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At the same time we draw attention to our own Index published in 1971 in *Theoria* 37 (a revised and updated version of one which appeared in 1965). We hope to supplement this at intervals of five years.

THE EDITORS

LEGALITY AND MORALITY
TWO CONTROVERSIES
by D. A. ROHATYN

Everyone recognizes that there is some relationship between the law and the moral code. But what is the nature of this relationship, and whence does it originate? I am not asking about the historical development of either law or morality, but about the logical background underlying their tenuous partnership. Since the task I set for myself is neither that of the lawyer, nor that of the cultural historian, I shall not make the (eminently worthwhile) attempt to trace the temporal antecedents of present legal patterns, nor to compare those found, say, in 'traditional' or non-Western civilizations with contemporary standards already familiar to us from our own society.

Nor do I pretend exhaustively to categorize *the* relationship supposedly obtaining between legality and morality. Rather, I wish philosophically to examine, and perhaps elucidate, a few features of that relationship, whatever it might be, with respect to: (*a*) the legalization of certain drugs and of abortion, and (*b*) a particular 'classical' viewpoint in ethics, which I should like here to appropriate as my own, for reasons which will be given below.

To proceed with the delineation: A. *Thesis: 'Whatever is legal, is moral.'* This statement is plainly false. It is legal to spit on the street under certain conditions, but that does not automatically mean that it is the right thing to do. Whatever is legal is certainly not always in accordance with good taste or etiquette. And to be operating within the framework of the law, whether deliberately or just by accident, is not necessarily to be 'obeying' the law in just the same way as the moral law might compel obedience. This is sometimes expressed by saying that legal standards are 'external', while moral ones are 'internal'. But since a legal code can become a personal guideline, and so be 'introjected' by an agent, this way of expressing the difference, if any, between moral and legal norms is insufficient.

Moreover, legality and morality simply do not coincide on other fronts. It may be legal to foreclose a mortgage, but under certain circumstances, highly immoral. It may be legal to force payment of what is legally a debt, but which from a moral angle appears to be extortion. All of this is clear from hypothetical counter-examples, without the necessity for a close definition of either 'law' or 'morality', apart from the problems surrounding such a construction.

This does not mean that law and morals have nothing in common. As the discussion above suggests, moral and legal norms need not be construed as 'different' at all. The legal law, for instance, may be

viewed as a special case of the moral one, while the terminology that accompanies it may be regarded as a sub-class of moral vocabulary. All this is a matter for philosophic 'legislation', so to speak.

Unfortunately, some pieces of legislation are more pertinent than others. For, if laws are looked upon as just a special instance of moral codes, and capable of being subsumed under the latter, then the evidence of *conflict* between these two standards disappears. For example, a known 'chiseler' who nonetheless behaves in accordance with all the legal rules of his society is thereby exempted from any wrong-doing; indeed, he must be seen as praiseworthy, if anything.

Similarly, persons who break the law in the name of something 'higher' — Socrates, and those who engage in some forms of civil disobedience are paradigm cases — must have their claims disallowed. While dissolving the apparent irreconcilability of (some) laws with certain moral statutes may be a desirable goal for an idealistically-minded, philosophic legislator, it is hardly helpful in trying to explain certain readily perceived phenomena of human society as we encounter it.

The foregoing counter-example leads us to see that B. *Thesis:* '*Whatever is moral, is legal*' is likewise a false statement. One can of course *make* the moral into the legal by fiat, just as one can exclude from one's 'moral' purview everything but legal codes. I hesitate to call such a policy dishonest, only because in so doing I would invoke or rather smuggle in, a moral norm whose presence needs to be justified, as a logical prerequisite to its use as a descriptive label in this context, where both legal and moral terms have not been sorted, and are open to discussion (as they perpetually are, anyway). But I do not recoil from calling it incorrect, because empirically unsound, for the reasons just enumerated. That of course is not enough to prevent or dissuade anyone from formulating the characteristics of the moral universe, or the legal world, and their connection, as he sees fit; at the same time, in a metaphilosophical way, we enjoy the liberty of attacking (and, if necessary, condemning) such a proposed 'system' as would arbitrarily 'reduce' the moral to the legal, or which, conversely, would identify the legal with the moral, in either case producing an (artificial) intensional equivalence.

Speaking modally, morals and law may fairly be said to be only contingently coextensive, and only on certain occasions; in general, their identity is only a possibility, but certainly neither a contingent truth, nor to be raised to the status of a necessary proposition.

These technical remarks are, however, only a preliminary to the main subject, which is to treat, in succession, two of the most difficult and complex social problems of the day in a way that will

reveal where I stand on each issue, why the questions as they are posed are so baffling, and why they therefore admit of different solutions, or resolutions. In doing this, we shall be able to observe that rampant disagreement, about both doctrinal and methodological affairs, is not limited to the closeted world of philosophic debate. Perhaps we can take some comfort in this.

I do not intend to make the issues — the legalization of certain drugs, particularly marijuana, and the abortion controversy — any simpler than they really are. On the contrary, I hope if anything to show why they are so subtle, and admit of such a variety of logically respectable viewpoints.

It would be foolish to announce that after the dissection of these problems is terminated, the problems themselves will cease, or that enlightenment will automatically ensue for anyone who takes the trouble to think through the difficulties. My only hope is that someone will be stimulated to do just that, for himself. This is all that philosophers or reasonable men can expect, whether of themselves or anyone else. Mine is a call not to action, but only to the comparatively feebler medium of thought. Once again, philosophy may be reprimanded for not 'getting things done'. This complaint should, however, only be laid at my doorstep, not at philosophy's.

In the interests of avoiding digression, I shall permit myself a certain measure of simplification. Thus, in respect of drug-taking, I shall assume that the narcotics in question are really harmful to their user(s), just for the sake of argument.

I realize that scientific evidence on this matter is very much lacking, that informed opinion on the question is consequently quite divided, and that no consensus is likely to emerge for some time because the prevailing, heated climate surrounding the drug-question, makes a dispassionate, non-polemical investigstion virtually impossible. (We need only look at recent, pseudo-scientific anthropological defenses of the concepts of 'racial supremacy' and 'inferiority' for an unfortunate, but instructive, precedent.) However, in the absence of positive, reliable, accepted scientific findings, we must make some categorical judgments, if discussion is to be possible at all.

I also realize that to fall back upon the law of excluded middle is not very helpful. Either drug use is harmful to the user, or it is not; but there is very little comfort to be derived from this tautology. Morever, 'harmful' is systematically ambiguous — it can mean different things to different people, none of which is necessarily invalid. Put another way, there are degrees of both harmfulness and harmlessness, so that to say that drug use is (or is not) damaging may not mean the same thing to everyone, nor, consequently, have the same general (persuasive or dissausive) effect.

Finally, I am aware that it is a mistake to lump all drugs together under a common heading; that such things as marijuana, LSD, and heroin are entirely dissimilar, and should be studied, let alone evaluated, independently. For the moment, however, we cannot point to anything on the subject, and say with confidence that it is authoritative. If something like that already existed, the drug controversy, although perhaps not the drug 'problem' (if there is one), might be considerably diminished by now. So, as Locke would say, we must light a candle for ourselves in the dark, and try bravely to move ahead.

It is clear that if drug use were *not* pernicious in its effects upon those who partake of it, the drug problem would cease to be a problem in that it would not arouse horror or outrage, or even much concern. Problems are only, as sociologists like to say, what people think they are. In this respect man is indeed the measure; his perceptions and corresponding limitations condition what is thought of as calling for (immediate or other) rectification, as well as what is not bothersome. To be sure, there would always be people who object to drug use. But this would be on the level of social pressures, or folkways and mores. People find many things to disapprove of — long hair, short hair, card-playing, gambling (which in some instances *is* outlawed), and yes, spitting in the street. Why does the law not interfere in these areas? Well, in some places it does. In others, it does not need to, because the social pressure to conform, and the social penalties of derision or ostracism (to name two) are sufficient in their own right to serve as quasi-legal checks on 'aberrant' conduct. In still others, enforcement would prove too cumbersome, too irritating to the state itself, or too inefficient; in short, impracticable. Where some are in favour of, and some are opposed to, certain practices, sheerly on the basis of personal preference, with the rights and interests of no second or third parties involved, the law usually judges that it has no business interfering. A large determining factor in the attitude taken is the form of political organization in the society in question. But even a totalitarian government can leave some things to the discretion of its members, or dictate terms in the manner that it wishes to without resorting to law — only, of course, by flagrantly violating both legal and moral standards of tolerance, as one of its more frequent methods of compelling public assent. (Regrettably, such practices are not confined to totalitarian countries, or even to dictatorships; but at least, they are only compatible with, or inherent in, the legal and political structures of such societies as must suffer under them).

As citizens in an allegedly free state, we recognize that there is an area, however vague its boundaries, in which neither we nor the law

are permitted to interfere. The concept of a man's 'private life' has not existed at all times or in all places; it would be alien and repulsive to many of our predecessors; but it does exist, here and now, and is an accepted part of the fabric of law as well as life. If drug use were of no consequence to the user, or of no more consequence, let us say, than the eating of figs, there would be little or no basis for the tumult that the drug-situation has caused in the United States and other countries. Therefore, if we are to make a contribution to the discussion, we must, for the time being, accept the premise that drug use is anything but benign in its effects. Anything less than this as a starting point would make further deliberation on the topic absurd.

I am, then, prepared to admit, if faced with the right kind of evidence, that the drug problem is no problem after all. Some people, indeed, advance just such a position, but it has yet to be established; it is just a contention, like any of those we are about to examine. With no proof that drug use is utterly without negative consequences with respect to the physical, mental and emotional health, well-being and stability of persons who imbibe them (and I know how 'loaded' all of these terms are), we must proceed, if we are to proceed at all, only on the opposite assumption. Call it playing devil's (or angel's) advocate, if you like; otherwise the 'drug problem' ceases to be a pertinent moral issue altogether.

With those preliminaries, what I want to do is to bring up some of the chief arguments advanced, both for and against the legalization of drugs. We shall assume that drugs are 'bad medicine', so to speak, and by 'drugs' we shall not have any particular one in mind; it does not, for purposes of this discussion, improve or detract from the arguments whether they are applied to one drug or to all, since for argument's sake we can just as well assume that all are evil in what they wreak on their users. My purpose in randomly airing the pros and cons of drug-legalization is to show just how tortuous the issue remains, from a philosophical stand-point, even after we have made it 'easier' on ourselves.

1. *Drug use cannot be 'without consequence', since such a great economic factor is involved.*

That is true, but it does not mean that the law should take an interest in settling the drug dispute. The manufacture and sale of razor blades also has an inexpungable economic consequence. No-one argues from that to the conclusion, either that shaving should be forbidden or that it should be compulsory.

2. *Drug use is no more harmful than that of alcohol, or tobacco.*

That may well be the case, too. Alcohol was at one time legally

unavailable in the United States. Prohibition was not repealed because scientific evidence suddenly showed that alcohol did not, in sufficient quantities over an extended period of time, damage the brain or the liver, but because the problems of enforcement were generated, which made it impossible meaningfully to continue Prohibition. There is a movement on in the United States Senate to outlaw tobacco, too, as of the moment. If it succeeds, there is no telling how successful such a ban may be, or what insuperable problems it may pose for law enforcement officials, or whether scientists not beholden to the tobacco lobby for their income will legitimately and conclusively discover that the statistical correlation between cigarette-smoking and incidences of lung cancer or emphysema is just that, and not a cause-effect relation. One thing is clear — North Carolina and Virginia will suffer disastrous economic consequences if the raising of tobacco on farms is made unlawful. But no-one (except Senators and Representatives from those states, and their supporters) thinks this is a sound argument for rejecting such a proposed law.

To say that 'x is no worse than y, but x is illegal whereas y is not' is not a sound, albeit relativist proof for the unfairness of x's present status. It is a reproach to the lack of even-handedness which has always plagued the law, but, if anything, it indicates either that x should be legalized or else that y should be made illegal, too. In the case of alcohol, this was tried in the United States and proved unworkable. Perhaps history need not repeat itself with drug-traffic, although enforcement is getting out of hand in the States at the moment. But this is occurring precisely because the public is divided as to whether it is right, wrong or indifferent to indulge in drugs. In the 1920s there was no such tension; every 'moral' person 'knew' that drinking was evil, but, like Alkibiades, they wanted to have a bottle anyway, and were willing to take enormous risks to get one. With the present and proposed reduction of penalties for drug use (as opposed to drug sale), and the absence of any noticeable fervor against taking drugs, the situation has become more complicated, like everything else in the past fifty years.

3. *The legalization of drugs would cut off the underworld's main source of revenue, or at least one of their chief sources of income.*

. . . and this is highly desirable, but only if you admit, as some politicians refuse to do, that the 'underworld' is real and not a metaphysical hallucination devised by ethnically prejudiced persons. Granted that references to the 'syndicate' or 'mob' are not fictitious or imaginary, this seems to me to be the most worthwhile argument in favor of drug-legalization. But someone may object that organized

crime will always find a profitable avenue, so what is the use of struggling against it? As a practical consideration, this has no weight. Almost anything that makes life more difficult for the mobsters is to be encouraged, even if their cunning is sufficient to enable them to survive, and perhaps flourish, in other areas.

A more cogent objection would be that the state has no business pandering to the 'base(r) inclinations' of men, and that drug-use, like (say) wagering on horse races, should be prohibited for this reason. Here we enter a genuine area of philosophic differences of opinion. A Plato (at least prior to the *Laws*) or a Kant would, I take it, exhort the state to reform the populace, as well as exhort individuals to reform themselves; while a Spinoza or a Hume would say that human nature is imperfect, and always will be, and that rather than waste enormous effort, time and money in an attempt to improve it, the apparatus of government and law should find ways to channel those 'base instincts' to its own advantage. The *laissez-faire* economic theories of Adam Smith are similarly motivated. Or as Bentham and Mill later glibly assumed, self-interest and the 'general will' do not collide, so by promoting the former (which people are naturally predisposed to do, in their own cases, to begin with) you indirectly advance the latter. Instead of asking for heroic sacrifices and virtuous selflessness, be ingenious enough to harness the much greater, untrammeled energies of self-advancement, or even greed.

It is of course doubtful whether such a system, embodying the desired state of affairs from the economic and moral *laissez-faire* point of view, has ever existed, or ever will, any more than that parallel hypothesis of the 'state of nature'; but the working model is fascinating nonetheless. I suspect that there is no decision-procedure for resolving the temperamental as well as contentual conflict between the two types of approaches I have just sketched. For this reason, although the argument that legalization of drugs would hamper the criminal element has its charms, it is not conclusive.

4. *Drug use is nobody's business.*

One might with equal justice say that drug use is everybody's business. We have already seen that no position on any matter is without economic consequences, which are after all only a part of human consequences, too. Drug use is everybody's business in another sense: users are frequently 'pushers', and as vendors they would seem to have a (moral) responsibility to their customers, if not themselves — the more so, because their operation is at present illegitimate, and therefore begs for some other reasoned defense (which is not to say, to revert to Thesis A briefly, that making drug

use legal would instantly remove any moral compunctions surrounding the propriety of its widespread distribution). In short, drug use affects everybody — although no one is (legally) compelled to participate in social relationships which may lead to, or culminate in, the imbibing of drugs.

In another sense, of course, drug use is nobody's business, at least in societies where such concepts and practices as personal privacy are respected and, moreover, consistently applied or exercised.

Also, if drug use is held to be a right, then to infringe upon its exercise is to tamper with human dignity — no matter how undignified any involvement with drugs may appear. It may even be that jurists will one day decide that drug laws as they now stand are simply — or complexly — unconstitutional.

