship the soldier is possessed by his officer, falsifies his relationship with Desdemona to such an extent that when she finds herself in a situation in which she knows she cannot obey him, she lies and tries to evade his questions and commands.

Desdemona: Why do you speak so startingly, and rash?
Othello: Is't lost? Is't gone? Speak, is it out o' th' way?
Desdemona: Bless us.
Othello: Say you?
Desdemona: It is not lost: but what and if it were?
Othello: How?
Desdemona: I say it is not lost.
Othello: Fetch't, let me see 't.
Desdemona: Why so I can: but I will not now:
This is a trick to put me from my suit,
Pray you let Cassio be receiv'd again.
Othello: Fetch me the handkerchief,
My mind misgives.
Desdemona: Come, come: You'll never meet a more sufficient man.
Othello: The handkerchief.
Desdemona: A man that all his time
Hath founded his good fortunes on your love;
Shar'd dangers with you.
Othello: The handkerchief.
Desdemona: In sooth you are to blame.
Othello: Zounds. (Act III, sc.iv.)

Desdemona's capacity for generous and courageous action expresses itself in this scene in a show of capricious stubbornness which might

appear to be utterly out of character. It is the self-belying behaviour often found in innocent people when they panic. It is no more an accident that Desdemona should panic in this critical situation than that Othello should fail to imagine any other explanation for the loss of the handkerchief than the one Iago has suggested to him. She knows that their marriage is founded on her absolute obedience, on her avowal that

> My heart's subdu'd
> Even to the very quality of my Lord; . . . (Act I, sc.iii.)

and on Othello's sense of ownership,

> The purchase made, the fruits are to ensue, . . .
> (Act II, sc.ii.)

When I say that Othello treats Desdemona like a possession I do not mean to imply that he is possessive, as we may call a mother's love towards her children possessive. I want to point to a certain rigidity in Othello's attitude which, in the play, is wholly understandable as well as fatal. Othello's insecurity in civil life and in dealing with people deeply strange to him naturally means that he accepts public and formalized relationships more easily than any others. He is late to marry, and no small element in his love for Desdemona is the security he feels in her attitude towards him. She will not lose respect for him in pity. He is safe with her.

> She lov'd me for the dangers I had pass'd,
> And I lov'd her, that she did pity them. (Act I, sc.iii.)

Her firmness and integrity are his surety. It is typical of Desdemona that even in situations of great stress, in which public observation might shake her from her own truest mind and heart, that she does not even waver. When she acknowledges Othello before her father she is calm with a nobility which equals Othello's. The danger of their calm is the rigidity I have tried to point to.

The habit of command without an understanding or an acceptance of the obligations of the person who commands to the person commanded is typical of Iago. He too is a soldier. His scenes with Emilia are significant. He does not answer her questions, does not give reasons for his behaviour, does not attend to her advice, but orders her to obey him blindly.

> Iago: I good wench, give it (the handkerchief) me.
> Emilia: What will you do with 't, that you have been so earnest to have me filch it?
> Iago: Why, what is that to you?
> Emilia: If it be not for some purpose of import,
> Give't me again. Poor lady, she'll run mad
> When she shall lack it.
> Iago: Be not acknown on 't:
> I have use for it. Go, leave me. (Act III, sc.iii.)

Iago knows how far the limits of obedience need extend. He knows, and says, with many other truths, that a man's integrity, his thoughts, may never be commanded.

Othello: I prithee speak to me, as to thy thinkings,
As thou dost ruminate, and give thy worst of thoughts
The worst of words.
Iago: Good my Lord pardon me,
Though I am bound to every act of duty,
I am not bound to that: All slaves are free:
Utter my thoughts? . . . (Act III, sc.iii.)

He knows that by deception service may be acted without being given. Iago is the free man. He admits no obligations and no restraints. The most binding oaths mean nothing to him. He does as he likes.

Since he recognises no bonds or ties, the reciprocal operation of such recognition cannot benefit him. Iago can trust no one, not even his wife.

I do suspect the lusty Moor
Hath leap'd into my seat. (Act II, sc.i.)

His constant degradation of love into bestiality and lust is like the smutty stories told by schoolboys to deny the existence of those experiences with which they are unable to deal. The cowardice Iago exhibits in disappearing from every dangerous action is not confined to looking after his mere skin. He can never trust, or allow himself to fall into a position of dependence. He must command. His scenes with his wife are staccato with commands. No note of tenderness enters his relationships. Iago can afford no superfluity, like love. Hatred, envy and vanity, only the cannibal emotions, are recognised by Iago. Love, to him, is a meaningless term. Prophet of Professor Ayer, Iago will not admit the existence of what cannot be proved.

He leads Othello to accept his own criteria. He leads Othello to think that material evidence is a completely reliable means of judging the truth.

But yet, I say,
If imputation, and strong circumstances,
Which lead directly to the door of Truth,
Will give you satisfaction, you might have't.
(Act III, sc.iii.)

The proved, for Iago, is secure. The unproved is unknowable and cannot be believed in. Iago is, even more totally than Othello, dependent on appearances. He himself seems to be little more than the appearances—varying with each occasion—which he presents to others. He is unknowable, even to himself.

I am not what I am.

His motives, given throughout the play, vary from one another, and therefore do not convince. When Othello asks,

Will you, I pray, demand that demi-devil,
Why he hath thus ensnar'd my soul and body?

Iago replies

Demand me nothing: what you know, you know: . . .
(Act V, sc.ii.)

He still remains unexplained. Even his soliloquies present us with a man playing a part.

And what's he then,
That says I play the villain?

Since appearances are all that Iago can know, he takes a certain delight in them. He is a wit and a poet. He is as careful as a craftsman to keep a certain urbane finesse and polish to his arrangement of action. It is part of his enjoyment of the power to control and organise. The enjoyment we share with Iago implicates us in his evil, as we are implicated in his dependence on evidence. We are not a divinely perfect audience unscathed by the action. A measure of the control Iago gains over Othello is that he is able to make Othello take notice of such finesse. The free grace and power of Othello's actions at the beginning of the play, his serenity and assurance of the appropriate action, are replaced by Iago's concern for the perfection of design.

Iago: Do it not with poison, strangle her in her bed,
Even the bed she hath contaminated.
Othello: Good, good:
The justice of it pleases: very good. (Act IV, sc.i.)

Dependence on appearances is a dependence on non-essentials, a misconception about the realities of the world in which we live, like Brabantio's colour prejudice; it is a subjection, as the scholastics would put it, to accidents. Is it perhaps a pun on this conception which underlies the structure of plot in which Iago's plans are thwarted by an apparently unreasonable accident? Accidents, in the conceptions of the scholastics, are not stable. They have no principle of being in themselves. Iago's admission,

I am not what I am. (Act I, sc.i.)

is a negative echo of the metaphysical definition of God as consummate being, and of the identification given by God to Moses, "I am that I am." (*Exodus*, Ch. 3, v. 14.)

Iago's non-existence, as it were, tries, like a vacuum, to suck into itself whatever does exist. The principle of order and the reasonableness of obligation are denied. Values are confused. Black and white are so identified with one another that no discrimination is possible. The lieutenant commands the general, the good appears the evil, and the rigidity of concepts like "honour" is asserted at the cost of love. More particularly, whatever exists with superfluity, is abhorrent to Iago. Wherever duty is exceeded by love the occasion or the person must be destroyed. Cassio, the officer who has respect and affection for his general and his general's wife

. . . hath a daily beauty in his life,
That makes me ugly:

therefore

. . . he must die. (Act V, sc.i.)

The insatiable envy of evil when it recognises good obsesses Iago to destroy.

The greatest good, that which most completely creates and gives order, beauty and value, is love. Disinterested love, in *Othello*, is focused in Desdemona. Through her we are aware of love as that which transcends obligation. Desdemona need not, but asks that she may follow Othello to the wars. In valuing her love, apparently reasonable considerations are transcended.

> . . . my love doth so approve him
> That even his stubbornness, his checks, his frowns,
> . . . have grace and favour. (Act IV, sc.iii.)

It is because it transcends the limitation of appearances that it can be a principle of order.

> . . . love is not love
> Which alters when it alteration finds . . . (Sonnet CXVI)

Like Plato's Form of the Good, it is that which has most complete existence, and that by which existence may be recognised. Without it the world is confused and dark.

> Methinks, it should be now a huge eclipse
> Of Sun, and Moon; and that th'affrighted Globe
> Did yawn at alteration. (Act V, sc.ii.)

Desdemona is more than the highest value to Othello only. She is constantly presented as of the greatest value, either in the mockery of Iago

> . . . he *tonight hath boarded a land carrack,*
> If it prove lawful prize, he's made for ever. (Act I, sc.ii.)

or in Cassio's acknowledgement of

> . . . the divine Desdemona . . . (Act II, sc.i.)

The very elements recognise her and calm for her divinity as for Christ's. There is nothing accidental in her death. She chooses freely to submit to it, for love of her murderer, trying

> Not to pick bad, from bad; but by bad, mend.
> (Act IV, sc.iii.)

This Passionate pattern of her death is necessary for the truth of her integrity to be revealed.

> "Now set beside this paragon the just man in his simplicity and nobleness, one who, in Aeschylus' words, 'would be, not seem, the best.' There must, indeed, be no such seeming; for if his character were apparent, his reputation would bring him honours and rewards, and then we should not know whether it was for their sake he was just or for justice's sake alone. He must be stripped of everything but justice, and denied every advantage the other enjoyed. Doing no wrong, he must have the worst reputation for wrongdoing, to test whether his virtue is proof against all that comes of having a bad name; and under this life-long imputation of wickedness, let him hold on his course of justice unwavering to the point of death." (Plato, *The Republic*, Bk II.361.)

An alternative to Desdemona's immutable integrity is the morality of convenience which is Emilia's. She thinks that morality is nothing more than a social convention and is, therefore, capable of revision.

> Why, the wrong is but a wrong i' th' world; and having the world for your labour, 'tis a wrong in your own world, and you might quickly make it right. (Act IV, sc.iii.)

Although she would not reveal her sins, she would still commit them. Iago may be speaking with very personal knowledge when he says,

> I know our country disposition well:
> In Venice, they do let God see the pranks
> They dare not show their husbands.
> Their best conscience
> Is not to leave't undone, but keep 't unknown.
> (Act III, sc.iii.)

This morality is always at the mercy of altering circumstances. It is essentially muddled, and an easy ally for more clearsighted evil.[1]

Another contrast with Desdemona's integrity is the parody of Othello's rigid and immutable resolution to kill her.

> Like to the Pontic Sea,
> Whose icy current and compulsive course,
> Ne'er keeps retiring ebb, but keeps due on
> To the Propontic, and the Hellespont:
> Even so my bloody thoughts, with violent pace
> Shall ne'er look back, ne'er ebb to humble love
> Till that a capable, and wide revenge
> Swallow them up. (Act III, sc.iii.)

Othello is incapable of bearing doubt or irresolution. He will not

> . . . make a life of jealousy;
> To follow still the changes of the Moon
> With fresh suspicions . . . (Act III, sc.iii.)

He escapes his own insecurity in this false rigidity which does not permit him to listen to Desdemona's pleas, or any evidence against his suspicion that she is unfaithful. The very imagery of his resolution is deceptive. The image of the current recurs. We see that Othello's current flows from Desdemona,

> The fountain from the which my current runs,
> Or else dries up: . . . (Act IV, sc.ii.)

and when she is dead, and he finds out that he has killed her without cause, he knows

> Here is my journey's end, here is my butt
> And very sea-mark of my utmost sail. (Act V, sc.ii.)

The recurrence of the image reveals the inherent contradiction of a moving firmness, the hidden deception in the image reveals the ambiguity of a vow which is no less false than Iago's vow of evil by the lights of heaven.

[1]The false value placed on reputation as "the immortal part of myself" (Act II, sc.ii.) and "the immediate jewel of (men's) souls" (Act III, sc.iii.) is, of course, relevant to the examination in the play of the real sources of personal integrity which cannot be in the opinion others may hold, but must be rooted in the most intimate, experiental knowledge of each person.

With demi-devil Iago on one side and the divine Desdemona on the other, *Othello* has the simplicity of a morality play in its structure. The great difference between Iago's relationship with Othello and Desdemona's, is that Iago wants to control Othello, to command his actions. His satisfaction is achieved when Othello appoints him as his substitute.

Now art thou my lieutenant. (Act III, sc.iii.)

In fact, Desdemona's way of judging, for all her simplicity, is more profound and accurate than Iago's, for all his show of subtlety. Human actions are shown, in this play, to derive from sources which are not wholly rational. Othello's jealousy, if it is founded by Iago's proofs, is founded on something very flimsy. By the end of Act III, scene iii, Othello is convinced of Desdemona's unfaithfulness, the proof being a report, by Iago, of Cassio's dream

Othello: O monstrous! monstrous!
Iago: Nay, this was but his dream.
Othello: *But this denoted a foregone conclusion,*
'Tis a shrewd doubt, though it be but a dream.
Iago: And this may help to thicken other proofs
That do demonstrate thinly.
Othello: I'll tear her all to pieces. (Act II, sc.iii.)

and Iago's report of having seen Cassio use the handkerchief which was Othello's first gift to Desdemona. Iago's impudent assurance, so great that he can even pretend to doubt the value of the evidence he has offered, rests on his knowledge that Othello has already been moved by his imputations. The very fact that Othello is prepared to listen to the slanders of his bride is a proof that he already has a bent towards accepting grounds for suspicion.

Othello's jealousy, we are warned by Emilia's shrewd comments, need have no cause.

Desdemona: Alas the day, I never gave him cause.
Emilia: But jealous souls will not be answered so;
They are not ever jealous for the cause,
But jealous, for they're jealous. (Act III, sc.iv.)

Jealousy is a devouring appetite. It is not reasonable. We should be wary, with this speech in mind, of Othello's self-justification when he comes to murder Desdemona,

It is the cause, it is the cause (my soul)
Let me not name it to you, you chaste Stars,
It is the cause. (Act V, sc.ii.)

This cause is the morality of other men, and their safety against betrayal, in Othello's own words. It is not, in his own mind, a cause which springs from the necessity of the present situation. Hence the note of falseness in all his attempts to justify his action in his own eyes, and the irresolution which continues even after he has killed Desdemona, while Emilia is knocking at the door.

Brabantio too understands that experience is a truer teacher than reason may sometimes be, and it is this that prompts his impatient and even rude reply to the Duke's pompous homily,

So let the Turk of Cyprus us beguile,
We lose it not so long as we can smile: . . .
But words are words, I never yet did hear
That the bruis'd heart was pierc'd through the ear.
(Act I, sc.iii.)

Like the Wanderer, he knows that

That man knows, who has had experience,
How cruel is sorrow as a companion (*The Wanderer*, 29, 30).

Even Iago, although unreasonedly, knows that knowledge which can be formulated is sometimes specious (like the reasoning which seems half plausible and seems to be half believed by Iago, by which he manipulates Roderigo) and inadequate. He despises the theoretic knowledge he accuses Cassio of having:

Forsooth, a great arithmetician, . . .
That never set a squadron in the field,
Nor the division of a battle knows
More than a spinster . . .
. . . Mere prattle (without practice)
Is all his soldiership. (Act I, sc.i.)

and is deeply affronted that he,

. . . (of whom his eyes had seen the proof . . .)
(Act I, sc.i.)

is passed over.

Knowing, then, that our most deeply held knowledge is that of what we have experienced, Iago's process in destroying Othello is to destroy that experience by which everything else that Othello knows is placed and ordered.

. . . Perdition catch my soul
But I do love thee: and when I love thee not,
Chaos is come again. (Act III, sc.iii.)

Othello's love for Desdemona is almost wholly a response to her love for him. She, sensing his vulnerability in social relationships with a foreign people, provokes the open affirmation of their love. She loves Othello for everything she knows him to be. Her love is remarkable for its constancy, and for the very opposite quality to that of which she is accused—her faith. When Othello turns against her without apparent cause, his mind is thronged with those images of bestiality and loathsome, brutish life which Iago pours out to puddle Othello's clear spirit. Othello's thoughts are improper to the highest degree—they have been spawned by Iago. Othello's lack of propriety is shown in an astonishing absence of social propriety when Lodovico arrives. Othello's own knowledge is that

. . . the world hath not a sweeter creature, she might lie by an Emperor's side and command him tasks. (Act IV, sc.i.)

