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CONTENTS

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OF THE Natal members of staff and graduates who have gone abroad in recent years, many have crossed the Atlantic. And of these, a number have settled in Canada. We are flattered to find proof in two articles appearing in this issue that new circumstances and new claims have not won these contributors from our journal. They may even believe—there is evidence of this in a letter accompanying one of the articles—that we foster an exchange of ideas as much as a record of scholarly findings and that this kind of debate gives opportunities which they value. We are greatly encouraged by their loyal interest.

Other contributors living overseas, in Europe and Australia besides America, show readiness to enter the debate again. Voices not heard before have also intimated their plans for certain fields of discussion and we look forward to results although it will be understood that we cannot guarantee a place for all in our forum.

Nothing written above should muffle the accents of those contributors in South Africa who have joined us on this occasion. If at any time speakers at home were unable to add their share, the future of *Theoria* would be disturbingly doubtful.

THE EDITORS

BLAKE'S 'MY PRETTY ROSE-TREE'

by G. H. DURRANT

Miss E. H. Paterson's appeal (*Theoria 28*) for a less cerebral approach to poetry, and in particular to Blake's 'My Pretty Rose-Tree', is a salutary reminder that criticism ought to involve a response of the whole person—of senses, feelings, experience, as well as of the brain. This account of the poem, however, though it shows us this activity sensitively at work, seems to me to leap too lightly over the evidence in *Songs of Experience* of what Blake was concerned with, and what is the general area in which we may reasonably seek for the meaning of so brief and elusive a poem:

MY PRETTY ROSE-TREE

A flower was offer'd to me,
Such a flower as May never bore;
But I said 'I've a pretty Rose-tree,'
And I passed the sweet flower o'er.
Then I went to my pretty Rose-tree,
To tend her by day and by night,
But my Rose turn'd away with jealousy,
And her thorns were my only delight.

There are other poems in *Songs of Experience* that suggest what Blake generally meant by the Rose. In 'The Lily' the Rose 'puts forth a thorn', whilst

The Lily white shall in Love delight
Nor a thorn, nor a threat, stain her beauty bright.

In 'The Sick Rose', the rose appears to represent passion and delight, poisoned at the heart by a strange corruption. The corruption of joy is also the theme of the flower-passage in 'The Schoolboy':

O! father and mother, if buds are nip'd
And blossoms blown away,
And if the tender plants are strip'd
Of their joy in the springing day,
By sorrow and care's dismay,
How shall the summer arise in joy,
Or the summer fruits appear?

With these examples in mind, it is possible to suggest that Blake uses flowers not as images of persons, but as representing states of mind, or of soul. The Rose is the flower of fruition, fulfilment, human joy. But it is subject to corruption, and it can put out thorns, and become a source of pain.

What is it that causes the corruption and the pain where all should be innocence and joy? Here we must consider the other flower—'such a flower as May never bore'—a flower that is not a natural growth, but seems to be of greater value than any Rose. The fate of the man who passes over this unearthly flower in favour of the 'pretty Rose-tree' is to find that the Rose itself offers him only its thorns. Is this strange flower not the mind's capacity for delight, the primal imaginative and creative power without which all search for particular joy is doomed to disappointment? If this is what the poem means, it may be read as a briefer account of what Coleridge tells us in the 'Ode in Dejection'—that without the spirit of delight in the mind, the 'shaping spirit', all objects of delight are rendered dead and therefore painful.

What Blake has to say here, I suggest, is close to what Yeats says when he writes:

> When such as I cast out remorse
> So great a sweetness flows into the breast
> We must laugh and we must sing,
> We are blest by everything
> Everything we look upon is blest.

The primal quality of innocence—of unfrightened, open, eager delight—is the flower that 'was offer'd' to the speaker, and is offered to all men. 'Consider the lilies of the field, they toil not, neither do they spin.' The capacity for delight is also the gift for taking no thought for the morrow:

> The Lily white shall in Love delight
> Nor a thorn, *nor a threat*, stain her beauty bright.

The strange flower of 'My Pretty Rose-Tree', I suggest, is the purity of the delighted mind, unafraid, innocent, committed to life. If this primal flower is allowed to wither, as it too often does when childhood is left behind, the 'pretty Rose-tree' of particular experience will yield only pain. The mind that is afraid of consequences, troubled by guilt, possessive, will not be 'blessed' by anything.

As I understand the poem, it is yet another example of Blake's insistence on the free delight of the imagination, unfettered by rules, remorse, or fear:

He who binds himself to a joy
Doth the winged life destroy;
But he who kisses the joy as it flies
Lives in Eternity's sunrise.

The man who binds himself to, and seeks to *keep* a joy, who talks of '*My* pretty Rose-tree' and says '*I've* a pretty Rose-tree' is guilty of possessive fear. He 'tends' the Rose-tree 'by night and day.' But joy will not be *possessed*; the Rose-tree turns away and offers only her thorns. The true flower of joy is in the mind, not in the objects of delight; the speaker in the poem has refused the only flower which has any true value, that power of mind which 'kisses the joy as it flies' and does not try it and keep it for ever.

For Blake, all that tended to fix the objects of sense in permanent form, all that made for stability and habit, was the enemy of the spiritual and imaginative life. Natural objects themselves. as the product of habitual modes of perception, are hostile to the energy which seeks to renew and transform. Of Wordsworth's 'natural piety' Blake remarked:

There is no such Thing as Natural Piety
because the Natural Man is at enmity with God.[1]

And of Wordsworth's claim that Natural Objects 'call forth and strengthen the imagination', Blake commented:

> Natural Objects always did and now do weaken, deaden, and obliterate Imagination in me. Wordsworth must know that what he writes Valuable is Not to be found in Nature.[2]

In this broader context, the 'pretty Rose-tree' may be understood as the real world of natural objects, or Nature. Wordsworth's tendency to claim, or to appear to claim, that his inspiration came from Nature itself, and not from the energies of his own creative imagination, was to Blake a heresy.

> Imagination is the Divine Vision not of the World, or of Man, nor from Man as he is a Natural Man, but only as he is a Spiritual Man . . .[3]

If then we tend the 'pretty Rose-tree' of Nature, or things-in-themselves, and turn from the flower of spiritual delight, we abandon the true source of joy, whose fountains, as Coleridge proclaims, 'are within'; we imprison ourselves in habit, and find that experience turns against us, offering us only its thorns. 'Imagination', says Blake, 'is the Divine Body in Every Man.'[4]

'My Pretty Rose-Tree' is proffered as a 'winged joy', and too much anxious tending of the poem may indeed leave us with only

the thorns of academic argument. But imaginative delight need not exclude irony (and how are we to read such poems as 'The Fly' if we prefer not to associate Blake with the ironical mode?) On the other hand, to read the poem as a tribute to constancy, self-denial, and the ethics of marriage seems to give too much weight to 'vice and virtue' in Blake's poetic vision. The activity engaged in by the speaker in the poem leads to the Rose-tree's turning away 'in jealousy', leaving het guardian with only 'her thorns.' It is of course possible to admire the gardener because he did what he felt right, and perhaps Blake intended this. But he has left no indication in the poem that the devotion given to the Rose-tree produces anything but bitterness and the denial of life. If there is tragic compassion here, it seems to be of the kind that we are invited to give to those who, like the child of 'Infant Sorrow', are bound in 'a mirtle shade':

> And I saw before me shine,
> Clusters of the wandering vine,
> And many a lovely flower and tree
> Stretched their blossoms out to me.
>
> My father then with holy look,
> In his hands a holy book,
> Pronounc'd curses on my head
> And bound me in a mirtle shade.

The speaker in 'My Pretty Rose-tree' has not been compelled by an externally imposed morality to pass over 'the sweet flower' for his own carefully cultivated rose-tree. He has freely chosen, as it seems, his commitment to what he already has, and means to keep. By choosing this limited commitment, he binds himself to what he already has, and limits himself to what he already is. So the Rose-tree—which I take to represent man's capacity for taking delight in the world of the senses, or in Nature—offers only its thorns, as though it were no more than a myrtle-tree bearing poison-berries. 'The Natural Body is an Obstruction to the Soul or Spiritual Body',[5] and without the gift offered to all men by the transforming power of the imagination, the garden of the senses becomes a wilderness of thorns. Men are however not condemned to the wilderness, for 'the soul of sweet delight can never be defil'd', and this 'soul of sweet delight' is given to us from birth; it is ours so long as we do not refuse it, as the 'sweet flower' is refused by the speaker in the poem, and so long as we are not turned away, by the voice of authority and the force of custom, from the garden 'that so many sweet flowers bore.'

The poem is indeed 'simple'—as simple as Blake could make it. But it is the product of a daring and powerful intelligence, and can

scarcely be understood except as an expression of the thought that shows itself throughout Blake's work. Perhaps our greatest risk in reading him is of importing into our understanding of his poems either our own inherited moral notions or our more contemporary permissiveness. Blake is in one sense a Puritan. He is not content with a less than perfect condition of being. For although he speaks of the Poetic Genius, and Imagination, he means by these terms nothing less than the divine Grace in men, without which all life, even that which appears most virtuous, is doomed to frustration. If he pleads for liberty it is not so that men may do as they like, but so that they may live fully in the light of the truth that is within them. It is a far cry from this to modern 'progressive' morality, or the socially organized Utopia.

Vancouver.

NOTES

[1] *Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes, London, 1932, p. 1024.
[2] *Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, pp, 1024-5.
[3] *Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 1026.
[4] *Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 1021.
[5] *Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 1023.

POTENTIALITIES OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: CONCEPTIONS OF HUMAN NATURE

by W. H. O. SCHMIDT

The overall theme of this convention is *The Child in the Process of Education.* It is about the *relationship* between our conceptions of human nature and our ability, as teachers, to identify and help actualize potentialities of human development that I propose to speak.

Conceptions of human nature, Conceptions of man: these are, of course, philosophical issues—but as practical teachers, constantly intervening in the process of development of individual children, and as developmental psychologists, attempting to understand the process of human development, we cannot afford to ignore the discussion of these philosophical issues.

In what now follows I want you to keep in mind, as a background:

Firstly, that philosophers have, over the ages, produced conceptions of man that are relevant to us as child psychologists, teachers, educators.

Secondly, that in formulating their conceptions of man philosophers in the past ignored the fact of childhood and have had nothing to say about what concerns us specifically at this Convention, viz. the child in the process of *developing into* and *becoming* what those grand philosophical conceptions regard as the true essence of man, of *human* nature.

Thirdly, that as a result of this inability, or refusal, to take into account the *fact* of childhood, child psychology, together with psychology in general, parted company with philosophy.

Fourthly, that this separation of the off-spring (psychology, child psychology) from its parent (philosophy) was essential if psychology and child study were to advance, and make the massive contribution to our knowledge which they have made.

Fifthly, that the separation was bought at a price, and that it has become necessary, particularly for child psychology, once more to relate to its parent, and not to shun looking at philosophical implications of its findings and of its whole way of viewing the child in the process of becoming.

Sixthly, and this leads me still nearer to the central theme of

*Address (slightly modified) given at a Teachers' Convention in Edmonton, Canada, in October, 1967.

this Convention, that the process of development is not only a process of *growing out of* a previous state or stage, but also as I foreshadowed by a formulation made a moment ago, a process of *growing into* and of *becoming* something: e.g., an adult, a responsible adult, a mature adult, a self-actualizing adult: a considerate person; a self-assertive person who can look after his own interests; a competitive person who wants to come out on top whatever it is in which he wants to keep up with the Joneses and outdo them, and whether or not in terms of a truly meaningful life it makes sense or not; a 'good' Canadian, American, or South African; a functionary of the State, a good Christian, a deviationist or a non-deviationist Communist. Oh, I could make the list much longer, but I hope I have made my point: the child develops into something specific—a certain kind of person, with certain aspirations and value systems, with certain kinds of relationships with his fellowmen, fit for and wanting to assume certain roles in society and making his contribution, or content to be a parasite, etc.

Seventhly, and this brings me to the heart of what concerns us, the process of development seen as a process leading not only out of something that is left behind but *into something* cannot be divorced from the process of education that guides, supports, gives direction to, as well as corrects, discourages, provides goals, and images, and self-images for the child. It is here that it becomes really important to think about conceptions of human nature. We all have them. They are often only implicit and become evident only in the choices we make, e.g. in choices regarding the education of children and of a particular child. They are often explicit, but sometimes the explicit, verbally formulated conception may be at variance with the implicit conception, according to which we act and make our decisions (e.g. regarding how we shall teach a particular lesson to a particular group of children). And—I now refer you back to the two symmetrical parts of the title of this address—our conception of human nature may *either* make us sensitive to numerous small signs in child behaviour that reveal a potential that exists, *or* it may make us narrow and insensitive to the signs.

You will be glad to know that I have no Eight: you see, I am aware of 'The Magical Number Seven,' which 'plus or minus two', according to George A. Millar of Harvard University, defines the 'limits on our capacity for processing information.' I have reached my limits too.

Let me say a few words about the conceptions of man formulated by philosophers since time immemorial, insofar as these are relevant to us. There is a grand tradition here, with ever new characteristics of man occupying the centre of the picture, revealing one or other distinctive potentiality that human beings can develop, and that, it is held, human beings *ought*, and *must*, actualize, if they are to live a truly human life and create a culture and a society fit for human beings to live in and to develop the best that is in them. So man was described as *animal rationale*, already by Aristotle—the *rational* being, not consisting, be it noted, only of rationality but having rationality as his distinguishing characteristic, the characteristic over and above whatever he shares with the animal, the plant, and even with inanimate nature. It is a characteristic which he *has*, by nature, but which he *ought* also to develop.

Man has also been described as *Homo ludens*, the *ludic* animal, the animal that *plays* and creates a whole world of *imagination.* When eighteenth-century rationalism had developed into an anaemic and constricted intellectualism, and tried to reduce even the writing of poetry to the following of logical rules and prescriptions, the time was ripe for such a conception of man. There is a famous theory (Schiller), according to which no nation whose members do not know how to play and who do not burst into music and create works of imagination of every kind, can be said to be producing truly *human* beings.

Man has also been described as the *tool-making* creature. This, like the conception of man as a rational being, emphasizes man's ability to extend his own *natural* powers and his own *natural* environment. Man creates an artificial environment. Instead of living in caves, he lives in skyscrapers. Instead of living off what nature offers, as other animals mainly do, he manipulates and transforms nature. He creates a civilization. And every now and then he becomes frightened by the civilization he has created: the hard concrete jungles with their business tycoons and the leaders who lust for power, with which he replaces the natural jungle and its tigers, and he yearns for a Golden Age in which nature, a romanticized nature, reigns supreme.

And finally: man has been described as the *animal symbolicum*—the being that creates symbols and symbolic worlds (Cassirer). Language is a symbolic system that man has created. But mythology, art, religion, science, mathematics, are symbolic systems too, created by man. And when man faces his world, his environment, it is not simply a natural environment, or an environment materially extended by his tool-making powers and his rationality, it is also a symbolic world. Each society, each culture, is characterized by its own

particular symbolic systems. It is the 'symbolic net, the tangled web of human experience' (Cassirer) that every child has to unravel anew, and discover, and re-create, if he is to relate to his fellow human beings in a truly human way. It is only *within* the symbolic systems, which limit the individual's freedom by imposing an already established order, and already established meanings, on him, and by forcing him to interpret his individual experience in terms of the possibilities inherent in the already established symbolic systems, that the individual can also become creative. The symbolic system *par excellence* is, of course, language.

These four conceptions of human nature must suffice. Can you see their relevance to our understanding of potentialities of human development, i.e. to our ability to read the signs in the infant, and child, and adolescent behaviour that signal to us the presence of potentialities that we might try to help the child to develop?

If I have turned to the philosophers, and to the grand tradition first, it is because, as Cassirer has said[1]:

> Human nature, according to Plato, is like a difficult text, the meaning of which has to be deciphered by philosophy. But in our personal experience (and here *I* am going to add to the words of Cassirer: in the behaviour of the infant, the child, the adolescent) this text is written in such small characters that it becomes illegible.

If we realize this, then perhaps we also have one answer (not the whole answer) to the amazing fact that the philosophers for so long paid such scant attention to the fact of childhood, and the scientific study of the child started so late. For it is indeed, as M. J. Langeveld has said[2]:

> Compared with the old and honourable concern for the continuity of society and of culture, to which pedagogues and didacticians as well as philosophers and politicians have devoted their attention since time immemorial, the psychology of the child is as young as the child.

Rationality, play and imagination, tool-making or transcendence of the body's limitations, and symbolisation: let me take first, *rationality*.