It is useful in this context to distinguish between rights and interests. As we mentioned earlier, the drug-question affects everyone's interests to some extent, whether these be economic, political, personal, or whatever. But does *x*'s use of drugs affect the rights of *y* in any way? Apparently not. But if *y* attempts to restrain *x* from using drugs, then this is a tangible infringement of *x*'s rights, on the face of it. (I am not for the moment talking about the attempt rationally or irrationally to appeal to someone's feelings, to persuade or dissuade him from a choice; I am referring only to overt interference with performance, and such as is not carried out in, say, a jesting or playful manner). Moreover, no one is forcing *y* to (continue to) associate with *x*. What then entitles the state, acting in behalf of the law, to do to *x* what would clearly be a violation of elementary decency or 'fair play' on *y*'s part (even if *y* is convinced that he is thereby 'saving' *x* from himself)? Perhaps nothing.

It is very difficult to establish that conflicts of interest do not, let alone cannot, occur. But, as J. C. Rees, interpreting Mill, has shown, it is similarly quite difficult to prove that *x*'s rights and *y*'s rights, such as we know them, conflict in their exercise, even though they are far from mutually exclusive in their respective content — in fact, they may overlap or coincide exactly.[1] It is only possible to construct one *type* of case in which the exercise of rights by one or more individuals hinders, or is hindered by, a similar act or set of activities on the part of their peers. Such a case invariably involves availability or allocation of certain products or resources, but it does not, as we shall see, put the theory I have been describing to rout.

For example, suppose *x* wants a blue polo shirt, and suppose further that *y* wants the same shirt. If there is only one store, and only one polo shirt there, and if *x* gets to the store ahead of *y*, then in exercising his right to buy the shirt, *x* has 'deprived' *y*, knowingly or unwittingly, of the same privilege. The number of such counter-

examples could be multiplied indefinitely, but they all are of the same general form: the conflict consists in the fact that blue polo shirts (or whatever the items may be) are not sufficiently plentiful to satisfy everyone's desires, and perhaps (as in the case of food-distribution) cannot even be produced, or distributed, in such a way as to eliminate conflicts.

But would anyone say that *x* acted immorally or illegally in buying the shirt? Hardly, unless in *x*'s biography we were able to add comments like the following: *x* knows that *y* likes blue polo shirts; *x* is habitually cruel (to *y*, or in general); therefore, *x* went down to the store bright and early, to rob *y* of the pleasure of buying and wearing a blue polo shirt. Even so, if *x* happens really to like blue polo shirts, it would be equally true that *y*'s getting to the store first would deprive *x* of a similar enjoyment to which, *prima facie*, he is equally entitled. If *x* is really a mean character, it may inspire our (moral) compassion, but the law has no right to step in — unless *x* walked out of the store without paying.

So much for arguments both in favour of and against the legalization of drugs. We can see from this that even if, as we assumed for the sake of argument, drugs do their users in, drug-users (but not necessarily, drug-vendors) may claim an area of personal sovereignty with which no one may interfere. This does not mean that actions taken do not entail responsibilities. A drug-abuser may be dangerous to his fellow-workers on the job, and to other motorists on the highway — but, to revert to argument 2, so is alcohol; perhaps much more so. No matter how limited the boundaries within which drug-use is to be condoned (which, as the dictionary tells us, simply means 'not condemned', *not* 'approved'), there is no overwhelming theoretical obstacle to the assertion of their existence. On the other hand, there are at least two, and frequently more, sides to the drug story, and a corresponding minimum of arguments and explanations on both, or all, sides, which effectively prevent the drug controversy from ever, in my opinion, being satisfactorily resolved or terminated (unless scientific findings of a conclusive nature are indeed forth-coming, evidence which would be beyond the purview of debate). In other words, the legal-moral issues surrounding drugs are just like, if not themselves, philosophical problems. They are equally open-ended and for that reason may be hopelessly beyond redemption. As a philosopher, however, I like to continue the issues worth exploring.

I turn now from drugs to abortion. The two are related topics, not merely in that they occupy a great deal of attention today. For one thing, the issue of human sovereignty (over one's own body) enters into the discussion in both cases; so does the question of rights —

the rights of the drug-user, the rights of the unborn child, and perhaps the right of the general public to be protected from abuse, including its own.

I shall not discuss abortion in precisely the manner in which I approached the topic of drugs. I do not think it is necessary to survey the various positions, since, as I have just pointed out, there are certain obvious parallels (as well as dissimilarities), which make an introduction to the subject at this stage nothing if not otiose. We already have all the background, in the form of roughly similar propositions on behalf of (or opposed to) drug-legalization, on hand. The only difference is that abortion is legal now in many places, and in some places has been for quite some time, provided certain conditions obtain (eg., mother's life in danger; deformed fetus; etc.). Pot-smoking and other forms of drug-indulgence are not, as yet. The question is therefore slightly different here: not, would it be proper to legalize drug-use; but, is 'abortion on demand' as it now exists, legally sanctified, legally (and morally) proper? The literature already extant is vast, but it leaves the fundamental problems here necessarily in the same uncertain state as they were found.[2] I do not, therefore, pretend to advance the subject, but only to shed light by way of giving my own, I hope less than ignorant, opinions, concerning it.

At the considerable risk of being accused of being a 'male chauvinist pig', or worse, I shall state my bias at the outset. I am morally opposed to obortion. I think it is morally wrong. My reasoning on this score is simple — some will say, too simple. All of us at one time were zygotes, and then embryos, and so on. This is a rather striking way of saying that pregnancy is a necessary (albeit, not a sufficient) condition for birth and life. (I am deliberately ignoring the 'test-tube baby' project, not because it is relatively new, but because it is a misnomer: a test-tube baby is merely conceived in the laboratory, but all save for the initial stages of gestation are carried out in the womb. That in no way compromises or contradicts my position).

Today there is a great deal of controversy — all of it misguided, I believe — concerning how to define the term 'life' in a biological sense. It is misguided, because it cannot be done, whether by scientists or philosophers. We cannot produce agreement as to whether only the newborn child, or the unborn fetus, or the just-mated sperm and egg, are any and/or all of them entitled to the honorary designation 'life'. (We cannot, for that matter, state with any precision what the boundaries between life and death, or between animate and inanimate, are. But a consideration of these difficulties would take us afield). We only know, I believe, this much:

that life has certain logical, biological and temporal requisites, all of which must be fulfilled *if* a child is to be born, and survive for any length of time afterwards. To suggest anything less is, in my view, disingenuous.

The conclusion I draw from this very simple set of facts is that we cannot make abortion licit without implicating ourselves in some way. To be sure, to reach this conclusion, I depend upon at least two intermediate premises, which I shall now insert: the first is an unrefined version of the so-called 'generalization argument', according to which whatever holds for anyone under certain circumstances holds for anyone else under those or similar circumstances; the second is a corollary which may be supported independently of the generalization principle, to the effect (again, crudely) that each human life, *qua* human life, is just as intrinsically valuable or precious as the next — no more, and certainly no less.

It is of course possible to deny the pertinence, or the validity, of either the generalization argument or its derivative concerning human equality of worth; someone like Nietzsche would not hesitate to deny both propositions, and I am not at all a partisan of the interpretation of Nietzsche which makes him into a proto-fascist. It is also quite feasible to suggest that the alleged 'sanctity of human life' has been overworked by hysterical apologists for official policy in the Roman Catholic Church — I do not say, religion. But I am not such a representative or spokesman, and, if the history of this century is admitted as testimony, then I would flatly assert that the sanctity of human life has been emphatically and eloquently absent from the parade of events — in short, from the Spanish-American war to Vietnam, it has, I am afraid, not been stressed or heeded enough.

But it is not necessary to believe in or uphold human life as an absolute, in order to see that the legalization of abortion makes such human life as we now see around us suspect. I am not suggesting that the next step after abortion will be to legalize the extermination of the human race, although I have no doubt that the attempt will be made, without benefit of legal buttress, in the near future, if it has not already (unsuccessfully) been tried. What I am saying instead is that the generalization principle alone, or by itself, in connection with the facts concerning the prerequisites for life as I see them, suffices to make *questionable* the presence of human beings now existing on the face of the earth. (I think the same thing applies to contraception and birth-control, but I do not want to digress.) In some sense abortion involves a denial of both life and the *right* to live — in some circles, that is what is intended by it. Whether or not life is worthwhile is, I grant, a question for which there is no ready or pat

answer. But I should invoke the following extra-logical, 'pragmatic' objection: in that case, why does not everybody (or at least those who favour abortion) commit suicide? Is, say, a 35 year old life more valuable (or less?) than one of 9 weeks' gestation? Or is it not absurd to try to 'measure' this? As Kant would say, we must distinguish between 'fancy price' and 'market price'.[3] Life itself has a 'fancy price', which is to say that it is beyond price, or that it is priceless. There is no medium of exchange for it, no equivalent whatsoever — in spite of the journalistic propensity to say such things as 'he is worth $150 million', which, if true, is not a statement about anyone, but only about their financial assets. (By parity of reasoning, to say 'he is worth 39c' is not to make a correct observation about anyone, but only about the chemical components of his body). That is what is meant — or, at least, what I mean — when I assert that human life is an absolute.

I recognize that the contention is just that; that it is open to dispute. But if life is *not* intrinsically valuable, then it is arbitrary to limit the domain here to the unborn (or even the unconceived). Everybody is affected — the living, the past generations now dead (although admittedly the point is moot in their case), adults as well as children. I have yet to hear of a pro-abortion statement which would deny the intrinsic importance of life *only* to unborn babies, although this may be its implicit intention. But if so, then I believe that certain conflicting implications can be extracted from a pro-abortion stance, as well, with the help of certain commonplace forms of reasoning which, as Kant, their originator, remarked, are not unique or confined to philosophic analysis and speculation.

It might be argued that life today, in the concrete historical conditions in which we find ourselves, is indeed not worthwhile on an experiential level. But is it only not worthwhile for the bearing and raising of new generations, or does not such pessimism and *malaise* apply equally to everyone? Is the answer to it self-destruction, or a determined effort to correct existing social and other ills as best one can? I do not deny that suicide may be the right 'way out' of life for some, although Kant, for example, in the first of his 'four examples', would deny even this, saying that individuals have no justification to make an exception of themselves and their own troubles.[4] But on what grounds do we legislate this on an alleged behalf of other people — the spoken-for as well as the voiceless?

If life is not worth living, for whatever reason, and in whatever era, then it is not worth living for anyone. In this respect Kant is quite right in showing that a man contemplating suicide is thinking in a manner inconsistent with the categorical imperative (regardless

how that may be construed); and he is acting, if he decides to take his own life, in a manner that is non-universalizable, except, as earlier alluded to, at the price of implying the elimination of the entire human population, although not necessarily rushing it into effect. Moreover, although life may be less than worthwhile today, what about tomorrow? Suicide, to any extent, is irreversible, at least under the handicaps of present technology, so perhaps our despair is premature.

Also, there is no reason to think that the 'intrinsic' value of life might not shine through again, if the objective conditions and barriers which at present render this impossible were removed. If this seems to be superficially optimistic, then I should say in retort that 'world-weariness' is equally superficial, and not much of a prop for abortion.

In short, the difficulty with an unqualified pro-abortion argument is that it is too selective. Like the argument 2, concerning drugs *versus* alcohol or tobacco, it succeeds only in showing that the way in which life is treated (by abortion-proponents) is not even-handed. We must be thorough-going; either we are whole-heartedly for, or against, life. Either position is arguable only up to a point; thereafter, like Cleanthes, we must 'take our stand' on one or another side, by deed as well as by word. That is why it is germane to inquire whether pro-abortion forces encourage, or even would practice, suicide in other ways than just abortion. Suicide is forbidden, of course, but the penalties can hardly be worse than successful commission, and enforcement can hardly be more (or less) difficult than was the case with Prohibition. So I do not think that the illegality of suicide is much of a deterrent, especially in view of the way abortions were advocated (and performed) long before they received legal shelter.

Some people will think I have been too quick in identifying abortion with (say) murder. I can only refer to Miss G. E. M. Anscombe's reply to J. Feinberg by way of response.[5] As I remarked before, I do not consider myself to be providing a definitive solution to the abortion conflict — I doubt there will ever be one, even from the scientific side of determining what life is, and is not. I am more concerned here with showing some of the legal problems concerning both drugs and abortion, from the point of view of a moral philosopher. Before pressing ahead with these undertakings, and thence to my conclusion, I must say something about another aspect of the abortion-controversy, already mentioned in connection with drugs. I am talking about the question of sovereignty (if I may resort to such a political metaphor) over one's body.

Do we 'own' our bodies? Are they our 'possession', which, by analogy with private property, we may do with as we please, and

dispose of as we see fit? (Again, this does not mean that we have no obligations towards other people — or their bodies). Or is rather the reverse true: that our bodies are not ours, that we are 'owned' by Someone Else, and that our bodies are merely 'loaned' (or leased, or rented!) to us, for the time being? The latter position is a classical theological one, although it stems from Plato,[6] while the former may have developed originally under the banner of political liberalism, utilitarianism, and the school of 'philosophic radicals' of the late eighteenth century.

It is of course possible that we have been grossly misled by this particular metaphor; or it may be, in Wittgensteinian terms, that we have been bewitched and held captive by the pyrotechnics of language. In short, neither alternative is tenable, and neither would any metaphorical replacement do, either.

But if the power enjoyed by these fanciful pictures of the human condition is unwarranted, both historically and systematically speaking, then it behooves us to find, not a better metaphor, but a way to describe the situation without having to rely on metaphors, or other asymptotic approximations, altogether. But if this were possible, then the mind-body (or soul-body) controversy within philosophy would likewise yield to intellectual penetration. I doubt whether this is a realizable goal, and so the entire enterprise seems to me to be dubious; at the same time, I do not think that we are dealing here with pseudo-problems (although their formulations may occasionally betray that), for which the only effective technique is one or another linguistic variant of Wittgensteinian 'therapy'.

Having protested my uncertainty, I want to add at least this much: if we take the Platonic metaphor 'seriously', then we should see that its content is no different from that of its apparent opposite. If Plato had known anything about real estate laws, he would have remarked that as long as you pay the rent, you own the apartment. The landlord may still own the building, but he does not own you. You are not 'cattle', or an indentured servant, or a slave, or 'imprisoned'. The implications (not heretofore drawn) of an avowedly simplistic reading of the Platonic ownership-analogy[7] are no different than those ideas which we might encounter in, say, Mill's *On Liberty*. I am not saying that the classical approach is identical with the more modern one; they diverge in other respects; but insofar as the classical viewpoint purports to say anything distinct from the libertarian's, it fails, and is logically self-defeating. It does not matter whether your bodily 'house' is already all paid up, or amortized in small instalments; once you receive the deed, it is yours to keep, so long as you fulfill your end of the contractual bargain. The abortion-question, in its misguided focus, boils down to: When

do we obtain the deed? At birth? Sometime before? At conception? And so on. But this is very much like asking: When did apes climb down from the trees, and become men? It did not happen that way, and even if it had, even the most gifted archivist could not fix or pinpoint the precise date. To ask 'When does life begin?' is therefore to invite the lore of the story-teller. This is all right, provided one takes the proper precautions against believing too strongly in the veracity of fables.

On this note, I want to pass to a final consideration of the legal problems posed by both drug use and abortion-procedures, from the point of view of a moralist (which is what I regard at least part of the function of ethics, or moral philosophy, to be). Here again, I shall make use of an elementary distinction: one between ignorance and innocence, such as confronted Faust in his moments of temptation.