Othello's love being that which orders his whole being, Iago must persuade him that, in fact, it does not belong to his real character.

Iago: Nay, that's not your way.
Othello: Hang her, I do but say what she is: so delicate with

her needle: an admirable musician. Oh she will
sing the savageness out of a bear; of so high and
plenteous wit and invention. (Act IV, sc.i.)

As in his dealings with Roderigo, Iago is attempting to replace the judgement of Othello with his own. His desire is also for the total and exclusive possession of another person.

The principle by which each life is ordered is essentially inalienable. Desdemona's constancy lies in her apprehension that this is so.

Unkindness may do much
And his unkindness may defeat my life,
But never taint my love. (Act IV, sc.ii.)

It is by no means irrelevant to the central concepts of the play that the fulcrum on which Iago swings Othello is the issue of chastity. Chastity involves the proper ordering by an individual of the use of that which most inalienably belongs to him, his body, for ends which serve the personality. It involves a capacity for self-control. Bianca, who is not chaste, is shown as unable to order her emotions as they, and her personality in its fullness, do not order her body.

It is a creature
That dotes on Cassio, (as 'tis the strumpet's plague
To beguile many, and be beguil'd by one) . . .
(Act IV, sc.i.)

Othello's virtual permission to Iago that Iago should order him is a kind of unchastity, as is Roderigo's. Cassio's consent to lose control over himself by convivial drunkenness and then by anger is not basically different. Even the Duke's attempt to make Brabantio accept pious platitudes, rather than working out his own conviction, is shown as a trifle ridiculous.

The love of Othello and Desdemona is defined in the first act as a wholly personal and proper response to one another. Imputations of witchcraft are refuted so that the freedom of both may be asserted. Their freedom consists in their ability to know what they truly desire and to order all their actions toward the fulfilment of that desire. Iago destroys this freedom in Othello by his destructive kind of freedom, and brings Othello to the stage in which he commits his most improper action, suicide. But although Othello's suicide is in one sense the homecoming of the current towards destruction and chaos in which Iago has drawn him, Othello's real freedom in this action is conveyed by the speech in which, recalling the service he has done the state, without vanity, he asks that his life and death be truly recorded. He recalls his service to the state as the standard of integrity by which he hopes others will judge him and by which he judges himself. He asks for a wholly truthful record,

Nothing extenuate,
Nor set down aught in malice. (Act V, sc.ii.)

understanding, at last, that justice depends on a careful vision of what has happened. His concern here is to free others from the false evidence of Iago, a concern for the common justice of the state and for

the integrity of his own nature which has always expressed itself in generous service to that state.

His claim that

Then you must speak,
Of one that lov'd not wisely, but too well:

has been justified by the pressure of Othello's dependence on Desdemona which we have been made to feel again and again in the play.

That he was

. . . not easily jealous, but being wrought,
Perplex'd in the extreme;

is, for all the carping of the critics, well merited. Othello has been perplexed by Iago—confusion has been Iago's whole method. It was the depth of Othello's love which made it necessary for Iago to confuse all Othello's values—Roderigo had been much easier to handle.

Returning to the constant imagery by which Othello sees Desdemona, he still sees her as a precious gem, luminously white in his hands, which he

(Like the base Indian)

has thrown away, but the standard of the gem's value is an odd, and now a living, one.

Richer than all his tribe: . . .

Othello's rigidity is dissolved in weeping—a man of Othello's dignity and strength!—and in his accepting this weakness as good.

Of one, whose subdu'd eyes,
Albeit unused to the melting mood,
Drops tears as fast as the Arabian trees
Their medicinable gum.

Supporting the whole speech has been Othello's regained integrity, and with it his calm sense of duty. It has allowed him to demand truth and to see his actions with truth. He finally sees himself in an image which has been developing through the reference to himself as a "base Indian", an image which is in no way false or donned for the occasion, as someone who, by betraying his deepest faith, has become an infidel. He has, in believing that heaven could mock itself, cut himself off from all loyalties to heaven and whatever has appeared good on earth, and has thereby, among other things

. . . traduc'd the State, . . .

The act by which he kills himself restores him to his former nobility when it is seen as a repetition of the blows he has always given to infidelity and treachery. That is why his evocation of his past actions is not fortuitous or vain.

The paradox of Othello is that his jealousy, his desire to possess only, leads him to that condition in which he possesses nothing even of his own integrity, but is steeped

in poverty to the very lips. (Act IV, sc.ii.)

DARWIN AND THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES*

by A. J. BURTON

THE STORY of Darwin and The Origin of Species contains a number of interesting paradoxes. In fact Charles Darwin himself can be said to have been something of a paradox.

He was an idle schoolboy, professing later in life to have learnt nothing from a total of five years spent at two Universities; yet he became one of the leading scientific figures of his age.

He was a sick man, or perhaps a hypochondriac, for the greater part of his life: yet he managed to accomplish more work than did many fit men.

A modest man and conservative thinker, who shunned controversy, he wrote a revolutionary book which sparked off the biggest battle of words of the nineteenth century.

I should like to proceed by saying a little more about the first paradox,—about Darwin's formal, and informal, education.

Born in 1809, the son of a prosperous country doctor, Charles Darwin was educated at (or rather I should say he attended) the Grammar School of his home town, Shrewsbury. He does not appear to have thrived very well there and he says, in his autobiography, written in his old age:

'Nothing could have been worse for the development of my mind than Dr Butler's school, as it was strictly classical, nothing else being taught except a little ancient geography and history. As a means of education the school was to me simply a blank.'

His father wisely took him away from school at the age of sixteen and sent him to join his older brother at the Medical School at Edinburgh. Here again the formal teaching did him little good.

'The instruction at Edinburgh was altogether by lectures,' he says, 'and these were intolerably dull. Dr Duncan's lectures on Materia Medica at eight o'clock on a winter's morning were something fearful to remember.'

Abandoning hope, after two years, of his son ever becoming a doctor, father Darwin sent the young Charles to Cambridge to study for the Church. Here Charles stayed for three years and obtained a B.A. degree—not, I fancy, a superhuman achievement in those days.

***Text of an address delivered in the University of Natal at Pietermaritzburg on the 12th August, 1959.**

But again he says in retrospect that, so far as his academical studies were concerned, the years spent at Cambridge were as much a waste of time as were those at Edinburgh and at school.

It has been said of Darwin's Cambridge days that 'he shot snipe, collected beetles, tapped rocks and believed in God. But mostly, he shot snipe.' The idea of becoming a parson was quietly dropped.

So formal education was lost on Charles Darwin. But, in the mention of collecting beetles and the tapping of rocks,—with a geological hammer of course—we have a clue to the sort of extra-mural education that Darwin had been accumulating since boyhood.

He had always been an avid collector. As a boy he collected natural objects of all kinds, just for the sheer joy of collecting—he hardly attempted to classify his finds in any scientific way. And we know that at Cambridge one of his chief passions was the collection of beetles. That this was indeed a passion is illustrated by an anecdote from his autobiography.

Here, he tells how he had just stripped off some old bark from a tree, when he saw two rare beetles and immediately seized one in each hand. Hardly had he done so when he saw a third, and equally rare, species, which he could not bear to lose. So he popped one of the captured beetles into his mouth, where it gave out such a burning fluid that he was forced to spit it out, and so lost two of the three specimens.

Again, as a schoolboy, but out of school hours, the young Charles became interested in chemistry, assisting his brother with experiments in a tool-shed laboratory at the bottom of the garden. He was even stimulated to read, of his own free will, several chemistry text books.

Of these essays into chemistry, Darwin later said that they were he best part of his education at school, as showing him practically the meaning of experimental science.

In his second year at Edinburgh, he fell in with a group of young men interested in natural science, and with them went on collecting expeditions and made observations; as a result of which he read two zoological papers to one of the University Societies.

And at Cambridge Darwin did other things besides shooting snipe. Of the courses of public lectures that he could have attended outside his curriculum for the B.A. degree, he chose only to attend those of a Professor Henslow, on Botany. This was a most fortunate choice, for Henslow was a man interested in all aspects of natural science and he became a friend of the young Darwin. This friendship was to be of crucial importance to Charles Darwin within a very short time.

It was Henslow who persuaded Darwin, rather against his will, to attend, during his last term, the Geology lectures of Professor Sedgewick. This led to Darwin's accompanying the eminent Professor on a geological tour of North Wales, during which he learned, as he says, something of how to make out the geology of a country.

So that at the end of a lamentable academic career, Charles Darwin found himself with a good deal of theoretical and practical

knowledge of Geology, Botany and Zoology, and also, incidentally, with a considerable amount of practice at horse-riding and game-shooting. He had the makings of a good Naturalist in the old sense of the word, and this was to stand him in good stead in his subsequent, and at that time quite unforeseen, career.

When he got back from the geological expedition with Sedgewick, a stroke of good fortune befell Charles Darwin. Professor Henslow had been asked by the Admiralty to suggest a suitable man to sail as unpaid naturalist in one of Her Majesty's men of war, on a two year survey voyage under the command of a Captain Fitzroy. Henslow thought of Darwin and wrote him a letter.

After overcoming his father's objections to the voyage, and the rather odd objection of Captain Fitzroy to the shape of his nose, Charles Darwin, at the age of twenty-two, sailed in H.M.S. Beagle on what was, in fact, to be a five year voyage that would take him round the world.

This voyage, lasting from 1831 to 1836, was later acknowledged by Darwin to have been the most important event in his life and that which determined his whole career. There is little doubt that, had it not been for the voyage, *The Origin of Species* would not have been written,—not, at any rate, by Charles Darwin.

It was very shortly after the end of this voyage that Darwin began to collect the facts for his great book, in which he would set down both the evidence for the occurrence of a process of organic evolution and a theory of how this process had taken place.

So that before saying anything about the voyage I feel that I must at this point try to give a brief sketch of the climate of opinion of the time, in England, at any rate, as it related to evolutionary ideas.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries orthodox Christian teaching required belief in the literal truth of the Bible, including the Genesis story of the Creation. Man and the other living animals and plants had been created in the forms which they now displayed, and the different kinds or species of animals and plants were unchanging, —immutable. They were as they always had been. And although not everybody believed, with Archbishop Ussher, that the world had been created in the year 4004 B.C., the generally accepted opinion was that the earth had been in existence for only a matter of a few thousands of years.

But there were certainly people who doubted the Creation story and the fixity of species. Already in the eighteenth century a number of evolutionary theories had been published, by men like de Maillet, Buffon, Lamarck and Charles Darwin's own grandfather, Erasmus Darwin, and these theories had been widely read and discussed. But they did not seem to take root. In order that any theory of evolution could be widely accepted, two things were required; first of all, a proof that the world was immensely older than a mere few thousand years and, secondly, a convincing demonstration that there had been a succession of forms of life throughout the history of the planet. These proofs were not yet available.

Admittedly, the discovery of fossil remains in the rocks had begun to be a source of trouble to the creationists, but known fossils were not so numerous as they are to-day and their presence was later explained by the theory of 'Catastrophism', which held that there had been a succession of faunas, each of which had in turn been overwhelmed by geological upheavals and new faunas created to take their place. Violent change was the predominant theme of the geology of the time, despite the fact that James Hutton, near the close of the eighteenth century, had put forward a very different theory of gradual change,—of gradual erosion of the land and slow uplift of the sea bed.

This then, very briefly, was the background to Darwin's departure in the Beagle. What sort of equipment in the form of ideas and influences did the young man take with him?

The first and most important piece of equipment was a newly-published book, *The Principles of Geology*, by Charles Lyell. Henslow had persuaded Darwin to take the book with him, telling him to read it, but emphatically to disbelieve the ideas contained in it. Early in the voyage Darwin read and believed Lyell's conception of geology, which was a return to James Hutton's gradualness of change. Lyell was no catastrophist. This book and its author are generally considered to have exerted the greatest influences upon Darwin's later work, though it was not until many years had passed that Lyell became converted to Darwin's evolutionary views.

Darwin must also have carried with him the knowledge of the early evolutionary ideas at least of Lamarck and of his grandfather, Erasmus Darwin, though he largely discounts their influence in his autobiography. Certainly Charles Darwin was not an evolutionist when he set sail in the Beagle, but there is very good reason to believe that within the first two years of the voyage he was beginning to observe the natural phenomena of the lands he visited with an evolutionary bias.

Thus equipped, Darwin set out on the long voyage. It is unfortunate that he was also equipped with a weak stomach for sea travel, and it says much for his endurance that his frequent seasickness does not appear to have prevented him from persevering with his job of naturalist.

But the Beagle spent the best part of two years surveying the East coast of South America, and Darwin spent much of this time on land, travelling great distances on horseback with the Gauchos, learning to use the lassoo and bolas, and having a high time of adventure, with murderous Indians thrown in for good measure.

These two years, and the five weeks subsequently spent at the Galapagos Archipelago, were the most important periods for the development of Darwin's evolutionary ideas.

In South America he saw evidence of the gradualness of geological change for which Lyell's book had prepared him. There he saw the great fossil-bearing rock stratum which lay below the Pampas, with the contained marine shells that proclaimed it to be of geologically

recent elevation from the sea. And there he found the fossilised remains of giant armour-plated animals, which, though different, were obviously related to the small armadillos still living on the Pampas.

That he was even then thinking along evolutionary lines is brought out by several entries in his diary of the voyage. For example, he records having seen a snake with rudimentary limbs . . . 'marking the passage by which Nature joins the lizards to the snakes.'

In 1835, the Beagle arrived at the Galapagos Archipelago, a group of lonely volcanic islands off the West coast of South America, which Darwin described as suggesting what the more cultivated parts of the infernal regions might be like. Here he found more food for evolutionary thought. In his Journal of the Voyage, Darwin wrote:

'The natural history of these islands is eminently curious. . . . Most of the organic productions are aboriginal creations, found nowhere else; there is even a difference between the inhabitants of the different islands; yet all show a marked relationship with those of America, though separated from that continent by an open space of ocean, between five and six hundred miles in width.'

And of the thirteen species of Galapagos finches, he says, 'One might really fancy that from an original paucity of birds in this archipelago one species has been taken and modified for different ends.'

Can we doubt that Darwin had already thrown overboard the idea of the fixity of species?

I can say no more of the voyage. In fact, after the Galapagos, Darwin's enthusiasm for natural wonders appears to have waned somewhat. They were on their way home, and no doubt they were all eagerly looking forward to the homecoming.

Darwin was back in England at the end of 1836 and immediately set to work to write up his Journal and other manuscripts for publication.

But in July, 1837, he opened his first note-book for the collection of facts and ideas relating to the origin of species, about which, he says, he had long reflected. And although he did a lot of other work, including the writing of a book on the origin of Coral Reefs, and eight years spent, on and off, in describing the various species of barnacles, he never ceased working, for the next twenty years, on the major task of the Origin of Species.

Charles Darwin was a slow and painstaking worker. He accumulated fact after fact,—and not only those facts which were in favour of his gradually emerging theory. In his autobiography, Darwin attributes some of the success of the Origin of Species to a golden rule that he had observed, namely, 'that whenever a published fact, a new observation or thought came across me, which was opposed to my general results, to make a memorandum of it without fail and at once: for I had found by experience that such facts and thoughts were more apt to escape from memory than favourable ones.' This is a rule which we could all adopt with profit.

When the *Origin of Species* was eventually published, over a quarter of the book was devoted to the careful examination and attempted rebuttal of objections to the theory. Darwin thus answered many criticisms before they could be made.

But the book might never have been published had it not been for a strange and, for Darwin, alarming coincidence in the summer of 1858. Two years before, Darwin had, on Lyell's advice, begun to write out his views in full, with the intention of filling three or four volumes. Then in 1858 the blow fell.

He received an essay from Alfred Russell Wallace, a naturalist then working in the Malay Archipelago,—an essay containing exactly the same theory of evolution as Darwin's.

This was a grievous shock to Darwin, who at first considered abandoning his priority to Wallace. But his good friends Lyell and Hooker persuaded him that the fair thing to do was to prepare a joint publication consisting of Wallace's essay and an abstract of Darwin's manuscript. These two papers were read together before the Linnaean Society in London.