Many North American psychologists seem to have taken some thirty years to move away from their presupposition that behaviour, including human behaviour, is motivated primarily by what was called 'drive reduction,' with hunger, thirst, and sex seen as the prototypes of the drives, whose mounting tension has to be periodically reduced. It has taken them equally long to grant academic respectability to the hypothesis that at least the higher animals,

including man, are motivated also by exploratory and curiosity 'drives'.[3]

However, there has also been a tidal wave that has swept aside all inhibitions about conferring on human beings, including children, full human status, over and above the status which they share with other organisms, such as rats and pigeons. A view is emerging, which is not unlike that propounded in the first statement made by Aristotle in his *Metaphysics*[4]: 'Man, by nature, wants to know, to have insight.' The well-known neo-behaviourist, D. E. Berlyne, even uses concepts which are in the grand philosophical tradition: he speaks of curiosity and epistemic behaviour[5], and tries to say in behaviouristic terminology what other people are content to say in ordinary language.

Of more direct relevance to us is A. H. Maslow's conception of a hierarchy of needs of the child and of the human being generally[6], in which the need to know and to understand is given a very prominent place. Maslow's experience is that of a psychotherapist, and it is significant that he states that the most effective therapy for some patients is quite simply to involve them in something that will give them a new interest, something to think about, and to help them to interpret their new experiences: to understand, to have insight.

Children do indeed need love, and security, and they need to be esteemed, so that they can *feel* loved, *feel* secure, *feel* self-esteem, develop a positive self-image and the courage to explore and to cope with what confronts them when they explore—to open their eyes to the fascination, and sometimes the frightening aspects, of what impinges on their senses and of what they encounter as they move about in their continually expanding world. How can any child, any human being, possibly cope with what streams into his awareness, as he touches surfaces and textures, bites, smells, and manipulates things, as he opens his eyes and his ears, is engaged in interpersonal transactions, suffers humiliations and frustrations, is infected by the fears and the excitements of brothers and sisters and parents and peers, and teachers—how can he cope, without being impelled to understand, to see how one thing, one experience relates to another? And the human being, in contradistinction to the ape, is impelled to understand in intellectual terms and in terms of the symbolic systems, which, for him, are inescapable, and in terms of which he shares his understanding, and from which he derives much of his understanding. The ultimate meaning of the incessant questioning of the happy, healthy two-year-old child, 'What is this?' gets lost if we regard this questioning merely as 'characteristic of the two-year-old' and not as a sign that signals to us a potentiality of charac-

teristically human development, that we ought to do all in our power to develop.

The signs change as the child grows older; and in school, partly because of what we do to the child, or what parents do to the child, or because children have become overwhelmed by the variety of what they experience, or by the lack of relevance of what we teach and how we teach it (i.e. relevance to their own personal concerns), the signs may be confusing to us, for they may seem to point in many different directions: they show no interest in school (but have you noticed what interests them as soon as they leave the school?), they want only superficial entertainment that requires no thought (but have they perhaps become frustrated in their effort to understand, because understanding at higher levels now requires ways of thinking that they have not been taught?); they are interested more in dating and mating (but does this exclude an urge to know, to understand?)

The point I want to make is: if we really have a conception of man as a being that is impelled to know, needs to know, and whose full humanity depends on knowing and on symbolizing, then we will become more sensitized to the signs that point to this potentiality. Nor need we be afraid that we are imposing something adult on children that does not fit in with their 'natural' aptitudes, interests, abilities. As I have said elsewhere[7]: a basic fact about being human is that we give meaning to things and events and make the world intelligible to ourselves—from birth onwards. The great fields of human enquiry, which we compartmentalize into subjects, and into course outlines or programmes of instruction, are modes of interpreting the world around us and in us that have been developed in the course of our cultural evolution. To train pupils in these does not mean that we are imposing something alien on them, but that we are supporting them in their own efforts to interpret the world. And that is the spirit in which—so I believe—we ought always to teach. Growing up, developing, becoming a mature adult, involve essentially the strengthening of our powers of giving meaning. The school must aid the child by giving it the opportunity to discover and re-create for itself the meanings that have been given by others and that can be shared. It is by this active process of giving meaning that the child on the one hand grows into the culture, i.e. becomes socialized and acculturated, and at the same time becomes the person that he will be: a person with such and such sensibilities, orientations, expectations, valuations.

This view, I believe, also has a bearing on a problem that sometimes overawes us as we contemplate the vast and rapid accumulation of knowledge, its abstract nature, and the limitations of the human

mind. The 'Magical Number Seven, Plus or Minus Two', I remind you, is a limit beyond which, apparently, the mind cannot go.

> Nowadays nothing one learns lasts for the rest of one's life. Our forefathers relied for a whole lifetime on what they had learnt in their youth at school; we have to unlearn and relearn every five years, if we are not to be hopelessly out of date.

I quote this in order to give us some consolation, for these are the words which Goethe puts into the mouth of one of his characters in a novel *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* (English translation: *The Affinities*). This character is about to start reading from a new book on chemistry. The novel was published in 1809, 159 years ago!

The rapid accumulation and reinterpretation of knowledge is not only a challenge to teaching today; it was a challenge 200 years ago too. And if the rate of accumulation and reinterpretation *has* increased so have our opportunities and our techniques for coping with it! I am not referring only to the computor, which certainly cannot carry the whole weight of what is required. I am referring to our insights concerning the process of acquiring knowledge and of rendering it meaningful to the human purposes of the individual. To an observer from the year 1809, were he able to see what we accomplish with quite ordinary children (not with the *élite* only), a miracle would seem to have occurred. Why should we in the year 1968, looking at the year 2127 A.D., despair? Bruner[8] speaks of the development of the child's ways of processing information as leading from complexity to simplicity; one could add, from moderate power to great power. This is, of course, a development that is forced upon us by our own need to understand. And the more there is to understand, the greater is the challenge to reduce complexity to simplicity. We are forced into paying more and more attention to looking at knowledge for what it is: not a leaden lump of facts, nor a pile of beads that can be counted and arranged in serial order, but a live and living body of structured interrelationships, of mountain peaks and valleys and plains, accessible to modes of enquiry invented by human beings and animated by personal and human concerns. What is beyond this is not knowledge; it belongs in the museum. Knowledge not only accumulates; great chunks, fortunately, wither and die away—though, of course, a later age may bring them to life again and make them relevant to human concerns.

The four great, and in a sense traditional conceptions of human nature, I have tried to indicate, are all in some way related. I can therefore afford to be briefer in speaking about play, tool-making, and symbolization, and the signs and signals in child behaviour that point to these potentialities of human development.

Man as *Homo ludens*, the being that plays and creates worlds of imagination: as a number of psychologists have shown, this is certainly not unrelated to the cognitive development of the child, to the development of his powers of abstraction, to his reasoning, to forming the kinds of hypotheses that push science and technology forward. Lewis Carrol, the mathematician-author, who wrote *Alice in Wonderland* for his little friends, though not a psychologist, knew this, and sensed his own affinity with the child. The child, like the adult, and particularly like the truly creative adult, lives in two worlds—the world that *is*, in which facts are facts, and the adults can tell you what they are, and the imagined world in which one can play with the merely possible and the 'not-yet', and is free to imagine the plainly impossible. There would be no art and no science, if we always saw reality only as it is, at present and in the accepted, conventional views, and did not look beyond at the possibilities inherent in reality, and if we did not 'play' with these possibilities. The possibilities inherent in reality, only imagined, but not yet actualized, these become so compelling—certainly for the creative person, but we are all to some extent creative, and little children too—that they must be illumined, articulated, brought to life, given form and substance, and in the end firmly anchored in the reality which man is constantly creating. This is true not only of the painter, the sculptor, the poet, the architect; it is equally true of the scientist and the engineer. For what is a hypothesis in science but a possibility of reality, which the creative scientist imagines, and then feels himself impelled, by means of experimentation and rational thinking to articulate, illumine, give form and substance, bring to life, and place firmly on the broad canvas of scientific theory, which is the expression of the world as the scientist sees it? And what is a bridge or the Simplon tunnel or the Panama canal, or a space-ship, but a possibility of reality that has become a part of the reality—the facts—that we now all take for granted?[9]

There is a link here, therefore, with man's rationality and with his tool-making and with his power to extend and to transform his natural environment. If we put the stress too strongly only on rationality (on the abstraction and logical reasoning required, e.g. by modern science) and on the child as a processer of information (on the computor model) or become too concerned with the utilization of knowledge for technological purposes with a view to increasing everyone's material standard of living, we may defeat our own ends.

But there is a link of play and imagination *also*, and *especially*, with the child's, and the human being's, symbolizing activity. This has been known in the past too (Schiller—eighteenth century, Froebel—nineteenth century, e.g.), but it is known in a more

specific and concrete way today. I shall mention only one study that demonstrates this link rather well, though I could point also, e.g. to experience in play therapy with children, and to other sources. I am thinking of a study by the Russian psychologists, Luria and Yudovich, entitled *Speech and the development of mental processes in the child* (Staples Press, 1959). A pair of identical twins had been left very much to their own company up to the age of five years. When observed and tested at that age, their language had all the characteristics of the language of a child of two years or less. Their play also had these characteristics, but, in addition, lacked a characteristic which in 'normal' children is usually quite well developed by then, and certainly at the age of three: their play was at a very low level of imaginal activity. A block was a block, to be carried, endlessly and monotonously, from one end of the room to the other, not an object that could be transformed by phantasy, depending upon ever-new possibilities to be explored and acted out, into a boat, a shoe, a wall, a cart, or a locomotive puffing steam and making the appropriate noises. Their behaviour in test situations designed to analyze certain intellectual functions, such as classification of objects, also revealed a level of functioning typical of much younger children. The twins were placed in a kindergarten. Both were thus subjected to the ordinary socializing influences that also arouse the need and the desire to communicate. But one twin—the one who had been the weaker at birth, and had had more illnesses, and who in the past had been the follower rather than the leader—was given, in addition, i.e. over and above what the other twin and all the other children were receiving, some specific language training. As a result of the general socializing influences, there were marked developments in both twins, on every front. But the twin with the extra language training showed a superiority on all fronts: intellectual (classification of objects, e.g.) and, as far as play is concerned, in the ability to transform objects into imagined objects, as well as in the ability to play games in which, for the duration of the game, the participant assumes a role and each participant must adjust to the roles of the others. Language, it seems, helps us to keep imagined possibilities in mind, or as Luria and Yudovich say, to grasp and to 'stabilize' what otherwise is only fleetingly imagined or not imagined at all. And the twin who had been the follower now became the leader (after nine months this reverse pattern was firmly established) in all situations save one: the exception was play requiring mainly physical activity and little imagination.

Rationality, play and imagination, tool-making, symbolization: I have said something about all of them and I now come to the end, not of what I would like to say, but of what an audience, however

well-disposed and intelligent, can be expected to endure in one session. Of that which must be left unsaid, I regret most the omission of two themes that are particularly topical and urgent in North America: firstly, what I like to call the spirit of interventionism—i.e. intervention in human development—as exemplified by the attempts to speed up cognitive development. It involves two aspects: what can be done, and what ought to be done. The other topic concerns the unrealised potentialities of children from 'disadvantaged' homes and communities. I can allow myself only a few remarks on this.

I said earlier that an observer from the year 1809 would regard what we are today achieving with quite ordinary children as almost incredible. The great reformers and innovators in education (Comenius, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, e.g.) have always had a passionate involvement in the poor, the underprivileged, and in the children whose potentialities were not seen by the convention-bound, hard-headed, so-called practical men with their stereotypes about the poor and the deviant. But I do not believe for one moment that we have reached the limit of what we can do to develop the potentialities of children who at present appear to have few potentialities. Let us hope that in looking to the future we shall not have to gaze as far as the year 2127 A.D. in order to find incredible what teachers are achieving with children who at present seem to us to have no, or very few, potentialities. We ought to be concerned in the process of education with the child at every level of ability and privilege, or inability and lack of privilege.

And finally, to exemplify the power of imagination and of symbolism, I shall end with a legend. There are so many truths and counterfeit truths in psychology and in education, and I have tried to convey to you some truths about the nature of human nature, as I see them, believing them to be genuine truths, though not 'the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth', for there are many more. And now the legend, which, after these introductory remarks, needs no further comment, for it carries its own message. It occurs in the preface to the novel *Winesburg, Ohio* by Sherwood Anderson, and I take it from an essay by Lionel Trilling in his book *The Liberal Imagination* (1951), and I am substituting for the general truths named there, the truths that teachers pick up:

The novelist tells the story of an old man who is writing what he calls 'The Book of Grotesques.' The old man has a ruling idea. It is this:

> That in the beginning when the world was young there were a great many thoughts but no such things as the truth. Man made the truths himself and each truth was a composite of a

great many thoughts. All about in the world were truths and they were all beautiful.

The old man listed hundreds of the truths in his book. I will not try to tell you all of them. There was the truth of rationality and the truth of play, the truth of man the tool-maker and of man the symbol-maker, of creativity and of individual differences, of the need for love and the need for understanding. Hundreds and hundreds were the truths and they were all beautiful.

And then the people came along. Each as he appeared snatched up one of the truths and some who were quite strong snatched up a dozen of them.

It was the truths that made the people grotesques. The old man had quite an elaborate theory about the matter. It was his notion that the moment one of the people took one of the truths to himself (only one), called it his truth, and tried to live his life by it, he became a grotesque and the truth he embraced became a falsehood.

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THEMES OF MANHOOD IN FIVE SHAKESPEARE TRAGEDIES

Some Notes on *Othello, King Lear, Macbeth, Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus*

(concluded)*

by C. O. GARDNER

V

Whereas the tragedies of Lear and Macbeth unfold themselves against a clear framework of good and evil, the terms in which *Antony and Cleopatra* is conceived are perhaps more aesthetic than moral. Or maybe one might say that the field of morality into which the later play plunges us is in some respects more complex, mysterious, uncharted, than the worlds of *King Lear* and *Macbeth*. The earlier two plays could be said to be concerned primarily with human conduct towards other people. Antony's central problem is his own conduct towards himself: what sort of person—what sort of *man*—is he to be? In what way or ways can he fulfil himself most copiously, most finely, most valuably? While *King Lear* and *Macbeth* contain suggestions of a moral order that is cosmic, divine even, *Antony and Cleopatra* is essentially humanistic, and the grand colourful empire that surrounds the protagonists is felt to be the hunting-ground, and at the same time the product, of human energy. If *Macbeth* makes us feel how dangerous and unholy a man's submission to his ambitious yearnings may be, *Antony and Cleopatra* gives us (in very different circumstances of course) a sense of the value and the necessity, but also the tragedy, of an ambitiously rich self-fulfilment—a sense, indeed, of 'the holiness of the heart's affections', and perhaps also of 'the truth of imagination.'

In the opening scene we are presented with two contrasting modes of seeing, two utterly different ideals of noble manhood. First we are given the Roman point of view:

> Nay, but this dotage of our general's
> O'erflows the measure. Those his goodly eyes,
> That o'er the files and musters of the war

*The first part of this article was published in *Theoria XXIX*.

> Have glow'd like plated Mars, now bend, now turn
> The office and devotion of their view
> Upon a tawny front; his captain's heart,
> Which in the scuffles of great fights hath burst
> The buckles on his breast, reneges all temper,
> And is become the bellows and the fan
> To cool a gipsy's lust. Look, where they come!
> Take but good note, and you shall see in him
> The triple pillar of the world transformed
> Into a strumpet's fool . . .

To Philo (the speaker of these words), a great man is a hardy metalled soldier, and a political leader; Antony, who was once great, has made a fool of himself by becoming infatuated with a voluptuous Egyptian woman. The movement of the verse that he speaks suggests the contrast that Philo sees between martial sternness and sensual flexibility, between masterful control and 'o'erflowing the measure.' But this contrast is viewed in a startlingly different light by Antony:

> Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch
> Of the rang'd empire fall! Here is my space.
> Kingdoms are clay; our dungy earth alike
> Feeds beast as man. The nobleness of life
> Is to do thus: when such a mutual pair
> And such a twain can do't, in which I bind,
> On pain of punishment, the world to weet
> We stand up peerless.

Antony rejoices in the change that Philo laments. For Antony, the dissolution of the military and political order and of its attendant responsibilities frees the heart for profounder commitments, for a truer and more inward nobility. A man achieves true greatness by completing himself in a fine love: human energy is expended most valuably in an embrace.

When Cleopatra replies, 'Excellent falsehood!', she is of course teasing Antony into a further avowal; but they both partly realize that there *is* a degree of falsehood in what he says. The relationship between them, as we soon discover, for all its astonishing vivacity lacks the perfection of mutuality that he has so grandly pictured. And manhood cannot be reduced to the simple ability to be a fine lover any more than it can be reduced to the simple possession of a 'captain's heart'—and indeed Antony's self-confidence and stature, and Cleopatra's love for him, depend to a considerable

extent upon his having so amply those qualities and achievements that he seems prepared to renounce. Yet for all its evasions Antony's speech has a warm vitality and a rhythmical power that suggest where the deepest truth about him—and perhaps about all noble manhood—will be found to lie.