An ignorant person — and by that, I mean one who has led a 'sheltered' existence, and has consequently not been exposed to various opportunities to do right *or* wrong, is in no position to be considered praiseworthy. His is a goodness by default. An innocent person is one who has been exposed to temptations, and resisted or overcome them, instead of succumbing. One might also call him morally experienced, mature, adult, responsible, or wordlly-wise, and each of these not merely in the generic growth-sense, but in the positive meaning of having successfully weathered any number of ordeals. We need not agree on what good and bad, or good and evil, or success and failure, are or consist of, in order to settle upon a common matrix of expressions to delineate the *achievement* of moral innocence in this fashion (whereas, ignorance is simply a native state of affairs). Put in a much more old-fashioned vein, we may not agree on wherein Adam's 'sin' lies, but we can adopt a mutually acceptable terminology, to refer, for example, to the Fall and the acts and/or thoughts which precipitated it.

The goal of moral development is to pass from moral ignorance to moral innocence, in the sense in which the latter is an *accomplishment*. I regard this simple statement of purpose as not merely a philosopher's whim, but as something akin to a descriptive, albeit teleological, setting forth of the empirical conditions for reaching the plateau of morally upright conduct, *regardless* how we envision that, or what we believe to be embodied in it. (In saying this I am, however, committing myself to 'naturalism' in some sense.)

If what I am opining is correct, then as moralists we ought to foster a situation, whether legally or in any other context, in which as many possible alternatives and options are open to agents as is feasible. This is the only way to insure (*a*) moral growth and (*b*) a legitimate basis for praise and blame of agents. Anything less, not

only prohibits moral growth, but invites a doctrine of social determinism (or environmentalism) which is anathema to freedom, responsibility, and ultimately to virtue or vice — or make up your own rubrics for the ideas to which I am alluding in passing.

Therefore, even though I may be morally against abortion (for example), my conception of morality as well as of the task of philosophy in this region compels me simultaneously to affirm that abortion should be legalized. This is *not* to say that it should be made 'licit' in a further *moral* sense — for that reason, it was necessary to present and refute Theses A and B, respectively, at the outset. But only by making abortion legal, can one hope for people to make the right choices. To do this involves taking the risk that people may also go wrong, in spite of our and their best efforts at guidance. Although it is awkward to have to do so, I must, from my vantage point, be simultaneously for and against abortion, which is an ambiguous, but not a paradoxical or contradictory, position to be in.

For the abortion-proponent, however, there is no such lack of smoothness in coordinating legal with moral theory. (I do not say this in order to recommend abortion or its merits; but it is a point which must be acknowledged). However, the dedicated pro-abortion-theorist is, prior to legalization, in a position quite similar to my own. He must, if his moral theory is worthy of the name, counsel perseverance in the face of regulations and other obstacles. He must counsel obedience to something 'higher' than what he has come to regard as an absolete, antiquated or just plain unjust law. Abortion made too 'easy' by being made legal robs the decision to abort of much of its dignity, as a moral act. The pro-abortionist whose moral doctrine aspires toward profundity is in a peculiar position, insofar as morality comes cheaply to those who do not have to struggle in order to abide by their 'conscience'. I am not saying, in effect, that a pro-abortionist is impelled toward civil disobedience (in the form of encouraging abortions while they are still illegal, or of actually undergoing them). There *is* a way for the tension between law and morality to be overcome: and that is, by working for the kind of conceptual harmony between morality and law which was discussed very early in this paper, and which is such, on an 'ideal' level, as to render one or the other category superfluous, once the full normative theory has been worked out or elaborated. But this way, whose deficiencies I have already taken the pains to notice, is not open to an anti-abortionist, such as myself.[8]

Since I am neither for nor against drug use, and since I believe that an intelligent response to the problem depends upon getting more knowledge about drugs and their allegedly harmful influence

(as well as, possibly beneficial effects, under the proper circumstances and controls), which I remain confident can be supplied in the near future, my own position reflects the uncertainties which I take to be part of the objective problem concerning drugs as it currently faces us. In short, I am at this moment neither in favour of nor opposed to drug-legalization. For me the matter is not cut and dried.

Abortion is quite another matter, for several reasons. First, abortion demands an answer within a definite period of time; drug use is not so imperative, as an issue. Abortion involves life and death at every turn; drugs do so only when the involvement becomes too deep. Abortion cannot be postponed indefinitely, while the imbibing of stimulants, intoxicants, hallucinogens or depressants can. Abortion involves the destinies of people who are as yet in no position to discuss, let alone control them, and for whom no one can do more than simulate a voucher, since nobody else knows what it is like to be in their position — and neither, at the time, do they. Drugs only involve voluntary person-object associations, although they may seem to mean more to people who are actually wrapped up in drug use. And, if I am right, there is no way that the advance of scientific knowledge can ever free us from misconceptions (*sic*) concerning human life and its termini. We already know a great deal about how babies are and can be made, anyway; more than enough, I should think, at least to be able to confront in an informed manner those options which William James would call 'forced, living and momentous'. About drugs we are mostly ill- or uniformed, but this situation, and with it the ramifications of the drug-problem, are, I believe, remediable, without recourse to much philosophy. Despite many significant parallels, however, the abortion-issue as a fresh controversy for philosophy seems both permanently inescapable and unresolvable, unfortunately, and consequently begs for at least a philosophical exposition and articulation; whereas the drug problem is neither so urgent, nor such a morass, into which virtually any point of view can jump to its own irreconcilable doom.

If there is one 'lesson' which may be gleaned from the foregoing, it is that morality cannot get along with a l-valued logic, so to speak. It would be nice if we could make everything true and good and beautiful, and in so doing circumvent the problem of evil, by crushing the serpent and confiscating all of the apples in the Garden of Eden. But it would be a shallow triumph for what would no longer deserve to be called 'morality', not even in the generic meaning. It would also, as I have already suggested, be exposed to the spectre of some form of determinism. A morality without a freedom to 'do otherwise', as Moore would say; without opportunity, without choices either antecedently created and then presented to,

or else discovered by, the agent; or one capable of being forged and invented or created by him for his own inspection and selection in sufficient plenitude therefrom, is just no morality at all, but a mere shadow.

Postlogue: What I have said in this paper is meant to apply only to men and societies who are *not* any longer in what Mill would term their 'nonage'. If the headlong rush to hospitals to have obartions in places where they have recently become legal, is a valid indicator, then perhaps the drift of my remarks should have been tempered with a little more sobriety concerning the foibles of human nature. As one opposed to abortion, I cannot but feel, that the 'rights' of the unborn have been violated, and that the legislator's first duty, moreover, is to protect them at least as vigilantly as he would anyone else's. If this means that the remnants of an aura of moral paternalism, however asinine or detestable, must be (re-) instated, then so be it. The exigencies of humanity should be served before even the priorities of morality, since the latter are utterly pointless without the former.[9] But this only reinforces my earlier disclaimers of omniscience in this regard. At the same time, I must confess that the phenomena are morally as well as personally disheartening.

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NOTES

[1] J. C. Rees, 'A Re-reading of Mill on Liberty', *Political Studies*, VIII (1960), 113-129; repr., w. a 1965 Postscript, in Peter Radcliffe, ed., *Limits of Liberty* (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1966), 87-107.

[2] For review, see Rudolf J. Gerber, 'Abortion: Parameters for Decision', *International Philosophical Quarterly*, XI (1971), 561-584.

[3] Kant, *Grundlegung*, Prussian Academy ed. (1911), IV, 434-435. Kant goes on to identify 'fancy price' with the concept of human dignity, freedom, obedience to the moral law, etc.

[4] Kant, *Grundlegung*, Prussian Academy ed., (1911), IV, 422-423, 424. See also Plato, *Phaedo* 62A.

[5] See G. E. M. Anscombe, 'The Two Kinds of Error in Action', *Journal of Philosophy*, LX (1963), 393-401. For Joel Feinberg's self-defense, see 'On Being 'Morally Speaking a Murderer',' *Journal of Philosophy*, LXI (1964), 158-171.

[6] Plato, *Phaedo*, 62B-E. I do not suggest that this is an accurate reading of Plato, but the view is and was clearly held in some quarters for many centuries.

[7] From *Republic* IV and X it is clear that Plato did *not* regard the human soul or its destiny as subject to similar provisions or structures.

[8] My account and analysis are very much in the view of Plato's Myth of Er, and correspondingly indebted.

[9] This could be one way of surmounting the supposed (and often very real) disparity between 'Theory' and 'Practice'. But value-hierarchies are easier felt than exhaustively formulated, and so there will always be 'gaps' in theory-construction, even at its most sensitive and nuanced.

RITUAL PATTERNS IN SEAN O'CASEY'S 'WITHIN THE GATES'

by RONALD AYLING

In an essay on W. B. Yeats's drama, Raymond Williams says of *The King's Threshold*, 'One notes about the play's method an attempt at movement from dialogue to ritual incantation', adding that this is 'a technical problem with which Yeats was to continue to grapple and which Eliot was to take up after him.'[1] As such a struggle is a central one in modern poetic drama and may be witnessed in varying degrees of imaginative intensity in the writings of major dramatists from Ibsen to Arden, it is interesting to examine a particularly good example of it being handled successfully in a dramatist seldom compared to Yeats or Eliot, Sean O'Casey. As we might expect, there are a number of occasions in the latter's work — including early as well as late writings — when the experience is similarly intensified from apparently superficial realistic speech and action to a deeper level of consciousness. The use of a liturgically patterned prayer by Mrs. Tancred in *Juno and the Paycock*, followed by its subsequent incantatory repetition by Juno Boyle, is an obvious if crude example of this technique, as is the choral effect towards the end of the first act of *The Silver Tassie* where we are gradually distanced from the lively and intimately individualised world of the Dublin tenement to become aware of a detached, critically observed vision of front-line soldiers in France during the Great War.

Other examples abound in O'Casey's drama but, for my own purposes, I wish to look at a brief yet significant episode in *Within the Gates*[2], a play that is usually neglected by critics. It occurs in the first of the play's four scenes and comprises a conversation between a Salvation Army Officer and the play's heroine, Jannice (called the Young Whore in the first published version and the Young Woman in the revised text).[3] It is, in my opinion, a beautifully written episode, the most accomplished piece of dramatic writing in Scene I. As such, it deserves attention in its own right, as well as being an instance of how O'Casey subtly raises the action from the particular to the general, from the local to the universal. It is one of the better examples of how the play's style is carefully modulated from scene to scene, and even within scenes, to reflect shifting relationships and changing thematic emphases. Here, the religious significance of the episode is brilliantly prepared for in the preceding scene, during which the Athiest has rejected his step-daughter's pleas for material salvation (by refusing to provide a home and security for the girl) and has ridiculed her fears of spiritual damnation. The action has proceeded in a fairly prosaic and naturalistic manner —

mainly because the Atheist succeeds in bringing the Young Woman's flights of fantasy (that is, her visions of Hell) brutally down to earth. She may speak of her visions in which:

> Green-eyed, barrel-bellied men glare and grin at me; huge-headed yellow-eyed women beckon to me out of the glow from the fire that can never be quenched. Black-feathered owls, with eyes like great white moons, peck at me as they fly through the glow from the fire that can never be quenched. Save me, dad, oh save me!'[4]

but her stepfather's speech is direct and far from fanciful:

> 'No, no; no more of that. Live your own life. I'm not your father so cut out the daddy business.'[5]

Similarly, her naive belief that the Gardener will soon marry her is painfully confronted with the Atheist's coarse realism: of the Gardener he says:

> 'I know 'im — a boyo that'll never keep a cow while 'e can get a penn'orth of milk.'[6]

The Atheist's crude and insensitive handling of the girl affords a complete contrast to the tenderness of the scene that follows and which is the focus of my present concern. It also provides the exquisite touch of irony that introduces this subsequent scene. The Young Woman, spiritually bruised and rebellious, flings scraps of Christian doctrine at her step-father, not because she believes in them but merely, in self-defence, to challenge his disbelief and perhaps infuriate him. Her words, however, do more than she intends them to do. They encourage the Salvation Army Officer (who overhears the quarrel) to offer her spiritual help, and, because of their heightened liturgical quality, they lead quite naturally to the ritualistic passion of the next scene.

In the earlier scene, too, the Young Whore's impassioned pleas, her repetition of certain phrases ('the glow from the fire that can never be quenched'), and suggestions of semi-stylised speech ('You crept into a father's place when you took me away from the nuns who were moulding my life round the sin of my mother. You made me call you dad when you took me away from their crosses, their crowns, and their canes, and lifted my hands up in salute to the sun and the moon and the stars'[7]), all these, even in the midst of a naturalistic scene, unconsciously prepare us for the fully non-realistic dialogue of the

following scene. The smooth transition is the result of skilful artifice similar in kind to the use of reiterated verbal echoes and antithetically balanced choric speech at the end of the predominantly realistic first act of *The Tassie*, which likewise leads to expressionist stylisation in the next act. In both instances we proceed from the particular to the universal, from the material to the spiritual level, hardly noticing the change. At the same time, the irony in the Young Woman's taunts, and in the abrupt return to realism when she notices the Officer caressing her knee, is brilliantly counterpointed with her own and the man's liturgical responses. The human as well as spiritual interest which he takes in the woman also helps to keep the dramatic balance in the episode. It is an extraordinarily powerful and effective scene whose dramatic quality is only fully appreciated within its total context in the play, and when studied in its entirety.

The Atheist and the Young Whore are sitting on a park bench, deep in heated discussion, when the Salvation Army Officer enters:

> *The Officer glances at the Young Whore as he passes, and she returns the look. He sits down on a seat and steals a furtive look at the Young Whore. He meets her eyes and lowers his glance to the ground. He again glances at her, at her face, and then at her legs.*
> *Young Whore*: (*turning her thoughts away from the Officer, and pressing close to the Atheist, as she puts an arm coaxingly round his neck.*) You'll do what I ask you, this once, dad, only this once, won't you?
> *Atheist*: (*firmly removing her arm from around his neck.*) No, never again. Swing along on your own sweet way, and leave your Dad out of it.
> *Young Whore*: (*tensely*). You won't? You won't, dad?
> *Atheist*: (*in a tone of finality*). No, I won't!
> *There is a pause, during which the Young Whore, with tightened lips and a sullen look in her eyes, looks in front of her.*
> *Young Whore*: (*thrusting her face close to that of the Atheist.*) I believe in God, see? An' in the beginning He created the Heaven an' the earth.
> *Atheist*: (*moving his face away from the Young Whore's.*) I see, I see.
> *The Salvation Army Officer is listening intently to what is being said.*
> *Young Whore*: (*following the face of the Atheist with her own — vehemently.*) An' in the resurrection of the dead, when they that have done good shall go into life everlasting, and they that have done evil into everlasting fire!

The Atheist rises from his seat without a word, and turning up the centre path, crosses the slope and passes out.

Young Whore: (*rising and speaking loudly after the Atheist.*) An' I believe that God's near them who need His help, an' helps them who ask His help — see?

She sinks down on the seat again, and begins to cry softly and resentfully.

The Salvation Army Officer, after a moment's hesitation, comes over, looks with a shy interest at the pretty legs displayed by a disarranged skirt, then sits down beside her.

S.A. Officer: (*earnestly.*) No need to cry, sister, for no one trusts to God in vain.

Young Whore: (*resentfully.*) Oh, go away; I'm miserable, for he that's gone is the only real friend I have in the world.

S.A. Officer: God is your only friend.

Young Whore: I've not called upon Him for years, and He will not hasten to hear me now.

S.A. Officer: (*putting his hand gently on her knee.*) God would empty Heaven of His angels rather than let the humblest penitant perish.

Young Whore: (*in low tones.*) If I ask for help, will He hear?

S.A. Officer: He will hear.

Young Whore: And hearing, will He listen?

S.A. Officer: Hearing, He will listen.

Young Whore: (*grasping his arm appealingly.*) And listening, will He grant what the sinner asks, to save the sinner from a life of sin?

S.A. Officer: (*fervently, as he caresses her knee.*) God is able to save to the uttermost all them that come to Him.

Young Whore: (*earnestly, after a few moments' thought.*) I'll pray and pray and pray till all that's done's annulled, and all that is to do is blessed by God's agreement.