Darwin then set to work to write *The Origin of Species* in a greatly shortened form for publication. It took him thirteen months and the book was published in November, 1859.

On the day of publication, the first small edition of 1,250 copies was sold out. Since then many thousands of copies have been sold in many languages, and the title of the book, or at least the name of its author, is now known to every educated person. What did this nineteenth century best-seller have to say?

The Origin of Species is a book of some 400 pages. But fortunately it is not difficult to abstract the salient points, which have in any case been abstracted many times before. The great bulk of the book is made up of evidence and illustration upon illustration of the points made.

First of all it is necessary to say that the book consists of two parts, though they are intermingled and are frequently and incorrectly lumped together as Darwin's 'Theory of Evolution.'

The first part is concerned with the evidence that a process of evolution has taken place; that the creatures of the earth were not created as they are now, but that the earth's present inhabitants have evolved from less complicated forms. Darwin considers the evidence provided by fossils,—the Geological Succession; the evidence from geographical distribution and the evidence from comparative anatomy, embryology, and from the existence of what he calls rudimentary organs. A great part of the book is taken up by this evidence that evolution has taken place, but I do not propose to say anything further about it. The evidence for a process of evolution of some sort, which was strong in Darwin's day, is now overwhelming, and there are few people at the present day who have studied the subject, who deny the reality of evolution.

The second part of the book deals with a theory of how this pro-

cess of evolution has come about, and it is this part alone that should be referred to as Darwin's theory.

Of this theory, Darwin in fact gives a brief but clear abstract in the full title of the book, *On the Origin of Species by means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life.*

Let us take this abstract title and say a little more about it, beginning at the end. What does he mean by "the Struggle for Life"?

Darwin had been very much impressed by the essay of Malthus, *On Population*, in which it was stated that a human population tends to increase geometrically, whilst the production of food can only increase arithmetically, so that there is a continual tendency for a population to outstrip the means of subsistence.

The truth, or otherwise, of Malthus' statement is not, in fact, important from the point of view of Darwin's theory. What Darwin pointed out was that plants and animals produce many more offspring than one would expect to be necessary for the preservation of the species. Yet, apart from periodical fluctuations, the populations of species in nature do not in general increase. And if this is the case, says Darwin, it follows that the great majority of each generation must perish before they can reproduce in their turn. Thus, of the millions of eggs laid by the cod, on an average only two are destined to survive to maturity. If this were not so, the seas would, in a relatively short time, be packed solid with cod.

And the idea that, though many offspring are produced, few can possibly survive, led to the concept of a struggle for life, or a 'struggle for existence,' as it is frequently called. I think it is important that we should not regard this struggle as a tooth and nail fight between the individuals of a species, though this may occur. There are more ways than one of killing an offspring, and death may occur through failure to secure enough food, through disease, or being snapped up by some predatory beast.

Having established the fact that there is a struggle for life, what does Darwin mean by the 'Preservation of Favoured Races'?

Darwin had observed, and we can observe, that the general rule in nature is for offspring to resemble their parents. Cats produce kittens. Dogs produce puppies. Like produces like. But not exactly like. We all know that, with the exception of identical twins, no two children of a family are exactly alike, or exactly like either of their parents. And it is the same in nature; offspring resemble their parents in general, but differ from them and from each other in detail. There is variation between individuals, usually slight, sometimes more marked.

Now, says Darwin, given the fact of variation: given the fact that there is a struggle for life: is it not probable that any individual which happens to vary from its fellows in some advantageous way, however slightly, will have that much more chance of surviving and reproducing its kind? And if that slight advantageous variation is inheritable, it will be passed on to future generations.

By the gradual accumulation of such advantageous variations over a long period of time, new species may arise, different from their forbears, and the whole face of nature may be changed.

This selection, for preferential survival, of individuals possessing advantageous variations, Darwin called 'Natural Selection.' And according to his theory, the present diversity of living forms has come about by the operation of Natural Selection over millions of years, from very different previously existing forms, and perhaps, originally, from a single common stock.

No wonder that the *Origin of Species* caused a stir. It was a revolutionary book. It sought to replace a time-scale of a few thousand years by the idea of a past stretching back for many millions of years. For a benevolent Heavenly Architect, it substituted an indifferent Natural Selection,—without a purpose,—without a goal. And perhaps worst of all,—though Darwin did not explicitly write this until some years later,—it knocked man off his pedestal. Man, for whom the Universe was thought to have been created, became only another animal,—probably descended from an ape-like ancestor.

It is small wonder that there was an almighty row over the book. I should like to have said something of the battle, and of the famous debate between Bishop Wilberforce and T. H. Huxley. But there is no time.

I want to conclude by saying something about the implications of evolution at the present day.

I have said that the *Origin of Species* was a revolutionary book. It still is.

But there are two ways of dealing with an unpleasant revolutionary idea. First of all, you can fight it, as the Church and the Establishment did in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The second way is to make it respectable and forget about it. And that is what has now happened to the theory of evolution.

The Church—the Roman Catholic Church and a large part of the Protestant Church—has accepted the idea of evolution. We no longer hear the sounds of wordy battle. Biology is taught on an evolutionary basis in all but a few Universities. The mass of people don't think about it at all.

Yet its implications for modern man are of the very highest importance. For animals, for plants and for primitive man, evolution didn't really matter,—in the sense that they had no control over it. For man to-day it is different.

With the growth of civilisation two important changes have occurred with respect to evolution.

The first change is that, in respect of man, Natural Selection doesn't work any more—not, at any rate, in its full force. We have built barriers against it in civilised communities, in the shape of increased medical skill and the care of the sick and needy. In civilised societies there is now hardly any struggle for life. Not only the favoured survive,—pretty well everybody survives.

This nullification of Natural Selection has led to two results. First, to the enormous and rapidly increasing human population, which is doubling itself in less than a hundred years. Unless something is done about this problem, there will certainly be a return to a struggle for life and to some form of very bitter selection.

The second result is that we are now deliberately preserving the unfit in our populations. And, in the light of our modern knowledge of genetics, this means that we are encouraging the maintenance and spread in the population of unfavourable hereditary patterns. At the least, this must lead to an increased burden of physical and mental ill-health.

That is the first important change that has occurred with respect to evolution in modern times. The second change is that a new evolutionary factor has now entered the picture.

Formerly, the only link between one generation and the next was the hereditary link. The offspring received nothing but its hereditary make-up from the parents, with in some cases a little training in elementary skills like food gathering. Each generation had to start from scratch, or almost from scratch.

But with the development of language, and other means of communication and storage of information, another link arose. Knowledge could now be passed on from generation to generation. Each generation no longer had to begin from nothing, but could now build on the accumulated knowledge, first of the family, then of the race, and now of the world.

It is to this new form of evolution—social, or cultural evolution —and to this alone, that mankind owes its incredibly rapid advance.

Physical evolution is now of minor importance to civilised man, (though he must guard against physical de-volution, or degeneration). Any further evolution lies in the sphere of man's intellect, and I consider morality also to be an intellectual matter. This possible further evolution depends largely upon the new factor—cultural evolution.

What we pass on to succeeding generations, and what use we make of our ever-increasing knowledge, is of enormous importance. It is illuminating to consider what, in fact, we are passing on, and what use we are making of our knowledge.

The freedom from blind Natural Selection and from a struggle for life among individuals has been turned into a *directed* struggle between national groups. Cultural evolution has 'advanced' to a stage where the mere *possibility* of this international competition giving way to co-operation—as exemplified by the proposed visit of Mr Kruschev to America—is sufficient to cause a precipitous fall in the prices of stocks on Wall Street.

Our increased knowledge and wealth are being very largely used, on the one hand, to devise more terrible weapons of destruction, and on the other, to build bigger and better instruments of passive amusement, so that mankind may pass the time ever more pleasantly between birth and death.

But unless man's cultural evolution is redirected from a philosophy of competition towards one of co-operation; and towards intellectual expansion, rather than the mere maintenance of the mental status quo, there is a very real danger of man's decline and extinction. There is a corollary to Darwin's 'Preservation of Favoured Races.' It is the elimination of unfavoured races.

We tend to think of man's position on this planet as a permanent one. Man has, in fact, been on this earth for the minutest fraction of geological time. We should remember that the great Dinosaurs dominated the earth for a hundred million years. Their sole heirs today are the crocodiles.

And it is a salutary thought that, with the passing of the human race, no solitary tear would be shed by his fellow animals,—not even a crocodile tear.

BIOLOGY AND ETHICS

by WILLIAM T. BLACKSTONE

I

IN THE EIGHTEENTH century the scientific orientation of Jeremy Bentham led him to formulate his famous "hedonistic calculus" and attempt to reduce ethics to a science. He saw the obvious advantage that if the scientific method were applicable to ethics, then ethical disputes or human conflicts could be resolved by a common and agreed upon procedure. Bentham consequently defined "good" in terms of pleasure and "right" in terms of acts which produce the greatest pleasure for the greatest number. The "calculus" was designed as a means of measuring pleasure and hence the rightness of acts.

Since the time of Bentham and his "calculus" there have been a number of attempts to base ethics on science. The ideal of a common and agreed upon procedure for solving human conflicts has persisted. One of the most recent attempts to base ethics on science is that of Alfred E. Emerson, a zoologist at the University of Chicago. In his article, "Dynamic Homeostasis: A Unifying Principle in Organic, Social, and Ethical Evolution,"[1] Emerson exhibits a concern for reaching some sort of scientific agreement on ethical norms so that human conflicts can be resolved. His feeling is that the use of the scientific method can not only effect such agreement but also that it can prevent the misuse of so-called scientific knowledge for totalitarian purposes.[2] Actually Emerson suggests a number of senses in which ethics may be based on science. In this paper we shall examine these different senses of "basing ethics on science." We shall be primarily concerned with Emerson's attempt to reduce ethical statements to biological statements or his attempt to reduce ethics to the science of biology.

II

Part of what Emerson means by approaching ethics scientifically is that moral behaviour and expressions of moral emotion are susceptible to an inductive study. We are told, for example, that "science is based upon objective data, whereas ethics may arise in part from subjective feelings, but subjective data may be objectivized and analyzed. Psychologists constantly treat subjective emotions

[1]*Scientific Monthly*, vol. 78, 1954, pp. 67–85.
[2]See his references to the ethics of Nietzsche and to communism. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

scientifically. The origins and the effects of subjective attitudes may be studied by the objective methods of psychological and social science, in large part the same methods that are used in natural science."[3]

Emerson's point can hardly be denied. Certainly science can study the behaviour of human beings as found in their moral activities and emotions. The methods of natural science can provide fairly accurate statistical evidence on the behaviour of human beings and even on their subjective feelings. Science can even provide probable empirical knowledge of the causal relationships between moral feelings and environmental conditions. One would hardly question that this is possible in principle, even if in practice practical difficulties arise in the use of the inductive method as applied to psychological phenomena. However, would any of these procedures, that is, an analysis and descriptive account of moral emotions or an analysis and descriptive account of causal relationships between moral emotions and environmental conditions, provide information about what we *ought* to do? It would seem not. No matter how carefully verified these descriptive data are, they are still descriptive data. Unless there is an implicit norm already accepted, for example, that one ought to do that which is approved by most people in our culture, then the descriptive data that certain kinds of acts are approved of by most people in our culture, will carry no normative implications. A scientific study of subjective attitudes and emotions will not provide us with a criterion of right conduct, and this question of a criterion of right conduct, it would seem, is the significant question for the ethicist.

Emerson suggests that another way in which ethics may be based on science is that "a partial understanding of value systems is possible through scientific method."[4] Again this will hardly be denied.

The use of induction can show us that basic normative principle is accepted by certain people or certain cultures. Induction can also show us what subsidiary maxims, like promise-keeping, are accepted along with the basic normative principle. The use of induction can also show us what has intrinsic and instrumental value in a given culture. But would this scientific understanding of a value system or systems provide us with an ethical code? Would it answer the question, "What should I do?" No. This descriptive data about what is valued carries no normative implications in the sense of providing us with an ethical code, that is, with a standard of what is valu*able* (ought to be valued).

A third way in which ethics may be based on science, Emerson tells us, lies in the fact that certain biological principles are found to be transferable to social science. "Biology and anthropology have clearly demonstrated that man has evolved from certain higher animals. Not only do his body and mental faculties show relation-

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 67.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 68.

ship to his primate relatives, but his society is based on mammalian group behaviour. These comparisons may assist us in understanding fundamental principles of societal organization. For example, a social hierarchy founded upon dominance and subordination learned through individual contacts is characteristic of many vertebrates, particularly in flocks of birds and in herds of mammals. A similar social hierarchy seems to be characteristic of man in his various social organizations." [5]

Now it may be true that biology and anthropology can provide probable empirical knowledge regarding man's relationship to higher animals, pointing out similarities of physical attributes and similarities of social organization. It is also perhaps true that these comparisons will assist us in the understanding of "fundamental principles of societal organization." But these "fundamental principles" are genetic and causal accounts of social organization. They are not normative principles about what we *should* do in regard to social organization. The information that biology and anthropology provides is descriptive and carries no normative implications about how we *should* act.

Emerson implicitly recognizes a fourth manner in which ethics may be based on science. He tells us that "freedom of opportunity, freedom of speech, and freedom of inquiry are essential forms of controlled variability necessary to social progress . . . and progress means an increase in individual, social, and ecological homeostasis." [6] Furthermore, killing a member of one's own species, dishonesty, lying, or cheating "tends to be destructive of group homeostasis. . . ." Here Emerson is recognizing that certain moral rules or maxims are better than others in the sense of leading to a valued state of affairs, namely, what he calls "homeostasis." He points out that it is an observable fact that the violation of certain rules will not lead to the desired end of group homeostasis. Although Emerson does not explicitly say so, it seems clear that science can provide probable empirical knowledge that conformity to certain moral maxims or rules is the best means for the attainment of a valued state of affairs, like group homeostasis. In this sense it is surely true that "a refinement of ethical decision is available through increased knowledge of natural and social events and processes." However, this scientific information will not tell us what end or goal we ought to choose but only what are the best means of attaining a goal once it has been accepted as desirable.

The above senses of "basing ethics on science" provide knowledge about values only in the senses of (1) a descriptive account of what is valued, (2) a descriptive account of who places value on certain things, (3) a descriptive account of what causes persons to value something, (4) a descriptive account of the general format of a value system, (5) a descriptive account of the genesis and causes of societal

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 74.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 74.

organization, (6) and a descriptive account of the best means for the attainment of a valued state of affairs. We have no quarrel with any of these senses of "basing ethics on science." In fact, any responsible ethical decision must rely very heavily upon the empirical knowledge of causal connections in the world that the various sciences provide. This descriptive data is the basis of intelligent conduct. However, we do deny that any of the above senses of "basing ethics on science" can provide us with an ethical norm, that is, a standard of right conduct.

III

Emerson does attempt to provide this norm, however, in another sense of "basing ethics on science." He attempts to ground ethical norms on a biological basis. What is meant by grounding ethical norms on a biological basis is the reduction of normative ethical terms to biological or physiological terms, with the consequence that all normative judgments can be verified or falsified empirically, according to the scientific method. Emerson tells us, for example, that "the maintenance and control of the necessities of life at optimal values for efficient existence seem to be a universal evolutionary trend."[7] Emerson elsewhere speaks of it as a biological trend. This biological trend involves the self-control, regulation, and maintenance of many important conditions of life within each organismic level. Following the Harvard physiologist, Walter Cannon, Emerson calls this trend "dynamic homeostasis." Permit me to quote Emerson in detail: "Homeostasis within the human body includes the regulation of water, sugar, salts, and temperature, to mention only a few examples. Relative equilibrium within various ranges of variation, and balanced compromise among multitudinous activities are characteristic of homeostasis. Homeostasis may be a delicate regulation by means of subtle mechanisms, as well as a grosser and more obvious control. It may be psychological as well as physiological. It may involve activation as well as inhibition. Homeostatic effects are often web effects with many feed-backs. There may be homeostasis of homeostatic functions. Homeostasis is not static but dynamic. Functional differentials and unbalance may be homeostatic. For example, the nerve impulse is a wave of depolarization of the nerve membrane. Repolarization is rapid, thus maintaining the functional capacity of the nerve. The maintenance of polarization in this case is the homeostatic establishment of disequilibrium. Optimal conditions of life and existence often require differentials, asymmetries, and variation, rather than uniformity, symmetry, and stability. Homeostasis is the regulation, control, and maintenance of conditions for optimal existence."[8] Within human society, homeostasis includes the social regulation of optimal physical and biotic conditions of

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 72.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 73.

human existence by a variety of means, including architecture, industry, transportation, agriculture, public health, and economic exchange.