In so far as my particular theme may be disentangled from the complicated and beautiful whole, the play can be seen as the acting-out of Antony's attempt to fulfil the totality of his manhood—to be a good statesman and soldier in the Roman fashion as well as a successful 'Egyptian' lover. (The two poles of the Roman world and the Egyptian world, which represent the two opposite tendencies of Antony's manhood, are given marvellously vivid life not only by characterization and imagery but by numerous pieces of subtle dramatic interplay. For instance, Enobarbus—who is at some moments almost Antony's *alter ego*, at other moments something of a chorus—speaks for Egypt to his old Roman colleagues when he describes the bewitching Cleopatra, and then later represents Roman reasonableness and practicality when he argues with her; his final despair, however, springs from a rejection of Roman criteria.) Throughout the play, Antony is felt to be colossally masculine. As a bold and imaginative lover and as an open-hearted companion, he has a deep and experienced emotional life; as a leader and a soldier, he has unrivalled mental and physical power. The tragic tension within him is a sign both of his stature and of the full-bloodedness of his involvement in the human condition. From the first he is felt to be *more of a man* than his 'competitor', Octavius Caesar—who (though he is impressive in some ways, and formidable in many) is younger, less experienced, less relaxed and yet less torn, less warm, less profoundly and heroically serious in his humanity.

In the second scene of the play we see Antony struck by 'a Roman thought':

> These strong Egyptian fetters I must break,
> Or lose myself in dotage.

Here he sounds like Philo himself. And in his strained but earnest determination to live up to a purely Roman ideal, he is even prepared to attempt to abandon Cleopatra altogether: he goes to Rome, and ties himself to Caesar by marrying his sister, whose gentle modesty and chastity he sincerely respects.

But Antony's real interest in soldiering and politics is quite different from the conventional Roman interest. In Caesar's view, as the early scenes have shown, a man proves himself by rugged, ascetic endurance:

> Leave thy lascivious wassails. Antony, when thou once
> Wast beaten from Modena, where thou slew'st
> Hirtius and Pansa, consuls, at thy heel
> Did famine follow, whom thou fought'st against,
> Though daintily brought up, with patience more
> Than savages could suffer; thou didst drink
> The stale of horses and the gilded puddle
> Which beasts would cough at . . .

Indeed to the 'scarce-bearded' Caesar, as to Philo, sensual love is wholly unbecoming:

> From Alexandria
> This is the news: he fishes, drinks, and wastes
> The lamps of night in revel; is not more manlike
> Than Cleopatra, nor the queen of Ptolemy
> More womanly than he.

Caesar's strictures are not wholly unjustified, of course, and his ideal is far from being contemptible; but it is a rather narrow and inhuman ideal. It is hardly surprising that the speaker of such words should be capable of the icily relentless calculation that we see towards the end of the play. For Antony, the joy of war has come to be an aspect of his love for Cleopatra, an extension of it. Before leaving Egypt, he had said to her,

> By the fire
> That quickens Nilus' slime, I go from hence
> Thy soldier, servant, making peace or war
> As thou affect'st

and she had finally broken through her love-coquetry to reply,

> Upon your sword
> Sit laurel victory, and smooth success
> Be strew'd before your feet!

It is obvious that Antony's deepest feelings lie in the East. Unlike the Othello of Act I—but a little like the Othello of Act IV—he finds his most powerful emotion incompatible with his official role. His attraction to Cleopatra is, at this stage in the play, partly a sensual self-indulgence; to some extent, we feel, she is a temptress, like Lady Macbeth, exploiting masculine frailties and provoking doom. But this is not the whole of the truth, nor is it the most important part of it: the love between Antony and Cleopatra, for

all its inconsistencies, strikes us as extraordinarily real. And Cleopatra, for all her faults, is more alive and far more loving than the touching and pathetic Octavia, for all her virtues. The latter's mildness seems to exemplify a certain lack of vital human awareness within the Roman response to life.

Antony returns, then, to Cleopatra. He abandons his forlorn attempt to reassume all the Roman views and values, and tries to be his whole self—lover and soldier—beside Cleopatra. His defeat, his fall, is inevitable. Caesar follows swiftly, determined to overwhelm his profligate colleague and rival. Antony's Egyptian mood is not productive of the Roman qualities that are so necessary if battles are to be won: he rashly decides to fight by sea instead of by land (as Professor Wilson Knight has shown, this choice of the soft sensuous element symbolizes the inner decision that Antony has made); and there follows the disaster of Actium in which Antony's manly honour seems totally annihilated:

Scarus: Yon ribaudred nag of Egypt—
Whom leprosy o'ertake!—i' the midst o' the fight,
When vantage like a pair of twins appear'd,
Both as the same, or rather ours the elder,
The breese upon her, like a cow in June,
Hoists sails and flies.
Enobarbus: That I beheld:
Mine eyes did sicken at the sight, and could not
Endure a further view.
Scarus: She once being loof'd,
The noble ruin of her magic, Antony,
Claps on his sea-wing, and like a doting mallard,
Leaving the fight in height, flies after her.
I never saw an action of such shame:
Experience, manhood, honour, ne'er before
Did violate so itself.
Enobarbus: Alack, alack!
(*Enter Canidius*)
Canidius:
Our fortune on the sea is out of breath,
And sinks most lamentably. Had our general
Been what he knew himself, it had gone well:
O, he has given example for our flight
Most grossly by his own.

For the moment it seems that Enobarbus is wholly right to exclaim, 'Naught, naught, all naught!' Politically and militarily Antony's

fate is sealed. And he has not notably asserted or embodied any value that can challenge the powerful argument of Caesar's success: he has been betrayed and humiliated by Cleopatra; even his close friends regard his performance as mere effeminacy.

But this is not, of course, the end of the story: the play is only half over. The tragedy does indeed consummate itself; the impossibility of successfully combining such a love as Antony's with worldly power is grimly displayed. But at the same time suggestions of personal triumph and even of a transcendence of some sort—suggestions that have been implicit within the play from Antony's and Cleopatra's first words—are set up as a counterpoint to the notes of tragedy. In his distress, Antony's inner fire glows into a most noble generosity:

> Hark! the land bids me tread no more upon 't;
> It is asham'd to bear me. Friends, come hither:
> I am so lated in the world that I
> Have lost my way for ever. I have s ahip
> Laden with gold: take that, divide it; fly,
> And make your peace with Caesar.
>
> *Attendants:* Fly! not we.
>
> *Antony:*
>
> I have fled myself, and have instructed cowards
> To run and show their shoulders. Friends, be gone.
> I have myself resolv'd upon a course
> Which has no need of you: be gone.
> My treasure 's in the harbour: take it. O,
> I follow'd that I blush to look upon:
> My very hairs do mutiny, for the white
> Reprove the brown for rashness, and they them
> For fear and doting. Friends, be gone; you shall
> Have letters from me to some friends that will
> Sweep your way for you . . .

His very remorse, his recognition that he has failed his own manhood, are by a potent paradox indications of the courage and amplitude of that manhood. He goes on to say that he has 'lost command'; but the strength, nobility, sobriety and tragic grandeur of this speech show him to be more admirable and more commanding than we have seen him before. Moreover, as the end approaches, his relationship with Cleopatra begins to take on a new firmness and purity. As a result of what she has done he is at first, as Iras says, 'unqualitied with very shame':

> Now I must
> To the young man send humble treaties, dodge
> And palter in the shifts of lowness, who
> With half the bulk o' the world play'd as I pleas'd,
> Making and marring fortunes. You did know
> How much you were my conqueror, and that
> My sword, made weak by my affection, would
> Obey it on all cause.

Again, all that the Romans have said about the effect of Cleopatra on Antony's greatness would seem to be true. But she begs his pardon with unusually straightforward sincerity and humility; and Antony moves—with more than a touch of pathetic bravado, to be sure (the new tone overwhelms the tragic only, if it all, at the very end)—into a brave and passionate mood in which he seems perhaps more fully integrated, more wholly manly, than ever before:

> Fall not a tear, I say; one of them rates
> All that is won and lost. Give me a kiss;
> Even this repays me. We sent our schoolmaster;
> Is he come back? Love, I am full of lead.
> Some wine, within there, and our viands! Fortune knows
> We scorn her most when most she offers blows.

I cannot attempt to trace in detail the intricate workings of the counterpoint that I have talked of: sadness and elation, tragedy and triumph are interwoven with the greatest subtlety. As Caesar is favoured more and more fully by Fortune, Antony's despairs and angers recur, and Cleopatra several times bends and wavers. Enobarbus deserts. But he soon recognizes his mistake, realises that the sheer force of humanity within Antony is far more valuable than Caesar's reason and cold, lucky competence. And Antony's manliness has a great range; at times he draws the different parts of himself together into a superb unity:

> Fare thee well, dame, whate'er becomes of me;
> This is a soldier's kiss. Rebukeable
> And worthy shameful check it were, to stand
> On more mechanic compliment; I'll leave thee
> Now, like a man of steel . . .

That kiss seems more acceptable, more admirable, than the one we witnessed in Act I scene i. Cleopatra and he are very aware, however, that there is a tragic disproportion between his essential worth and his ineluctable fate; she says,

That he and Caesar might
Determine this great war in single fight!
Then Antony—but now—Well, on.

At one moment Antony seems almost able to defy fate itself. After a successful day's fighting against the invading Romans, he returns home in a scene of unparalleled richness:

We have beat him to his camp. Run one before,
And let the Queen know of our gests. Tomorrow,
Before the sun shall see's, we'll spill the blood
That has today escap'd. I thank you all:
For doughty-handed are you, and have fought
Not as you serv'd the cause, but as 't had been
Each man's like mine; you have shown all Hectors.
Enter the city, clip you wives, your friends,
Tell them your feats; whilst they with joyful tears
Wash the congealment from your wounds, and kiss
The honour'd gashes whole. (To Scarus) Give me thy hand:
(*Enter Cleopatra, attended*)
To this great fairy I'll commend thy acts,
Make her thanks bless thee. O thou day o' the world!
Chain mine arm'd neck; leap thou, attire and all,
Through proof of harness to my heart, and there
Ride on the pants triumphing.

The note of pathos is still insistent, of course. But the grandeur of Antony's personality makes an ineradicable impression upon us. War and love, courage and imagination, fierceness and gaiety, effort and release, are joined in one movement of the heart—in one passionate, and peculiarly masculine, eloquence. He is an inspiring and exhilarating leader of men, and his self-confident animation flows naturally and freely into magnanimity and bounty. The same fire burns behind a remarkably varied series of vigorous verbs—'beat', 'run', 'spill', 'thank', 'enter', 'clip', 'tell', 'wash', 'kiss', 'commend', 'bless', 'chain', 'leap', 'ride.' This passage provides perhaps the most profound and attractive embodiment of fulfilled manly energy that is to be found in Shakespeare's plays.

But human life seems unable to bear very much of that particular sort of reality. Antony is again betrayed by 'this false soul of Egypt', and his manly attributes fall back into disunity. He gives himself over to bitter anger—

To the young Roman boy she hath sold me, and I fell
Under this plot; she dies for 't—

and to a sense that he himself is disintegrating as his love disintegrates:

Antony:
That which is now a horse, even with a thought
The rack dislimns, and makes it indistinct,
As water is in water.
Eros: It does, my Lord.
Antony:
My good knave Eros, now thy captain is
Even such a body: here I am Antony,
Yet cannot hold this visible shape, my knave.

But when he is led to believe that Cleopatra is dead, deeper feelings well up to the surface. He desires to join her again; he runs on his sword; then, before he dies, he is wholly reconciled to her. His end is noble, and it does justice to Roman as well as to Egyptian values.

The quality that Antony has achieved, and the final quality of his relationship with Cleopatra, are irrefutable and in a sense indestructible. Shakespeare has daringly thrown out suggestions of an unearthly consummation. Antony has felt himself to be passing beyond the world of pain and energetic struggle into a realm where human life is both fulfilled and mysteriously transmuted:

Off, pluck off:
The seven-fold shield of Ajax cannot keep
The battery from my heart. O, cleave, my sides!
Heart, once be stronger than thy continent,
Crack thy frail case! Apace, Eros, apace.
No more a soldier; bruised pieces, go;
You have been nobly borne. From me awhile. (*Exit Eros*)
I will o'ertake thee, Cleopatra, and
Weep for my pardon. So it must be, for now
All length is torture; since the torch is out
Lie down, and stray no further. Now all labour
Mars what it does; yea, very force entangles
Itself with strength. Seal then, and all is done.
Eros!—I come, my queen—Eros!—Stay for me;
Where souls do couch on flowers, we'll hand in hand,
And with our sprightly port make the ghosts gaze.
Dido and her Aeneas shall want troops,
And all the haunt be ours.

In this passage not only Antony's armour, but his body too, his manly form and force, seem to dissolve; but this willing dissolution is very different from the disintegration that he has feared and felt

shortly before. His freed spirit prepares to enjoy the simple and sublime mutual love that it has always desired.

Suggestions of an unusually explicit and elaborated 'tragic joy' are of course even stronger in Act V:

> My desolation does begin to make
> A better life.

Cleopatra has by now taken on a fuller womanliness, as if in response to the final fullness in Antony; in her eventual marble-constancy she too finds room even for Roman virtues.

The passage in the final Act that is most important for my purposes is that which contains Cleopatra's great speeches to Dolabella:

Cleopatra:

> . . . You laugh when boys or women tell their dreams:
> Is't not your trick?

Dolabella:

> I understand not, madam.

Cleopatra:

> I dream'd there was an Emperor Antony:
> O, such another sleep, that I might see
> But such another man!

Dolabella:

> If it might please ye—

Cleopatra:

> His face was as the heavens, and therein stuck
> A sun and moon, which kept their course, and lighted
> The little O, the earth.

Dolabella:

> Most sovereign creature—

Cleopatra:

> His legs bestrid the ocean; his rear'd arm
> Crested the world. His voice was propertied
> As all the tuned spheres, and that to friends;
> But when he meant to quail and shake the orb,
> He was as rattling thunder. For his bounty,
> There was no winter in 't; an autumn 'twas
> That grew the more by reaping. His delights
> Were dolphin-like; they show'd his back above
> The element they liv'd in. In his livery
> Walk'd crowns and crownets; realms and islands were
> As plates dropp'd from his pocket.

Dolabella:

> Cleopatra—

Cleopatra:

Think you there was, or might be, such a man
As this I dream'd of?

Dolabella:

Gentle madam, no.

Cleopatra:

You lie, up to the hearing of the gods.
But if there be or ever were one such,
It's past the size of dreaming. Nature wants stuff
To vie strange forms with fancy, yet to imagine
An Antony were nature's piece 'gainst fancy,
Condemning shadows quite.

Cleopatra sees Antony complete and magnified, almost deified, in a context where contingency cannot touch him, where his true worth is thoroughly expressed. At last he is wholly himself; his manhood becomes a universal value, a universal fact—for in her woman's eyes, of course, his masculinity is not stripped away, but glorified. It is all a dream, she says; yet she believes her dream. The poetry of the speech is both passionate and vivid: we feel not only the reality of her emotion, but a validity in what she sees. Her words are too hard and clear and exultant to be an expression of mere feminine illusion. In some sense, then (and we are left with an impression of unexplained and unexplainable mystery), Cleopatra's vision is an important part of the play's truth. Certainly the response of the kind, slightly patronizing Dolabella—'Gentle madam, no'—is adequate: *that*, for all its courtesy, is the voice of the practical, positivistic Rome that we see morally defeated in its very victory, in its merely military triumph.

VI

In *Antony and Cleopatra* an heroic manly splendour pitted itself against the less admirable representative of worldly political success; the contest Antony both lost and won. In *Coriolanus* a man who is less glowing and full, yet in his way hardly less heroic, pits himself against the rising power of the people; Coriolanus is defeated—yet he, too, has a victory of a sort.

Coriolanus lacks the wonderful abundance and depth, and perhaps also something of the timelessness, of the four plays I have looked at; but it is nevertheless, needless to say, a very remarkable tragedy indeed. Coriolanus himself is not a figure that most modern readers or audiences find attractive: our attention is focused particularly upon

his political attitude, and this attitude neither a modern democrat nor even a modern aristocrat is likely to take to spontaneously. Yet the point of view that the protagonist expresses is not only one that seems to have been taken for granted by most people at most times, until the last few hundred years; but it is one that Shakespeare considers seriously, and clearly has a considerable amount of sympathy for.

What I wish to suggest in this section of my essay is that Coriolanus's view can valuably be seen as, partly, his own passionate and absolute formulation of a traditional way of thinking—a traditional translation into political terms of a belief in the power, rights and responsibilities of 'noble' (that is, high-spirited, illustrious and well-born) manhood.