S.A. Officer: (*softly.*) Praise the Lord!

Young Whore: (*becoming conscious that he is caressing her knee.*) Oh God, don't do that, please! You'll make a ladder, and silk stockings aren't easy to get.

She pushes his hand away, pulls down her skirt, and looks at him questioningly. He stands up, embarrassed, and fidgets with his cap.

S.A. Officer: (*a little nervously.*) I must go on to our meeting. Will you come? (*She shakes her head.*) No? Some other time. I should like to keep in touch with you. Very much indeed.

He half extends his hand to her, then draws it back. Good-bye.

Young Whore: (*in a formal voice*). Good-bye. *He turns up the centre path, looks back for a moment at the Young Whore, then*

crosses the slope and goes out.
The Young Whore remains sitting thoughtfully on the seat.[8]

From the point of view of theme, we note the introduction of elements which will be further developed in the course of the play. In the preceding scene with her step-father, the Young Whore told of her convent-bred fears of Hell-fire. In her subsequent taunts, she reiterates her belief in damnation and in the reality of God's Judgement, 'when they that have done good shall go into life everlasting, and they that have done evil into everlasting fire!' This theme of judgement is important, for the final scene of the play is to be a 'judgement scene' where the life and values of the Young Whore are judged by the Old Woman, the Bishop's Sister, the Bishop and the Dreamer. Her vehemently protested faith in the 'resurrection of the dead' in this early scene is also a theme to be picked up later in the final scene where, dying, the Young Whore says to the Bishop:

> 'Guide the hand you hold into making the sign of the cross, that I may whisper my trust in the golden mercy of God.' *The Bishop guides her hand as she makes the sign of the cross.*[9]

The themes of judgement, mercy and salvation are thus skilfully integrated early in the play into a scene vivid with an intense life of its own.

The scene's dramatic quality is derived from the irony and beauty of the language. The skilful repetition of words and phrases builds up the tension and the passion, emphasises the urgency and importance of the young girl's search, and throws forward her doubts and fears to give the echoing replies of the young man an added assurance in re-affirmation:

> *Young Whore*: If I ask for help, will He hear?
> *S.A. Officer*: He will hear.
> *Young Whore*: And hearing, will He listen?
> *S.A. Officer*: Hearing He will listen.
> *Young Whore*: And listening, will He grant what the sinner asks, to save the sinner from a life of sin?
> *S.A. Officer*: God is able to save to the uttermost all them that come to Him.

We note how the whole sequence is built up on rhythmical balance and counterbalance, with biblical echoes as in the man's final retort (see *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 7, verse 25). The scene rises to a climax in an earnest reiteration of the Young Whore's passion: 'I'll pray and

pray and pray till all that's done's annulled, and all that is to do is blessed by God's agreement'; this is immediately followed by the Salvation Army Officer's 'Praise the Lord', which arrives with the rhythmical precision of a Q.E.D., pat at the end of a perfectly balanced sequence. (The fact that there is a cadenced appropriateness about this should not obscure the feeling that this is, as the play subsequently suggests, too glib a conclusion: life and personal redemption are not as simple as the evangelist supposes. The climax is in itself a dramatic triumph; but O'Casey goes further, breaking the pattern of supplication and response to bring the audience back to mundane reality in the very next line, when Jannice becomes aware that the young man is stroking her knee. Her concern to avoid a ladder in her stocking is a reminder of the economic struggle behind the spiritual one, a continual juxtaposition in O'Casey's work. At the same time, the occasion allows us to see the evangelist's complete failure on the human level; like the Bishop in Scene II, he is unable to make contact with people on other than a remote and abstract level. The unconscious irony in his words, 'I should like to keep in touch with you,' offers a crude commentary on this failure.

Yet although the Salvation Army Officer's help was rejected in Scene I, something lingers in the Young Woman's mind from their scene together; she returns to his offer in Scene II (in the revised edition) and goes off with him, despite the contrary influences of the Dreamer and the Bishop, at the curtain-close to that scene. Incidentally, we might note in passing that the self-professed atheist O'Casey, although strongly critical of certain aspects of Christianity in *Within the Gates*, gives three episodes of great tenderness to Christian comforters of Jannice: the two scenes with the Officer that have been mentioned, and the opening of her scene with the Bishop in Scene III.

Both the Salvationist and the Bishop offer her that 'peace of God which passeth all understanding.' Though neither in fact uses that most beautiful phrase from St Paul, the terms of reference they do use are specifically Christian. The Salvationist counsels her:

> 'Be of good comfort, sister; only believe, and thou shalt be saved. The Kingdom of Heaven with all its pardon, and all its peace, its power, and all its glory, is in the first thought a sinner gives to God!'[10]

The Bishop says to her:

> 'My child, the sinner is always nearer to God than the sinner dares to think . . .[11] God alone knows, my dear daughter, how deep is my desire to save you! . . .[12]

and after proposing that a pious sisterhood should receive her into their hostel as the first step to her long rehabilitation, he adds:

> 'The offer I have made is a good offer. In it is peace and a fair hope of better things to come.'[13]

For all their attempts to bring spiritual consolation and religious comfort, however, the human inadequacies of the Bishop and the Officer are concretely realised in scenes of great power and insight. Two brief examples must suffice. In the play both men are shown to be frightened of sex and of Jannice as a young woman, though both are well aware of her sexual attraction. In a deliberate attempt to maintain an emotional detachment, they would prefer to think of her as 'a lamb' or as 'a stranger' rather than as an attractive young girl in distress. In Scene II, the Young Woman desperately attempts to get the Bishop interested in her personal problems, but the Bishop is too nervous of what 'other people' may think:

> *Bishop*: (*frightened to be seen talking to the girl — looking round him nervously*). Why do you run to the priest for help only when you begin to feel the terrible consequences of your shame?
> *Young Woman*: (*irritated at the Bishop's thought.*) Oh, I'm not going to have a kid, man, if that's what you mean. Nothing like that for me yet, thank you! It's because I'd love to have one that I came to you: — to save me from falling into the condition that could never give me one.
> *Bishop*: But you can't discuss such things with a man and a perfect stranger, girl.
> *Young Woman*: You're neither a man nor a stranger: you are a priest of the most high God![14]

Here, in the superb retort of the girl we find O'Casey's social criticism and his idealism perfectly fused. Once again we might note how O'Casey's style brilliantly realises the theme. In this respect one cannot do better than quote the anonymous critic of the London *Times* who reviewed the play when it was first published. His comments on this passage are incisive and penetrating. Of Jannice's final retort to the Bishop, 'You're neither a man nor a stranger: you are a priest of the most high God,' the reviewer wrote:

> This is a sword-thrust . . . (it) is an instance, not only of the force of Mr. O'Casey's attack, but of his special use of language. The stream of dialogue here has been naturalistic and will be again, but suddenly the girl has said not 'You are a clergyman,' nor

> even 'You are a priest of God,' but 'You are a priest of the most high God.' This leap from photography into vision, this power and courage to desert naturalism and to communicate the essence of the speaker's thought by changing the plane of her language is the key to the play's genius.[15]

Indeed, this is true; we may see it corroborated again and again if we examine the play in detail. When the requirements of the theme are most demanding, then the theatrical devices and the language raise the dramatic level on to the universal plane of ritual.

O'Casey's criticism, moreover, is not merely an empty, destructive form of satire: an alternative way of life is offered, not only in the positive terms of the Dreamer elsewhere in the play but also, by implication, in the very terms of the criticism itself. An example of the realisation of the latter kind of affirmation is to be found in the statement, 'You're neither a man nor a stranger: you are a priest of the most high God.' Directly, this a criticism of the remoteness of an alien priest. By inference, it conveys far more: it makes a positive claim, even if we don't recognise that the final phrase here is another significant biblical echo (*Genesis*, 14, verses 18-20 and *Hebrews*, 7, 1-5), for the supreme reality of God's importance and that of His Church too. The Young Woman criticises the Bishop's fear of what people in his Church will think about his actions; she also suggests that the importance of his ministry should transcend all such human fears and jealousies. Implicitly, she is asking him to look at himself anew, implying that his mission is greater than himself as an individual. Indeed, she is virtually commanding him to be proud of his vocation, and to justify it in his life and in his works. And all this information is conveyed in one line of dialogue. Such an example is a concrete realisation of the imaginative richness of particular lines and scenes in O'Casey's most ambitious dramatic experiment. That the play is uneven in quality, because the author attempts to do too much in too many different ways perhaps, is no reason why we should overlook its genuine achievements.

I began by suggesting, in quoting Raymond Williams's description of the strivings of Yeats and Eliot to create a new poetic theatre, that such experimentation entails a struggle which lies at the heart of much modern drama. The 'movement from dialogue to ritual incantation' is central to O'Casey's creative concern in *Within the Gates*. In this respect, too, the play looks forward to more self-assured and successful theatrical experiments by O'Casey. If one wonders how much the consummate dramatic mastery of *Juno and the Paycock* and *The Plough and the Stars* owes to O'Casey's extensively rewritten and reworked earlier apprentice plays,[16] then we may well ascribe the

fluency of later experiments such as *Cock-a-Doodle Dandy* and *The Bishop's Bonfire* to the prolonged process of writing and revising *Within the Gates*. In its failures and its triumphs alike, *Within the Gates* is indeed one of the playwright's more important dramas.

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FOOTNOTES

[1] *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht* (London, 1973), p. 131.

[2] The original text of *Within the Gates* was published by Macmillan in London in 1933 and in New York the following year. After stage productions in both cities in 1934, the playwright completely rewrote and recast the play, drastically cutting the number of characters and altering many of the scenes. The new play, entitled a 'stage version', was published in O'Casey's *Collected Plays*, volume II (London, 1949). These are referred to as the 1933 and the 1949 editions in the following footnotes. 'The Two Published Versions of Sean O'Casey's *Within the Gates*' was the subject of a good essay by R. Mary Todd in *Modern Drama* (X, 4), February 1968.

[3] *Within the Gates* (1933 version), pp. 39-41; *Ibid.* (1949 version), pp. 143-145. The play is hereafter referred to as *Gates*.

[4] *Gates* (1933), p. 37; (1949), p. 141.

[5] *Gates* (1933), p. 36; (1949), p. 141.

[6] *Gates* (1933), p. 37; deleted in the revised edition.

[7] *Gates* (1933), p. 36; (1949), p. 141.

[8] *Gates* (1933), pp. 38-41; (1949), pp. 143-145. There are minor changes in the final stage directions for this scene in the revised text.

[9] *Gates* (1933), p. 166; (1949), p. 230. These lines are identical in both printed versions. The phrase, 'that I may whisper my trust in the golden mercy of God,' was added at a late stage in composition, most probably in the galley proofs (not an uncommon place for O'Casey to add material); it does not appear in O'Casey's final typescript draft.

[10] *Gates* (1933); p. 120; the speech is omitted from the revised version.

[11] *Gates* (1933), p. 101; (1949), p. 190.

[12] *Gates* (1933), p. 103; (1949), p. 192.

[13] *Gates* (1933), p. 105; (1949), p. 193.

[14] *Gates* (1933), pp. 65-66; (1949), p. 160.

[15] 'Mr. Sean O'Casey's New Play,' *Times*, November 26, 1933, p. 12. The critic was probably Charles Morgan.

[16] These unpublished early works, though but four in number, were much more extensively revised than is generally recognised. The four that I think of as 'apprentice' plays are *The Frost in the Flower* (probably one-act; written round about 1918-1919, rejected by the Abbey Theatre in 1919; re-written the same year and again rejected in January 1920), *The Harvest Festival* (three-act; 1919, rejected in January 1920 and partially revised in 1920), *The Crimson in the Tricolour* (three-act; written 1920-1921, rejected October 1922 and considered subsequently for possible re-writing as a comedy), and the one-act *The Seamless Coat of Kathleen* (1922, rejected April 1922).

SUCCESS AND FAILURE OF 'SOKULULEKA'

BISHOP COLENSO AND AFRICAN EDUCATION

by P. KEARNEY

Bishop John William Colenso is such a many-sided, complex and important figure in the history of Natal, that his life and work will constantly require re-examination and evaluation. My purpose in this article will be to examine his attitude towards African education and the contribution he made in this field.

Before he arrived in Natal in 1853 to take office as first Bishop of the colony, Colenso had established a reputation as something of an educationist on the basis of his school arithmetic text which was regarded as 'a classic of its day'.[1] For part of 1831 he had been assistant master in a small private school in Dartmouth, prior to commencing his studies at St. John's College, Cambridge. Seven years later, upon completion of those studies he went to Harrow as mathematical tutor. The school had at that time fallen into disrepute under Dr. Wordsworth, and because the numbers had dropped, Colenso found that he had to return to St. John's to act as tutor. There he took private pupils while completing his *School Arithmetic*. A decade later, in 1849, he very nearly accepted the headmastership of King Edward VI school, Norwich, but decided against it because no house was provided with the job. From this time his attention was focused increasingly on the activities of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, an enthusiasm which led ultimately to his appointment to the Natal bishopric in 1853.

He set out for this new mission with the very highest hopes, describing the task that lay ahead, in these words:

> There is, I trust, a great missionary work to be set on foot there, with decided support from Government, and I do not hesitate to say, it is the noblest field ever yet opened to the missionary labours of the Church in any part of the world.[2]

In a letter to Bishop Gray of Cape Town, in 1856, he made clear that he saw his task as primarily educational:

> I am desirous of establishing, without delay, two institutions for the improvement of the natives, viz. 1st. An Industrial School. 2nd. A Central or Diocesan College. 1st. I have selected the Amaganya tribe, under the chief Ngoza, for our first Industrial School . . . Ungoza, I am persuaded, will welcome the establishment of an institution such as this, and give every assistance

> that can be reasonably expected from him, towards making our efforts effectual for the improvement of the condition of his people. My intention is to fix one school in the very midst of his kraals, and endeavour to bring the natives under regular instruction, without drawing them away from their familiar and ordinary occupations . . . I have a confident hope that, under God, the result of a few months' labour here, will warrant me in requesting . . . the means of setting on foot other similar institutions in different parts of the country. 2nd. Besides these Industrial Schools I am anxious to found a Central or Diocesan College, which will be planted on a hill about four and a half miles from Maritzburg . . . To this institution would be removed the most promising youth of both sexes from all the different Industrial Schools, in order to receive closer attention, which may enable them to become, in their turn, the teachers of others. Here also will be a College where young men, the sons of European parents, may complete their studies, especially those intended for the ministry.[3]

It is rather sadly that one reads of these plans because only the second came to some fruition, and that for a matter of a few years, and on a very limited scale. This was what Colenso called his 'Kaffir Harrow' and it was commenced with the enthusiastic support of Shepstone, the Secretary for Native Affairs, who sent a message to all chiefs instructing them to send 'all their children that were losing their first teeth' to the Bishop's school at Ekukanyeni (Bishopstowe). The first reaction of the chiefs was to fear that their sons would be sent overseas or forced to become Christians, so they refused to comply with the request. One of those who was subsequently to be a pupil of Colenso, Magema Fuze, described this reaction many years later in the first book to be written and published by a Zulu:

> On finding that the people had refused to send their children to be educated in accordance with the request of Sobantu,[5] he (Shepstone) assembled his head men and elders under him — Chief Ngoza Ka Ludaba of the Majozi tribe and Zatshuke ka Mbheswa of the Ngubane, along with the important elders under them — to inform them that all elders were to send their older children to school at Ekukanyeni where they could be taught and thus enabled to assume control of their homes when their fathers were no longer living there.[6]

This time the request was successful, and thus Colenso was able to report proudly in a letter of November 5, 1856:

> Our great experiment is actually in progress. Last Thursday I received at the Station 19 little Kafir boys all the sons of principal men, and 13 more are promised — and it is just impossible to say what the end may be. Perhaps all may speedily come to nothing . . . However we hope for the best: and up to this time, they are as happy as possible and several can already read all their letters.[7]

Not long after the start, the most important of Colenso's pupils arrived. This was Mkungu, son of Mande the Zulu King and a possible claimant to the succession. The majority of the boys were 6 or 7 years old, while Mkungu was 12 and described as 'a pleasant, and at present, very docile and seemingly intelligent but very fat boy'.[8] The arrival of Mkungu was clearly regarded as an event of considerable significance as the boy was handed over into the Bishop's care by the Lieutenant-Governor of Natal and the Secretary for Native Affairs. At the time of Mkungu's arrival, the numbers in the school had risen to 36. Colenso was prepared to take 50 boys and looked forward to a time when there would be 500.[9]

Not a great deal of detail survives of what was taught at Ekukanyeni. Much time was clearly devoted to literacy, and Colenso claimed with considerable satisfaction that with the twelve year olds this could be achieved within a year.[10] The Bishop himself taught Euclid to a particularly promising child, Undiane, and Mkungu had piano lessons with the Colenso children. A visitor to Ekukanyeni, Miss Alice Mackenzie, stressed the similarity to an English school: 'the boys of the school under their own master, such a troop of orderly merry fellows — 40 of them quite like an English school . . . the way they march in and out of Chapel reminds me of Rugby.'[11]

Colenso had the highest ambitions for these pupils. In a letter dated August 6, 1857 he speaks of some 'very *valuable* men who will be landing just now at the Cape on their way to join us here'. One of these was Dr. Mann (later to be first Superintendent of Education in Natal) 'very intelligent as a scientific man and *practical astronomer.* He is coming to this Station, where we hope to have some of our Kafir boys brought up as medical men under his care.' He was also considering training some as architects.[12]

Mann turned out to be a disappointment to Colenso chiefly because, like Lieutenant-Governor Scott, he criticised the sort of education Colenso was giving as being unpractical. The Governor's and Mann's criticism did at least bear some fruit for the reader keen to learn more of what was happening at Ekukanyeni at this time: Colenso's response was to request Mr. Walter Baugh (a candidate for the Anglican ministry) who was in charge of the industrial

training, to write a detailed account of the practical work that was being done. This gives the only detailed record of the educational activities of the school.