Emerson argues that "we may conclude from the accumulation of great quantities of evidence that the general long-term trend of all social and organic evolution is toward increased homeostasis, and that ethics and economics are important portions of the process in human social evolution. Many terms and phrases carry implications of homeostasis and indicate that this concept is old. They include such words and phrases as beneficial, well-being, adaptation, adjustment, welfare, security, harmony, equilibrium, balance, the good life, satisfaction, prosperity, enrichment, self-fulfilment, the full life, self-sufficiency, progress, the greatest good of the greatest number, self-control, peace of mind, contentment, and happiness. Many of these terms have ethical connotations. Dynamic homeostasis has an important advantage over nearly all of these terms. It can be observed and measured in living systems."[9] It "seems to be a more adequate goal for both the organic and social evolution, and has the added advantage of being subject to objective analysis, quantification, and comparison."[10]

From the above remarks and others that Emerson makes, it seems clear that right conduct is to be defined in terms of that which contributes to dynamic homeostasis. He remarks: "Any controlled behaviour that leads toward individual disintegration may be considered unethical, and any behaviour leading toward personal balance, control, and greater effectiveness may be considered ethical."[11] This remark applies also to familial and social homeostasis.

Emerson is probably correct, assuming that "homeostasis" is a purely descriptive predicate, that it has the advantage of "being subject to objective analysis, quantification, and comparison." The use of the inductive method would provide probable empirical knowledge of the rightness of acts by discovering whether or not they contributed to homeostasis. Using one of Emerson's examples, "it is usually against the long-term interests of society for an individual to kill or harm another of his own species . . ." This can be discovered empirically. Since killing damages social homeostasis, it can scientifically be shown to be bad. Emerson's implicit inference is that with probability, all ethical choices can be shown to be right or wrong by the use of the scientific method.

However, the problem with Emerson's attempt to base ethics on biology is the same problem that confronts any form of value reductionism. If a descriptive predicate is to express the meaning of "right," then it must be nonsensical to ask whether what possesses this descriptive property designated by the predicate is really right. If, as Emerson claims, "contributes to dynamic homeostasis" were the meaning of "right" in its moral sense, then to ask of any act

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 73–74.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 79.
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 78.

which contributes to dynamic homeostasis whether it is really right would be nonsensical. But clearly this question is quite meaningful. Emerson's definition of "right" in terms of an empirical characteristic, "contributes to dynamic homeostasis," the presence of which is discoverable by the use of the scientific method, robs the term "right" of any of its normative characteristics. No doubt the scientist can discover if an act contributes to dynamic homeostasis. But if this is all that is meant when one says that an act is right, then knowing that it is right will not inform us whether or not we ought to choose it or perform it. The notion of "right" has lost its normative implications.

Emerson seems to be particularly insensitive to the problem of the relation of "is" to "ought." He remarks: "Without attempting to solve this ancient problem (relation of "is" and "ought"), it seems that value systems and attitudes evolve and are directed by dynamics similar to those found in biological systems, and that our philosophical difficulties are more semantic than scientifically real."[12] However, it seems clear to me that the difficulty of moving from the "is" to the "ought" is obviously not a semantic problem. It is a logical problem, and can certainly be called "scientifically real" if the scientist is interested in conforming to valid patterns of reasoning. That we cannot derive a normative statement from purely descriptive ones is simply one case of the general rule according to which the conclusion of a demonstrative argument cannot contain any term that is not contained in at least one of the premises. Surely this is a logically sound contention. Taking Emerson's own position, it is clear that we cannot derive the conclusion, "act x, which contributes to dynamic homeostasis, is right" from the purely descriptive statements that Emerson provides, namely, "the biological trend is toward homeostasis" or "dynamic homeostasis is a universal evolutionary trend." What is needed for this inference to be valid is the further normative premise, "Every act which contributes to homeostasis is a right act." Emerson has not, however, in any sense justified this major normative premise. He has not shown that "contributes to homeostasis" is a necessary and sufficient condition for an act to be right. He simply arbitrarily defines "right" in terms of "homeostasis." Thus Emerson, with his value reductionism, not only leaves normative terms bereft of their normative import. He also fails to justify scientifically an ethical norm.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 68.

IMAGE AND SYMBOL IN *THE SEAFARER*

by NEVILLE DENNY

Note.—I refer those readers who are unfamiliar with the poem to a working translation I have appended at the end of this essay.

IT IS A great pity that one of the finest poems in English, *The Seafarer*, should be known to relatively so few people. It is a greater pity that the vast majority of those who do know it (people, for the most part, who have had the good fortune to study English at the university) know it only as a language exercise, after its mutilation at the hands of the "linguists" rooting around for nice philological points. *The Seafarer* is great poetry and deserves to be approached as such, and not as a kind of philological crossword puzzle.

The Seafarer, despite (perhaps because of) its "primitiveness", works in precisely the same kind of way as most great poetry does. A concrete and particular situation ("a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events"), usually by means of minute particulars becoming the symbol of the general and the universal, is used as the "formula" for a particular "emotion", for a fresh and unique human experience, full of feelings and values. As in all great poetry, the sensory situation and the emotional experience become fused into an indivisible unity.

In *The Seafarer*, the concrete and particular situation, evocatively presented, is of a lowering sea-scape, of the harshness of the seafaring life to the early seaman. In a manner slightly reminiscent of *Gerontion*, the poem is virtually a dramatic soliloquy in form, the reflections of an old seaman about his former life. In the very first line we get a hint of what the poet is trying to do. "I can utter a true-song about myself." It is the bold assertion of the confident artist: he will narrate the past ("tell of (his) travels"), but the suggestion is also there, very light, that he will be creating a poem as well (*sōthgied* also means "true-poem"), using the facts he can remember as the image of something greater and more universal.

He goes on, with extraordinary power and economy, to communicate what exactly life at sea represents. The power grows out of the economy. The spare, stark, simple diction, the deliberate generalization and failure to particularize about specific hardships, somehow invest single words and phrases with a significance they would not otherwise possess. And this very control and economy, this refusal to indulge in impressive detail, gives the verse a vigour and an elo-

quence of compelling strength. We notice the force of this in the first few lines. The poet can "tell" of the "times of hardship" he has "suffered" on "toil-days" (i.e. the days at sea, as distinct from the days rocking idly at anchor in some foreign port); and the physical privation, the aching muscles, the blistered hands, the parched throat and crippling fatigue, explicitly not referred to, are still subtly evoked by "suffering" and "toil-days". He can tell, too, of the "bitter breast-care" he has "endured"; and, again, though not enumerated or particularized, the emotional trials, the anguish of loneliness and the cruel longing for home and rest and loved ones, is communicated by "breast-care" and given extra sharpness here by the sensory implications of "bitter". The stringent economy of expression demands the keenest sensitivity to the implications of apparently innocuous words and word groups.

The poet can tell of the toil-days and the breast-care of life at sea. He can also tell of trials he has made of life on many voyaging ships, those austere "care-halls" so ironically and succinctly referred to: it is a wry contrast between the spacious, easy, joy-filled "hall" of the germanic chiefs, and this narrow, cooped-up misery in a small boat. We are meant to make the shift of meaning, after registering the irony, from "hall" to "coop" or "hutch" of care ("care" itself so marvellous an example of English understatement, embracing so much, again, of the seaman's lot: loneliness, longing, exhaustion, fear, hunger, the day-to-day, ceaseless labour); and he can tell of the terrible "rolling of the waves". The key words burn with a power that gives them immediate significance, and which comes directly from the austerity of their context. We are conditioned in these first lines for the way in which the language will "work" in the remainder of the poem.

At sea, the poet has often "occupied" the "strict night-watch" at "the boat's prow", "strict" with its meanings of narrow (referring to the actual boat's bows) and also strait, severe (referring to the harshness of the duty). He has occupied the cold and lonely night-watch, crouched there shivering and alone on countless nights, of calm and of storm, and also during those ghastly, eternal-seeming moments when the keel has "jarred against rocks". Further power, emotion, is given to the bald, matter-of-fact statement by its very terseness: the poet refuses to elaborate or embellish. On those grey northern seas, the poet has often been "assailed by cold" (the O.E. verb, in the original, derives from a word meaning "throng": hence "thronged about by cold" would be more accurate, but not so compelling as the original, where the force of the image, immediately conveyed, comes from the powerful suggestion of enemies, inexorable and malignant hosts, bent on crushing the seaman); his feet, his limbs, have been "locked" (bound) by frost, by "cold fetters", chilled to an immovability comparable to their having been bound by iron. Again, the image is evocatively poetic, implying as it does the imprisoned quality of *life at sea*, as well: the seaman is like a prisoner in an endlessly floating cell (memories of the ironic "care-hall" linger in our minds

and are summoned up here). And in delicate, finely balanced contrast to the "shackling" *cold*, the seaman's "cares" (again, that curt, underplayed word, containing so much) "were sighed *hot* around the heart"—it is a masterly touch.

Shackled by cold, molten with "care" within, the spirit "torn", rent, ravaged by hunger (for objects other than food as well), the "sea-weary one" exists from day to stretching day at sea. Once, he ("poor care-worn") spent an entire winter at sea, "on a victim's" lonely "wake" (*wræccan* comes from the verb *to avenge, punish*, so "exile", the favourite of the editors, is perhaps not the best word here; nor, really, is "wretched one"), alone on the tossing "ice-cold sea", "hung with icicles", as if "fallen away" from kinsmen, all he holds dear. Dryly, he comments that the soft men on dry land, those for whom things go "most prosperously", know nothing of what these facts mean in reality. (There is a slight ambiguity in the poet's attitude to the life lived by those on dry land, a slight nostalgia, confirmed in further references to land-lubbers, which provides a tension in what the sea- and land-life come to symbolize.)

On those wintry, forbidding seas, the hail flies "in showers", nothing is to be heard but the sea's "echoing boom", the sound of the "ice-cold billow", and sometimes, the "elfin song"—mysterious, magic, frightening—perhaps the keen, unearthly "song" in the ears produced by fatigue and loneliness and constant listening to the sea's voice. But "elves' song" refers to something else too, I feel: the *poetic* voice, the magic voice of the muse, comes unbidden. The solitude, the close communion with nature, with profound reality, stir the poet's creative imagination.

But more than this, ever amid this freezing austerity, the sea-bird can be heard, and the poet can find his "delight" in the cry of gannet and curlew: greater delight in their pure, ringing song than in "the laughter of men", greater delight in the "singing seamew" than in "ale-drinking". Austere life at sea may be, but its delights are purer, more keen, than those found in the soft, indulgent society of men on land.

At sea, storms beat upon the rocks and cliffs, and headlands passed; their roar is "answered" by the "ice-feathered tern", and there too the "dewy-feathered" eagle "yells". Always the rigour of the life is balanced by the graceful sea-bird, symbol of something precious and good. It is "ice-feathered", it is true, subjected to all the harshness of its world and clime, but it can "yell", in elemental acceptance of life and in defiance of all that nature can hurl at it; and it can be "dew-feathered" too: there is a spring-like promise in the bird as well, a quality of freshness, sustentation and rebirth. The first suggestion is made in these references to the solitary, self-sufficient sea-birds, of a value, an as yet undefined quality of good, in this apparently stringent and totally savage life.

The "needy heart" is uncheered by "protectors" on these remote, watery wastes: the warmth and comfort of a chief's hall are not for the seaman. And via the link of this memory of land-life, reference

is again made to the drowsy, indulgent, "wine-cocky" life of the land-lubber. He who revels in the joys of towns, he who has endured "few evil-times", can know nothing of the life at sea, "believe little" of the weariness (again, the evocative under-statement) of confinement ("I *had*-to stay") to the "brimpath"—the ocean's lip, the very edge of the curving sea. But, as in the earlier reference to land-life, a slight tension is felt in the poet's attitude, a trace of longing or regret for the "few evil-times" and the "life's joy" of towns.

The land-man knows nothing of life at sea, where the "night-shadow" gathers with ferocious suddenness, and the snow howls down from the north, and rime "clenches" the earth, and that "coldest of grain", hail, smites down on the world. There is the same subtle ambiguity in "coldest of grain" as there is in the balance of "ice-feathered" and "dewy-feathered"—a containing of promise (of rebirth and harvest) *within* the harshness of the northern life. "Hail" is a feared and cruel aspect of this life (seen here as symbolic of the whole life), but the poet sees even this as "grain"—suggestive of something *sown* by this flinty austerity that will later flower in abundant harvest.

The juxtaposition of the two worlds or ways-of-life, is as delicately balanced as elsewhere in the poem: hardship, austerity, *involvement* at the heart of elemental nature, and the cosy, indulgence-laved comfort of life on land. It is not so much that land-life is being condemned, but that it and life at sea are being used as symbols of two *kinds* of life that the poet is contemplating, in any region.

Thinking about the hardships of life at sea, the poet finds, strangely, the "thoughts" of his very being "buffeting" now, his heart excitedly stirred, to "try" once more "the steep streams" and "the salt waves' tumult"; far from being appalled by the forbidding picture he has been contemplating, of life on those dread and desolate wastes of water, he is stirred to excitement, to eagerness, to "try" it again; his heart "lusts" to fare forth, to visit "the land of strange peoples". And he reflects with preciser exactness now on what life at sea represents. There, living so close to danger and death, man is always "anxious" regarding God's will for him: he never knows what is in store for him. No matter if he is the proudest man on earth, no matter how "liberal" he was with his gifts, no matter how "spirited" in youth, how "bold", courageous in his deeds, how "faithful" his lord was to him—about his seafaring he always feels anxiety as to what the Lord may will for him. The items cover all that is valued by the world: personal liberality, spiritedness, courage, and the security and protection of a good lord. But even with the thought of these to comfort him, and the knowledge of a good life nobly lived, it is not sufficient to remove the fear life at sea brings: there one is closer to elemental forces, closer to the immediate, mighty presence of God.

This first reference to God (and hence to religion) in the poem, begins to define for us the almost intangible intimations we have already had that this is a religious poem, and the austerity of sea-life

and "the world", as images, begin to sharpen into clearer focus. The symbol of the bird (traditionally symbolic of the human soul, and in our own times seldom free, as a symbol, of overtones of the Holy Spirit) has begun to do this for us already, but these first explicit suggestions of a link between the life described and the religious life confirm the nebulous suspicions.

At sea, the poet goes on, the seaman's thoughts are not of the harp, "nor of ring-receiving, nor of delight in women, nor of the world's joy", but only of the fearsome "rolling of the waves". These are the things that generally make life delightful—song (poetry), women (love), presents (gifts, payment from grateful and liberal lords—suggesting the joy attained through satisfying *service*), or simply worldly joy (eating, sleeping, laughter, conversation, comfort, warmth, security). All these are harshly absent at sea. But the seafarer "always has longing": he doesn't necessarily *think* of these things (but the ambiguity of attitude is still there), or desire them, but a "longing" for all the joy and comfort they normally represent is never absent from him.

Spring comes (with all its associations—echoing the associations of "*dewy*-feathered" and "coldest of *grain*"—of rebirth, promise, Christ), "the world revives", and this "rouses the heart to a voyage". The cuckoo "urges" too (the "lookout watch" or "harbinger" of summer, of what is promised). His call lures us to the sea again, but his song also "bodes" sorrow, "care", "bitter in the breast-treasure" (i.e. heart)—it warns that the life will be "care"-filled, painful, hard. Here the cuckoo has merged as symbol with the lone-flying sea-bird, suggesting the "care" and hardship, *and* the spring-like promise of what it symbolizes.

Another reference to the land-man follows ("the man luck-rich" —the nostalgia and longing are still noticeable), who knows so little of what seafarers "suffer", the men who "wretched wakes widest spread": those unfortunates who lay a "victim's" wake away at the sea's "brim".