Like Othello, Lear, Macbeth and Antony—each in his own way—Coriolanus is intensely virile. Indeed, less complicated and less richly-characterized as he is, he is in some respects more quintessentially 'manly' than any of the others. On the battlefield, where the harsher of the masculine values are at a premium, he is magnificent. He is the epitome of bravery, and so inspiring a commander (when he wishes to be) that he is able to win the complete allegiance of the plebeians who in peacetime activity dislike him. He is generous, genuinely patriotic, and strikingly humble about his achievements:

> Pray now, no more: my mother,
> Who has a charter to extol her blood,
> When she does praise me grieves me. I have done
> As you have done—that's what I can; induc'd
> As you have been—that's for my country.
> He that has but effected his good will
> Hath overta'en mine act . . .
> I thank you, general;
> But cannot make my heart consent to take
> A bribe to pay my sword: I do refuse it;
> And stand upon my common part with those
> That have beheld the doing.

Coriolanus is too great a man to feel the young Hotspur's yearning for public acclamation. Yet his modesty is not sweet and reasonable like that of Prince Hal (whose nature is too essentially harmonious to be tragic): it grows from his sense of what belongs to manly honour, from his fierce contempt for emotions and attitudes that he believes to be artificial and effeminate. After the soldiers and the trumpets have proclaimed his heroism and his magnanimity, he bursts out:

> May these same instruments which you profane
> Never sound more! When drums and trumpets shall
> I' the field prove flatterers, let courts and cities be
> Made all of false-fac'd soothing!
> When steel grows soft as is the parasite's silk
> Let him be made a coverture for the wars!
> No more, I say! For that I have not wash'd
> My nose that bled, or foil'd some debile wretch—
> Which, without note, here's many else have done—
> You shout me forth
> In acclamations hyperbolical;
> As if I lov'd my little should be dieted
> In praises sauc'd with lies.

Coriolanus's rugged aloofness from ordinary joys is formidable, forbidding even; one appreciates the justice of Cominius's mild rebuke:

> Too modest are you;
> More cruel to your good report than grateful
> To us that give you truly.

Shakespeare hardly ever makes it possible for us to feel our way into the most intimate recesses of Coriolanus's being; but in the speech that I have quoted, for all its rough discourtesy, there is much that we must admire. The pride that lies behind his sharpness is not unworthy, nor is it simply the pride of personal egotism. He speaks on behalf of a band of comrades, for on the battlefield all true warriors are equals. Soldierly nobility, he implies, is a communal value, and a value in itself: vulgar applause of one particular man is wholly inappropriate, a mere temptation. We feel ourselves to be in the presence of a most firm and unrelenting integrity.

And it is this integrity, this austere sense of right and wrong, that Coriolanus carries with tragic results into the more difficult field of politics. Aufidius, speaking as a sort of chorus at the end of Act IV, suggests that Coriolanus's expulsion from Rome may have been caused by the inflexibility of his nature, which—

> Not to be other than one thing, not moving
> From the casque to the cushion, but commanding peace
> Even with the same austerity and garb
> As he controll'd the war—

proved fatal to him. It is worth remembering that Aufidius's diagnosis is somewhat applicable to Othello and even to Macbeth. Indeed the problem is a common one. Shakespeare makes us vividly aware, here as elsewhere, that what makes for heroism in one set of

circumstances may be disastrous in another, that sincerity and dedication may feed vice—that the finest and most passionate manliness may prove utterly inadequate in the complexity of human affairs.

In Rome Coriolanus is the fiercest of aristocrats. The patricians he considers the embodiment of authority, the guardians of good political order and of the high and well-born virtues of 'nobility' and 'generosity' (he always thinks of the primitive meanings of these words.) Aristocratic rule (he feels), while producing general happiness, is based upon an acceptance of human greatness—of the stature, that is, of those who truly *are* great.

Shortly after Menenius has painted his rather winning picture of the hierarchical order of society, Coriolanus, in a contemptuous address to the people who have been clamouring for change, adds his personal intensity, the weighty if unpleasant absoluteness of his conviction:

> What would you have, you curs,
> That like nor peace nor war? The one affrights you,
> The other makes you proud. He that trusts you,
> Where he should find you lions, finds you hares;
> Where foxes, geese. You are no surer, no,
> Than is the coal of fire upon the ice,
> Or hailstone in the sun. Your virtue is
> To make him worthy whose offence subdues him,
> And curse that justice did it. Who deserves greatness
> Deserves your hate . . .

In his severe masculinity, he despises everything that seems soft or undisciplined—cowardice, vanity, fickleness, sentimentality, envy, the desire for equality. He is so loyal to the patrician point of view that the hardships that the plebeians may be suffering strike him as irrelevant; certainly their desire for some sort of political representation is to him preposterous:

> They said they were an-hungry; sigh'd forth proverbs:
> That hunger broke stone walls; that dogs must eat;
> That meat was made for mouths; that the gods sent not
> Corn for the rich men only. With these shreds
> They vented their complainings; which being answer'd,
> And a petition granted them, a strange one—
> To break the heart of generosity,
> And make bold power look pale—they threw their caps
> As they would hang them on the horns o' the moon,
> Shouting their emulation.

The starvation that they claim to be afflicted by is no excuse at all for a challenge to the grandeur of authority.

For Coriolanus, indeed, all democratic processes are an insult to the truest human quality and dignity. As he goes reluctantly through the business of canvassing popular support for his candidature for the consulship, he says to himself,

> Better it is to die, better to starve,
> Than crave the hire which first we do deserve.

One is reminded of his refusal of praise on the battlefield: it is wrong, he feels, for true nobility to seek any other justification than what it contains within itself.

That Coriolanus's views are in many ways very unsatisfactory nobody can fail to recognize. Shakespeare makes the point unambiguously. The people, for all their faults, have genuine grievances:

> We are accounted poor citizens, the patricians good. What authority surfeits on would relieve us. If they would yield us but the superfluity, while it were wholesome, we might guess they are relieved us humanely; but they think we are too dear . . . Let us revenge this with our pikes, ere we become rakes: for the gods know I speak this in hunger for bread, not in thirst for revenge.

(The word 'superfluity' may recall to our minds the social insight and compassion achieved by Lear and by Gloucester.) Some of the remarks made by the Citizens are telling and memorable, and yet at the same time, in the most *human* sense of the word, very generous —which is more than can be said of anything that Coriolanus says to them:

Coriolanus:
You know the cause, sir, of my standing here?
First Citizen:
We do, sir; tell us what hath brought you to 't.
Coriolanus:
Mine own desert.
Second Citizen:
Your own desert!
Coriolanus:
Ay, not mine own desire.
First Citizen:
How! not your own desire?
Coriolanus:
No, sir, 'twas never my desire yet to trouble the poor with begging.

First Citizen:

You must think, if we give you any thing, we hope to gain by you.

Coriolanus:

Well then, I pray, your price o' the consulship?

First Citizen:

The price is, to ask it kindly.

Even the Tribunes, who are on the whole far from admirable, make some very valid comments on the haughty hero:

You speak o' the people
As if you were a god to punish, not
A man of their infirmity.

This statement echoes and re-echoes in our imaginations as the play moves towards its climax.

Yet in *Coriolanus*, as in every tragedy, we must not let our moral judgement—important as it of course is—cloud the sense that the dramatist gives us of the protagonist's personal situation and apprehension, or of what may indeed be reasonable or profoundly understandable in his attitude. Moreover we must recognise that, at least until the end of Act III, Coriolanus is a person of thorough though limited honesty. Even when he is displaying most blatantly his peculiar blend of pride and humanity, of disdain and true honour, there can be no doubting his passionate desire to be loyal to his ideal of manhood, to what he believes to be his own best self:

To brag unto them, thus I did, and thus;
Show them the unaching scars which I should hide,
As if I had receiv'd them for the hire
Of their breath only! . . .

Some of Coriolanus's formulations of his position are eloquent and not unimpressive;

What may be sworn by, both divine and human,
Seal what I end withal! This double worship,
Where one part does disdain with cause, the other
Insult without all reason; where gentry, title, wisdom,
Cannot conclude, but by the yea and no
Of general ignorance—it must omit
Real necessities, and give way the while
To unstable slightness. Purpose so barr'd, it follows
Nothing is done to purpose. Therefore, beseech you—
You that will be less fearful than discreet,
That love the fundamental part of state

> More than you doubt the change on't, that prefer
> A noble life before a long, and wish
> To jump a body with a dangerous physic
> That's sure of death without it—at once pluck out
> The multitudinous tongue; let them not lick
> The sweet which is their poison. Your dishonour
> Mangles true judgement, and bereaves the state
> Of that integrity which should become it,
> Not having the power to do the good it would,
> For the ill which doth control 't.

The intelligent emotion, the desperately vehement yet nobly sincere rhetoric, are powerful. Though Coriolanus's personal problem is presented in largely political terms—though the play contains nothing as inward as the great moments of the other tragedies—the agony of mingled pride and concern is most vividly present in the diction and the rhythm:

> it must omit
> Real necessities, and give way the while
> To unstable slightness. Purpose so barr'd, it follows
> Nothing is done to purpose.

The political nature of the passion, the very intellectuality of it, plays its part in evoking a peculiarly *masculine* intensity.

The attitude itself has to our eyes a distinctly archaic look: one is struck by the narrowness of Coriolanus's vision. But let us beware of losing sight of the reality, the perenniality, of the issues that the speech raises. May not ultimate democracy threaten the organic harmony of society? Might it not perhaps destroy the principle of authority and purpose? What would become of political and cultural *élites* (which all societies are apt to have) if they could not 'conclude, but by the yea and no of general ignorance'? Only a few years ago so great a man as Yeats was able to ask all these questions—and often to answer them with Coriolanian emphasis! It is not difficult to believe that Shakespeare may perhaps have had an obscure intuition that these might be some of the questions that would exercise Western society in the next few hundred years after his death. Coriolanus's solutions to these problems are clearly not Shakespeare's; we do not know that Shakespeare had any solutions. But, as I have said, the dramatist regards his hero's view as comprehensible and challenging, even though it is inevitably and perhaps rightly doomed. And the play may further suggest that the rise of the people, 'the revolt of the masses' (to use Ortega's phrase), may mean, tragically, the decline of the hero and of the heroic ideal.

Coriolanus is no politician. The manly and idealistic spirit within him is incapable of the temporizing, the moderation, the somewhat cynical tolerance practised and recommended by his fellow patricians. Menenius, critical and admiring, says,

> His nature is too noble for the world:
> He would not flatter Neptune for his trident,
> Or Jove for's power to thunder. His heart's his mouth:
> What his breast forges, that his tongue must vent;
> And being angry does forget that ever
> He heard the name of death.

This is a tragic fault, of course; but the nobleness is real and touching. When we find the Tribunes preparing to make use of this characteristic of his—

> . . . being once chaf'd, he cannot
> Be rein'd again to temperance; then he speaks
> What's in his heart; and that is there which looks
> With us to break his neck—

we feel the viciousness of their plan quite as much as its bitter justice. Volumnia's tone is similar to Menenius's:

> You are too absolute;
> Though therein you can never be too noble,
> But when extremities speak . . .

We are made to realize and to feel that Coriolanus's absoluteness, for all its defects, is an indication of a peculiar and poignant greatness of heart and spirit. Stern and responsible manhood, he feels, cannot 'dodge and palter in the shifts of lowness.' He says to his mother,

> Why do you wish me milder? Would you have me
> False to my nature? Rather say I play
> The man I am.

We admire and disapprove: in the complexity of our response is enacted a part of the tragedy of manhood. A little later, when he has allowed himself to be persuaded, he sees his task of placating the plebeians as one of destroying his own male power, pride and virtue:

> Well, I must do't:
> Away, my disposition, and possess me
> Some harlot's spirit! My throat of war be turn'd,
> Which quired with my drum, into a pipe
> Small as a eunuch, or the virgin voice
> That babies lulls asleep! The smiles of knaves

Tent in my cheeks, and schoolboys' tears take up
The glasses of my sight! A beggar's tongue
Make motion through my lips, and my arm'd knees,
Who bow'd but in my stirrup, bend like his
That hath receiv'd an alms! I will not do't,
Lest I surcease to honour mine own truth,
And by my body's action teach my mind
A most inherent baseness.

In so far as he takes us along with Coriolanus's thought and feeling, Shakespeare seems to be suggesting that an important truth about manhood is that it contains within itself the need to be assertive and authoritative, the need to be self-confident and self-sufficient. An abdication of this natural duty and fulfilment may mean—or may *seem to* mean—both the ruin of the state and the dissolution of the individual. Coriolanus believes with an almost religious fervour in the authority and value of his own proud humanity. As in the case of Macbeth, we find ourselves recognizing that masculine power and moral truth can easily be at cross purposes. And yet the moral earnestness of Coriolanus's utterance is remarkable, and disturbing.

Again he decides that he will do as his mother and his friends advise. But we are shown that his nature will not be able to tame itself:

Cominius:
Away! the tribunes do attend you: arm yourself
To answer mildly; for they are prepar'd
With accusations, as I hear, more strong
Than are upon you yet.
Menenius:
The word is 'mildly.'
Coriolanus:
Pray you, let us go:
Let them accuse me by invention, I
Will answer in mine honour.
Menenius:
Ay, but mildly.
Coriolanus:
Well, mildly be it then. Mildly!

The trick of the Tribunes works. Coriolanus explodes in indignation, and is banished from Rome. His ultimate downfall is inevitable.

Yet for a moment, as he says farewell to those he is close to, he reveals an admirable tenderness, even a touch of humour:

> . . . Cominius,
> Droop not; adieu. Farewell, my wife! my mother!
> I'll do well yet. Thou old and true Menenius,
> Thy tears are salter than a younger man's,
> And venemous to thine eyes . . .

His resoluteness is splendid:

> Bid me farewell, and smile. I pray you, come.
> While I remain above the ground you shall
> Hear from me still; and never of me aught
> But what is like me formerly.

But those last words contain an irony: 'what is like me formerly' is not reassuring. Coriolanus's obstinate and unmanageable spirit has shown itself unable to deal with the delicacies of domestic politics; he has indeed tended unconsciously to create within himself the mood and the attitudes of war. What is one to expect of him, then, in the perplexing and demoralizing conditions of banishment?

There is a grim emotional logic (though we are also surprised and shocked) in the process whereby outraged pride and earnest energy flow into terrible, pathetic, disastrous vindictiveness.

> . . . in mere spite,
> To be full quit of those my banishers,
> Stand I before thee here,

he says to the envious Aufidius. For all the intellectual passion that he has displayed, Coriolanus is not essentially a ratiocinative person; perhaps 'manly men' never really are. The fact that we are not *shown* the dreadful change taking place within him suggests that he has succumbed to what is almost a biological reflex action. Coriolanus is doomed by an impulse which in other circumstances might have been the basis for a noble act.

By a deadly irony, his final destruction is partly accomplished by his mother. A grand Roman matron, she had brought him up to be hardy and courageous; she had been more successful than either Lady Macbeth or Cleopatra in creating her own sort of man.

> To a cruel war I sent him; from whence he returned, his brows bound with oak. I tell thee, daughter, I sprang not more in joy at first hearing he was a man-child than now in first seeing he had proved himself a man.

Coriolanus's bitter determination to return to Rome and to burn it is in a sense a natural development of the mental and emotional

attitude that his mother has helped to form. Yet in the end it is she who, forced by sheer necessity to enlarge her vision, manages to persuade him that the richest and best manhood possesses virtues that transcend those in which his intensity and his integrity have been grounded:

> Thou hast affected the fine strains of honour,
> To imitate the graces of the gods;
> To tear with thunder the wide cheeks o' the air,
> And yet to charge thy sulphur with a bolt
> That should but rive an oak. Why dost not speak?
> Think'st thou it honourable for a noble man
> Still to remember wrongs?

He is persuaded, and exclaims, movingly,

> O my mother, mother! O!
> You have won a happy victory to Rome;
> But for your son, believe it, O believe it!
> Most dangerously you have with him prevail'd,
> If not most mortal to him. But let it come.

The change is complete. The rebuffed and anxious Menenius, before he has heard of the new development, complains:

> He wants nothing of a god but eternity and a heaven to throne in . . . There is no more mercy in him than there is milk in a male tiger.

But now Coriolanus finds himself publicly castigated and mocked by his old rival:

> Breaking his oath and resolution like
> A twist of rotten silk, never admitting
> Counsel o' the war, but at his nurse's tears
> He whin'd and roar'd away your victory,
> That pages blush'd at him, and men of heart
> Look'd wondering each at other.