Baugh pointed out first that Africans had been involved from the start in the construction of the mission buildings: 'and as a substantial proof of *their* handiwork we have now a strong stone building on the Mission ground which was walled entirely by natives.'[13] From the time of the boys' arrival they had been engaged in gardening — 'weeding, digging, planting, harvesting, etc.' When this work was completed, six of the older boys were given instruction in carpentry for a few hours each afternoon and during this time prepared the materials that were to be used by skilled craftsmen in the construction of the Bishop's residence. Another six were engaged in simple tailoring — 'making trousers, bags, etc. A work which they very much like, and rejoice to engage in.'

But the only significant training given at Ekukanyeni was in printing. Four of the more intelligent boys were trained by Mr. Purcell, the printer 'and it is pleasing to report that they have taken the liveliest interest in their new, and to them strange employment'. These boys were to render very valuable services to Colenso by printing a number of the many books he had printed at the mission, and one of them, Magema Fuze, was, as pointed out above, to become the author of the first book by a Zulu.

Baugh, though full of praise for what had been achieved, stressed that numerous difficulties had slowed progress. The training of adults had been impeded 'by the ever restless nature of the young men. They remain steadily at work from 1 to 12 months and acquire a fair knowledge of useful labour, and then suddenly they persist in leaving their work and returning to their kraals.' The skills they had learnt were thus soon forgotten. Then there were the ever-present difficulties for the teacher 'having to do with a people in an unknown tongue — having to study their language, their mode of thought, and their peculiar habits and weaknesses'. Such difficulties, he concluded, should have caused observers, especially those recently arrived from England, to be slower to criticise the work of missionaries.

With some bitterness Colenso recorded that what Governor Scott seemed to find lacking was the growing of cotton and other such-like out-of-door occupations — which may make a Native a better *machine* for the purposes of his European Masters, but not a better or a nobler *Man*'.[14] The fundamental clash of Colenso with the white settlers in Natal becomes clear from this statement — a clash which was to climax in his support for Langalibalele, which lost him

most of his few remaining white defenders, but sealed a very close bond with the Zulu people.

Governor Scott's criticism of Colenso's methods was to cost the latter dearly, for it meant that the financial help (£5,000) which had been promised by the Government and was desperately needed for the continuation and expansion of the work went instead to an abortive attempt by Scott himself to set up a number of training institutions all over Natal. Financial difficulties were eventually to restrict severely, if not altogether cripple, Colenso's work, for after he had been declared a heretic the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel refused to provide the mission with any further financial support.

Colenso's problems with Mann are just one example of his numerous difficulties in finding and keeping the services of suitable people. Winckler notes that 'He formed quick first opinions of people, many of which he later revised, or which collapsed at the first serious challenge',[15] while Hooker, describing Colenso's 'bad judgment of character', states: 'There are innumerable later instances where his initial assessment of a person was too charitable.'[16]

His work was hampered by an early form of 'job reservation'. It was not long before Mr. Purcell, the master-printer, was refusing to impart his skill to Africans. 'He has thoroughly imbibed the spirit of the town in this respect.'[17] Three catechists who had been brought out for comparable duties — a tailor, a pastry-cook and a joiner — all likewise failed Colenso, and perhaps for the same reason as Purcell.

However, what he especially seemed to lack was a close friend who was in overall agreement with him, both theologically and in his practical plans for the diocese and mission. He had especially wished to involve the Rev. T. P. Ferguson, a contemporary of his at Cambridge, in the educational work at Ekukanyeni. After a year in Natal, Colenso wrote to Ferguson: 'O how I long for some congenial spirit, who really will enter with me . . . into this noble work, and have the intellectual power requisite for bringing knowledge down to the level of these poor barbarians.' G. W. Allnutt was the friend whom he relied upon in England to seek out the right sort of personnel, and in a letter to him of July 7, 1857 he described his reasons for wanting the assistance of Ferguson:

> I might be able to go away and visit other parts of the country which I cannot without great difficulty now, and the boys are so advanced that they want a *superior Teacher* as I hope to train these up for future *Schoolmasters* among their people. And many books of Education require to be written — and I cannot

> do everything and I want a *friend* like Mr. Ferguson — loving order in the Church, but loving the Gospel and the souls of men more than mere ritualism.

But Ferguson did not come to Natal, and this may have been a serious obstacle to the school at Ekukanyeni ever enjoying any great success, or even to its continuing in existence. It had to remain tied to Colenso's supervision, and his energies were increasingly directed to the work of authorship and translation and later to biblical and theological scholarship and controversy.

More needs to be said of this work of authorship and translation because it constituted a very important contribution to the education of the Zulu people. Colenso had realised from the time of his appointment that he would have to learn Zulu as rapidly as possible in order to write grammars, dictionaries and translations of the Bible which were to be the very basis of his missionary work. His son, Francis, writing of his father's efforts at learning Zulu, said:

> . . . his mastery of the Zulu tongue was the reward of stubborn work, of sitting with natives who could not speak a word of English, day after day, from early morn till sunset, till they as well as (himself) were fairly exhausted . . . and when they were gone still turning round again to (his) desk to copy out the results of the day.[18]

He carried out the work of scriptural translation in an extraordinarily interesting way. Assisted by the Zulu, William Ngidi (who had been educated by the American Missionaries), he would sit for long hours ('a close prisoner at his desk'[19]) in a little open-air shelter he had had erected outside his house at Bishopstowe, poring over the Scriptures with dedication equal to that he had expended on learning the Zulu language.

> Taking the Greek Testament, for instance, he would first represent in Zulu as accurately as he could the meaning of a clause in the original, and would then ask the native to repeat the same in his own phraseology. Being trained gradually to understand the Bishop's purpose, the native would introduce those nicer idioms which must distinguish the work of a native from that of a European.[20]

Ngidi's influence extended beyond questions of phraseology however, into the realm of scriptural interpretation itself. He frankly explained that he found it difficult to accept the literal accuracy

of certain Biblical accounts, and this led Colenso to examine these more thoroughly. Thus Winckler notes that when translating the Genesis account of the deluge, 'William . . . had questioned its physical feasibility. To Colenso this was the final sign that it had now become his duty to apply his energy chiefly to probing the scriptures'.[21] Colenso's humble acceptance of the intellectual insights of his assistant was to make Him the butt of some mockery as expressed in this crude popular jingle of the time:

A Bishop there was of Natal,
Who took a Zulu for a pal,
Said the Kafir 'Look 'ere,
Ain't the Pentateuch queer?'
And converted the Lord of Natal.'[22]

Yet another source of controversy for Colenso was his appreciation of the political significance of the education he was offering. In this respect as in so many others he seems to have been at least a century ahead of his time, for only in the last few years have the political implications of literacy been given their rightful stress, chiefly by the Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire, in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* [23] Freire argues that literacy training is a profoundly political act, but its method will determine whether it will bring genuine freedom to the learner, or further domination by the ruling class. Freire advocates a method in which the adult peasant learns how to alter the social situation in which he is living, and in which he has been prevented from being fully human precisely because he is illiterate.

In the Preface to his *First Lessons in Science designed for the use of Children and Adult Natives* (1860) Colenso notes: 'It seemed desirable that they should be gaining some information, as they read, about the state of things around them, instead of wasting their energies upon the child's story of "Dick Bell' and his doings."

More directly political is his comment on the *Zulu Reading Book* he published in 1858: 'I have almost completed in M.S. (sic) my Zulu-Kafir Reading Book — a pretty castigation, I expect, I shall get from all sides when it is published. I have taken care to let the people know all about the Legislative Council, and their own right to vote for Members when properly qualified, and I hope to have a good many voters before long upon this Station.'[24]

But he wrote numerous other books which, though not of great abiding value, provided essential tools for the foundations of African education. With exceptional tenacity Colenso managed to complete in seven years the following works: a grammar of the Zulu language and a summary of it for beginners; a Zulu-English dic-

tionary of 552 pages; selections and reading books in Zulu; manuals of instruction in English ,history and astronomy; and the translation of the books of Genesis, Exodus, Samuel and the entire New Testament. Perhaps more important, he encouraged Zulus to write. Thus we have in Zulu an account of a visit to King Mpande by Colenso, written by three Zulus, one of whom was Magema Fuze whom Colenso was later to encourage in the writing of a history of the Zulu people, to which reference has already been made.

Though these works were in themselves a great contribution to African education they were one of the reasons why the school at Ekukanyeni never flourished. We have seen his other difficulties: lack of personnel and finance, and the scriptural, theological and political contoversy in which he became ever more deeply embroiled. one should not be greatly surprised that the school which had been started with such high hopes came to an end in 1861 only five years after its inception. In the 'Zulu Panic' of that year, it was though by the Governor that Bishopstowe was particularly endangered because of Mkungu's presence there. Thus, all the boys who had been gathered from their kraals with such difficulty, were scattered once more to those kraals. 'Let us hope', wrote Colenso rather ineffectually, 'that the education which they have received will not be lost on them in after life.'[25] The closing of the school coincided with Colenso's visit to England — and when he came back to Natal he did not reassemble the school. In 1865 a number of past and potential pupils requested him to revive the school but this he put off for some ten years until Langalibalele's misfortune compelled him. Thus in 1875 fourteen of the chief's sons and nine others were living at Ekukanyeni, but we have no indication of what educational activities were undertaken at that time.[26]

Disappointment at the failure of Colenso's educational schemes is especially great when one reads the moving accounts of the high esteem in which the Zulu people held him, and the degree of mutual trust that had been built up. Though at the time of his death in 1883 he had few white friends, Zulus informed a travelling evangelist that they had known only one honest white man — 'Sobantu — it is he whom you call Bishop Colenso.'[27]

Francis Colenso recounts a statement of Cetshwayo which gives clear proof of the degree of trust and esteem enjoyed by Colenso: 'I have told the Government of Natal this, that whatsoever happens, I and my people have determined ever to consult Sobantu. He is our friend, and we shall tell him everything that we want to. We shall send to him today, tomorrow, and the next day, *Kuze*, *kubi pakade* (i.e. to the end of the chapter).'[28]

In all his contacts with the Zulus, Colenso had treated them as friends and equals, rather than as objects: the work he had done was for their *liberation* and not for their *domestication.*[29] In this way he came to deserve the title the Zulus gave him — 'Sokululeka' — 'the father who brings freedom'. From his first visit to the Colony (vividly described in *Ten Weeks in Natal*) he made it evident that he was fundamentally in disagreement with the racist attitudes of the colonists who had lost no time in trying to set him apart from the Zulu people ('You must never indulge a Kaffir — never shake hands with him. He does not understand it, and will soon take liberties.'[30]) Colenso looked rather for the good points of the Zulu people: '. . . they are not at all wanting as a race, in intelligence.'[31] His comment on the feast of the first fruits speaks eloquently of the positive attitude that marks the great educator:

> This as now observed, is a purely heathen ceremony, but had undoubtedly a right meaning at the bottom; and, instead of setting our faces against all these practices, our wisdom will surely be, in accordance with the sage advice of Gregory the Great, to adopt such as are really grounded on truth, and restore them to their right use, or rather raise them in the end, still higher by making them Christian celebrations.'[32]

He was amazed at the attitude of Daniel Lindley, the American missionary, who claimed that it would take '500 years to produce any sensible effect upon them',[33] and who carefully segregated his own children from the Zulu children on his mission at Inanda.

Even more abhorrent was the attitude of the average settler, as described by Colenso's wife Frances: . . . 'the hatred which the typical colonial bears to the native is quite a phenomenon in the history of mankind. They have never been allowed to make slaves of them which they want to do.'[34] It was an attitude the Colensos had chosen to avoid by living six miles outside Pietermaritzburg.

What lesson should we derive ultimately from Colenso's educational work? Certainly his institutional plans were not in any respect particularly original, nor did the schooling he offered at Ekukanyeni appear especially liberating; the reasons for its failure have been recorded in this article. It is perhaps in the question of aims that he provides a lesson that is very relevant today. Free and compulsory schooling for Zulu children seems not far off and yet one needs to question whether this will be basically beneficial. To use Colenso's own words, will it make the Zulu simply a better 'machine for his European Masters' or 'a better and nobler Man'? Colenso was original, too, in seeing that genuine education is intimately connected

with political liberation and in stressing that the teacher who desires the full autonomy of his pupils must be prepared to be in turn their pupil and to learn from their perceptions. Salvation for the white man in South Africa may vitally depend on his ability and willingness to learn from black people who have retained a stronger sense of justice and community.

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NOTES

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31 Colenso, J. W., *op. cit.*, p. 257.
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ALLEGORISERING EN 'N 'SESTIGER'-ROMAN*

deur S. W. van ZUYDAM

Vir baie eeue reeds is die allegorie 'n belangrike vorm van beeldspraak in die letterkunde. Dit is haas op elke terrein beoefen en daar was min twyfel oor die aard van hierdie literêre tegniek. In die twintigste eeu het daar egter 'n kunsvorm ontstaan wat enersyds sterk verband hou met die tradisionele allegoriese tegniek en andersyds opvallende verskille toon daarmee. Die opset van hierdie artikel is derhalwe om die begrip allegorie van nader te ondersoek en vervolgens 'n moderne Afrikaanse roman[1] by die bespreking te betrek met die oog op allegorisering.

Deur te begin by die betekenis van die Griekse werkwoord *allegoreo*, waarvan allegorie afkomstig is, kry ons 'n mate van duidelikheid oor die betekenis daarvan in die literatuur. Volgens A. P. Grové is die Griekse woord 'n samestelling van *allos* (ander) en *agoreuein* (om te praat).[2]

Die oorspronklike betekenis van allegorie 'om anders te praat', word oor die algemeen ook soos volg omskryf: 'in beelde spreek'[3], of soos Grové dit stel: 'om iets te beskryf onder die beeld van iets ander.'[4] In die literatuur is veral laasgenoemde omskrywing van belang omdat allegorie inderdaad 'n vorm van beeldspraak aandui.