And the poet's heart turns restlessly in the "heart-cage" (like a caged bird—why do editors persist in giving "breast" in their glossaries?). The poet's mind is "with the sea-flood", roams "over the whale's world", "wanders" widely over "earth's lap" ("lap", so suggestive of profusion and expanse and prolificity). And it comes back to him "ravenous and greedy", hungry to "try" the sea again. And in his mind the sea-bird, "the lone-flier", "yells" again, and irresistibly "whets" the heart "for the whale-way", the "spreadness" of the sea.

But to the poet "the joys of the Lord"—closeness, communion with Him, the doing of His will—are "hotter" (again, we are meant to make the contrast with this savagely cold world), more consuming, alive, aflame, "than this dead life", so "loan-brief and lean on earth" (*læne*, meaning "brief" in the text, is from a word meaning "loan", but there are obvious overtones of "lean"—O.E. *hlæne*—which the contemporary listener would not have missed). And on earth we are

ever unsure of how and when death will come: "disease or age or sword-hate" (i.e. violence) may "scatter" the life of the "doomed bold-watch". Given this—the uncertainty and doubt, the uselessness of acquired wealth—the best memorial a man can have, the best he can achieve, is a record of a good, valorous life, spent in fighting evil. "That which is after-spoken of every man, the praise of living men, best behind-words, is that before he had to go he strove, acted on earth against the malice of fiends, against the devil with bold deeds." So will "the children of men afterwards praise him", and his glory live with angels, forever, "a delight among angel throngs". The religious implications of the imagery of the poem have become boldly explicit. Thinking of the austerity and hardship of life at sea, contrasted with the indolence and luxury of life on dry land, has led the poet to think of the austerity of the religious life (of which the sea-bird becomes the symbol—of lone, simple, austere existence, close to God, nature, delighting in things simple and elemental) as opposed to the wordly life of Mammon. It is for this life, austere it is true, but filled with simple delights and promise, that the heart "lusts".

The poet goes on to lament the passing of the days of "pomp", of the kings and emperors and "gold-givers", who performed such "glorious deeds" and who lived in "lordliest glory". The times of the sumptuous, splendid, powerful rulers are gone, with all their glory: "fallen is all this host, the joys are gone away". The pagan chiefs and their glory have become, perhaps, a bold symbol for the splendid and glorious life before the Fall: now only the "weak" remain, all "joy" departed, and we possess the world "in trouble".

Life grows joyless for the old seaman. He reflects how the "nobleness" of the earth "ages and sears", how "glory is pressed down"; every man in the world (the "mid-yard"—between before-life and after-life, between conception and death, between heaven and hell) ages, grows pale, "laments" the passing of friends, the princes' sons "delivered to the earth". Death comes to all, and then all life's most elemental delights, most simple and universal experiences, are lost to man: he can no longer "devour sweetness" (how imperative and total and un-deniable is that "devour", *relish*!), no longer feel pain even, no longer "touch with the hand" or "think with the mind". All these, most precious and common (to seaman and landman), cease at death.

Gold is of no use then. "Strew" your brother's grave with gold: "that will not go with him". The soul "full of sins" will find gold (collected, hidden, cached on earth) no help "before the dread of God". This "fear of the Creator", so great, is what keeps the universe in operation, is what "turns the mould" ("mould" with all its marvellous connotations of the loving artist's care and dedication, the *manual* fashioning that produced the earth. It brings dramatically close the poet's belief in the absorbed and real *interest* of the Artist in his creation, and the suspension of all things, and all reality, by His will). God "established the strong earth, the earth's vastness ("lap" is the word used, again, with all its rich implications) and the

high heavens". And the poetry implies, surely, how small we are in relation to all this.

The poet is reaching the end of his "true-song". He has presented us with the hard, rigorous seafaring life as image of the religious life of denial and self-discipline; tension has entered the poem in the contrast between the superficially blasted and forsaken quality of this life and the ease and warmth and security of life on land (the life of indulgence and luxury). Of this latter the seaman is contemptuous, but deep beneath the contempt is a poignant longing and nostalgia. But the sea, savage, bitter, cruel, is also a siren that cannot be denied. To the religious man, no matter how keen the longing for material ease, the Lord's joys are always "hotter"; the sea-bird has its own joys and delights. Ultimately, all "worldly" pleasures and achievements are temporal: the one, eternal fact that remains is the dread of God, His mightiness, His suspension of all things by His will. What boots "gold" before this fact?

"Foolish is he who dreads not his Lord: death comes to him unexpectedly. Blessed is he who lives humbly: the honour from the heavens comes to him: the Creator confirms in him that heart, because he trusts in his strength." On this note of simple, but triumphant faith, the poem ends. "Humility" and self-denial are in the end the only intelligent things to strive for: the Lord will "confirm" and strengthen that heart desiring them. Arrogance,—"cockiness"—stupidity—seeks comfort and pleasure and riches, all lost at death, and with them the hope of any later reward. It is not the message we have to endorse or otherwise, it is the manner in which the poet has communicated it, and this he has done in masterly fashion. *The Seafarer* belongs with all great English poetry, and speaks with as powerful a voice across the centuries as anything produced in more recent times. As a poetic expression of the early seafaring life, alone, of what the sea *meant* to men twelve hundred years ago, as it always will mean to them, *The Seafarer* is brilliant, and deserves far wider popularity than it enjoys today. But in addition, the poem is a profound and delicate expression of man's eternal quest for something better than mere vegetable or animal existence, of the spare but real delight that comes from life made dignified and significant by submission to any higher ideal, and the discipline and regulation that goes with it. The *matter* of *The Seafarer* is timeless in its significance, and far from the naïve superstition of a simple "primitive" which it is generally supposed to be. The *Seafarer* is a man "speaking to men", whenever and wherever they live, and in this resides its real value.

THE SEAFARER

(I include this translation, for ease of reference, having made no attempt at stylistic flow or lucidity. It is a line-by-line translation, even word-by-word, except where ambiguity would result.)

I can about myself a truesong utter,
Of travels tell, how I on toildays
A time of hardship often suffered,
Bitter breast-care have endured,
Made trial on ships of care-halls many; 5
Terrible the waves' rolling. There me oft occupied
The strict night-watch at the boat's prow,
When it against rocks jarred. By cold assailed,
My feet were locked by frost,
By cold fetters; there the cares were sighed 10
Hot around the heart; hunger within tore
The sea-weary (one's) heart. The man not knows
To whom on (dry) land (it) most prosperously happens,
How I, poor care-worn, the ice-cold sea
A winter remained on, on a victim's wake, 15
To good kinsmen fallen (away),
Hung with icicles. The hail in showers flew.
There I naught heard but the booming sea,
The ice-cold billow, sometimes the elves' song.
Did I me delight with the gannet's cry 20
And the curlew's song, before the laughter of men,
The singing seamew before mead-drink.
Storms there the cliffs beat (upon), there them the tern
answered,
Ice-feathered; full oft then the eagle yelled,
Dewy-feathered. No protectors 25
The needy heart might cheer.
And yet of it believes little he who has life's joy
Experienced in towns, with evil-times few,
Proud and wine-cocky, how I, weary, often
On the brim-path had to stay. 30
Grew dark the night-shadow, from the north (it)
snowed,
Rime the earth clenched; hail fell on the world,
Of grain the coldest.
And yet buffet now
My being's thoughts, that I the steep streams,
The salt-waves' tumult, myself might try; 35
Exhorts the heart's lust always
Forth to fare, that I far hence
The land of strange peoples might visit.
And yet not is so proud a man on earth,
Nor of his gifts so liberal, nor in youth so spirited, 40

Nor in his deeds so bold, nor to him his lord so faithful,
That he ever of his sea-faring anxiety not has,
As to what the Lord will do (to) him.
Not is with him of the harp the thought, nor of
ring-receiving,
Nor of delight in women, nor of world joy, 45
Nor about aught else except about the waves' rolling;
But he ever has longing, who on the water makes his way.
The groves' blossoms put forth, towns grow beautiful,
The fields grow fair, the world revives:
All these rouse the heart's eagerness, 50
The mind to a voyage, in him who so thinks
On the tide-ways far to roam.
Likewise the cuckoo urges with a sad voice,
Summer's lookout-watch sings, (and also) bodes sorrow,
Bitter in the breast-treasure. That the man not knows, 55
The man luck-rich, what some of those suffer,
Who wretched wakes widest spread!
And yet now my heart turns (restlessly) in the
heart-cage,
My mind with the sea-flood,
Over the whale's world, wanders wide (over) 60
The earth's lap, comes again to me
Ravenous and greedy; the lone-flier yells,
Whets to the whale-way the heart irresistibly,
Over the seas' spreadness.
And yet to me hotter are
The Lord's joys than this dead life, 65
Loan-brief (and lean) on earth: I trust not
That with Him earth-riches everlasting stand.
Each one of three things,
Before its time comes, will always be in doubt:
Disease or age or sword-hate 70
Scatters the life of the doomed bold-watch.
Wherefore that which is afterspoken of every man,
The praise of living men, best behind-words, (is)
That he strove before he had to go,
Acted on earth against the malice of fiends, 75
Against the devil with bold deeds,
So that men's children afterwards praise him,
And his glory afterwards live with the angels,
For ever, eternal life's glory,
A delight among angel throngs.
The days are departed, 80
All the pomps of earth's kingdoms;
Not are now kings nor emperors
Nor gold-givers, as formerly were,
When they most among them(selves) glorious deeds
performed

And in lordliest glory lived: 85
Fallen is all this host, the joys are gone away;
Remains the weaker and this world possesses,
Enjoys (it) in trouble. Glory is pressed down;
The earth's nobleness ages and sears,
As now every man throughout the mid-yard (i.e.
world) 90
Old age him assails, his face grows pale.
Grey-haired (he) laments, knows his former friends,
Princes' sons, to earth are delivered.
Not for him can then his flesh-house, when from him he
that life loses,
Not sweetness devour nor sore (pain) feel, 95
Nor (with the) hand touch nor with the mind think.
Though he will strew the grave with gold,
Bury his born brother beside the dead,
With treasures various, that will not go with him.
Not can there the soul, who is full of sins, 100
Gold of help (find) before the dread of God,
When he it hides beforehand, while he here lives.
Great is the fear of the Creator, whereby the mould
(i.e. earth) turns,
He established the strong earth,
The earth's vastness and the high heavens. 105
Foolish is he who his Lord not dreads: comes to him
the death unexpected.
Blessed is he who humble lives: comes to him the
honour from the heavens:
The Creator in him that heart confirms, because he in
his strength trusts.

EDUCATION IN THE SOVIET UNION

by P. D. HEY

"I knew an American once: he came and visited the U.S.S.R. and saw our schools. When he was here he said all sorts of nice things; but when he got back home he wrote horrible things about us. You'd have thought it was another country he was writing about."

(*Intourist Guide.*)

"They have a barbaric energy." (*West Berlin Headmaster.*)

"Every year 2,900 students cross from Eastern Germany to the West as refugees to study."

(*West Berlin Ministry of Education Official.*)

IN VISITING another country, one is barraged by a host of disparate impressions many of which seem to have relevance to education one way or another. The problem is to know what to leave out. This is largely an impressionistic account of a recent visit to schools in Leningrad and Moscow.

I found the greatest freedom of discussion of problems affecting teaching—technical problems, one might say; but, when I broached a political matter, there was seldom any comment. For the most part, comments on the educational system by Russian teachers were favourable—there was far more unanimity of opinion than one would have found with a comparable group, say, of English teachers. I got the impression of a tremendously powerful, if somewhat inflexible system. But it was pleasant to be in a society where the teacher was accorded such high status, and where he was so obviously aware of, and proud of, his achievement.

In considering the system or making criticisms, it is well to bear the past in mind, and to realise that although formal education in Russia has been going on for a long time, it was received by a very small proportion of the whole population before the Revolution. The achievement of the Soviet teacher since the Revolution has been considerable if what was claimed in numerous instances is true. In two generations the teacher has succeeded in developing a literate society, whereas in 1917 only 25% of the population were literate. Literacy figures were frequently quoted to me with pride.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

As a preliminary to a consideration of recent developments in Soviet education, perhaps the following general characteristics might be given for those who might not be familiar with the system:

Firstly, it can be said that education is most developed in the Soviet Union in the large industrial cities, and in particular in Leningrad and Moscow. The description that follows is a generalized account merely, and cannot easily be applied to all parts of the Soviet Union. The degree of industrialisation, for example, influences the types of schools that are available. It can be said, however, that there is far greater uniformity in this system than can be found in countries such as Britain where growth has been much more haphazard, and less subject to state interference.

Because of the increasing demands of industry and agriculture, and of the economy, many mothers are compelled to work. There has, in recent years, been a rapid growth of nursery schools ("yasli") for children up to three years, parents being charged a percentage of their combined salaries. Children can be brought to school at 8 a.m., and are collected at 6 p.m. Attendance at kindergartens ("detskie sady") is free but voluntary. These schools fall under the control of the directorate of pre-school education in the various republic ministries of education, and while they have to conform to ministerial standards, can be established by a wide range of institutions such as factories, apartment houses and trade unions. It is estimated that about 15-20% of children between the ages of 3 and 7 are in kindergartens. There is no doubt that there will be a rapid increase in the number of children attending these schools.

Education is compulsory in the Soviet Union for children from 7 to 14: this is soon to be raised to 15. The primary school ("nachal 'nye") as a separate institution does not exist in the urban centres of the Soviet Union, but this sort of school still exists in remote areas. Here four years of education are given. The "incomplete" secondary school ("ne polnye srednie shkoly") or seven-year school ("semiletki") carries students to the present compulsory school leaving age, and is to be found in most areas. The child remains, therefore, in the same school throughout his period of compulsory education. The "complete" secondary school ("polnye scrednie shkoly") or the ten-year school ("desyatiletki") is to be found in the large urban centres, and it is from this school that students proceed to the university. Tuition is free though textbooks, writing material and school uniforms of the Young Pioneers (see p. 7) have to be paid for.[1] A number of "technicums" ("vehilisheha") or "specialised" secondary schools take children on after the seven-year "incomplete" secondary school. These include schools to train nurses, and veterinary surgeons and institutes to train teachers for the seven-year school. A student transferring to a "technicum" from the ten-year school would spend only two years on his course.[2]

[1]See table "Higher Education in U.S.S.R.", Yelyutin, V. Soviet Booklet No. 51, June 1959, p. 13. (Appendix I.)

[2]*Ibid.*, p. 63.

The Soviet system sets great store by examinations and these are taken at regular intervals at schools and higher institutes.[3]

Young teachers are trained in separate establishments for primary and increasingly for secondary school work. The university seems to be playing a less important part in the training of secondary school teachers while separate Pedagogical Institutes have been growing in size and status. The First Moscow Institute of Foreign Languages, for example, which trains teachers of English only, has 700 full-time students doing a five-year course, and 2,000 part-time. The Soviet Union has 212 teacher training institutes for teachers for the 5th-10th grades (that is the upper ranges of the school) with an attendance of 515,000.

In the Soviet Union the term "higher education" ("vysshee obrazovanie") refers to training from 4 to 6 years after the secondary school. These higher institutions tend to be concentrated in the cities. Entrance to these institutions is by competitive examination, and there is a high failure rate, particularly in the larger cities such as Moscow and Leningrad. There is a wide range of institutes open to the student besides the 39 universities of the U.S.S.R.[4] These institutes include medicine, technology, law and economics. Most students receive a grant that is adequate to cover fees and living expenses. At Moscow University, for example, 96% of students are on grants. (It might be said here that a vast number—45%—of all students in the Soviet Union attend evening colleges or take correspondence courses of one sort or another.)

There is state control in education throughout the Soviet Union, in each Soviet republic. Education is highly centralised. There are, of course, no private schools and there is a good deal of rigidity in the system. Control by the inspectorate is more severe in the Republics than in most systems in the West. This was explained as being necessary in view of the rapid growth of the U.S.S.R. and the lack of adequately trained teachers. There are, incidentally, more than 1,700,000 teachers in the Soviet Union, not all of whom are fully qualified; 80% of the teaching profession are women: however, more men than women teach in the senior grades, though it is not uncommon for a woman to be director of a school.