What more telling taunt could Aufidius have hit upon? Insulted, bewildered, roused to a final but hopeless anger, Coriolanus dies. His last spurt of energy has reasserted his manly supremacy:

> Boy! False hound!
> If you have writ your annals true, 'tis there,
> That like an eagle in a dove-cot I
> Flutter'd your Volscians in Corioli:
> Alone I did it. Boy!

It is on the whole a very dark ending. But Volumnia's success, though it has brought about the fall of Coriolanus's warrior-manhood, has nevertheless achieved a victory for humanity within him. Shakespeare does not dwell for long upon the moment at which a new sort of imaginativeness opens up within the hero; but the moment is important, and it makes its subtle contribution to the atmosphere of the closing scenes. By this, as by some things in *King Lear* and in *Antony and Cleopatra*, we are carried on into the post-tragic world of the last plays.

VII

In the 'romances', which have in many ways grown out of the experience of the tragedies, Shakespeare's emphasis has of course shifted. The manhood of the chief male characters in these four plays is seen differently, and in a different perspective. The new attitude had perhaps been prefigured in *Coriolanus*, where the proud protagonist was somewhat less likeable than the earlier tragic heroes. One may feel perhaps that after intense brooding on the tragic inner conflicts of his heroic men— a brooding that would inevitably have been to some extent a meditation upon his own manhood—Shakespeare suddenly found his gaze focused, once again, upon different things, contradictory things even—and most expecially upon the beauty and grace and purity of young womanhood:

> O Helicanus! strike me, honour'd sir;
> Give me a gash, put me to present pain,
> Lest this great sea of joys rushing upon me
> O'erbear the shores of my mortality,
> And drown me with their sweetness. O! come hither,
> Thou that begett'st him that did thee beget;
> Thou that wast born at sea, buried at Tarsus,
> And found at sea again. O Helicanus!
> Down on thy knees, thank you the holy gods as loud
> As thunder threatens us; this is Marina.

Pericles's new vision and uprush of unexpected joy are surely, in some sense, Shakespeare's. The lineaments of life and the meaning of life seem somehow to have changed; as T.S. Eliot exclaims, in his fine elaboration of Pericles's emotion.

> What images return
> O my daughter.

In each of the last plays there are very important male characters. In three of the plays, but more especially in *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale*, we are presented with a tragedy of manhood: the very masculine dispute between Posthumus and Iachimo leads directly to the latter's cynical triumph and to the former's jealousy and despair; Leontes's jealousy and tyranny are the wild expressions of a tumultuous masculine soul. Shakespeare seems to be re-creating and recapitulating the element of tragedy in order to place it in a new context. But of course the mere fact of the new and wider context means that, for all the bold power of the drama and the poetry, the tragedy occupies, and is intended to occupy, less than the whole of the play—is circumscribed, less overwhelming, in the end more controllable and controlled. Moreover, though Posthumus and Leontes and the male characters in *The Tempest* are splendidly alive to us, Shakespeare's imagination deliberately does not give itself quite as fully to any of them (except perhaps Prospero) as it does to the tragic heroes. One of the effects of this is that the relationship between our imaginative sympathy and our moral judgement is not the same as it was in the tragedies: Posthumus, Leontes and Alonso all at some moments incur moral criticism in a way that the tragic protagonists perhaps do not (with all of the latter, even Macbeth, the burden of bewilderment and suffering is too great for us to impose a sharp judgement); and in the last three 'romances' sin is followed by repentance, repentance by reconciliation, and thus too the tragedy is mastered.

Manhood, then, with its ominous tendencies, is no longer wholly dominant. Its eruptions of passionate intensity are placed somewhat more firmly within a moral framework. And the life-giving forces of Nature and of human goodness that impinge upon it are no longer, as in the tragedies, completely or partially impotent. The Welsh mountains, the countryside of Bohemia, the magic island—all these cast upon the dramatic atmosphere a serene and beneficent influence which would have been impossible in plays centred on titanic heroes. Furthermore, 'time the destroyer' proves in the end to be 'time the preserver.' And where Desdemona, for all her generosity and beauty, and Cordelia, for all the power and success of her love, were finally overwhelmed, the 'rare' women of the last plays triumph. They challenge the principal men, and help them to their rightful place in the concluding harmony.

The vision of life embodied in these plays is, in some sense of the word, a religious vision. Noble man, no longer finally and fatally racked by his inner torments, takes his place within the rich order of society. Chaos, despair, 'tragedy wrought to its uttermost', which the darkest plays gave us, are replaced by—

O rejoice
Beyond a common joy, and set it down
With gold on lasting pillars . . .

And masculinity submits to a larger humanity. The central male characters are by no means unmanly; Posthumus, for example, is extremely forceful and brave:

Therefore, good heavens,
Hear patiently my purpose: I'll disrobe me
Of these Italian weeds, and suit myself
As does a Briton peasant; so I'll fight
Against the part I come with, so I'll die
For thee, O Imogen! even for whom my life
Is every breath, a death: and thus, unknown,
Pitied nor hated, to the face of peril
Myself I'll dedicate.

But this energy is not bent upon any sort of self-assertion: it is harnessed to love and to service. In the last plays, indeed, manhood is often associated with specifically *moral* power rather than with psychological and physical masterfulness. Only a few lines after the extract quoted above, we find Iachimo saying,

The heaviness and guilt within my bosom
Takes off my manhood.

At first sight these words may seem reminiscent of Lady Macbeth's cruel view of her tortured husband. But Macbeth lost or seemed to lose his manly power only at moments of honest compunction. Iachimo's situation is the opposite:

I have belied a lady,
The princess of this country, and the air on't
Revengingly enfeebles me; or could this carl,
A very drudge of nature's, have subdu'd me
In my profession? Knighthoods and honours borne
As I wear mine, are titles but of scorn.

Iachimo's final action is to kneel before Posthumus:

But now my heavy conscience sinks my knee
As then your force did.

He asks Posthumus to take his life, but receives this answer:

Kneel not to me:
The power that I have on you is to spare you;
The malice towards you to forgive you. Live,
And deal with others better.

Manhood, like life itself, has been transmuted 'into something rich and strange.'

VIII

I have said a little about the last plays because it seemed valuable to indicate, briefly, the way in which the general theme of tragic manhood was finally caught up and changed. It seems clear that in these plays Shakespeare was formulating a personal vision of life: he was attempting partly to solve, or at least to see very differently, such universal problems as those that he had dramatized in the tragedies that he had recently written. The last plays are a remarkable achievement: their evocation of a spirit and a mood which reduce the menace of the tragic tensions within man, and which project mankind into what is almost an 'unknown mode of being,' is on the whole marvellously convincing.

But of course, while the stream of human living goes on, the last plays can never in any sense *supersede* the tragedies. Indeed the greatest tragedies have probably a deeper resonance, a more terrible and beautiful attraction, than even *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*. This may be largely because tragedy itself, whether or not it is the ultimate truth of human existence, seems to be the fact that affects us most profoundly. The tragedies are also, however, less complex and 'personal,' and more immediately overpowering in their dramatic inevitability.

A good deal of twentieth-century Shakespeare criticism, with its main emphasis upon poetic imagery and dramatic structure or upon a perhaps too disenchanted analysis of character, has had the unfortunate effect of putting the reader or spectator at too great a distance from the central dramatic figures. It seems to me that Shakespeare's plays, especially his tragedies, are wholly alive only when the beholder has fully imagined the inward situation of the protagonist—and indeed felt that situation in his own veins. Even a very sympathetic treatment of the character of a tragic hero may sometimes make the mistake of placing too great a stress upon his uniqueness.

In this study of themes of manhood in five of the tragedies, I have tried to sketch one of the many ways in which we are made to respond personally, and to recognize most intimately the perpetual relevance and challenge of Shakespeare's perceptions.

Pietermaritzburg.

HEROIC VITALISM IN GERMAN DRAMA —A TRAVESTY?

by O. BRÜCKL

In considering the impact of heroic vitalism on German drama one has to be wary of the difficulties involved when attempting to determine the precise meaning of these terms. For the philosopher indeed there is no problem involved in establishing that a *Lebensphilosophie*, that is to say a philosophy of life, can be traced back to Friedrich Nietzsche as its main source and inspiration. I do not wish to suggest that the origin of this concept and of all that it implies can simply be separated from the complexity of innumerable contemporary cross-currents in thought. But when undertaking the study of sources and influences of such streams of thought on literature, then the undertaking becomes considerably more difficult and hazardous, the evidence being far more of a circumstantial nature than one would like to be satisfied with in determining causality. Nietzsche's impact on German thought, feeling and writing is not to be sought so much in the sphere of systematic philosophical or even aesthetic thought (he was anything but a systematic thinker) as in the echo which his impassioned cry of revolt against the smugness of the nineteenth century, convinced of the power of progress and gradual democratization, found in many hearts. In many respects the anguish of his protests reminds one of the anger and frustration of the period of *Sturm und Drang* in the eighteenth century. His appeal to feeling and passion and not to reason, to what he called the Dionysian element in man's make-up, as opposed to the Apollonian, is proof of the remarkable insight into many aspects of the human psyche which were only later to be systematically investigated by psychologists. Proudly he claimed that 'there was no psychology before me.'[1] Erich Heller points out that Siegmund Freud all but endorsed this self-compliment when he came to know Nietzsche's writings.[2] A passage in his essay 'Beyond good and evil' anticipates a great deal of later research on traumata and compensations, on lust and sublimations. His interest in the psychology and ethics of knowledge itself led him to the conclusion that the pursuit of knowledge was but a subtle guise of the will to power. In other words, it is the situation of Faust.

For the sake of simplification the possible Nietzschean influences on later German writing might be reduced to the following considerations:

(1) the idea that God is dead led to the concept of the Superman,
(2) the already mentioned opposition of the Apollonian and the Dionysian in his reflections on the birth of tragedy,[3]
(3) and his profound cultural pessimism.

The quintessence of these influences is adequately summed up in the following quotation from Nietzsche:

> The word Dionysian expresses an ecstatic affirmation, a saying 'yes' to the fundamental character of life, to that which in all change remains unchanged, equally powerful, equally blessed; the great pantheistic sharing in joy and suffering, which also approves and sanctifies the most terrible and most questionable aspects of life, the eternal will towards procreation, towards fecundity, towards recurrence; the feeling of unity of the need for creation and destruction.[4]

The aphoristic brilliance and clarity of these ideas as well as his poetry left an indelible mark on subsequent writers.

Even where a direct Nietzschean influence is not discernible its impact must have permeated the mental and emotional climate of the time, since this was constituted by factors like the remarkable advance in the biological sciences, in psychology, especially in the realm of the unconscious, cultural pessimism and despair (partly attributable to Schopenhauer's philosophy) and not last of all the emergence of the German Empire, its industrialization and the rise of its military might.

Assuming the validity of these conclusions it is still somewhat surprising that Nietzsche does not appear to be directly reflected in any of the works of the three authors under consideration. If one accepts the findings of reliable scholars in the sphere of source study, then the first traces of Nietzschean influence are discernible in the period of literature opposed to Naturalism, but running concurrently with it, from about 1895 to 1910, that is to say, in the epochs of Impressionism, Neo-Romanticism and Symbolism. The authors most directly affected are Thomas Mann, as clearly reflected in the novel *Buddenbrooks* and in the two short stories, *Death in Venice* and *Tonio Kröger;* Hermann Hesse, particularly in *Demian* and *Siddharta;* Richard Dehmel's novel *Zwei Menschen;* and in the symbolist poetry of Stefan George, e.g. *Der siebente Ring.* The period of Expressionism, as its very name implies, was far more profoundly influenced by Nietzschean cultural pessimism and its consciousness of the necessity for the renewal of man. The same awareness, of course, was more poignantly present in the post-war period, both in the more responsible and culturally aware sections of the population and in the rise of National Socialism. The latter with its emphasis on the people, fatherland and the soil fostered the falsely

understood concept of the Superman and rejected all aestheticism as decadent. From a literary point of view the products of this stream are of no great significance.

I do not intend to determine in what way Nietzsche influenced these works or was reflected in them. There are, however, far more pertinent questions bearing on the central theme of this article which I shall attempt to answer. Why choose Gerhart Hauptmann who was apparently the most important representative of Naturalism, and Arthur Schnitzler, an Impressionist par excellence? The choice of Frank Wedekind, with his tragedies of sex and violence, is far more obvious. The answer to my next question affords an adequate starting point in this investigation: why choose drama in the first place, if according to scholarship no direct Nietzschean influence is discernible?

Although Nietzsche's concepts of the Dionysian and the Apollonian involve an antithesis, he attempted even as a young man to reconcile these two opposites. From the very beginning he speaks of a 'doubleness of the Apollonian and the Dionysian.' In other words, he sacrifices part of the fascination of sensation, renounces to some extent at least the grandiose character of the contrast in order to allow for the conjunction of the two factors. The brutality of intoxication or, if you prefer, of the ecstasy always requires the formative element of the dream in order to produce art. According to Bruno Markwardt the symbolic quality of the Apollonian contemplative attitude will always prefer the epic, the narrative genre as the most suitable form of expression. This becomes more comprehensible later in the *Götzendämmerung*, where Nietzsche explains that the phenomenon of the Dionysian can only be understood in terms of 'an excess of power.' Since the Apollonian is weakened by an excess of contemplativeness, only the combination of Dionysian vitalism and Apollonian symbolism can produce an aesthetic whole. Nevertheless, a fundamental tenet of the 'birth of tragedy' postulates *schön ist, was lebenserhöhend ist*, 'that which elevates life is beautiful.' This suggests that the emphasis finally is placed upon the Dionysian. Drama has one very important initial advantage over all the other genres by virtue of the fact that it employs living, plastic, rounded-off characters, who require living speech in order to become effective at all.[5] Obviously a dialogue between two or more characters alone does not constitute a dramatic situation. What is essential is an element of tension and suspense.[6]

These considerations immediately lead on to the question of what constitutes the dramatic hero. The term 'heroic' in the title 'Heroic Vitalism' implies the attributes and qualities of a character found in the tragedy of antiquity, Shakespeare or German classical

drama: great, noble, preferably aristocratic, driven by a spirit of revolt (e.g. Faust, Wallenstein, Don Carlos, Penthesilea and Ottokar). From the point of view of an initial consideration the purely comic hero appears to be ruled out *a priori* for the requirements of a heroic vitalist drama. But even if we accept, for argument's sake, the Dionysian nature of many dramatic characters in contemporary literature, the full acceptance of such a postulate is fraught with great difficulties when we consider the development of drama during the last two centuries. From the second half of the eighteenth century onwards with the introduction of the tragedy by Lessing and Schiller to Büchner's proletarian hero Woyzeck and to the humble weavers and peasants as well as effete bourgeois in Gerhart Hauptmann's early naturalist tragedies, an obvious decline in heroic stature of the principal characters is discernible. Even the exponents in plays like Grabbe's *Napoleon or the Hundred Days* or Florian Geyer in Hauptmann's play of the same name do not stand out as overpowering individuals in spite of the military context in which they appear. Where such characters of nineteenth-century drama are drawn from ancient myth, as in Friedrich Hebbel's Nibelungen trilogy, the possible infusion of a Dionysian dynamism is lacking since this particular dramatist studiously avoided mythologization. An obvious exception in the dramatic literature of the same period, i.e. in the two decades from 1850 onwards, would be Wagner's Nibelungen tetralogy. The possible further romantic mythical development of this heroic form of drama, even though it be musical drama, was cut short by *Parsifal*, which Nietzsche castigated as 'thin-blooded Christian revivalism.' In other words, the definite trend towards social drama in the latter part of the nineteenth century, which had started with Ibsen and had reached a great culmination in German literature with Gerhart Hauptmann, would seem to rule out any possibility of heroic vitalism in drama. His early plays tend to portray no heroic individualism, except as a sacrificial act. The dramatic literature of Impressionism, which followed shortly after the onset of Naturalist drama and developed for some time concurrently with it, tends to support such an interpretation. It is only with the great emotional and irrational revolt of Expressionism shortly before the First World War which, in many respects, as I have already stressed, resembles the period of Storm and Stress in the third quarter of the eighteenth century, that a situation is created which might have proved receptive for a Dionysian influence.

However, since a fair number of outstanding tragedies or quasi-tragedies emerged in the generation round the turn of the century, it is obvious that the Dionysian postulate should be discarded, at

least for the time being, and replaced by other fundamental considerations. The Aristotelian tenets of terror and compassion prove a useful starting point.