Die werking van die allegorie kan soos volg vereenvoudig word. Die allegorie spreek in beelde omdat daar 'n sekere saak beskryf word, máár in werklikheid iets anders bedoel word. Laasgenoemde is nie 'n gegewe in die beskrywing nie maar moet verstandelik agterhaal word. Nienaber-Luitingh en Nienaber sê trouens:

> Wanneer 'n mens 'n allegoriese werk lees, begryp jy onmiddellik dat daar iets anders bedoel word as wat die kunswerk inderdaad beskryf.[5]

Hierdie omskrywing kan uiteraard ook geld vir 'n ander vorm van beeldspraak, naamlik die metafoor. Eintlik kan ons nie tussen die twee onderskei sover hul werking betref nie. Met ander woorde ons kan nie onderskei tussen die twee vorme volgens die wyse waarop die beeld voltrek word nie. Prinsipieel verskil hulle egter omdat die allegorie 'n 'uitgewerkte metafoor' is:

> Terwijl die metafoor kan worden gezien als een woord dat op een ongewone wijze wordt gebruikt, is de allegorie een zin, of een reeks van zinnen waarin metaforen voorkomen die met elkaar in verband staan doordat ze in hetzelfde beeld zijn gecentreerd en daarin hun verklaring vinden.[6]

Nog 'n onderskeid wat gemaak moet word, is dié tussen die allegorie en die simbool. Om dit te verduidelik kan ons veral steun op N. P. van Wyk Louw se reeks radiopraatjies, gebundel onder die titel *Rondom Eie Werk*. Sy samevatting van die 'metode' van die allegorie lui soos volg:

> Dis eg die paraellIle ontwikkeling van twee reekse gegewens die avonture en die sedelesse, of die gegewens van die oppervlakte en hulle tweede of dieper betekenisse, wat 'n ooreenstemming punt vir punt besit. By die allegorie ontstáán die vraag na die dieper betekenis skaars; dié betekenis bied homself onmiddellik saam met die oppervlakte-betekenis aan. (p. 31).

As voorbeeld hiervan noem hy 'Die Oue Put' van Totius en *Die Christen se Reis na die Ewigheid* van John Bunyan.

Hierteenoor is die ('goeie') simbool nie iets wat hom 'deur een of ander tydgebonde beskouing wil laat vasvang nie'. Dit omvat meer as een verklaring of beteknis. Omdat ons 'nooit weet wanneer 'n goeie simbool se moontlikhede van interpretasie uitgeput is nie', kan dit in 'nuwe of later omstandighede' ander betekenisse by kry.[7]

Ook Grové onderskei tussen die simbool en die allegorie, maar sy onderskeid berus op 'n ander prinsipe. Volgens hom ontdek die simbolis 'n nuwe waarheid in die werklikheid, terwyl die allegoris 'n waarheid wil verkondig en daarvoor gebruik maak van die werklikheid.[8]

Nog 'n kenmerk van die allegorie, maar skynbaar nie 'n vereiste nie, is dat 'daar veelvuldig van personifikasies gebruik gemaak word'.[9] In die verband praat C. F. P. Stutterheim[10] van epiese allegorieë wanneer dit saamval met 'n hele kunswerk. Hy beskryf die werking daarvan soos volg:

> Dan treden, in de eenheid van een hogere conceptie, verscheidene personificaties op, die in bepaalde situaties worden samengebracht, die met elkaar spreken, elkaar helpen of bestrijden. Meermalen wordt een mens geplaatst temidden van een allegorisch bedoelde wereld, waaruit blijkt, dat het om psychische lotgevallen gaat, om een psychische ontwikkeling.

Stutterheim gee die volgende voorbeelde van epiese allegorieë: *Le roman de la Rose* van Guillaume de Lorris en Jean Clopinel, Spenser se *The Faerie Queene*, Swift se *Battle of the Books* en Bunyan se *The Pilgrim's Progress from this world to that which is to come*. Ons sou hier veral Dante se *La Divina Commedia* kon byvoeg.

Op die gebied van die drama is die allegorie ook druk beoefen. Veral beroemd in die Middelnederlandse letterkunde is *Den Spyeghel der Salicheyt van Elckerlyc*.

Hierdie allegorieë dateer almal uit vroeër tye toe die allegorie onder andere gebruik is vir 'die verkondiging van religieuse en sedelike waarhede'.[11] Die gewildheid daarvan, tydens die 15de en 16de eeue, word toegeskryf aan die feit dat dit abstrakte dinge konkreet voorgestel het. Derhálwe kon moeilik verstaanbare dinge op 'n bevatlike wyse oorgedra word aan die gewone mense.

In die meer moderne literatuur het die allegorie herlewe en miskien 'n belangrike verandering ondergaan, waarop ons nou kan let. Onder andere, André P. Brink vestig die aandag op 'n andersoortige 'allegorie' wat in die 'nuwe prosa' voorkom.[12] Brink onderskei soos volg tussen die allegoriese aard van die held se lotgevalle in *Don Quijote* en dié van meer tradisionele allegorieë: Eersgenoemde is 'Nie allegories soos *Elckerlyc* of *The Pilgrim's Progress* nie, maar in dié sin dat sonder Amadis Don Quijote nooit sou kon bestaan het nie, dat wat met Amadis gebeur het, weer met sy opvolger gebeur'.[13] En verder:

> Maar dit is net so belangrik dat die oorspronklike deur herhaling verander, selfs verwring word: dat dit selfs nie maar 'n variasie van 'n bestaande patroon word nie, maar 'n herskepping.
> In die nuwe roman het dit ontwikkel tot 'n hoogs geraffineerde struktuurmetode waarvolgens 'n min of meer bekende 'patroon', dikwels 'n mite, gebruik word as basis vir 'n *paradigma* daarvan — eintlik is dit die bekende literêre verwysingstegniek tot sy konsekwensie deurgevoer. Daardeur word romankompleksiteit verkry, omdat selfs in 'n taamlik dun boek deur enkele ter sake verwysings 'n hele ánder, bestaande verhaal in die nuwe verhaalwêreld betrek word.[14]

Brink beweer vervolgens: 'nie net die ooreenkomste tussen hulle is ter sake nie, maar ook die verskille'. Hy gee onder meer die volgende voorbeelde van hierdie struktuur in die nuwe prosa: James Joyce se *Ulysses*, Simon Vestdijk se *De kellner en de levenden*, en in die jonger Afrikaanse prosa veral Etienne Leroux se romans. In hierdie romans, net soos in *Lobola vir die lewe*, is daar eintlik geen sprake van die tipe allegorie soos dié wat van Wyk Louw onderskei nie. Daar is met ander woorde nie 'n 'parallelle ontwikkeling van twee reekse gegewens(. . .) wat 'n ooreenstemming punt vir punt besit' nie. Maar wat wel tot stand kom, is dié tipe van allegorie waarvan Brink praat. In *Lobola* byvoorbeeld dien die Bybelse verhaal as oorspronklike of bestaande 'patroon' wat in die nuwe verhaal verwring en verander word. Ons kan nou meer spesifiek let op hierdie dieper struktuur in *Lobola*.

In die eerste plek is daar 'n ooreenkoms tussen sekere karakters wat optree in *Lobola* en belangrike Bybelse figure. A. P. Grové dui dit soos volg aan:

> Soos aan die begin gesê, wil die boek in en deur sy eerste verhaal 'n tweede, allegoriese betekenis na vore bring. En dié word na my mening duidelik sodra ons agterkom dat ons in die drietal — Raubenheimer (die afsydige syknvader en bedrieër met sy streng voorskrifte), Maria (die ligte vrou) en Serfontein (die vervalle, impotente en onskuldige plaasvervanger, die droë fontein) — agtereenvolgens die verwronge teenbeeld kan lees van die Bybelse Vader, Maagd, Verlosser.
>
> So gesien, is Francois die bedroë mens wie se soeke uitloop op die eksistensialisme (die aansteek van 'n eie lig), nadat hy afskeid geneem het van 'n 'bedrieglike' Bybelse 'mite' wat sy skeppingsmoontlikhede gefnuik en hom selgs met 'n gevoel van skuld gelaat het.
>
> Kortom, Francois kom ten slotte tot 'n filosofiese heroriëntering wat hom in staat stel om die verslete en uitgediende hospita (die kerk?), wat die lig na willekeur kontroleer, te ignoreer.[15]

Die feit dat Grové dit 'n 'verwronge teenbeeld' noem, bevestig die vermoede dat ons hier nie met die meer tradisionele allegorie te doen het nie.

In *Lobola* is daar heelwat aanduidings wat laat blyk dat Grové gelyk het. Dit word veral duidelik wanneer ons meer spesifiek let op die betrokke karakters. Die sleutelfigure in hierdie allegorie is Marie (Maria) en Serfontein (Christus).

Die verbintenis tussen Marie en Maria ontstaan reeds in die proloog. Francois se herinneringe aan haar gaan oor tot herinneringe aan Maria:

> Marie, Maria Mater Dei ora pro nobis peccatoribus nunc (. . .) (p. 6).

Deur hierdie oorgang word die twee figure naasmekaar gestel. In die epiloog praat Francois van die 'virginale' Marie. Die oggend na die eerste aand wat hulle saam deurbring, tree sy op met die 'onskuld van 'n kommunie-meisietjie' (p. 100). Dit is ook opvallend dat die vuurlig van die kaggel in haar kamer, "n halo om haar ligte kop' maak (p. 94). Hierby moet ons in ag neem wat Grové oor Marie opmerk: dat sy haar 'verset (. . .) teen natuurlike bevrugting'.[16]

Wanneer spesifiek gelet word op Marie se houding teenoor haar medemens, val dit op dat sy eintlik meer ooreenkom met 'n ander Bybelse figuur, naamlik Maria Magdaléna. Om haar medemens te

dien, is immers een van Marie se besondere karaktertrekke. Oor Maria Magadléna se lewe bestaan daar allerlei meningsverskille. Daar is onder andere nie sekerheid oor die sewe duiwels — waarvan ons in Lukas 8 lees — wat uit haar uitgedryf is nie. Eweneens gee die Bybel nie uitsluitsel oor die bewering dat sy die sondares is wat die voete van Jesus gesalf het nie (Lukas 7:36-50).[17] Hierteenoor kan met sekerheid beweer word dat sy één van die vroue was wat Christus en sy dissipels 'met hul goed gedien het' tydens hul sendingsreise. Vir ons doeleindes is dit betekenisvol dat Marie die 'sondares', net soos Maria Magdalena, onbaatsugtige diens lewer aan haar medemens: Eers aan Serfontein die 'vervalle Christus' en later ook aan Francois.

Serfontein is nou wel nie Marie se seun nie, maar vanweë sy offerdood verskyn die magtige gestalte van Christus agter hom. Met dié belangrike verskil: Serfontein sterf in die eerste instansie 'n soendood omdat sy wêreld geheel en al sinloos raak. Hy is geen Christusfiguur in die ware sin van die woord nie, maar veel eerder 'n 'vervalle Christus' soos Francois dit bewoord.

Die vermeende allegorie lewer eintlik 'n paradoks op: 'n parallel met Christus se kruisweg word geskep tussen Francois se lewensverhaal in plaas van Serfontein s'n. In die proloog praat Francois herhaaldelik van die 'stasies' van sy 'kruisweg'. Sy verhaal word vervolgens nie in hoofstukke aangebied nie maar as veertien stasies. Neem ons hierby in ag dat die karakters in *Lobola* veel meer verskil van as ooreenkom met hul Bybelse voorgangers, word dit duidelik dat die klem eintlik val op die verwringing van die Bybelse 'mite'. Die kruisweg wat Francois bewandel is boonop feitlik onvergelykbaar met Christus se kruisewg.

'n Belangrike aspek van die allegorie in *Lobola* is dat dit deur allerlei verwysings onderskraag word. Die parallelle Marie/Maria en Serfontein (vervalle Christus)/Christus het ons reeds gemeld. Daar sal voorts meer in die besonder gelet word op Francois. Vanweë die groot hoeveelheid verwysings wat in die roman voorkom, volstaan ons hier met enkele voorbeelde.

Heel aan die begin van die verhaal word Francois voorgestel as die wagtende mens, onder andere wagtend op 'Antichris en Christus, Boeddhambrama, of enkele eenvoudige simbole: klip of kers of spieël' (p. 5). In die telefoon-gesprek vra hy homself af: 'Is jy Kain?', 'Is ek Abel?' (p. 13).

Francois se ondervinding in die kroeg (eerste stasie) word uitgebeeld as 'n soort hellevaart. Met enkele verwysings word parallelle geskep met figure in die geskiedenis en literatuur wat 'soortgelyke' ervarings gehad het.

(Maar ook: Lasarus tussen die dode en Faust by die hekse en Dante se hellevaart van Heilige Vrydag tot dagbreek Paassondag en Boccaccio se priester wat hom in die lustige jong hel van sy klein minnares begewe . . .) (p. 15).

Serfontein verskyn in die tweede stasie om Francois uit sy verknorsing te lei soos '(Vergilius om Dante uit sy hel te lei sy purgatorium binne, goddelike gesant om Prometheus los te maak van sy daaglikse ellende . . .)' (p. 24).

In die derde stasie word hy uit die slaap gewek deur Serfontein soos onder andere Lasarus (deur Christus) beveel word om op te staan en uit te kom (p. 29).

Die twee soektogte wat Francois in die sesde stasie aflê gaan gepaard met parallelle soektogte wat in vroeër tye onderneem is, soos Menelaus wat uitgevaar het teen Troje om Helena terug te vind, die herder se soektog na die verlore skaap, Moses se soektog na Kanäan die Beloofde Land, en Vasco da Gama wat uitgestuur is 'om 'n nuwe seeweg om die Kaap na Indië te soek'.

Francois se omgang met Marie word eweneens vergelyk met dié van historiese figure:

die bronstige Lilith wat met haar seun verkeer,
en Adam en sy Eva,
Simson wat hom lomerig aanvly teen die listige Delila, e.v. (p. 89).

Die vyf soektogte wat in die veertiende stasie beskryf word, het ook elk 'n reeks historiese parallelle.[18] Neem ons hierby in ag dat Francois sy angs en skuld uitbrei tot universele angs en skuld[19], is daar seker genoeg rede om te glo dat Francois veral die teenbeeld vorm van die soekende mens van alle eeue en geslagte.

Dié verwysingstegniek in *Lobola* het 'n belangrike uitwerking op die aktuele verhaal van die roman. In die eerste instansie word Francois se soektog daardeur gerelativeer, omdat dit wat met Francois gebeur, tegelyktydig verbind word met die ervarings van sy magdom voorgangers. Die gevolg hiervan is 'n regenerasie van die mens se soeke deur alle eeue heen. Eweneens verleen hierdie tegniek universaliteit onder andere aan Francois se eensaamheid, verlorenheid en vreemdelingskap.

Andersyds ondersteun die groot hoeveelheid vergelykings die allegorie in *Lobola*. Dit skep natuurlik nie 'n volgehoue parallel tussen Francois en een van sy voorgangers nie. Met ander woorde Francois se lewensverhaal kan nie konsekwent vergelyk word met dié

van enige figuur waarmee hy vergelyk word nie. Ons het eintlik hier te doen met mitiese reste wat gesamentlik 'n kollektiewe beeld vorm van die mens, meer spesifiek die soekende mens.