By law, there is no religious instruction in Soviet schools up to the age of 16. "Education is given in the spirit of atheism" I was told. However, there is no specific subject "atheism" in the curriculum. Anti-religious propaganda is permitted under Article 124 of the constitution. The syllabuses of all subjects in all schools and institutes must conform to the Marxian doctrine of materialism.

All schools are co-educational. There have been periods of experimentation in education in the U.S.S.R. and for a period during and

[3]"It is amusing to reflect that in Russia, where capitalism is cursed for its competitiveness, competition in schools is the norm, whereas in the capitalistic West it has all but disappeared." (Barzun, Jacques "The House of Intellect"—Secher and Warburg, 1959.)

[4]Attendance "exceeds 200,000". Yelyutin, V. *op. cit.*, p. 20.

after the war the sexes were educated separately in many schools. Since 1954, however, boys and girls have been educated together, even doing work together in the "machine shop" of the school, or factory work of a similar kind during school periods.

There is no "streaming" by intelligence in Soviet schools. The use of intelligence tests was abandoned in 1936. I was told by a Leningrad headmaster that classes in schools are made up as children from the area apply for admission, with the general provision that there are an equal number of boys and girls in each class, and that the "social composition" is mixed. By this he meant that children from a variety of homes—professional, skilled workers, unskilled workers and so on—are put into the same class. The theory that there should be equal opportunity for all was frequently quoted.

There is, therefore, a wide range of intelligence in any class, and the teacher is compelled to proceed at a rather measured pace with his lessons. This might account for the stress, in Soviet education, on memorisation and "recitation". Soviet theorists think that hard work and a favourable environment can overcome most hereditary deficiency. (Incidentally, it is an extremely difficult matter to get a child accepted for a school for retarded children in the Soviet Union.)

THE SOVIET SCHOOLS AND THE PIONEER MOVEMENT

An important aspect of Soviet education is the link the school has with the locality. Parents' committees are epxected to take an active part in the life of the school. For example, in school 153 in Leningrad, the parents' committee assists the school with excursions (e.g. to the theatre). Members of the parents' committee assist with various after-school study circles for children, for example, in domestic science. Discipline problems also fall within the province of the parents' committee. For example, the committee investigates domestic problems if a child is misbehaving at school, and carries a report to the factory (say) where the offending father is working. He will then be spoken to by the factory committee and, if necessary, lampooned in the wall newspaper. Free school meal provision, surprisingly enough, is not yet a feature of Soviet education, and the parents' committee sometimes assists indigent children. Last year at school 153 in Leningrad, the parents' committee provided free meals for 28 children whose fathers died in World War II.

At one ten-year school in Leningrad, the following menu was provided by the parents' committee at nine roubles a week (about 13/6 at par):

(i) Soup,
(ii) Meat or fish,
(iii) Jelly or stewed fruit,
Bread and coffee or tea.

At the centre of the life of all schools is the Young Pioneer movement:

"I, a Young Pioneer of the Soviet Union, promise in the

presence of my comrades to love my Soviet fatherland, to live and strive as our great Lenin showed us, as the Communist Party teaches us."

Young Pioneer Promise.[5]

Most boys and girls join this group at the age of 9 and remain members until 14—that is, throughout school life. Essentially, the Pioneers are meant for the education of Communist youth, and political instruction forms an important part of their training. Most schools have a Pioneer room which acts as centre for children's activities. Here one can see often a bust of Lenin, or a picture such as one of Lenin addressing the young Communists. Gifts and flags may be about the room from a variety of communist countries with which the school has established a link.

The Young Pioneers establish study circles for children after school hours, and it is these that often supplement the rather pedestrian teaching in the classroom, besides giving political instruction.

If a child is fortunate he will be able to go to a Pioneer Palace, such as the one in Leningrad, where an extraordinary number of cultural facilities are available to him. To enumerate some . . . there are 328 rooms in the Palace, providing 760 "circles" for about 16,000 children a week. Approximately 400 adults are at work in the Palace—60-70% full time. Each "circle" meets twice a week for two hours, out of school time. There is an artistic section which has two orchestras—a symphony orchestra and one of folk instruments—and a large choir. Children can learn to play all sorts of musical instruments. There are sections for dramatics, puppets, ballet dancing, folk dancing, singing. There are painting (oils and water colour) sculpturing, pottery. One whole wing of the Palace is given over to "technical" work from fretwork to work with precision instruments. There are language circles where most of the languages of the West are studied. Classes in Arabic, Hindu and Chinese are also available. There is a planetarium in which the night sky of Leningrad is simulated and it is possible to go on an imaginary (at present at least) trip to Mars. There is a geology section with a small museum attached: Pioneers collect specimens during the summer in the company of a Professor from the University of Leningrad. There are story-telling rooms where specially trained adults (and actors, and sometimes the authors themselves) tell stories to younger members. There is a chess room where classes are given by experts. It is possible for a child to attend films, concerts, lectures, dances, excursions; meet authors, actors, or read in one of the luxurious drawing rooms.

No one, not even the most prejudiced Western observer, could deny the tremendous educational opportunities provided (free) by this Palace.

[5]Quoted by Levin, Deana, "Soviet Education", Staples Press, 1959, p. 45.

Apart from the Pioneer organisation there are also "circles" run by schools after hours in a wide variety of subjects. "Komsomol", membership to the age of 25 for a selected group, follows the Pioneer movement and is a development from the latter. In recent years outstanding students have been encouraged to join to ensure able political leadership.

SCHOOL LESSONS

I was able to see some teachers in various sorts of schools at work. A general impression was that there seemed to be a considerable stress on rote learning and memory work, with the teacher being very much in the ascendant. He seemed to stress the learning of "facts" a good deal. A determined, rather sharp, purposeful manner seemed to be the general approach adopted in teaching. A teacher said: "Our Soviet children do not like those teacher who show mildness and indulgence, but those who teach theis. material well and clearly; they are severe, but just." If anythingr the children appeared to lack spontaneity. Children in class were, ranged in desks in the usual formal way. There was not a great deal of illustrative material on the walls of classrooms, though there were a good many mottoes about such as "Serve the honour of the school", and "Work, study and try for the people". This went well with a general seriousness of purpose and a rather stiff manner characteristic of children in the schools I visited. It was only when I saw them in the children's theatres in Moscow, 700 strong, that they seemed more relaxed and behaved freely.

In the science laboratories and biology rooms there was a profusion of models, microscopes, goldfish, guineapigs, tortoises and the skeletons of dogs, birds and the rest. The equipment in science laboratories seemed (to my eye) of an extremely high order, and I was frequently told of local manufacturers who had "adopted" schools to give them their equipment for use in the school.

One might ask what were some of the unusual things that school children in Russia do—unusual, that is, by comparison with the activities we find in our schools. Perhaps this can help suggest the function of the school in the developing Russian society. Let us consider one school—a typical ten-year secondary school in the heart of Leningrad. Children who live up to 150 metres away attend this school. Boys and girls work at the local car repair factory of the Pobeda car works during the course of their schooling.[6] Children in the 10th grade learn car driving—the school

[6]"The main task confronting the school to-day is to train the rising generation to take their places in life, to do useful work; it is to bring up our youth to deeply respect the principles of socialist society. The school has to give a many-sided education to people, who should be well familiar with the fundamentals of science and capable of systematic physical work. It has to rouse in youth the desire to be useful to society, to play an active part in the production of material wealth needed by society." (Decisions of the 21st Extraordinary Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, p. 142.—Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1959.)

has a car of its own. There is also a course in electrotechnics for everybody. Children in the school are encouraged to engage in manual labour—"labour-upbringing" it is called in the jargon. For instance, every boy and girl helps to clean the school premises at the beginning of the school year, and cleans the floors of the school throughout the year. Children in the school also care for pensioners in their out-of-school hours. They scrub the floors and go to the shops. They make furniture and toys for three kindergartens.

Last European summer children from the 5th grade and up built the following: a garage for the school car, a building for the school zoo (and put on the roof and installed the heating); they built a fountain and a basin for the school's fowls and ducks; they laid bricks and undertook excavation work. There is close liaison between the school and the local factory. For instance, each month the factory orders small articles that the school's workshops can make and the factory no longer produces.

There is a small "agricultural section" in this city school, with apple trees and currant and raspberry bushes. There are field crops in which the children experiment to produce different kinds of wheat. The children of the school have an interest in a "virgin soil" collective farm on the Urals, and send letters and parcels to the people living there.

Appearance of Schools

There is a shortage of schools in the Soviet Union. During the war, I was told, 82,000 schools with 15 million school places were destroyed. Many schools in the cities run a double shift—children coming in the morning at 8.30 and a second shift starting at 2.15. (The majority of teachers only work one shift.) School building is a priority. Since 1950, it is claimed, one new school in the Moscow region alone has been opened every nine days. The schools average 20 classrooms, 6 laboratories, a gymnasium and hall.[7] In 1955-56 37 schools were built in Moscow alone. School building has a prerogative over housing. By the best Western standards, I would say the schools I saw in Moscow and Leningrad were poor in appearance. They seemed to be built of inferior materials, and much of the furniture was heavy and old fashioned. In the cities of Moscow and Leningrad secondary schools were usually two or more storeys high (without lifts) and housed between 1,200 and 3,000 children. Corridors in the schools were large, windows abnormally small, and double windows were used.

Schools in Moscow and Leningrad seemed to have very little ground for playing fields. There might be a patch of ground for a small experimental garden, or an area that is flooded during the winter and used for skating. School equipment might include tractors, lorries and motor cars for polytechnical training.

[7]Korolev, F. "Education in the U.S.S.R.", Soviet News Booklet No. 24, London (undated).

There were few school halls for assembly—most had gymnasia. Sanitary facilities were often poor, though central heating was adequate. Classrooms were small. Most secondary schools had specialist rooms provided for the physical sciences, biology, geography and technical drawing, and as I have suggested, were well equipped. The study of a director of a secondary school was usually well carpeted and often even opulently furnished.

To the superficial observer at least, it was interesting to see the uniformity of the symbols displayed about the directors' studies in the various schools. Many I visited had full-length portraits of Lenin or Kruschev or N. N. Krupskaya, Lenin's wife. There would be at least a portrait of one of these on the wall. Each director's study had at least one potted plant—these were to be seen all over the schools—the one touch of green to be seen in winter. Desks were always of good wood. Of the books on the directors' desks, one could always be assured that there would be one by Makarenko.[8] Directors wore suits if they were men, and rather severe, somewhat frumpish, costumes if they were women.

Brief mention should be made here of the Children's Theatre, which is a most important feature of out-of-school education for Soviet children, since children under sixteen are not permitted to attend adult films or plays. There is close liaison between the Education Ministries and the Children's Theatres, and children often study and see performed plays set for examinations. A wide variety of plays can be seen: apart from frankly propaganda plays such as "The Life of Lenin" or plays dedicated to young people who fought in the Revolution, or a play about Pavlic Morosov, a Siberian boy, a Pioneer who, in the civil war in 1927-1929, intervened against his father and was killed, the best classic plays are

[8]A. S. Makarenko (1888–1939) gained experience as a teacher in the Maxim Gorky Labour Colony for juvenile delinquents. He stressed in his teaching the importance of the collective, and combined in his school theoretical teaching with productive labour. "Basing himself on the teachings of Lenin and Stalin on communist education, he developed his pedagogical system in a trenchant battle with bourgeois and petty-bourgeois pedagogical theories hostile to Marxism-Leninism. He ridiculed and rejected the anarchistic "theory of free education", showing that it led to laxity, lack of initiative, inability to meet difficulties, etc. He vigorously fought the pseudo-science of pedology, which made its chief law the fatalistic pre-determination of child personality by heredity and an immutable environment, and which displayed an exaggerated interest not only in the child's past but in its ancestors, too. What interested Makarenko was not the child's past but its future. He combated the pedologist "law" of fatalistic pre-determination because of heredity by theoretically substantiating the tremendous influence of correct education and demonstrating this influence in practice. He refuted the artificial and defective pedologist methods of studying children (by intelligence tests, far-fetched questionnaires) and knew how to probe the child's personality by pedagogical observation. He was adamant in his criticism of early 20th century experimental pedagogics for its biological tendencies, and fought, also, the metaphysical theories which built pedagogical "laws" on a purely speculative foundation divorced from real life, as, for example, the reactionary pedagogical system of the German pedologist Herbart."—(Professor Y. Medinsky: "Introduction to Makarenko, A. S. 'The Road to Life'." Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1951—pp. xv, xvi.)

frequently presented for children.[9] "The Theatre of the Young Spectator" in Moscow presents a repertoire of about eleven different plays in a month. Children pay reduced fees, and plays are carefully selected for different grades (I-IV, V-VII, VIII-X). The Children's Theatres are found in different centres of the Soviet Union, and each has a permanent orchestra, producers, actors and scene designers. Puppet Theatres are growing in number, particularly for children under seven.

Curricula are pretty well uniform throughout the Soviet Union, with minor local variants. The direction in which Soviet education is moving is clear. In the jargon, it is to make schooling "more in relation to life". What one notices is a strong utilitarian stress, though it must be confessed that teachers, when asked about this, were emphatic that from specific tasks general principles would emerge, and it was the job of the teacher to relate concrete examples taken from an industrial civilization and evolve more general principles.

NEW PROPOSALS IN SOVIET EDUCATION

1. *The Eight-year School.* The curriculum of the new eight-year school[10] will also increase the number of hours given to foreign languages, mathematics, physics and chemistry, and this suggests the direction in which Soviet education is moving. Education is geared to the national economy and its spirit is greatly influenced by Party ideology. The new Education Law passed in recent months is an example. This represents the most significant development in Russian education since the war, and it accelerates the trend towards "labour upbringing" already described. It also illustrates the close relationship that exists between education and State economic policy.

Broadly speaking, the intention of the Law (to be implemented in the next three years) is to combine education with productive labour. Increased labour training is to be incorporated into the curriculum as a way of educating the child.

At present two-thirds of Soviet children receive seven years of schooling after which they either go to work or to a labour reserve vocational training school. The New Law will increase schooling to 8 years, and in this additional year there will be an increase in the hours devoted to academic study with particular stress on language, mathematics, physics and chemistry. A good deal of "polytechnical" training is incorporated into the curriculum.

Following the eight-year school, there will be a considerable amount of supervised vocational training for three years linked to industry and agriculture, for children in all types of schools.

[9]These include plays by Shakespeare, Moliere, Tolstoy, Turgeniev and Gogol, as well as fairy tales and dramatized versions of Kipling's "Mowgli" and "Just So Stories".

[10]"Teaching Curriculum for 8-year School." (See Table—Appendix II.)

(i) In the academic type of secondary school, 30% of the time will be given to technical training, that is training of a non-academic nature;

(ii) Some children will enter a "technicum" (secondary vocational tutorial school);

(iii) The majority will have instruction in the evenings in schools for working youth—children employed during the day.

2. *Boarding Schools.* The second major development in Soviet education is an increase in the number of boarding schools—all state-owned of course—called "internat". These schools are also co-educational. It is only recently that the boarding school has gained favour. By 1965 it is expected that 2½ *million* children will be in boarding schools. At first, in the years following the last war, preference was given in these schools to children of unmarried mothers, children of invalids, children of poor families, difficult children ("stylagi"), teddy boys, who are, incidentally, frequently censored in the Soviet press, and so on. But in recent years the social composition of these schools has changed and children from all types of families attend these schools. These schools meet the problem of children travelling distances to school, and they also meet the State's frank intention to increase its role in the life of the schools. The scale of payment of fees is fixed by the Ministry. In Moscow, orphans pay no fees and a maximum payment of 500 roubles a month is made by parents earning more than 2,000 roubles a month. The cost to the State is estimated at 600 roubles a month per child. Size of family, of course, as well as income, is a factor in determining payment.

These schools are co-educational and take children from 7 years to 15 or 17 years. Most boarding schools are of two sizes, with 300 or 600 children. The same curriculum is studied as in other Soviet schools, but "closed pedagogical control" is claimed.

Soviet educational theorists place stress on the importance of the "collective" in education. The child must learn to be responsible to his fellows, he must learn to co-ordinate his own desires with those of his colleagues. He must respect the decisions made by the collective. One teacher said, "The child must learn to understand another's sorrows and misfortunes." The teacher must try to develop this group responsibility, and suggest a series of attainable goals to the group. These theories were developed by Makarenko, of whom mention has already been made. (See p. 46.)