The reflections of a contemporary dramatist, Friedrich Dürrenmatt, might well throw light on the problem. Some ten years ago in his 'Problems of the Theatre', he stated:

> Tragedy posits guilt, necessity, moderation, the embracing view, and responsibility. In the great confusion of our century . . . there are no guilty and no responsible persons any longer. No one is at fault for what has happened and has not desired it. In fact, things can go on without anybody. All is carried away. We have become too collectively guilty, much too collectively embedded in the sins of our fathers and forefathers. We are still very much children. That is not our fault, not our guilt: guilt only exists still as a personal achievement, as a religious deed.[7]

Dürrenmatt's reflections were obviously motivated by contemporary mass civilization, by notions of collective guilt and the collective unconscious. His conclusion, that only comedy now remains, appears to have little relevance in these considerations. However, he does admit that the tragic element is still possible, even if pure tragedy can no longer exist. The tragic element can be derived from the comedy, can emerge from it as a frightful single moment, as a yawning abyss. His reference to Shakespeare's dark comedies in this context suggests that a possible solution to the problem we are considering might well be found in an analysis of the nature of modern tragi-comedy. I shall deal with this aspect more fully later on.

Although Dürrenmatt admits that courage and strength of will characterize many figures in modern drama, he claims that tragedy is no longer possible in the full sense of the original word, as it, by its very nature, tends to overcome the sense of distance and remoteness. Modern man no longer possesses that essential *naïveté* which can transform ancient myth into contemporary living reality. This again would seem to negate the possibility of an effective Dionysian influence. The employment of irrational and unconscious factors and motifs as well as of myth, are the result of both an awareness and acceptance of these elements as well as deliberate, conscious construction. Opposed to this sphere of thinking and writing is the presentation of apparent objective reality in the naturalist or impressionist interpretation. This dichotomy is the result of the deep cleavage in modern man's apprehension of reality. On the one hand, this consciousness can find expression in the glaring clash of opposites as reflected in the literature of absurdity, the grotesque,

tragi-comedy and travesty; on the other, the contrariness and, at its worst, the irreconcilable contradiction of these two factors in man's psyche can only find expression in a deep-rooted, inevitable sense of overwhelming tragedy. Ultimately the fundamental questionability of modern man's situation can voice itself adequately in tragi-comedy. By its very ambivalent nature, this genre would lend itself to varying interpretations and accentuations: either towards something approximating pure tragedy or towards comedy in the hybrid forms of satire, travesty and grotesquerie.

I have already mentioned that the three authors under consideration were exponents of three literary epochs. I do not wish to argue the case for and against such sharp categories, which are very often useful guides for distinguishing moods, form and style. In the present context, what the three authors have in common is more important that what distinguishes them.

By a mere coincidence two were born in the same year, 1862, viz. Hauptmann in Silesia and Schnitzler in Vienna, and Wedekind two years later in Hanover, although he spent his youth in Switzerland and most of his mature life in Munich. The impact of the regional milieu is most clearly discernible in the case of Hauptmann and Schnitzler, but hardly applicable to Wedekind. However, what is common to the three is their intense interest in the natural sciences, particularly biological, pathological and psychological factors, and the current irrational streams of thought leading to an increased preoccupation with mythology and mysticism. Wedekind and Schnitzler were, furthermore, the sons of medical men, the latter himself qualifying in medicine when the impact of Freud began to make itself felt in Vienna.

Among the above-mentioned influences and formative factors, three thinkers in particular contributed in varying degrees towards guiding Hauptmann, Schnitzler and Wedekind into the broad stream of Nietzschean speculation and response, or evoking what was already latent in a quasi-Nietzschean mould in their own psychic make-up. This applies in particular to Hauptmann.[8] The three thinkers are: Johann Jakob Bachofen whose book on *Matriarchal Law* appeared in 1861 and was to have a profound effect on the study of mythology, ethnology and the psychology of the subconscious, particularly on C. G. Jung. Schopenhauer's philosophy of cultural pessimism as well as the emphasis on surrendering to the elemental life urge, the stress on intoxication and ecstasy all point to the same direction as Nietzsche, even though they might lack his tremendous sense of drive and urgency.[9] The third thinker is Ludwig Klages (born in Hanover in 1872) who later profoundly influenced Thomas Mann. In his work *The Metaphysics of Life* he

stressed the pre-eminence of the body and the soul (in the wider sense of the German word *Seele*) over the intellect, i.e. *Geist*. The soul, the *Seele*, has its own visions (*Schauungen*) and the body its sensations, both of which are more vitalistic and continuous than the discontinuous states of consciousness of rational understanding, which have little reference to time and place. The *Geist* is that factor which bridles and stifles life.[10]

The choice of five apparently 'naturalistic' plays among six titles for the study of Gerhart Hauptmann is deliberate. One of the great fallacies in German scholarship until fairly recently was to regard Hauptmann primarily as a naturalist writer who subsequently fell under the influence of contrary currents. However, the dichotomy between *Geist* and *Natur*, phantasy and realism, was already apparent from the very beginning.[11] In the same way the conflict between orthodox Christian thinking, a heritage from his extremely religious mother, and, initially, a positivistic, agnostic assessment of reality bedevilled him from the outset. Later the second component was to be gradually replaced by a Dionysian, neo-pagan interpretation, although there are already indications of this mood, if not view, when Hauptmann was in his forties. The essential breakthrough took place in 1907, when he was forty-five during his holiday in Greece. His interpretation of Greek antiquity is an echo of Nietzsche's. although no mere copy, because the indications are already apparent in his early works that he was searching for a synthesis of myth based on his fundamental intuitive conviction that a literary work is myth; '*Was ist . . . das dichterische Werk anderes als Mythos*?'

It might be argued with some justice that if we were to ignore such distinctions, the most salient feature of the bulk of Hauptmann's writings from the early 1890s to the early 1940s is the theme of suffering and compassion. Such themes would appear to rule out any suggestions of anything akin to Nietzschean influence. However, even an extremely brief survey of Hauptmann's entire creative work will refute this interpretation. From the early plays of social compassion, (referred to by one scholar as the naturalistic tetralogy in contrast to the final work, the tetralogy of the Atrides)[13] viz. *Before Sunrise* (1889), *The Festival of Peace* (1890), *Lonely People* (1891) and *The Weavers* (1892), a gradual movement away from social problems to individual problems within the social context, as e.g. *Drayman Henschel* (1898), *Rose Bernd* (1903) and *The Rats* (1911) is discernible. This development is then followed by an increasing emphasis on the individual pitted against imponderable forces beyond his control, either of a religious, mythical or vitalistic nature, although the three factors tend to overlap or merge. An

example of the third type would be the play, *Before Sunset*, written when Hauptmann was seventy.[14] The final stage, which to some extent emerges from the third, was reached by showing Man within the cosmic framework, either Christian or neo-pagan, in other words these plays or novels proclaim an eschatological vision. The tetralogy of the Atrides is an attempt to reconcile Christianity and Dionysian neo-paganism by revitalizing the sterile Christian revelation with the powers of the mythic subconscious.—Beneath the substratum of suffering is the broad basis of love which likewise undergoes considerable transmutations. In the ultimate analysis, however, whether the emphasis be more on neighbourly charity or love between the sexes, the bond is, according to Hauptmann, one or other manifestation of the all-pervading, cosmogonic Eros. Eros is the power higher and stronger than Dionysos, which begets all life and sustains it creatively; it is the power 'into whose merciless hands heaven and hell have been delivered up.'[15] This quotation is from Hauptmann's novel *The Heretic of Soana* (1918) but might well have appeared in later works as well. The final words, which likewise are echoed in the last phase, are: 'Dionysos against the Crucified One.' The words, of course, are also those of Nietzsche in ECCE HOMO. It is, in effect, the anguished cry of revolt of human, heroic vitalism against the suffering God, but not a God of the earth, an autochthonous god, warm and comfortably close to man, but of a God who is Man and yet not Man.

A closer scrutiny of *Drayman Henschel* (1898), written when Hauptmann was thirty-six, will serve to throw light both on the earlier work up to the first play, *Before Sunrise*, and on the last drama, the Atrides tetralogy.—Henschel, a man in his forties, loses his first wife. Before her death he takes an oath not to marry again, particularly not the strong, young, erotically appealing maid in their service, Hanne Schal. The wife's suspicions that a bond exists between Henschel and Hanne and that the latter might well beguile Henschel, as she had already ensnared other men, are subsequently proved true. Although the action of the play extends over fifteen months (from a February day to Spring of the next year) most of this action only becomes comprehensible by the gradual disclosure of past events. In this respect the play has a certain quality reminiscent of the stark concentration and predetermined inevitability of a Greek tragedy. A far cry indeed from a purely naturalistic play! The action in the present depicts how Henschel succumbs to the spell of Hanne who in spite of her hot-bloodedness is an extremely cold, calculating woman. Hauffe says of her in Act I: 'She'll go off her head pretty soon if she don't get no husband.'[16] Mrs Henschel's accusation is borne out subsequently in Act IV:

'Ill? An' who was it made me ill? You two—you an' your wench!' Soon after her death, Hanne's plans are unknowingly advanced by friendly advice to the still robust Henschel. Siebenhaar advises him not to brood and to become obsessively depressed by the memory of his dead wife.[17] While considering the merits of Hanne, Henschel admits to Siebenhaar that he knew of her illegitimate child:

> That she has . . . I don't care nothin' about that. Was she to wait for me, eh? She didn't know nothin' about me when that happened. She's hot-blooded; all right. That'll come out somehow. When the pears is ripe, they falls to the ground. On that account—no, that don't trouble me none.[18]

The moral aspects initially do not appear to trouble Henschel unduly. Later, during the course of the third and fourth acts, it becomes quite obvious that Hanne is deceiving him.

After the child of his first marriage, Gustel, dies, Henschel takes it upon himself, without consulting Hanne, to bring her illegitimate child into their home. It is from this moment that the confiict between the two becomes apparent. The news of Hanne's infidelity simply brings to a head the process of destruction that had set in long previously. It is obvious that there is only one way out for him, namely suicide. The presentation of alternatives to Hanne is no more than a gesture of despair. There is no question of survival for him:

> Hanne, one of us two'll have to go.
> One of us two. Yes, yes, 'tis true . . .
> that can't be changed.

He then continues:

> It don't matter about me.[19]

He then goes off-stage and puts an end to his life. This culmination of an inexorable inevitability is made perfectly clear for the first time earlier on in the same act, in the conversation with Siebenhaar. The latter suggests that he takes some rest but Henschel answers:

Henschel:

> No, no; we c'n talk about it a bit. You see, I know 'tis all my fault—I know that, an' with that we can let it be. But before I went an' took this woman—Hanne, I mean—before that it all began . . . slowly it began, slowly—but downhill right along. First thing, a good bonehandled whip broke. After that, I remember it right well, I drove over my dog an' he died. 'Twas the best little dog I had. Then, one right after another, three o' my horses died; an' one of 'em was the fine stallion that cost me five hundred crowns. An' then, last of all . . . my wife died. I noticed it well enough

in my own thoughts that fate was against me. But when my wife went away from me, I had a minute in my own mind when I thought to myself: Now it's enough. There's not much else that c'n be taken from me. But you see, there was somethin' else.—I don't want to talk about Gustel. A man loses first his wife an' then a child—that's common. But no: a snare was laid for me an' I stepped into it.

Siebenhaar:

Who laid a snare for you?

Henschel:

Maybe the devil; maybe, too, somebody else. It's throttlin' me—that's certain.

(*Pause*)

Siebenhaar:

That's a most unhappy notion of your . . .

Henschel:

An' I'm denyin' nothin'. A bad man I've come to be, only it's no fault o' mine. I just, somehow, stumbled into it all. Maybe it's my fault too. You c'n say so if you want to. Who knows? I should ha' kept a better watch. But the devil is more cunnin' than me. I just kept on straight ahead.[20]

This confession as well as his earlier preoccupation with his dead wife and child, which are represented in a mood and style different from that of his usual utterances, cannot be psychologically explained as depression, fantasy, or absentmindedness. The *femme fatale*[21] that Hanne is, is ultimately only the instrument in a chain of deterministic factors. Certainly a good deal of his mental breakdown might well be explained by the impact of vitalistic urges in the unconscious which make him completely helpless. This would certainly be in accordance with Schopenhauer's explanations. On the other hand, one cannot ignore Hauptmann's own concept of fate nurtured by his religious upbringing.[22] It is quite in keeping with the dualistic vision of the author that both explanations throw light upon an essentially metaphysical problem. Suffering had led Henschel to the outer limits of human existence where he sees himself face to face against a power which he cannot understand but simply accepts. Hauptmann himself stated once that this is the acceptance of one who had become conscious of the terrible truth of loneliness in a world of unknown powers, which, however, he does not fear but loves with terror.[23] Henschel's vitalism consists in living his life out to the full, until death. The death-wish is, in a sense, an identification with the cosmic will.

In spite of the horror and the compassion we feel for Henschel,

there is, nevertheless, a very strong tone of dramatic irony in that the woman, apparently the more vitalistic of the two, should emerge victorious. This is not the only play of Hauptmann's where this is the case. Mrs. Wolff, Rautendelein, Rose Bernd, and Inken Peters are other examples. On the other hand, even where the principal female character dies, usually by her own hand, she proves by this very fact that she was originally motivated by the greater vitalism. Helen Krause in the very first play *Before Sunrise*, Mrs. John in *The Rats* and Iphigenia in the tetralogy of the Atrides are the most obvious instances. It should thus be clear that this trend in Hauptmann tends to place the Nietzschean brand of heroic vitalism, which in effect is fundamentally masculine, in a somewhat ambiguous light.

Impressionist dramatic writing, particularly of Vienna, would seem to verify this interpretation albeit with a curious distortion which brings us very much closer to the third term of our original proposition, namely that heroic vitalism in German drama is in effect a travesty. Impressionist writing for the theatre is ultimately a form of histrionism of the psyche, a curious form of play-acting or make-belief vis-à-vis the uncanniness of the soul. The more highly developed and refined sense of form brings about a clearly discernible distinction of two levels of existence where the superficial in the actual action of the play appears to mask or hide the abyss beneath. The vital forces of the psyche are only played with,and all that remains is tragic laughter. In the following quotation Arthur Schnitzler equates God with the law of causality, the deterministic principle which, in a more serious interpretation, could well be identified with vitalism:

> Can one really imagine a God who is satisfied with creating a law of causality, so that once the world had been set in motion, all further events developed unchangeably and predeterminately? No, He did not provide Himself with such a simple solution: He placed an equal adversary into the cosmos, namely the free will, which is prepared in every moment to take up the battle with causality and is even doing this when it believes itself to have subjected itself humbly to an inscrutable decision.[24]

This ironical dictum means, in effect (seen in the context of Schnitzler's writings), that the free will is an illusion. Nevertheless, Schnitzler does not believe in fate but in chance. It is on this basis that one should consider his three central themes of love, life and death in his entire work.

Like some of his contemporaries, particularly Thomas Mann, Schnitzler is morbidly fascinated by pathological phenomena.

Anatols' views in 'Dissolution' in *The Affairs of Anatol*, is almost symptomatic of a great many of the author's characters:

> I feel that I should lose very much if one day I should suddenly become—'strong.' There are so many diseases but only one health. If one is well, one is just like all the others—but if one is ill, one can still be quite different from all the others.[25]

In this scene, also known as 'the death-agony', Anatol is discussing the end of a love affair:

Anatol:

> I have always been a hypochondriac of love. My emotions may not have been as sick as I thought them—that is all the worse—I feel sometimes as if the legend of the Evil Eye had come true in my case. But my Evil Eye is turned inward, and my best emotions sicken under its glance.

Max:

> Then you must have the courage of this Evil Eye.

Anatol:

> Oh, no, I envy the others—you know, those happy ones for whom every bit of life means a new victory. I have to force myself to carry anything to fulfilment . . .

Max:

> Don't envy them, Anatol—they do not conquer—they merely pass by.[26]

The attraction of the elusive goal, of the vitalistic forces, is apparent. What Schnitzler's principal characters lack, though, is the intuitive certainty of living fully according to their instinctive urges. Their tortured determination, hampered by introspection, to achieve some modicum of a fuller, more meaningful life by flitting from impression to impression, from experience to experience, from one love affair to another is an ironical variation on the theme of Eternal Recurrence. The subsequent discussion between Anatol and Max bears this out. Although the principal characters are desperately in search of ecstasy and the heightening of mood they are always conscious that the emotions are ever beginning to cease gleaming before they have begun to make themselves felt. Ironically enough out of the ashes of one emotion another trifle of feeling, a fleeting impression will suddenly flicker up. Anatol is conscious that people 'are exhausted by the fear of dying—and then life suddenly gleams before us, hotter—more ardent than ever—and more illusory than ever.'[27]

Schnitzler's world is that of the upper classes, decadent, effete and no longer capable of lasting, strong feelings. Besides affairs with

women from their own class many of the male characters look for additional stimulation from the prostitutes and tarts of the suburbs, whom the author euphemistically refers to as the *süsse Wiener Mädl*, the sweet Viennese girls. Paradoxically enough, the impotent, weak kernel of society must in a sense derive its nourishment from the hard, tougher shell. All efforts in attaining a fuller life and more love is dictated by a third, extremely sensitive form of self-analysis. This refined and subtle psychological technique is shown at its best in the one-act play or in a series of dramatic dialogues, e.g. *The Affairs of Anatol* or *Hands Around* (Der Reigen).