'n Poging kan nou aangewend word om die funksie van die allegorie in *Lobola* te agterhaal. Ons moet eerstens besin oor die wesenlike betekenis van God, Maria, Christus en die kerk vir die gelowige mens. Dit is egter onnodig om uitvoerig in te gaan hierop, omdat die Christelike religie volkome bekend is aan ons. Daar word derhalwe volstaan met die onbetwisbare feit dat geloof die Christen se lewe *sinvol* maak. Ons moet hierby in ag neem dat Christus veral die lewe van die Westerse mens opnuut sinvol gemaak het, ná die afsterwe van hul eie gode en afgode.

In *Lobola* verloor die Christelike dogma sy waarde. Francois (die mens) ontdek dat hy deur sy vader (God) bedrieg is. Hierdie bedrog van 'n vader wat hom in 'n 'smal vormpie gegiet' het en wat vir hom 'n 'afgod' was, veroorsaak dat Francois sy geloof verloor. Derhalwe verlaat Francois sy valse vader en gaan hy op soek na iets wat die lewe wel sinvol kan maak.

In 'n sekere sin wys Serfontein net soos Christus 'n nuwe weg aan. Bowenal omdat hy Francois bewus maak van die waarde van seksualiteit[20]. Maar dit is meer 'n versplinterde parallel met Christus se nuwe religieuse dogmatiek.

Anders as in die Bybelverhaal, word daar nie 'n verlosser (Christus) uit Marie gebore nie. Aaan die einde vn die verhaal is daar egter 'n 'vreemde bekende vrou-mens' — 'n soort kollektiewe vroue beeld in Francois waarvan Marie die belangrikste deel vorm — wat Francois se 'hart' tot nuwe lewe voer (p. 188). Dit is juis hierdie vrou-mens wat Francois lei tot filosofiese heroriëntering. Met in agneming van Serfontein se invloed, gee sy as 't ware geboorte aan 'n nuwe lewensbeskouing: naamlik Francois se bewuswording *dat hy is*. In 'n wêreld waar die Christelike dogma sy sin verloor het, kan hierdie gebeurtenis beskou word as die 'geboorte' van 'n nuwe soort geloof. 'n Nuwe lewenslig (die kers) word opgesteek wat die lig van die kerk (dié van miesies Jurgens) vervang en oorbodig maak.

Dít geskied natuurlik alles binne-in Francois, en juis hy word bewus van die nuwe lewensbeskouing. Vanweë die ooreenkoms tussen Francais se nuwe etiek en dié van sekere filosowe, ontstaan daar enersyds 'n sterk verband tussen hom en dié groep filosowe wat inderdaad verantwoordelik is vir die eksistensialisme en verwante lewensbeskouings, byvoorbeeld Sartre en Camus. Ons kan Francois derhalwe beskou as 'n soort apostel van die eksistensialisme, aan wie 'n nuwe lewenslig openbaar word te midde van die absurde.

Andersyds ontstaan daar 'n verband tussen Francois en Christus. Ons kan albei beskou as draers van 'n nuwe lewensbeskouing — met

dié verskil: Christus verkondig sy religieuse opvattings uit die staanspoor met sekerheid; terwyl Francois eers teen die einde van sy lewensweg ontdek dat die lewe geen metafisiese of religieuse betekenis het nie en dat die mens alleenlik daarvan seker is *dat hy is*. Hierdie parallel werp ook meer lig op die 'kruisweg' waarna vroeër verwys is: veral omdat albei figure 'n sekere lyding moes ondergaan. In Francois se geval is dit boweal die leë soeklewe wat hy moes voer.

In Brink se woorde sou ons tereg oor die allegorisering in *Lobola* kon opmerk dat die Bybelse 'mite' met sy beswerende krag herhaal word in moderne gedaante.[21] Maar daar is geen sprake van die vereiste wat van Wyk Louw stel nie, die sogenaamde 'parallelle ontwikkeling van twee reekse gegewens.'[22] Dit laat mens veel eerder dink aan Walter Benjamin se beskrywing van die allegorie soos aangehaal deur André P. Brink:

> What ruins are in the physical world, allegories are in the world of the mind.[23]

Die gevolgtrekking waartoe ons kom, is dat daar wel in *Lobola* 'n oppervlakte- en dieptestruktuur voorkom. Maar dié twee strukture is nie punt vir punt samehangend nie, soos in die meer tradisionele allegorie. Daar is derhalwe 'n sterk saak uit te maak vir die opvatting dat daar in die moderne literatuur 'n nuwe soort allegorie aan die ontwikkel is.

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1 Die roman waarop gekonsentreer sal word, is André P. Brink se *Lobola vir die lewe*; tweede, hersiene uitgawe; Kaapstad; 1963.
2 *Letterkundige sakwoordeboek vir Afrikaans*; Kaapstad, ens.; 1963.
3 Vergelyk byvoorbeeld M. Nienaber-Luitingh en C. J. M. Nienaber se *Woordkuns*; Pretoria; 1965 waarin die volgende betekenis gegee word: 'iets anders sê as wat 'n mens bedoel, in beelde spreek' (p. 101).
4 *Letterkundige sakwoordeboek vir Afrikaans.*
5 *Woordkuns*, p. 101.
6 *Grote Winkler Prins*, Encyclopedie in twintig delen, deel I, Zevende geheel nieuwe druk, p. 639; Amsterdam, ens.; 1970.
Vergelyk ook die *Encyclopeadia Britannica*, Volume I; Chicago; 1968: 'Allegory may thus be said to be extended metaphor, worked out in many relationships' (p. 641).
7 N. P. van Wyk Louw, *Rondom Eie Werk*, pp. 31-35; Kaapstad, ens.; 1970.
8 *Letterkundige sakwoordeboek vir Afrikaans.*
9 Nienaber-Luitingh en Nienaber, *Woordkuns*, p. 101.
10 *Winkler Prins Encyclopaedie*, Deel I, Sesde geheel nieuwe druk, p. 570; Amsterdam, ens.; 1947-1954.

[11] Nienaber-Luitingh en Nienaber, *Woordkuns*, p. 102.
[12] *Aspekte van die Nuwe Prosa*, pp. 41-52; Pretoria, ens.; 1967.
[13] Ibid., p. 41.
[14] Ibid., pp. 41-42.
[15] *Oordeel en Vooroordeel*, pp. 203-204; Kaapstad; s.j.[a]
[16] Ibid., p. 204.
[17] Vergelyk byvoorbeeld *Dictionary of the Bible*, volume III, Sixth Impression; Edinburgh — New York; 1906.
[18] Vergelyk onder andere bladsye 171, 174, 178, 179 en 181.
[19] Vergelyk *Lobola* pp. 157-158.
[20] Vergelyk p. 110.
[21] Vergelyk *Aspekte van die Nuwe Prosa*, p. 42.
[22] *Rondom Eie Werk*, p. 31.
[23] *Aspekte van die Nuwe Prosa*, p. 48.

CHRISTIAN AND PAGAN SYMBOLISM AND RITUAL IN 'SIR GAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT'

by J. M. LEIGHTON

Although recent criticism, as will appear later, is pretty generally in agreement that *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is a Christian poem, and that there is little evidence for John Speirs' theory that the Green Knight is a fertility symbol whose significance is derived from pagan sources of the story, there is little, if any agreement, on the precise import of the intruder's green colour. Indeed it has been suggested that the green colour is over-emphasised in criticism, and that it is merely a part of the marvel that Arthur is waiting for; merely a part of the fantasy tradition to which the poem belongs. I shall try to show, however, that the Green Knight explicitly states his function, and, through interpretation of such equipment as his axe and holly bough, implies a very definite symbolic significance. This significance does not, perhaps, alter our interpretation of Gawain's ordeal, rather it adds dimension to the ideal, and acts as an integrating factor in the joining of the two traditional narrative strains.

By way of introduction, let me at first attempt a definition of ritual:

> A ritual is a prescribed ceremony, in which the values, ideals and, beliefs of a society are dramatically embodied, with a view to establishing or confirming the values and beliefs by repetition.

If this can be accepted as a valid definition, it will immediately be obvious that many of the customs discoverable in folk-lore have strong ritualistic elements, in that they are repetitive; they dramatically embody the values, ideals, and beliefs, of the society in which they are found; and the ceremony attempts to establish or confirm some ideal or belief necessary for the maintenance of an orderly homogeneity.

In order to establish what rituals are embodied in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and to understand their significance in the poem, it will be necessary to interpret specific passages, not only in isolation, but also in the context of the poem as a whole. This might seem an obvious statement to make, but it is necessary, for if one scans the vast quantity of anthropological studies that have been made of the poem, it is clear that not all the critics in the past have had their attention firmly fixed on the poem before them, but on customs and sources outside the poem. The effect of this has been to twist the meaning of the poem to suit an intention that is too often irrelevant

to that of the poet. My approach, then, will be to examine the poem first, and only then to draw on outside evidence to confirm the validity of my interpretation.

The poem opens with a reference to the siege of Troy. This seems to serve several purposes: in the first place it provides a linear historical context for the action and values embodied in the poem. Just as in the past such great men as Aeneas have been found imperfect, so in this poem the hero will be found wanting. Secondly, as the poem returns to Troy in the final stanza, the Trojan war would seem to form a frame for the events of the narrative, and a frame for the moral implications. Finally, the opening stanzas provide a genealogy by which the inhabitants of Britain may be seen as related to the founder of the Roman empire.

From this historical context the poem moves directly to the present, where we see King Arthur and his court engaged in Christmas festivities:

> This king lay at Camilot upon Cristemas
> With mony luflich lorde, leudes of the best,
> Rekenly of the Rounde Table alle tho rich brether,
> With rich revel aright and rechles mirthes; (ll. 37-40)[1]

Jollity, tournaments, song and dance, provide the atmosphere for the seasonal festivities. And indeed these are 'aright', or appropriate. But there is more to the festivities than just fun and games, for this is a meaningful custom, instituted for a number of reasons relevant to the future action of the narrative.

Christmas was one of five occasions, we are told by Tolkien and Gordon, following Madden, in a note on this section, when the king would wear his crown and officially 'hold court'.[2] To this end he would be fulfilling his coronation oath, which, romantic fiction or not, would have been accepted, consciously or unconsciously, by the poet as something similar to that of Ethelred the Unready, or its slightly altered version at the coronation of Edward I. Ethelred's oath would seem to have become the prototype for all future oaths, and reads:

> 'In the name of the Holy Trinity three things do I promise to this Christian people my subjects: first that God's church and all the Christian people of my realm hold true peace; secondly that I forbid all rapine and injustice to men of all conditions; thirdly that I promise to enjoin justice and mercy in all judgements, that the just and merciful God of his everlasting mercy may forgive us all.[3]

And what better, or more romantic mode of upholding this oath than appropriate revels, tournaments, and all 'the mirthe that men couthe avise' (l. 45), all held in the fifteen days from just before Christmas to the manifestation of Epiphany, which begins on the twelfth day after Christmas?[4] And what better time to uphold the oath than the celebration of the advent of Christianity, for this is a Christian people, and the values they uphold are Christian values? And this, it will be part of my purpose to argue, is the intention of the poet.

But why, one might ask, does the poet present the court as 'rechles', and 'in her first age' (l. 54); and why is Arthur himself presented as 'sumwhat childgered' (l. 86)? Tolkien and Gordon, in their glossary, give 'rechles' as 'care-free, joyous'; 'However', argues Burrow, 'as the *Oxford English Dictionary's* article on "reckless" shows, the Middle English word, like its modern descendant, normally carries sinister implications of heedlessness or rashness'.[5] It seems reasonable to suppose, then, that it is this very immaturity that must be put to the test.

Some sort of challenge, I tentatively suggest, is implied by Arthur's refusal to eat, as was 'an other maner' (another custom) (l. 90), until he is confronted with 'sum main mervail' (l. 93), or asked by someone to joust with him 'in jopardy to lay,/Lede lif for lif' (ll. 97-98). For this too, this challenging of the king, is a re-enactment of a coronation ceremonial, and appropriate for a time when the king holds formal court.[6]

Having, then, been prepared for a Christian story, or to be more accurate, a story in which Christian principles are at issue; and having been prepared for a test of some sort, we are ready for the entrance of one of the most controversial figures in English literature — the Green Knight. Indeed, were this poem as generally read as *Hamlet*, there would, I dare say, be as many different interpretations of his meaning and function as there are of Shakespeare's unhappy prince. What I propose is obviously speculative. If, however, I am near enough the truth to evoke discussion, perhaps the truth will emerge from the discussion.

Interrupting the festival banquet:

> There hales in at the halle dore an aghlich maister,
> One the most on the molde on mesure high.
> Fro the swire to the swange so sware and so thik,
> And his lindes and his limmes so long and so gret,
> Half etain in erde I hope that he were;
> Bot mon most I algate minne him to bene,
> And that the meriest in his muckel that might ride,

For of bak and of brest al were his body sturn
Both his wombe and his wast were worthily smal,
And alle his fetures folgande, in forme that he had,
ful clene;
For wonder of his hue men hade,
Set in his semblaunt sene;
He ferde as freke were fade,
And overal enker grene.

(ll. 136-150)

The reader of the poem sees the Green Knight in much the same way as the company at Arthur's court. He is a huge figure, imposingly strong and well-proportioned, but the most startling thing about him is his colour — he is 'overall bright green'. And this is where the problems start. How are we to interpret this being, what is his purpose, and what does his colour mean?

Perhaps a brief run-through of some of the major interpretations of the Green Knight's significance will be appropriate at this point. Much of the information contained in this list comes from Professor Morton Bloomfield's invaluable article.[7] There are those who have attempted to find an historical significance by searching for an exact location of the Green Knight's chapel, or by equating the Green Knight with an historical figure.[8] It is not surprising that satisfactory evidence for this approach is not given. The fallacy in this *modus operandi* is obvious: it takes no cognisance of the intention of the poet, or the very real clues to significance contained in the text itself; in short, it is extra-literary.

By far the most influential group of anthropologist-critics is that which holds that the Green Knight is a fertility figure. Chief among these are John Speirs and G. L. Kittredge, who follow Jessie Weston's approach.[9] Their concentration is largely on the sources of the two stories, and a hypothetical lost French version. They work on the principle that there are striking parallels with sources, which no-one can gainsay; and that the only significance of the colour green is in vegetation symbolism, which might have been so at some point in the dark backward and abysm of time. But the colour need not always have such significance, for it is generally accepted that with the passage of time and customs new interpretations are engrafted on old rites, and old symbols. Finally, they would seem to work on a principle of selection of passages for analysis that support their theory but ignore other factors. For instance, if the fertility figure is seen as 'natural' man, controlling the over-abundant procreativity of nature, and fighting against the effects of civilization, that is endangering, presumably, his phallic be-towered castle, why does he have so many of the appurtenances of civilization about him? And

even more pertinent, why does he have a chapel in his castle, in which are celebrated all the sacraments of the established church of medieval England? That he has a beard is of no significance whatsoever, for he certainly has no leaves sprouting from it, as Speirs in his evidence says are visible in the rafter carvings in medieval churches. The only possible significance of the beard is that contact with Muslim custom, brought about by the crusades, had caused one of those changes of fashion in the history of the world from beardlessness to facial hairiness — but this has little relevance in our story. The two main problems with this vegetation theory, to sum up, are firstly: the hypothesis is built on the assumption that green is the symbolic colour only of fertility; and also, the clear indication that the Green Knight's castle is a civilized, Christian castle is ignored.

The fact that the castle has a chapel, in which divine service is celebrated, is also clear indication that the Green Knight is not a Satanic figure, at least not in the New Testament sense. And then there is the theory held by Krappe that Gawain goes to confront a death figure,[10] a theory that cannot be accepted in view of the fact, as we shall see shortly, that the Green Knight explicitly states that he has come to rest the reputation of the Arthurian court, not to threaten its physical life.