3. *General observations.* A main concept of the function of education is the education of children in the spirit of patriotism—the love of the motherland. Children are taught to "hate the Tsarist aristocracy and to respect the common interests of all peoples". Learning is related to this "spirit of patriotism"—the importance of study or work for Russia, and an understanding of the peoples of the world. History provides the greatest opportunity for the study, or the understanding, of the national struggles—seen through Commu-

nist[11] eyes—of various countries such as China, India, Indonesia and the rest. (Children learn songs of other countries in the original—Normandy folk songs, American, English. On my visit to school 333 in Moscow, students sang "For he's a Jolly Good Fellow", "I love Paris", "Why do Robins sing in December?") Dances, theatre visits, school festivals, are supposed to stress the international theme. During the Burns bi-centenary for example, an exhibition of publications was held by one school in Moscow, his poems were learnt and recited and some were sung by children in English. School 706 in Moscow had an exhibit of men and women who have an outstanding place in world culture and included Charles Darwin and Abraham Lincoln.

In an account such as this, I have been compelled to treat whole areas of the field in summary fashion. I have kept my sights on the school in the U.S.S.R., but there are two institutions concerned with education that warrant a mention, no matter how brief. The principal research centre in education for the U.S.S.R. is the R.S.F.S.R. Academy of Pedagogical Sciences. A great deal of experimental work, as well as advanced training, is carried on by the Academy. The Academy is made up of various research establishments, each dealing with specific problems:

1. Theory and History of Pedagogy,
2. Teaching Methods.
3. Psychology.
4. Defectology (Handicapped Children).
5. Physical Education and School Hygiene.
6. Education in non-Russian Schools.
7. Art Education.

(The above are centred in Moscow)

8. The Leningrad Research Institute of Pedagogy.
9. Natural Science Institute in Leningrad (Research in methods of teaching Natural Science).

[11]The following examples are taken from a Soviet textbook: ("English textbook for the 10th Class of the Middle School" by I. A. Nelidov and L. R. Todd, published by State Educational Book Publishers, 1959) and suggest the influence of Communism and the State on the teaching of English:

"Point out the subjects in the following sentences:

1. The .... of workers in capitalist countries are very low, while food and lodging are very dear.
4. The .... of life in a Socialist country are altogether different from those in a capitalist country.
5. The peasants of India are hardly able to .... through the dry season, they are so poor." (pp. 18–19.)
"Fill in the blanks with the Present Indefinite, Past Indefinite or Future Indefinite . . .
2. The Soviet Union .... no aggressive plans; it .... no country and no people." (p. 46.)

I came across this sentence in a thesis in an Institute for the Further Training of Teachers in Leningrad: "Capitalist propaganda is seeking to cast doubt on the possibility of building society in the European People's Democracies."

The Academy has more than 500 research workers in the field of education. One of its principal responsibilities is the preparation of textbooks for schools. These are tested in the Moscow and Leningrad regions in several hundred schools before being put into general circulation. The Academy sponsors lectures on academic subjects, and also arranges a contest of "pedagogical readings" ("pedagogicheskie chteniya") each year for teachers in the Soviet Union. Selection for these readings is an honour much prized by teachers. Reports and studies are selected for publication from the contest.

Research work in education, then, is highly centralised in the Soviet Union, and subject to state control, although there is a formidable amount of work being done along chosen lines.

The second institution rapidly being developed is the college for the further training of teachers. There are seventy-six of these institutes in the R.S.F.S.R. alone. Teachers attend for one day a week for one year, on full pay, three years after their first appointment, and every five years thereafter. Large numbers attend these institutes—for example in the Leningrad Institute, eight hundred to a thousand teachers attend every day. Teachers get additional training in Russian life and literature, physics and mathematics, biology and chemistry, geography and the history of the U.S.S.R. There is also special provision for work in laboratories, physical education, music and singing, school films or special schools.

The Soviet teachers with whom I spoke were reluctant to criticise education in the West, and it was usually some time before I succeeded, in an interview, in drawing them out. The principal criticism was that social class still determines the degree and quality of education in the West while these distinctions (the teachers seemed to believe) were not made in Soviet education. Also, the use of I.Q. tests to "stream" children was frequently criticised by teachers, particularly, as in Britain, at the age of 11 plus. The Soviet teachers were critical of the use of corporal punishment since it could easily "damage the soul of the child". They felt that threat of dismissal from the Young Pioneers, though rarely carried out, was sufficient deterrent. They were emphatic in their claim that co-education was better than "single-sex" schools and they seemed to approve of the Soviet system of giving all children the same training (without option), so that they would all have a common core of learning. There can be no doubt that education is vastly important to the Soviet Union, and large sums of money are spent on it. To the visitor interested in education, the Soviet Union provides a field of exceptional interest.[12]

[12]See Bibliography.

APPENDIX I

Years	Total School Attendance	Including	
		Secondary school attendance (5–10 grades) in millions of people	Schools for Adults
1914–15	9·7	0·6	–
1957–58	30·6	13·5	1·9

APPENDIX II

TEACHING CURRICULUM FOR THE NEW 8-YEAR SCHOOL
(Compared with formal 7-year School)

SUBJECTS	CLASSES								Total No. of hours		No. of hours in the 7-hour school	
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	Weekly	Annually	Weekly	Annually
1. Russian Language and Literature	11	12	12	13	8	7	5/6	5	73·5	2537·5	71	2436
2. History and Constitution of the U.S.S.R.	–	–	–	–	2	2	2	3	9	315	8	280
3. Foreign Language	–	–	–	2	4	3	3	3	15	525	11	385
4. Mathematics	6	6	6	6	6	6	6/5	5	46·5	1609·5	42	1452
5. Physics	–	–	–	–	–	2	2	3	7	245	4	175
6. Chemistry	–	–	–	–	–	–	1/2	2	3·5	122·5	2	70
7. Biology	–	–	–	–	2	2	3/2	2	8·5	297·5	9	315
8. Geography	–	–	–	–	2	2	2	2	8	280	9	315
9. Technical Drawing	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	1	2	70	1	35
10. Drawing	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	–	7	242	6	207
11. Singing	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9	311	6	207
12. Physical Education	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	16	554	14	484
13. Labor	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	20	694	10	347
Total	24	24	24	27	31	31	32	32	225	7803	–	–
14. Practice at Sovkhoz, Kolkhoz or Factory	–	–	–	1	1	1	1	1	5	175	–	–
15. Physical Education (Sport, Art, Study classes, etc.)	–	–	1	1	2	2	3	3	12	419	–	–
Total Weekly and Annual Hours	24	24	25	29	34	34	36	36	242	8397	193	6708

Source: *Sovietskaya Pedagogika*, January, 1959

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THE MARRIAGE DEBATE. I.

by TREVOR WHITTOCK

The Wife of Bath's Tale, *The Clerk's Tale*, *The Merchant's Tale* and *The Franklin's Tale* are frequently grouped together, because they appear to form part of a debate among the Canterbury pilgrims on the subject of marriage. I think it is true that these tales form a unit, but I think that they deal with much more than marriage. In this essay I want to examine some of the issues dealt with in these tales and show how these issues link the tales together.

THE WIFE OF BATH'S PROLOGUE

The central subject of the Wife of Bath's *Prologue* and *Tale* is the war between the sexes. The struggle for 'maistrye', for 'sovereignty', is more than a mere struggle as to who should wear the trousers in the home (though it is this as well). It is the eternal struggle between male and female, in which the one attempts to deny the challenge and being of the other by domination or aggression. This struggle is represented in the *Prologue* in a number of different ways.

First, it is represented through the Wife of Bath herself. It is completely inadequate to see her as a mere character-drawing or, even worse, as a portrayal of a real woman. She is larger than life-size. I am not saying that Chaucer has not given us a convincingly drawn individual—he has. But the Wife of Bath is much more than this. She is more than merely an aggressive, uninhibited, vulgar woman dominating the particular men fortunate or unfortunate enough to have been married *by* her. She is also a matriarchal figure who has declared war on man-kind. She embodies the eternal female in revolt against a male-ordered and male-centred civilization. Such was the medieval civilization the Wife of Bath (and Chaucer) lived in; and the *Prologue* portrays that society as well as her nature.

Before demonstrating what I have said by an examination of the *Prologue* itself, it would be well to consider an account of some of the medieval sexual ideals and attitudes.

It was about the tenth century that the Church began to develop the enormously strict system which ruled in the Middle Ages. A series of 'penitential books' began to appear which explored the subject of sex in all its details; every misdeed was described and elaborated at length, and penalties were prescribed for each . . . All who could were urged to attempt the ideal of complete celiabacy,

while for those with priestly functions it was obligatory. In this direction the medieval Church could scarcely go further than had the early fathers. Jovinian had been excommunicated for daring to deny, what St. Augustine had asserted, that virginity was a better state than marriage. St. Jerome tolerated marriage simply because it provided the world with potential virgins . . .

An absolute ban was placed on all forms of sexual activity other than intercourse between married persons, carried out with the object of procreating.[1]

The sexual act, even in marriage, was held to be accompanied by lust and sin unless performed solely for the object of procreating.

St. Gregory the Great wrote that the marriage act is in itself lawful and pure, 'but in practice husbands and wives are far from respecting fully the serene beauty of this act. They do not respect its extremely lofty purpose, seeing that all too often they mix lust in with it and the desire to gratify their craving for pleasure; they make immoderate use of it, not confining themselves to what the Divine Will calls for. That is why the marriage act is always tainted with a fault . . . It is a slight fault, no doubt . . . ; but after all it is a fault, and David could with reason assert that we are all conceived in sin.'[2]

Because of this belief all sorts of prohibitions were placed upon the sexual act even within marriage.

What is not generally realised today is the extensive nature of the attempt which was made to limit and control the sexual act when performed *within* the marital relationship. Thus the sexual act must be performed in only one position, and numerous penalties were prescribed for using variants . . . Not content with this, the Church proceeded to cut down the number of days per annum upon which even married couples might legitimately perform the sexual act. First, it was made illegal on Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays, which effectively removed the equivalent of five months in the year. Then it was made illegal for forty days before Easter and forty days before Christmas, and for three days before attending communion (and there were regulations requiring frequent attendance at communion). It was also forbidden from the time of conception to forty days after parturition. It was, of course, forbidden during any penance . . . It was ordered that no one might marry for a second time, even if the first partner had died . . .[3]

The position of women in those days must have been an unenviable one.

The sexual obsessions of the Church bore with especial hardness on woman. By the Saxons she had been treated as property; now she was treated as the source of all sexual evil as well. Chrysostom, less vindictive than some, spoke of women as a 'necessary evil, a natural temptation, a desirable calamity, a domestic peril, a deadly fascination, and a painted ill'. But by the Middle Ages even these

[1]G. Rattray Taylor, *Sex in History:* Chapter III, 'Medieval Sexual Morality'.
[2]Quoted by Dr. Jaques Leclercq in *Marriage and the Family*, p. 147.
[3]G. Rattray Taylor, *Ibid.* Chapter III.

qualifications were no longer acceptable. 'A Good Woman (as an old Philosopher observeth) is but like one Ele put in a bagge amongst 500 Snakes, and if a man should have the luck to grope out that one Ele from all the snakes, yet he hath at best a wet Ele by the Taile.' It was argued that sexual guilt really pertained to women, since they tempted men, who would otherwise have remained pure . . . By the Middle Ages married women ceased even to have a legal existence. Though unmarried women had certain legal rights, and could dispose of their own property on reaching their majority, married women were mere shadows of their husbands. 'The very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage . . . for this reason a man cannot grant anything to his wife or enter into any covenant with her: for the grant would be to presuppose her separate existence, and to covenant with her would be only to covenant with himself', says Blackstone.

Furthermore any suit against a woman automatically made the husband a defendant: hence husbands must have the power to prevent their wives from doing anything which might so involve them. It was upon this proposition that the husband's right to inflict 'moderate chastisement' on his wife was based. Though the common law enjoined husbands to treat their wives mercifully, the civil law said that he could 'beat her violently with whips and sticks'. It was permissible to thrash a woman with a cudgel but not to knock her down with an iron bar.[4]

'Allas! allas! that evere love was sinne', says the Wife of Bath.

Clearly, an important part of the *Prologue* is the satire (Chaucer's satire) directed at the sex-obsessed and guilt-ridden attitudes of medieval Christianity. At all times the male attitude towards woman involves a certain amount of distrust: the male suspects her of undermining and betraying his manhood. But the sexual repressions of medieval Christianity pushed this fear to insane and absurd lengths.

> Thou liknest eek wommanes love to helle,
> To bareyne lond, ther water may nat dwelle.
> Thou liknest it also to wilde fyr;
> The moore it brenneth, the moore it hath desir
> To consume every thyng that brent wole be.
> Thou seyest, right as wormes shende a tree,
> Right so a wyf destroyeth hire housbonde;
> This knowe they that been to wyves bonde. (371-8)

Every one of the ridiculous images here could be capped by quotations from the seriously intended anti-feminist writings of the times (e.g. St. Jerome's phrase upon which Chaucer based this speech: *Infernus, et amor mulieris, et terra arens, et ignis exaestuans*). But this passage, put in the mouth of the Wife of Bath, makes preposterous the whole business of the male projecting his sexual guilt on to the female. Indeed, what better vehicle for the satire could

[4] *Ibid.* Chapter III.

there be than the comic, guilt-free, indignant Wife of Bath! Again and again, with devastating common-sense she upturns official morality.

> Telle me also, to what conclusion
> Were membres maad of generacion,
> And for what profit was a wight ywrought?
> Trusteth right wel, they were nat made for noght. (115-9)

And

> For hadde God commanded maydenhede
> Thanne hadde he dampned weddyng with the dede.
> And certes, if ther were no seed ysowe,
> Virginitee, thanne wherof sholde it growe? (68-72)

The last passage, with its image of the seed, shows the Wife of Bath to be on the side of life, and opposed to the forces of falsehood and death. She stands for naturalness, vigour, spontaneity, joy and fertility. The only time she speaks sadly is when for a moment the reflection of inevitable age and death touches her, but she shakes off such morbid thoughts with her next breath.

> But, Lord Christ! whan that it remembreth me
> Upon my yowthe, and on my jolitee,
> It tikleth me aboute myn herte roote.
> Unto this day it dooth myn herte boote
> That I have had my world as in my tyme.
> But, age, allas! that al wole envenyme,
> Hath me biraft my beautee and my pith.
> Lat go, farewel! the devel go therewith!
> The flour is goon, ther is namoore to telle;
> The bren, as I best kan, now moste I selle;
> But yet to be right myrie wol I fonde.
> Now wol I tellen of my fourthe housbonde. (469-80)

> 'The innocent and the beautiful,
> Have no enemy but time',

wrote W. B. Yeats, but Chaucer's achievement is to make one feel the essential innocence and beauty in the Wife of Bath—and in a way that is more profound than Yeats's romantic idealisation. Chaucer achieves this largely through the centrality and homeliness of his images, such as 'myn herte roote' with its suggestion of deep and solid connectedness with the source of life. 'The flour is goon' is another such image. Here the associations of pure and good fare are mingled with associations of delight and beauty in the ambiguous word 'flour'. It is achieved also through the presentation of the Wife of Bath's courageous and joyful acceptance of sorrowful things: 'The bren, as I best kan, now moste I selle'.

'I have had my world as in my tyme.' The Wife of Bath is essentially a secular figure. Without shame she confesses that God's commands are for those that would live perfectly, and that she has never aspired to do!

He spak to hem that wolde lyve parfitly;
And lordynges, by youre leve, that am not I.
I wol bistow the flour of al myn age
In the actes and in fruyt of marriage. (111-4)

Hers is a rejection of transcendental religion. She is, to refer to a Yeats poem again, the self as opposed to the soul. She sometimes aspires to speak piously but the effect is usually a parody of false clerical arguments, or else a revelation of the blasphemy that often lies in common piousness ('By God! in erthe I was his purgatorie,/ For which I hope his soul be in glorie'). Yet she is not really an anti-religious or amoral figure. Just as in her piety she sometimes utters blasphemy, so in her blasphemy we sometimes find the profoundest piety and morality.