Both men and women are all too conscious of their lost vitality and spontaneity as is evident from the dialogue 'Christmas Shopping' in *The Affairs of Anatol* where Anatol informs his married friend, Gabrielle, that he intends buying a present for his 'sweet little girl.' He admits that she is not fascinatingly beautiful, has no style and is certainly not brilliant.

> But she has the soft charm of a spring evening—the grace of an enchanted princess—and the soul of a girl who knows how to love.[28]

On parting Gabrielle gives him a bunch of flowers, saying:

> Tell her 'these flowers, my sweet little girl, were sent to you by a woman who, perhaps—might know how to love as well as you—but who hasn't the courage.'[29]

Perhaps the best illustration of the artificial intoxication of the *fin de siècle* in much of Schnitzler's plays is to be found in 'Anatol's Wedding Morning.' His friend Max calls on Anatol and hears a woman's voice from his bedroom. In reply to Max's question where he had picked up the girl Anatol replies that after the wedding-eve celebration he had stood outside in the winter night:

> Freezing, it came over me then with a mighty rush of pain, —the thought that from now on I should no longer be a free man—that I must bid farewell forever to my mad, sweet bachelor days. This is the last night, I said to myself, the last night in which I can come home without being asked where I have been—the last night of freedom—of adventuring —of love, perhaps . . .
>
> And then suddenly I found myself in the midst of the turmoil—silk and satin garments rustled about me, eyes sparkled, masks nodded mysteriously, gleaming shoulders threw out their fragrance—the whole mad carnival breathed and whirled about me. I sucked it in—I bathed in it.

Max:

Get to the point, please—we haven't much time.

Anatol:

The crowd pushed me forward and as I had excited my brain before, now I excited all of my sense with the perfumes that swirled around me. It seemed to rush over me as never before —it was as if the carnival were giving me its own festival of farewell.

Max:

I'm waiting for the third excitement.

Anatol:

That came soon—the intoxication of the heart.

Max:

Of the senses.

Anatol:

Of the heart—of the senses, too, possibly.[30]

The references to *Hands Around* and the more detailed discussion of *The Affairs of Anatol* would certainly tend to support the initial thesis that vitalism is presented in a form of travesty. But even in these plays the tragic undertones cannot be missed. In common with many of his contemporaries Schnitzler is convinced that the life and sex urge can lead either to chaos and destruction or is the presage of a new and fuller order of life. This is particularly true of the tragedy *Playing with Love.*

Although differing considerably in tone and tenor, FrankWedekind takes up the same themes to proclaim with true missionary zeal and ardour the need for a return to nature. The slogan of Expressionism, of which he was a forerunner, was the conviction that man should once again become a vital being, that is to say, he had to be renewed, revitalized. The determination to achieve this ideal presupposes and is imbued with a heroic attitude and confidence. Although this consciousness of mission and salvation is characterized by a deep and moving pathos it often tends to lead, by overemphasis, to sententious platitudes. It is this antithesis that explains the emergence of so much tragi-comedy in the dramatic writings of Expressionism. Tragi-comedy ensues when the missionary consciousness is burdened with the curse of the ridiculous; that is, when the sorrow following on failure is coupled with the almost futile hope of an achievement which might, nevertheless, still be fulfilled.

Of the three dramatic works of Wedekind's to be briefly considered: the first, *The Awakening of Spring* (1891) is by far the most poignant tragedy although it does not lack comic, satirical or even grotesque elements. This 'children's tragedy', as the sub-title reads, depicts

two adolescents who fall in love but, crushed by bourgeois mores, end in despair and destruction. The girl, Wendla Bergmann, dies after an attempted abortion. The boy, Melchior Gabor, the son of a professor in contrast to Wendla's humble origins, is put into a reform school from which he escapes. In the graveyard he is on the point of taking his life, in response to the exhortation of his friend, Moritz Stiefel, who had already committed suicide and had appeared to him with his head under his arm, when a muffled gentleman suddenly confronts him. This figure, according to Wedekind, symbolizes life, and turns Melchior back towards his task of bringing light and hope to his generation.

From a stylistic point of view three distinct levels can be recognised: the world of the children which is portrayed with the clarity and insight of Naturalism, the world of the adults, particularly of the schoolmasters who are caricatured with the venom and sharpness which was typical of the older Wedekind, as well as of many Expressionist dramatists, and thirdly, in the final scene, the infusion of quasi-romantic symbolism.

Melchior:

If I shake hands on it, Moritz, it will be from self-contempt. I see myself proscribed . . . What lent me courage, lies in the grave. I can no longer think myself worthy of noble impulses —and perceive nothing, nothing, that might yet stand in the way of my descent. —I am, in my own opinion, the most detestable creature in the universe . ..

Moritz:

What are you waiting for?

(A muffled gentleman enters, and addresses Melchior).

Gentleman:

The fact is, you're shivering with hunger. You're in no sort of condition to debate. — (*To Moritz*) Go.

Melchior:

Who are you?

Gentleman:

That will come out. — (*To Moritz*) Vanish! — What business have you here? — Why haven't you got your head on?

(The muffled gentleman is adamant that Moritz should leave and not bother him and Melchior with his 'charnel stench' but Moritz begs to be allowed to remain.)

Gentleman:

Then why do you brag about sublimity? — You know well enough that that's humbug — sour grapes! . . . kindly keep your rotting hand out of the game!

Melchior:

Are you going to tell me who you are, or not?

Gentleman:

No. — I propose that you entrust yourself to me. First, I should see to your getting away.[31]

If Wedekind's attempts so far to represent the muffled gentleman as the symbol of Life have been rather unconvincing because of the naturalistic undertones in this character's remarks, the subsequent dialogue stretches credibility too far. Melchior takes the muffled gentleman to be his father in disguise (perhaps seeing in his overt helpfulness a projection of the father image!) but he is soon disillusioned.

Gentleman:

The gentleman, your father, is seeking comfort at this moment in the capable arms of your mother. — I open the world to you.

(Then follows a purely factual diagnosis of Melchior's state of mind.)

Your momentary want of balance springs from your wretched situation. With a hot supper in your belly, you can laugh at it.

(He continues after an interruption to explain why Wendla had died.):

. . . I will take you among men. I will give you an opportunity to expand your horizon beyond your wildest dreams. I will make you acquainted with everything interesting, without exception, that the world has to offer.

(Melchior is still not satisfied and asks him once again who he is. The altercation between the two is stopped by Moritz provoking the first statement of the muffled gentleman resembling a confession of faith.)

Gentleman:

. . . By morality I understand the real product of two imaginary quantities. The imaginary quantities are should and would.[32] The product is called morality, and its reality is unquestionable.

(Moritz regrets that he had not possessed this insight when still alive. His supposition that he might even have met the 'esteemed unknown'—as he calls the muffled gentleman—evokes the first, and only, clear admission of the latter's real identity.)

Gentleman:

And don't you remember me? Why, even at the final moment, you still were standing between Death and Life.[33]

> (This profound proclamation is immediately twisted into ridicule.) . . . But here, in my opinion, is not exactly the place to prolong so deeply probing a debate.

The remaining action and dialogue underline the fact that the play is by no means a vindication of the primacy of the life urge, since the closing lines belong to Moritz. He, a romantically distorted and grotesque ghost, is the symbol of death, rendered harmless by the matter-of-fact rationalisations of the muffled gentleman. He, 'the sublimated humorist', as the muffled gentleman called him earlier on, 'is the wretchedest, most pitiable creature in creation!'[34] The play ends with the following plaintive cries:

Moritz:

> Here I sit now with my head in my arm. — The moon hides her face, unveils again, and looks not a hair the wiser. — So now I'll turn back to my little plot, straighten the cross up that the madcap kicked so recklessly down on me, and when all is in order I'll lay myself out on my back again, warm myself with decay, and smile . . .[35]

Not only the total impact of this apparent tragedy, where the children are obviously dominated and impelled forward by an irresistible vitalism, savours of tragi-comedy, but Wedekind himself subsequently virtually admitted that this had been his intention. He said:

> In no scene, no matter how serious it might be, should a sense of humour be absent.[36]

And later, in a letter written to a friend in 1907, he maintained that the effect of the play was all the more gripping if it were acted in a laughing manner.[37]

The two Lulu plays, *Earth Spirit* and *Pandora's Box* (1895), though still designated as tragedies, exaggerate the inherent tendencies of the earlier play towards satire, travesty and the grotesque still further, while at the same time showing the greater impact of vitalism in Lulu, who symbolizes the sexual urge par excellence. She is, according to Wedekind, 'the true animal, the beautiful, wild animal.' By depicting this living to the full of amoral instincts, as a manifestation of primitive vitalism, Wedekind attempted to voice his indignation over bourgeois hyprocrisy. However, the form this righteousness takes in the two plays is rather curious. Lulu is the snare and the stumbling block for all the men who come into contact with her. She in turn lures away from their professions and higher ideals a medical man, Dr Goll; a painter, Schwarz; and an editor

Dr. Schon. She finally marries the latter but on finding him incompatible and not quite measuring up to what she had expected of him she murders him and is imprisoned. In the second play, *Pandora's Box*, Dr Schon's son is responsible for her release. After a series of escapades she reaches London via Paris. Here she is murdered by Jack the Ripper. 'One soulless criminal urge is destroyed by another.'[38]

This play leaves one with the impression that in its mounting intensity of lust and violence the Devil has been used to drive out Beelzebub. It is obvious that this device of exaggeration was even then leading heroic vitalism *ad absurdum*. Up to the present day quite a number of plays have done so by presenting variations on this central theme. The logical consequences of Wedekind's approach are first apparent in Bert Brecht's expressionist plays, perhaps most strikingly evident in *Baal* (1918). The central character is a huge man, brimful of life, a gourmet and drunkard, aggressive, a seducer and profligate. Only in this way can he become a poet. Much the same curious admixture of didactic satire and travesty on the one hand and an involuntary fascination by this vitalistic explosion is to be found in the *Threepenny Opera*.

The one author, however, who exposes Nietzschean heroic vitalism rightly or wrongly understood in all its apparent spuriousness is Friedrich Dürrenmatt. His earliest significant play, *It is Written*, dealing with the uprising of the Baptists at the time of the Reformation in Munster, is a Storm and Stress work in the latter half of the twentieth century. Johann Bockelson, the central character, is a contradictory combination of the Dionysian and Apollonian, rendered all the more ridiculous and yet terrifying by being in the zealous service of a religious ideal. He ends his life on the wheel, his arms and legs outstretched in the form of a cross: surely an image of Nietzsche's words in ECCE HOMO!

But *The Visit of the Old Lady* turns the wheel back full circle to Nietzsche. Claire Zachanassian, the arch-harlot, with six husbands already disposed of and several more on the list, all of whom had been mere tools in her search for vengeance against the man, Alfred Ill, who had initially seduced her, is a frightening caricature of vitalism. As a result of numerous accidents and operations she is virtually composed of artificial limbs, grafted skin and other substitutes; unable to move, she is always carried around, with a black panther led by an attendant as company. This animal serves to remind her of her youth when Ill had called her his 'little kitten!' In her remorseless pursuit of her goal she displays more energy than anybody else, until she gradually assumes the mien and bearing, the very role of a goddess of vengeance.

All previous indications in this article that the most potent manifestations of heroic vitalism are ultimately to be found in the female sex are vindicated in a cruel distortion by Claire Zachanassian. Of all the authors considered here it is particularly Hauptmann who advances closest to the archetypal concept of the woman as the Great Mother, the vital life urge subsumed in the figure of the Greek goddess, Demeter. Nietzschean Superman subjugated by the great Mother! Ironically enough it was Gerhart Hauptmann himself who provided the prototype of the male contestant in just such a conflict. The figure of Mijnheer Peeperkorn in Thomas Mann's novel *The Magic Mountain* is based largely on Hauptmann. This odd character, hungering for life, sexual sublimation and mystical exaltation, is ultimately brought to destruction by the very woman from whom he had hoped to receive all this increase: Claudia Chauchat. The romantic atmosphere of *The Magic Mountain*, charged with subtle irony, reveals that heroic vitalism in so much of German drama is a travesty of a romantic dream.

But let it not be thought in spite of Schnitzler and Wedekind, in spite of Brecht and Dürrenmatt as latter-day disciples, that Nietzsche's vision evoked no sincere response in German drama. Gerhart Hauptmann's final bequest in the Tetralogy of the Atrides, where the culmination of vitalism is reached in the sacrificial act of Iphigenia, is his gospel of the synthesis of the Dionysian and the Apollonian, of neo-Paganism and Christianity.

Johannesburg.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Friedrich Nietzsche: *Gesammelte Werke* (*Musarion Ausgabe*): Munich 1926/29, Vol. 21, p. 282.
[2] Erich Heller: 'The importance of Nietzsche.' In: *The Artist's journey into the interior and other essays*, London 1966, p. 183.
[3] Cf. 'The birth of tragedy from the spirit of music.'
[4] Friedrich Nietzsche: *Aus dem Nachlass der Achtzigerjahre.* (Works in 3 vols., ed. by Karl Schlechta). Munich 2nd ed., 1960, Vol. 3, p. 791.
[5] Cf. Bruno Markwardt: *Geschichte der deutschen Poetik*, Berlin 1967, Vol. 5 (*Das zwanzigste Jahrhundert*), p. 146 et seq.
[6] Cf. Friedrich Dürrenmatt: 'Theaterprobleme.' In: *Theaterschriften und Reden*, Zurich 1966, 00. 111-112.
[7] Dürrenmatt, op. cit., p. 122.
[8] Cf. Karl S. Guthke: *Gerhart Hauptmann, Weltbild im Werk.* Göttingen 1961, p. 109.
[9] A clearly recognizable line of development leads from Schopenhauer's concepts of will and instinct to Nietzsche, Richard Wagner and Freud.
[10] Later works develop these ideas still further which contributed to the intellectual climate at the beginning of the twentieth century: *Der Geist als Widersacher der Seele* (1929) and *Vom kosmogonischen Eros* (1922).
[11] A significant example is the year 1893 in which the naturalistic comedy *The Beaver Coat* and the mystical and romantic tragedy *Hannele's Ascension* appeared in close succession.
[12] Guthke, op. cit., p. 40.

[13] Cf. Guthke, op. cit.: *Auseinandersetzung: Die naturalististische Tetralogie*, p. 58-79.
[14] Matthias Clausen is a retired businessman of 70 who had lost his wife some years previously. He falls in love with Inken Peters, a girl in her early twenties, and is determined to marry her much to the chagrin of his family. The relationship has such a vitalizing effect on him that it seems to promise many years of health, vigour and contentment when he suddenly collapses and dies. The transformation was in effect restricted to the mental and emotional spheres.
[15] Cf. Guthke, op. cit., p. 129.
[16] The dramatic works of Gerhart Hauptmann, authorized edition, ed. by Ludwig Lewisohn. London 1913. Vol. 2, social dramas, p. 26.
[17] Cf. Hauptmann, op. cit., pp. 65-66.
[18] Op. cit. pp. 69-70.
[19] Op. cit. pp. 151-152.
[20] Op. cit., pp. 142-143.
[21] Cf. Siebenhaar's explanation:
'Henschel, you're just your own worst enemy. You're fighting phantoms which have no existence at any time or place . . . And such fancies are dangerous.' (ibid.)
[22] Cf. Guthke, op. cit., p. 99.
[23] ibid.
[24] Karl S. Guthke: *Geschichte und Poetik der deutschen Tragikomödie*, Göttingen and Zurich 1961, p. 273.
[25] Arthur Schnitzler: *Reigen, The Affairs of Anatol and Other Plays*, translated by Marya Mannes and Grace Isabel Colbron, introduction by Ashley Dukes. Modern Library ed.: New York 1933.
[26] Op. cit., p. 143.
[27] ibid.
[28] Op. cit., p. 95.
[29] ibid.
[30] Op. cit., p. 156-157.
[31] Frank Wedekind: *Tragedies of Sex*. Translation and introduction by Samuel A. Eliot, London 1923, pp. 105-106.
[32] 'Should' (German: *sollen*) and 'would' (*wollen*) represent duty and desire.
[33] Op. cit. pp. 106-108.
[34] Op. cit., p. 107.
[35] Op. cit. p. 110.
[36] Guthke, op. cit. (*Tragikomödie*), p. 330.
[37] ibid.
[38] H. A. & E. Frenzel: *Daten deutscher Dichtung. Chronologischer Abriss der deutschen Literaturgeschichte*. Munich 1962. Vol. 2, p. 135.

ESCAPE FROM NIGHTMARE ABBEY?

by P. STRAUSS

These things are not of the kind that can be explained away, but one wonders whether the serious English critic's imperviousness to German poetry—particularly Goethe—isn't due to more than that, by virtue of its simplicity, it translates into banality—whether it isn't rather due to a distrust of such simplicity in itself. I don't mean an irrational distrust of what is different, which would be ignoble; but a distrust based on the experience of what other poets have found needful. The restless fertility—self-propagation—of Shakespeare's language is so clearly *not* a matter of verbal conceit.

So it's not surprising that a critic with a lot of reading in English literature behind him, on confronting those short poems which the German critic values most, will tend to convict them of complacency, an aesthetic and intellectual perfection gained by turning away from the pressures of living. For instance:

Über allen Gipfeln
Ist Ruh,
In allen Wipfeln
Spürest du
Kaum einen Hauch;
Die Vögelein schweigen im Walde.
Warte nur, balde
Ruhest du auch.[1]

Unless it's the first poem one has ever read, one's response must be: How can a poet do without so much? And it must be some time before the indignation with which one says it changes to admiration. It isn't just the simplicity of the words, the syntax, the verse form, or the obviousness of the images, or the form of bare statement that the poet has chosen; what is unpardonable is the simplicity of the seeing. *Ruhiges Anschaun*—quiet observation—subjective, certainly, but subjectivity which has found the need to make rules and conditions for the way in which it is to observe its experience—in much the same way as a scientist makes conditions for his observations, so help us!—except that here a particular concept of naturalness is a criterion as well as accuracy.

[1]. Over all peaks/is peace,/in all tree-tops/you sense (notice)/hardly a breath;/ the little birds are silent in the wood,/Only wait. soon/you too will be at rest.

Then there is the apparently complete absence of a social tone. Where in German poetry will one find the equivalent of:

> Had we but World enough, and time,
> This coyness Lady were no crime?

The answer is, of course, nowhere. Not those exact qualities. However it's true that between the era of medieval court poetry and the somewhat winsome persuasiveness of Brecht, German lyrical poets seem to have been quite content and busy enough with finding a language in which to speak to themselves.

This is, however, not the whole truth, as I hope to show. In Goethe's *Wanderers Nachtlied*, which I quoted above, it is about line four—in that peculiarly suspended *Spürest du*—that the thing begins to happen. It is in this line that the poem begins to have a rhythm. The enjambement from the first line to the second seems on its own to be something of a gimmick—the rather flat kind of effect that a schoolboy can get in a period when free verse is fashionable. And the third line is too close a replica of the first for it to put a really sensitive rhythm into motion. It's in the fourth line, with the turn of the verse and the termination of the first group of rhymes (while the syntax remains unfinished) that the rhythm suddenly defines itself, bringing to life also the lines that went before it. It is because of this sudden tightening of the control that we know so clearly what we are feeling at this point in the poem. The definition of the poet's tone of voice and so of his attitude seems as complete as it could ever be in a more complicated web of ideas.

Another reason for the importance of this moment is the relevance of the word *spüren*—to notice, to sense—to the poet's activity in the poem as a whole (although the world as it stands is not given any obvious prominence). To say the poem is 'about death' has always seemed to me the kind of crudification which would be useful to satisfy schoolchildren who have to do the poem for matric—although the promise of death certainly is one of the reverberations left by the end of the poem. But a quotation from Conrad brings one closer, I think, 'his (a man's) heart, which is incorrigible, and of all gifts of the earth—even before life itself—aspires to peace.' There is only the difference that for Jukes, who is on deck in a storm, the longing for peace is an insidious danger, whereas in this poem the ultimate desire for peace and the assurance of its fulfilment are things which need to be felt for hope to become active again.

Another critical travesty is the over-emphasising of the way the poem moves from inorganic to organic life, on to animals and finally to man. It is a travesty because, by setting up a graded and

dissected chain, it breaks the spell of the chain by which the sense reaches the poet. It implies that Goethe's insight is a matter of a philosophy, and not of intuition. And what makes the poem supremely poetic is its complete responsibility to and faith in an intuitive discovery. Goethe's experience of peace comes to him through an intuition of the way non-human things are to themselves.

Hence the importance of the moment when the word *spüren* is used, even though it is used here in a restricted and simple sense—a moment in the poem which coincides with the introduction of a persona listening to the poem, who is asked to pick out the faint movement in the tips of the trees. We may see the listener as the poet himself—but we *do* have a social tone here: the poet's voice shows an awareness of common humanity with the listener that his rhetorical form *In allen Wipfeln | Spürest du . . .* has created—an awareness the more fine because it arises from the real perception of a shared bond with the rest of life.

The distinctive flavour of the humanity arising from the poet's intuitive insight, and communicating itself in the tone of his speech, seems to me to be the particular value of the poem, rather than any grandiose *Weltanschauung* one may try to extract from it. This flavour is a strange synthesis, an easy friendliness which doesn't preclude profundity, and which can develop into the mixture of good-humoured tenderness and awe in the line: *Die Vögelein schweigen im Walde*, and finally into the ambiguity of the ending:

> Warte nur, balde
> Ruhest du auch.

We cannot distinguish here whether the poet is speaking to the reader, or the poet is speaking to himself, or nature is speaking to the poet. The utterance is both humane and impersonal at once.

My purpose in this essay has been to raise the question whether a critic of English literature might not be helped by a knowledge of German lyrical poetry. It could, I think, give us a new standard, a standard different from those we already have, particularly because of the clear-sightedness with which certain principles have, on the whole, been pursued by its writers. The belief in simplicity, for one thing, is stronger than we are likely to find it in any other literature. In other words, there is something hard and consistent there, a principle of taste which amounts to a critical insight.

There are, moreover, reasons why this particular standard may be of value to us now that contemporary poetry seems quite lost in a miasma of mannerism, freakishness, strained vision and strained verbosity. The best that can be said of contemporary poets is that they try too hard—and don't think enough beforehand. Nor have

we critics done much to help them—we are not prepared to think on a fundamental enough level. The simplicity of the poetry of Wordsworth and Goethe, Goethe being the larger and more consistent poet, stems from a reconsideration on the most basic level of the eighteenth-century principles of naturalness in perception and communication—ultimately the belief that what men have in common is after all the thing which is most important to each personally. Because this was a re-thinking and less of a straight derivation from the classics, Goethe and Wordsworth are in a sense more truly classical than the eighteenth-century poets—less prone to romantic distortion. As for today, all we have is Nightmare Abbey.

Durban.

THE ROAD TO RESOLUTION

by A. I. DALE

All sciences are founded on doubt. Even such a well-established 'principle' as the 'Law' of conservation of mass-energy is accepted as being 'true' merely because no cases in which this principle has been contradicted have been observed. This does not however rule out the possibility of an exception to the rule being found at some stage in the future.

Thus Probability Theory is basic and in fact essential to the proper, precise study of any science; and so a study of this theory is necessary for the true understanding of phenomena. This, unfortunately, is little realized, and there are many in positions of academic authority who belittle the ideas, results and methods of probability theory.

As a first, extremely broad division, we may regard probabilities as falling into two categories—which I shall denote by 'non-physical' and 'objective', though, as we shall see further on, no apodictic barrier is possible. In the first (i.e. non-physical) category we shall include psychological, subjective and logical probabilities, while the second will deal with the physical and mathematical probabilities.

In approaching any concept of a definition of probability, three kinds of problems present themselves.[1] Firstly, there is the question of what meaning to give to statements that the probability of an event is a particular numerical value (that is, if we accept that it is possible to assign numerical values); secondly, there is the question of how these numerical values are to be obtained; and finally there is the question of how other probabilities are to be found from known probabilities. It is in the light of these questions that we shall examine various definitions of probability.

By psychological probability we shall mean (cf. Good)[2] a measure of degree of belief or confidence, but not necessarily a consistent or even considered value. Thus the probability assigned to an event may vary within a certain range or take a few fixed values, for no explicable reason, and under no set plan. It is somewhat difficult to see how probabilities could be calculated under such circumstances from knowledge of others.

Subjective probability will be interpreted (Good)[2] as a measure of one's personal, considered confidence in something, and is, of necessity, fairly consistent. Both experimental and experiential factors play a part in determining subjective probabilities, for in

statements like 'I believe the probability of a symmetric coin's landing "heads" to be half', we are making a prediction on the basis of practical evidence.

There can be no doubt that we have ways of apprehension which are (at present) beyond the range of our sensory equipment[3]; and thus our subjective (or personal) probability is influenced by experience. As our experience grows, and experimental evidence accumulates, so our subjective probabilities change, and once again a whole range of values may be obtained for the occurrence of a phenomenon. What von Mises terms the 'peculiar' approach adopted by subjectivists is due to the fact that they consider 'I presume that these cases are equally probable' to be equivalent to 'These cases are equally probable.' This, however, takes us into the realms of what might be termed meta-probability theory, and thus away from our present subject.

By the logical probability of an event is meant the degree of confidence which a rational person must have in the occurrence of the event.[2] This confidence is supposed to be implicit in the given information—experimental or experiential—which our hypothetical rational person has at his disposal. Thus logical probability differs (in my opinion—but cf. Cohen)[3] from the concept of a necessary probability, by which a rational degree of confidence is obtained by considerations of empirical evidence alone.

In defining logical probability I have stated that our rational intensity of conviction is implicit in the given information. By this is meant that the same degree of belief will be arrived at by any reasonable person who examines the evidence led. I cannot, however, accept the notion of physical (or material) probability, in which probability is regarded as an intrinsic property of the real word, independent of the presence of an experimenter, his theories—or his mind. For a phenomenon will have a different 'probabilities' (i.e. we shall have different degrees of confidence in its occurring) under different circumstances, and so the notion of an intrinsic, physical probability is quite untenable. The only meaningful interpretation which could be given to physical probability, would be to say that the probability of an event under certain well-specified conditions is such-and-such. Let me hasten to add that I am not intending to deride the importance of experiment. None can deny the major role that practical, real considerations have played in the development of modern, axiomatic probability theory.

The origins of mathematical probability theory are decidedly dicey! The Chevalier de Méré (in the seventeenth century) noticed anomalies in computations arising from games of chance. Subsequent discussions with mathematicians like Pascal and Fermat

started a planned enquiry and investigation of phenomena, and a theory began to develop.

The first—and no doubt hesitant—definition to be given was that which today is known as the classical or *a priori* definition. This states that if an event can occur in N distinct and equally likely ways, and if F of them are favourable to the event A, then the probability of A is F/N. Apart from certain computational drawbacks (for instance, no indication is given as to how to decide whether two situations are equally likely or not, while all but the simplest situations are incapable of being handled), this definition must be rejected for another reason—viz., a certain circularity in using the words 'equally likely' in defining probability. To give them their due, the early probabilitists realized the inadequacy of this definition; nevertheless its usefulness in simple situations made it extremely popular.

As an example of the snares presented by heavy reliance on the classical definition, we cite Bertrand's Paradox, in which a chord of a circle is chosen at random. We are required to find the probability that its length exceeds the length of a side of the inscribed equilateral triangle. According to our interpretation of the question, various answers are possible.

Firstly, by symmetry we may fix the direction of the chord in advance. Drawing the diameter perpendicular to this direction, we notice that only the chords that intersect the diameter in the interval from $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of its length will be suitable. Thus the required probability is $\frac{1}{2}$.

Alternately, by symmetry, one end-point of the chord may be fixed in advance. The three angles between the tangent to the circle at this point and the inscribed equilateral triangle are each 60 degrees. As only those chords falling within the middle angle are suitable, the required probability is $\frac{1}{3}$.

Finally, since the position of a chord is determined by its mid-point, the chord will satisfy the conditions of the problem if its mid-point lies within the concentric circle with radius $\frac{1}{2}$ that of the given circle. The area of this circle being $\frac{1}{4}$ that of the original circle, the required probability is $\frac{1}{4}$.

This illustrates all too clearly the disaster that a lack of clarity in formulating fundamental concepts (in this case, the meaning of the words 'at random') can lead to.

Gnedenko asserts that the concept of 'equal likelihood' is more primitive than that of probability.[4] This, I feel, can only be true in the sense that, given a number of events, it may be mentally easier to assume that each has the same chance of occurring than to weigh up the possibilities and assign various different values.

Let us assume the 'equal possibility' of events, and add the assumption that if nothing about an event is known, the probability of its occurrence is $\frac{1}{2}$—since it may either occur or not occur.[5] The confusion which this can cause is illustrated by the following example: we know nothing at present about life on Mars. Thus we may assume that the probability of any specific animal's not being on Mars, is $\frac{1}{2}$. Thus the probability of there being no cat, no dog and no bee is $\frac{1}{8}$. By taking as many animals as we wish, we can therefore make the probability of there being no animals as small as we please, thus proving beyond any reasonable doubt that there is life on Mars.

The simplest—and the wisest—conclusion we can come to (apart from a careful verification of assumptions on equal likelihood and independence) is the realization that probability is no measure of ignorance.

It is natural when considering 'possibility' to consider also 'impossibility.' This, however, may cause a contretemps. For an improbable event is by no means impossible; and so its actual happening in no wise denies the hypothesis of its extreme improbability.

The unfortunate and inescapable implications of the classical definition made mathematicians realize the need for another, more appropriate definition. With the tremendous growth in experimental natural science, the frequency or *a posteriori* definition came into vogue. Here an experiment is considered to be performed a number of times under conditions as near uniform from trial to trial as possible. Suppose a certain event A is observed. The probability of A is defined as the relative frequency with which the repeated observations satisfy the occurrence of the event.

The superiority of this definition over the classical one was glaringly obvious. At last one could calculate the probability of a single event. However, it was noticed that different probabilities would be obtained for the same event as the number of trials changed.

Consequently von Mises extended the definition. He defined probability in relation to a collective (today known as a sample space), which 'denotes a series of similar events or processes which differ by certain observable attributes'.[6] The probability of an attribute within a collective is defined as the limiting value of the relative frequency of that attribute. Thus the collective must have the following properties: firstly, the relative frequencies must possess limiting values, and secondly, these limiting values must remain the same in any infinite partial sequence which is chosen from the original sequence.

But this definition, in spite of its seeming advantage over quondam

definitions, has serious disadvantages. For a start it mixes empirical (performing trials) and theoretical (taking of limits) processes. Further, a probability is no longer (if indeed it ever was) an objective property of real phenomena. In fact, one cannot even speak of the probability of an event until an unlimited number of experiments has been performed, a task in the light of which the labours of Hercules pale into insignificance.

Appreciating the difficulties inherent in earlier definitions, and realizing also the importance of the concept of the 'collective', certain mathematicians (notably Kolmogorov) saw—in the early part of this century,—the close connection which could exist between set- and measure-theory and an abstract, axiomatic probability theory. Thus a set of axioms and a specific function—to be known as a probability measure or probability—were postulated.[7] Logical deductions were made and results proved from these axioms. It was noticed that the classical and frequency definitions arose as special cases of this theory (under appropriate additional conditions), and the observation of real phenomena served to suggest possible extensions, leading to the rich theory we have today.

This axiomatic approach has the magnificent advantage over the frequency definition in that the collective is postulated, thus removing any subjective tendencies in the choice of a suitable sample space.

Kolmogorov points out that his system of axioms, while consistent, is incomplete, in the sense that probabilities may be assigned in various ways (provided, of course, that they satisfy the axioms). Von Mises asserts that this incompleteness is precisely the shade that his theory illuminates. Nevertheless, the modern, formal approach has much aesthetic appeal, and the beauty of the mathemetical theory is inescapable.

Few will deny that a mathematical concept of probability, while certainly necessary, is by no means sufficient. However, any attempt to squeeze non-physical probabilities into mathematical moulds or mathematical theories into credibility castles-in-the-air will prove exceedingly difficult, if not impossible. The theories are to a large extent disjoint; yet regions of mingling exist, and studies in these areas will indubitably prove both stimulating and rewarding.

Durban

[1] Freund, J. E. *Mathematical Statistics*, 1962 (Prentice-Hall).
[2] Good, I. J. *The Estimation of Probabilities*, 1965, (Research Monograph No. 30, M.I.T. Press).
[3] Cohen, J. *Chance, Skill, and Luck*, 1960, (Penguin-Pelican series).
[4] Gnedenko, B. V. *The Theory of Probability*, 1966, (3rd edition, Chelsea).
[5] Cohen, M. R. *Reason and Nature*, 1953 ,(2nd edition, Free Press).
[6] von Mises, R. *Probability, Statistics and Truth*, 1939, (Wm. Hodge and Co.).
[7] Kolmogorov, A. N. *Foundations of the theory of Probability*, 1950 (Chelsea).

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