Crist was a mayde, and shapen as a man,
And many a seint, sith that the world bigan:
Yet lyved they evere in parfit chastitee.
I nyl envye no virgintee.
Lat hem be breed of pure whete-sede,
And lat us wyves hoten barly-breed;
And yet with barly-breed, Mark telle kan,
Oure Lord Jhesu refresshed many a man. (139-46)

Her sexual prodigality is in a curious way profoundly religious. In its bawdy exuberance it is an expression of life, and of gratitude to God who made her.

In wyfhod I wol use myn instrument
As frely as my Maker it hath sent. (149-50)

I have stressed the 'innocence and beauty' in the Wife of Bath, but clearly this 'innocence and beauty' contains within a great deal that is satirised and criticised. The Wife of Bath is the vehicle for satirising male attitudes, but she is also the vehicle for satirising female attitudes. She herself is a grotesque exemplar of most of the female vices: nagging, scolding, deceiving, chiding, grumbling, spending, gossiping, lying and betraying. She is vain, egotistic, hypocritical (as when she attends the funeral of her fourth husband), possessive and licentious. Chaucer brilliantly catches the smothering destructiveness of females in these lines:

Thow seyst that droppyng houses, and eek smoke,
And chidyng wyves maken men to flee
Out of hir owene hous; a! *benedicitee*
What eyleth swich an old man for to chide? (278-81)

But while she possesses most of the vices that woman-hating clerics could think up she still remains, despite these and thus giving the lie to the clerics who say women are agents of the devil, a very human and sympathetic figure.

Her prime fault, and here we return to the central theme of the war between the sexes, is that she wishes to assert female domination over the male. 'Sovereignty' means breaking the male will, and possessing him completely.

An housbonde I wol have, I wol nat lette,
Which shal be bothe my dettour and my thral,
And have his tribulacioun withal
Upon his flessh, whyl that I am his wyf.
I have the power durynge al my lyf
Upon his propre body, and noght he . . . (155-9)

This aspect of the Wife of Bath is (comically) terrifying. Here is the ugliness that co-exists with her 'beauty', making her such a complex figure. She is a terrible, matriarchal goddess, demanding complete subservience to herself. Law, order, discipline are cast over.

The climax of the *Prologue* is reached in the conflict between the Wife of Bath and her fifth husband, the clerk. All the elements of the poem are here united in the scene between the two, the servant of Venus and the servant of Mercury.

The children of Mercurie and of Venus
Been in hir wirkyng ful contrarius;
Mercurie loveth wysdam and science,
And Venus loveth ryot and dispence.

In the grand comedy at the end not only does Chaucer give the clash between the 'self' and the 'soul', between the natural vigour of the secular and the contemptuous asceticism of the ecclesiastical, but he also portrays for us in a scene of high absurdity the ruthlessness, aggression and fierceness lurking in the male-female relationship.

THE WIFE OF BATH'S TALE

It is easy to see why the Wife of Bath chooses to tell the tale she does tell. To her the moral seems an obvious one: that the man gets his reward by handing over the mastery to the woman. But there is irony in the fact that the Wife of Bath should choose to tell this tale, for the real moral of the tale is quite different from what she thinks it is. Indeed, the important thing about the tale it that is condemns the desire for mastery. Mastery involves the subordination of the beloved's will, and the swallowing up of his or her personality. It is the refusal to recognise the 'otherness' of the other person (to use D. H. Lawrence's phrase), or the desire not to recognise it by destroying it. The real moral of the tale told by the Wife of Bath is that this 'otherness' must be recognised.

The knight in the tale rapes a woman. This means that he sees women only as adjuncts to his own personality, as objects he can ravish by force. In punishment for this crime his life is made dependent on the will of women, and they (i.e the queen) tell him that his life is forfeit unless he can find out what women most desire. The answer he finds, with the aid of the ugly, old woman, is that

Wommen desiren have sovereynetee
As wel over hir housbond as hir love,
And for to been in maistrie hym above. (1037-40)

That is to say, they claim the right as much as men to assert their own identity and dominate the opposite sex. This is the first lesson the knight has to learn.

But then the knight is forced to marry the old woman, and a more searching problem is posed him. In the more common version of the folk-tale on which the Wife of Bath's *Tale* is based, the knight has to choose between having his old and ugly wife beautiful by day, or having her beautiful by night. That is, he has to choose which is the more important, physical love or ideal love. Chaucer changed this: the knight has to choose between having his wife ugly and faithful, or beautiful and unfaithful. This choice is in line with anti-feminist complaints: one can only be sure of a wife if she is ugly. Implied in the choice is this dilemma: *possession* of a woman can give a man no joy, since he can only hold dominion over her by making her show him the loveless side of her nature. On the other hand allowing her independence may allow her to be too free with her love, and cause the man to taste all the doubtful joys of jealousy and betrayal.

The knight in the *Tale* gives the correct answer, which is not to choose either of these alternatives. Both these alternatives involve a selfish, egocentric choice: the being of one partner is sacrificed for the pleasure of the other. The knight chooses rightly by giving the choice to her: he makes no claim at all upon her, subordinating his desires to her responsibility, letting her decide what is to their mutual benefit.

> Cheseth youreself which may be best plesance,
> And moost honour to yow and me also. (1232-3)

By doing this the knight finds that the lady will be both beautiful and faithful. By his full recognition of her 'otherness' he is rewarded by her free acceptance of him. Thus, in the mutual recognition of the other, in each giving only to find that the giving is the taking, in this lies the ideal love-marriage relationship. This is the true moral of the *Tale*.

What enables the knight to make his right decision? It is what he learns from the old woman about the nature of 'gentilesse'. 'Gentilesse' is a word almost impossible to translate into modern English. What W. B. Yeats calls 'courtesy' is only part of it:

> In courtesy I'd have her chiefly learned:
> Hearts are not had as a gift but hearts are earned . . .

'Gentilesse' is more than a 'glad kindness', and it is more than custom or ceremony.

> Crist will we clayme of hym oure gentilesse. (1117)

We do not inherit it but get it of God out of His grace and charity. Indeed, God is the source of 'gentilesse' (the Parson in his *Tale* actually speaks of God's 'gentilesse'). Perhaps the closest to it would be something of what Shakespeare means by 'grace' in *The Winter's Tale*. At any rate, 'gentilesse' is a charitable nobility of spirit, which involves the full recognition of other people in thought and action. The importance of 'gentilesse' in the love-marriage relationship is to be found even more powerfully explored in *The Franklin's Tale*, but the spirit of 'gentilesse' pervades all Chaucer's art.

THE CLERK'S TALE

> For trusteth wel, it is an impossible
> That any clerk wol speke good of wyves, (688-9)

said the Wife of Bath. The Clerk's Tale is his reply and his revenge. It is difficult to conceive a tale that could more fully answer the Wife of Bath. In her account of herself and her loves, the Wife of Bath stressed that love is the desire to assert one's personality, and to dominate one's lover. The Clerk tells a tale showing that love may be the abnegation of personality, the losing of one's self in the self of the beloved. The Wife of Bath has praised uninhibited pleasure. The Clerk preaches the importance of discipline and self-control—the virtue of 'patience'. The Wife of Bath's vision of life is of this world and in this world. The Clerk shows how this world may be subordinated to a higher world. The Clerk, in fact, asserts much that is finest in the medieval Christian tradition.

The Clerk's Tale is essentially a literary tale, yet its wonderful achievement lies in its gentle understanding of human motives and feelings, and in its reconciliation of different planes of meaning. Griselda is a suffering human being whose virtue is being abused by another; she is at the same time 'Everyman' or 'Every Woman' suffering and enduring the trials and tribulations of life before receiving a Heavenly reward; and she is also the personification of the virtues of meekness, humility, fortitude, fidelity and modesty. At one level, delicately hinted at, Walter stands for fate or cruel misfortune which tests us all; at another level he is a psychological study of a man driven to further and further cruelty in the pursuit of gratifying his domination over his beloved; yet he never becomes a completely unsympathetic figure. The success of the *Tale* lies in Chaucer's remarkable skill at guiding the responses of the reader, dexterously drawing his attention now to one element, now to another, maintaining all the time his poetic faith.

When the people insist that Walter take a wife whom they will choose for him, Walter appears to accede to their demands. He leaves the people with the impression that he has bound himself to their will, but the truth is that he has turned the occasion into an opportunity to marry whom he pleases with their promised acceptance. This scene shows Walter's dominating masculine intelligence at work, and prepares us for the way in which he will manoeuvre Griselda into marrying him on his terms. At this stage, though, we admire Walter; and the admiration increases when he chooses Griselda. He has the perspicacity to appreciate her true worth. The Biblical imagery with which she is described reveals that she is to be a pearl of infinite price.

> But hye God somtyme senden kan
> His grace into a litel oxes stalle. (206-7)

But, like Shakespeare in his treatment of Perdita in *The Winter's Tale*, Chaucer makes the ideal a credible human being in a realistic rural setting.

And when she homward cam, she wolde bring
Wortes or othere herbes tymes ofte,
The whiche she shredde and seeth for hir lyvinge,
And made hir bid ful hard and nothyng softe. (225-8)

The Duke's choosing her for wife seems to be an act of grace, but he cleverly manoeuvres her into promising herself completely, in act and thought, to him.

'I seye this, be ye redy with good herte
To al my lust, and that I frely may,
As me best thynketh, do yow laughe or smerte,
And nevere ye to grucche it, nyght ne day?
And eek whan I sey 'ye', ne say nat 'nay',
Neither by word ne frownyng countenance?
Swere this, and heere I swere oure alliance.'

Wondrynge upon this word, quakynge for drede,
She seyde, 'Lord, undigne and unworthy
Am I to thilke honour that ye me beede,
But as ye wol yourself, right so wol I.
And heere I swere that nevere willynly,
In werk ne thoght, I nyl yow disobeye,
For to be deed, though me were looth to deye.' (351-64)

A picture of their ideal life together follows on the marriage, and the wisdom, faithfulness and love of Griselda are portrayed. Then Walter begins to test the strength of his power over her. He does it with a refined intellectual cruelty: the way in which the children are seized from her, the blatant insincerity of his reasons, the cruel behaviour of the sergeant, multiply the awfulness of the deed. And later, when Walter pretends to be re-wedding, the callousness with which he dismisses his marriage to her, is a calculated cruelty. (Perhaps we might say that the Clerk, coy and still as a maid, would imagine cruelty in just such refined terms.)

Griselda's acceptance of the seizure of her children shocks many people. They feel that Griselda is being inhuman in not protesting. But no criticism of Griselda is presented in the actual lines of the poetry. What the poetry does do is make us feel in these scenes the very religious problem posed by the Lord demanding of Abraham that he sacrifice his only son. The cruel sergeant is certainly 'that fell sergeant Death' (did Shakespeare get the idea here?) that may visit any family. The death of those we love is the most difficult test of our faith. The human anguish is stressed by the poetry, and Chaucer makes us appreciate Griselda's agony of mind by showing us the strength of her love for her children. Her mind seizes upon one image that represents to her what death does to her children: the image of their being ravaged by birds and beasts.

'Gooth now,' quod she, 'and dooth my lordes heeste;
But o thyng wol I prey yow of youre grace,
That, but my lord forbad yow, atte leeste
Burieth this litel body in som place

That beestes ne no briddes it torace.'
But he no word to that purpos seye,
But took the child and wente upon his weye. (569-74)

How this image has haunted her is revealed when her children are restored to her, and in painful joy she utters her mind's dread:

'O tendre, o deere, o yonge children myne!
Youre woful mooder wende stedfastly
That crueel houndes or som foul vermyne
Hadde eten yow . . .' (1093-6)

She never does complain to Walter of his treatment of her. But when he demands her second child from her, she expresses her feelings and values with an honesty that says more than complaint could.

'I have,' quod she, 'seyd thus, and evere shal:
I wol no thyng, ne nyl no thyng, certayn,
But as yow list. Naught greveth me at al,
Though that my doughter and my sone be slayn,—
At youre comandment, this is to sayn.
I have noght had no part of children tweyne
But first siknesse, and after wo and peyne.

'Ye been oure lord, dooth with youre owene thyng
Right as yow list; axeth no reed at me.
For as I lefte at hoom al my clothyng,
Whan I first cam to yow, right so,' quod she,
'Left I my wyl and al my libertee,
And took youre clothyng; wherfore I yow preye,
Dooth youre plesaunce, I wol youre lust obeye.' (645-58)

Because she faces so squarely her situation, and shirks none of the sorrowful difficulties heaped upon her, she holds our admiration. Her feelings are never blunted, her resolution never blind. She doesn't complain here, but her straight speech damns Walter. At the same time as her words make explicit the guilt of Walter they show her consciousness that our obligations to ourselves and others are hard burdens we cannot cast off, and are part of our obligation to God. 'Ye been oure lord, dooth with youre owene thyng/Right as yow list.' God's necessity must be obeyed, no matter how strongly tempted we are to murmur against it. The word 'thyng', however, while it may describe an individual before the sight of God (and the language of the line suggests we are explicitly to think of God), makes clear that no man has the right to regard another as merely an object. In the word we can see how the level of parable and the level of 'realism' intersect one another. *The Clerk's Tale*, even while it is showing how man should yield himself to God, is also showing how man may be tempted to assert himself and try to play the role of God. Or to put the issue another way: the Clerk's criticism of Walter is a cleverly veiled criticism of the Wife of Bath.

The interplay of parable and 'realism' in the *Tale* can above all be seen in the character of Griselda. Her love for Walter is very con-

vincingly portrayed. She loves him *because of* himself, but it is also made clear how she loves him *in spite of* himself.

For wiste I that my deeth wolde do yow ese,
Right gladly wolde I dyen, yow to plese.
Deth may noght make no comparisoun
Unto youre love. (664-8)

Her love is the love that denies self. It is also a love that recognises and acknowledges the importance of duty. Griselda's love for Walter as a man is united with her dutiful yielding to him as a husband: neither would exist without the other. The form of marital obedience is filled out with the substance of Griselda's love, and hence we do not feel Griselda's surrender to be abject or resigned. Rather, she remains loyal to herself in spirited humility.

Griselda is at once both the object of our admiration and, because her suffering is so needless and undeserved, of our compassion. Indeed, it is by means of the compassion generated in the Tale that the Clerk most effectively replies to the Wife of Bath. For the compassion makes us aware of the preciousness of life and of virtue.

'The remenant of youre jueles redy be
Inwith youre chambre, dar I sauffly sayn.
Naked out of my fadres hous,' quod she,
'I cam, and naked moot I turne agayn.
Al youre plesance wol I folwen fayn;
But yet I hope it be nat youre entente
That I smoklees out of youre paleys wente.

'Ye koude nat doon so dishonest a thyng,
That thilke wombe in which youre children leye
Sholde biforn the peple, in my walkyng,
Be seyn al bare; wherfore I yow preye,
Lat me nat lyk a worm go by the weye.
Remembre yow, myn owene lord so deere,
I was youre wyf, though I unworthy weere.' (869-82)

Griselda's modesty here is not false: it is a genuine respect for herself as woman, as mother, and as Walter's wife. Her very humility emphasises the dignity of life that Walter by his callousness has shoved aside. Through the character of Griselda we are made aware that love is more than the assertion of vitality: it is the recognition of and sacrifice to what is proper and fitting.

At the end of his Tale the Clerk carries home his personal thrust at the Wife of Bath. He has presented an ideal of womanhood in place not only of what the Wife of Bath has said clerks thought women to be, but also in place of what she believes women are. His final irony is to say that Griseldas are few and far between, therefore he will recommend wives to follow the advice of the Wife of Bath!

Yet perhaps it is wrong to talk of the Clerk's Tale as being a reply to the Wife of Bath. This implies that what she stands for can be dismissed. But the Wife of Bath exists as much as Griselda. Both are extremes; both represent aspects of love. They are the contraries

Blake wrote of in his poem, *The Clod and the Pebble.*

'Love seeketh not Itself to please,
Nor for itself hath any care,
But for another gives its ease,
And builds a Heaven in Hell's despair.'

So sung a Clod of Clay
Trodden with the cattle's feet,
But a Pebble of the brook
Warbled out these metres meet:

'Love seeketh only Self to please,
To bind another to Its delight,
Joys in another's loss of ease,
And builds a Hell in Heaven's despite'.

(To be concluded.)

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