Finally, there is the theory held by Burrow, with which A. C. Speiring concurs, that the Green Knight is an ambivalent figure who comes in peace, as the holly branch signifies, and in war, as his axe suggests.[11] This too I am disinclined to accept, despite the challenge, for the axe is almost immediately handed to Arthur, and is never used as an instrument of threat. Even at the end, although the Green Knight might seem to threaten Gawain, it is only a seeming threat, for in fact it becomes an instrument of punishment for Gawain's minor infringement of the pact made between the two knights — but more of this later.

Now, let us look afresh at the Green Knight, for, until we can establish his place in the narrative, it will be impossible to understand precisely what the author's intention with regard to Gawain's testing is. He enters, a wonderfully imposing figure, and coloured entirely in green with gold trappings, just as the green girdle that Gawain receives from Sir Bercilack's wife is green and gold. He carries a holly branch, and an axe. And his first words are:

> 'Where is,' he said,
> 'The governor of this ging? Gladly I wolde
> See that segg in sight, and with himself speke
> resoun.' (ll. 224-227)

Far from being the uncouth creature of Speirs' interpretation,[12] he is a highly courteous knight. It will be remembered that Arthur is not sitting in his place at all, he is standing 'Talkande before the high table of trifles ful hende'. (l. 108) The Green Knight's opening words, then, are a courteous request for the leader of the company, with whom, be it well noted, he wishes to 'speke resoun'. I find it difficult to believe that this is a rough and uncouth form of address, nor can I see anything threatening in a request to 'speak reason'. Clearly, he is an astonishing and imposing figure, so it is small wonder that the courtiers should gaze at him in a 'swoghe silence' (dead silence). (l. 243).

Arthur, after making himself known, courteously requests the Green Knight to alight from his horse, and after, to make known his will. Again, the fact that the Green Knight has come with no warlike intent is stressed:

'Nay, as help me,' quoth the hathel, 'he that on high sittes,
To wone any while in this wone, hit was not myn erand;
Bot for the los of the, leude, is lift up so high,
And thy burgh and thy burnes best are holden,
Stifest under stel-gere on stedes to ride,
The wightest and the worthiest of the worldes kinde,
Preve for to play with in other pure laikes;
And here is kidde cortaisie, as I have herd carp;
And that has wained me hider, iwis, at this time.
Ye may be siker by this braunch that I bere here
That I passe as in pes, and no plight seche;
For had I founded in fere in fighting wise,
I have a haubergh at home and a helme both,
A shelde and a sharp spere, shinande bright,
And other weppenes to welde, I wene wel, als.
Bot for I wolde no werre, my wedes are softer.
Bot if thou be so bold as alle burnes tellen,
Thou wil grant me goodly the gamen that I ask
by right.'
Arthur con answare,
And said, 'Sir cortais knight,
If thou crave batail bare,
Here failes thou not to fight.'

'Nay, fraist I no fight, in faith I the telle.
Hit arn aboute on this bench bot berdles childer;
If I were hasped in armes on a high stede
Here is no mon me to mach, for mightes so waike.
Forthy I crave in this court a Cristemas gamen,

For hit is Yol and New Yere, and here are yepe mony;
If any so hardy in this hous holdes himselven,
Be so bold in his blod, brain in his head,
That dar stifly strike a stroke for an other,
I shal give him of my gift this giserne rich,
This axe, that is hevy innowe, to handele as him likes,
And I shal bide the first bur as bare as I sitte.

(ll. 256-290)

It should be noted that the Green Knight in this passage twice emphatically states that he seeks no hostility, and once states that the holly branch betokens peace. It should also be noted that his language is gentle, ceremonious, and flattering; that his clothing, as he points out himself, is unthreatening, for he wears no armour, as we have seen in the previous description the poet gives on his entrance. Finally, it is significant that he asks only for a Christmas entertainment, as is appropriate at this season of the year. With all this in mind, it is both natural and proper that Arthur should address him as 'Sir cortais knight'; nor should one take too much note, as does Burrow,[13] of the fact that the Green Knight uses the informal second person singular in addressing Arthur. After all, Burrow is in no doubt that Arthur is courteous to the Green Knight, and Arthur addresses him in the same terms: 'Sir cortais Knight', he says, 'If *thou* crave batail . . .'.

Nor is the entertainment, as Burrow suggests, 'a deceitful description of what the Green Knight goes on to propose'.[14] What it is, is a very careful narration of the Green Knight's purpose, which the Arthurian audience, and incidentally a large number of critics, misunderstand because both Arthurian audience, and critics, jump to the conclusion that this is the same sort of challenge that is found in such conventional Beheading Game stories as *Bricriu's Feast*, *Le Livre de Caradoc*, and *La Mule sanz Frain*. Now I do not for a moment doubt that these are possible sources for the Challenge sections of the poem in the first and fourth Fitts. What I do suggest, however, is that in re-forming his story to include an interdependent Test, the *Gawain* poet has reorganised his material to realise a different intention — a more sophisticated moral intention than simply a test of courage.

The fact that the Arthurian company is shocked by the apparent bloodthirstiness of the proposed challenge is the result of this misunderstanding, which is nevertheless necessary for the development of the testing theme in both Fitts three and four. The point is that Gawain, and through him Arthur's court and the values they uphold, their reputation and courtesy, must be tested without his

knowledge; their values must be seen to be inherent principles, rather than those values that are held for some overt motive. And this is presumably why, in the Fourth fitt, Gawain succeeds in avoiding the temptation offered by his guide to decamp without meeting the Green Knight. In this case, he can see the temptation as a test, and can foresee the effect, if only in his conscience:

> 'Wel worth the, wighe, that woldes my good,
> And that lelly me laine I leve wel thou woldes.
> Bot helde thou hit never so holde, and I here passed,
> Founded for ferde for to fle, in forme that thou telles,
> I were a knight cowarde, I might not be excused.
>
> (ll. 2127-2131)

But what, it might be asked, has all this to do with pagan and Christian ritual? Just this: the pagan ritualistic elements belong to the sources. The author of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* has engrafted onto the old story a new ritualistic symbolism. If the Green Knight is a testing agent, he is a Christian testing agent. Just as T. S. Eliot in his *Waste Land* searches for the meaning of life in the modern waste land, and Coleridge's mariner finds truth in the isolation of a desert sea, so Gawain must find truth in the lands of Sir Bercilack of the high desert, away from the comfortable familiarity of King Arthur's court. He must, in other words, learn the true meaning of Christian values, rather than simply learn by rote a set of conventions or commandments.

If this is so, what are we to make of the strange appearance of the Green Knight? The answer to this question is, I believe, to be found in medieval, ecclesiastical symbolism. Green is the colour of the vestments used at Epiphany, which begins at the end of Arthur's festivities (i.e. January 6th). It signifies, according to *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, 'faith, gladness, immortality, the resurrection of the just; (in dress) the gladness of the faithful . . . *In Church Decoration* it signifies God's bounty, mirth, gladness, the resurrection . . .'[15]. Intertwined with the Green Knight's green robes are gold decorative threads, which, according to the same source, signify 'faith, constancy, wisdom'.[16] Epiphany, moreover, is the time of manifestation, and does not the Green Knight, then, manifest himself to test the Christian principles that Arthur's court is reputed to uphold? And the green girdle that Gawain wears as a 'bauderik by his side', (l. 2486) is worn obliquely and knotted under his left arm, like the bar sinister on an heraldic device, as a token that 'he was tan in tech of a faute'. (l. 2488). The colour again signifies, heraldically, the nature of his failing. Which failing brings us to the next point in the narrative of symbolic significance.

The Green Knight has departed, with head in hand, to his home in the wild north country, and, having fulfilled the requirements of custom, there is nothing further to keep Arthur from his food. There being nothing further of relevance to the story until Gawain must set out on his quest, the poet telescopes the passage of time from Christmas to the feast of St. Michael in one of the most exquisite pieces of natural description in Medieval literature:

A yere yirnes ful yerne, and yeldes never like,
The forme to the finisment foldes ful selden.
Forthy this Yol overyede, and the yere after,
And uche sesoun serlepes sued after other.
After Cristemas com the crabbed lentoun,
That fraistes flesh with the fishe and fode more simple;
Bot then the weder of the worlde with winter hit threpes,
Colde clenges adoun, cloudes upliften,
Shire shedes the rain in showres ful warme,
Falles upon fair flat, flowres there shewen,
Both groundes and the greves grene are her wedes,
Bridden busken to bilde, and bremlich singen
For solace of the soft somer that sues thereafter
by bonk;

And blossumes bolne to blowe
By rawes rich and ronk,
Then notes noble innowe
Are herde in wod so wlonk.

After, the sesoun of somer with the soft windes,
When Zeferus sifles himself on sedes and erbes;
Wela winne is the wort that waxes theroute,
When the donkande dewe dropes of the leves,
To bide a blisful blush of the bright sunne.
Bot then highes hervest, and hardenes him sone,
Warnes him for the winter to wax ful ripe;
He drives with droght the dust for to rise,
Fro the face of the folde to flighe ful high;
Wrothe winde of the welkin wrasteles with the sunne,
The leves lancen fro the linde and lighten on the grounde,
And al grayes the gres that grene was ere;
Then al ripes and rotes that ros upon first,
And thus yirnes the yere in yisterdayes mony,
And winter windes again, as the worlde askes,
no fage,

Til Meghelmas mone
Was comen with winter wage;
Then thenkes Gawain ful sone
Of his anious viage.

(ll. 498-535)

But this is much more than a piece of fortuitous description. More than anything else it demonstrates what I have been trying to prove is the intention of the poet: concurrent with every period in the seasonal cycle of birth, growth, maturity, and death, there is a complimentary period in the Christian year. Mid-winter is not only Yuletide, a time of pagan jollity, a winter-solstice festival, it is also Christmastide, a period when the Christian celebrates the birth of Christ, and the values embodied in the 'new' religion. After Christmas comes crabbed lent, with its ritual fasting that the poet, with a rueful and wry humour, refers to in 'fysche and fode more symple'. And while nature burgeons and pours her abundant bounties over the land, both natural and religious cycles move towards harvest, harvest festivals, and the feast of St. Michael and all Angels. In the same way as the old fertility cults have been reinterpreted and altered to conform with Christian precept, so the source stories for *Sir Gawain* have been re-created to serve a Christian purpose.

Indeed it is the Christian values which are embodied in Gawain's heraldic devices, and which he adheres to as far as is humanly possible, that ultimately save him from his greatest danger — greatest because he does not know that he is in danger of his life every time the gay, and highly delectable lady of Sir Bercilack enters his room. He does not know that she is the prime agent in a test, the outcome of which depends on his disinterested adherence to Christian moral principles.

At any rate, the day after All-hallows (All Saints day), Gawain is dressed in preparation for his journey, and his dress is described with the same loving care as that of the Green Knight. The significant part of his dress for the symbol-hunter is the shield, with its picture of the Virgin on the inside, and its heraldic device on the other. The pentacle ,we are told, 'is a signe that Salamon set sumwhile/In betokning of trauthe'. (ll. 625-626). It is, however, more than Solomon's device, for this, like so many of the symbols and rituals in the poem has been given an overlay of Christian meaning. The intertwined and interlocked lines, indeed, have an unchanged significance — they suggest the endlessness of the virtues while the knot remains intact; but should it be broken all the virtues will be affected. But in addition to the 'trauthe' it signifies in Solomon's device, and in

addition to the five senses, and five fingers, it has often signified in pagan lore, there are the five wounds of Christ (i.e. hands (2), feet (2),[9] and side (1), and the five joys of Mary (which were variable, but were usually taken from the Annunciation, Nativity, Resurrection, Ascension, Assumption, Miracles, Crucifixion, Harrowing of Hell, etc.), and it is in their relation with these that we must see the five chivalric virtues:

> The fift five that I finde that the freke used
> Was fraunchise and felaghship forbe al thing,
> His clannes and his cortaisie croked were never,
> And pity, that passes alle pointes, these pure five
> Were harder happed on that hathel then on any other.
> (ll. 651-655)

The Green Knight, the testing agent, has manifested himself, and has explicitly stated that he has come to test the reputation of Arthur's court. The symbolism of his colour, if I am correct in supposing it to be ecclesiastical in import, suggests what joys await the true Christian if he is faithful to his values — God's bounty, mirth, gladness, and resurrection. To achieve this end Gawain dresses himself in clothes that represent his knightly and Christian values. He goes north to the wild lands to be tested, even as Christ went into the wilderness. Because he is not divine, however, he is found slightly wanting when his values are tested by his host's wife. And in his breaking of one of his fine Christian virtues he has broken the endless knot, and implicated all the other virtues associated with the pentacle. By failing in courage he is forced into dishonesty, which is a form of impiety, and failed to uphold his vows of fellowship and courtesy to his host. Like the ancient mariner, then, he goes home to confess his failing, with bitterness in his heart for his own inadequacy.

That the Green Knight and Gawain both have similar values is clear from the evidence. Both react with disgust to the two symbols of treachery: the Green Knight to the fox with the 'fende have the goodes!/And that is ful pore to pay for such pris thinges/As ye have thright me here thro, such thre cosses so good.' (ll. 1944-1946) and Gawain with 'Lo, there the falssing, foule mot hit falle!' (l. 2378). Both observe the Christian rituals of confession, absolution, penance, and the Mass. Their relationship is, thus, not antagonistic, even if the Green Knight is the testing agent. And Gawain, having undergone the test moderately satisfactorily and been confessed clean, is granted full absolution and forgiveness by the Green Knight.

What is, perhaps, most significant for an interpretation of the ending of the poem is the gift of the green girdle:

> And I give the, sir, the girdel that is gold-hemmed,
> For hit is grene as my goune;
>
> (ll. 2395-6)

Obviously the Green Knight is re-emphasizing the symbolic significance of the green here: the green girdle is equated with his own green gown. And the fact that this gift comes immediately after the Green Knight's statement that:

> 'I holde hit hardily hole, the harme that I had.
> Thou art confessed so clene, beknowen of thy misses,
> And has the penaunce apert of the point of myn egge,
> I holde the polised of that plight, and pured as clene
> As thou hades never forfeted sithen thou was first born;
>
> (ll. 2390-4)

would seem to suggest that Gawain has earned the benefit symbolically associated with greenness — the peace of God that passes all understanding. Gawain accepts the gift, and in doing so acknowledges the gift of God to all Christians who truly follow his commandments, or who, made clean by confession are once more through His grace made worthy of his gift. But, conscious of his failing, he wears the girdle as a bar sinister, diagonally across his chest, as a constant reminder of his own and mankind's weakness.

Gawain's return to the court poses one final problem: how is one to interpret his reception by the court? Lines 2505-2512 reveal Gawain once more confessing his failure, and then:

> The king comfortes the knight, and alle the court als
> Laghen loude therat, and luflily accorden
> That lordes and ladies that longed to the Table,
> Uche burn of the brotherhede, a bauderik shulde have,
> A bande abelef him aboute of a bright grene,
> And that, for sake of that segg, in sute to were.

Two possible interpretations occur to me. The first is that the court has not changed significantly from their perhaps frivolous and childish hedonism at the beginning of the poem; that there is an irony in their too ready acceptance of the girdle that will be worn by each as a sort of heraldic bar sinister more appropriately than they realise. They have not had the experience of Gawain, and therefore cannot feel as profoundly as he does the significance of his failing.

The second interpretation is, I think, more likely. Just as there was an early and long-lasting Christian tradition of God testing his creations, an idea that is perhaps distasteful to the modern consciousness, so also there was a tradition, certainly in courtly literature, that the experience of a single member of society could serve the whole of society. Thus by coming back and relating his tale of physical and moral adventure, the whole court benefited from the experience of their representation. If this is correct, then their acceptance of Gawain as one of their number once more, surely re-enacts the forgiveness, the tolerance, the joy of God in his regenerated creation; and their determination to wear the green girdle serves for them as much as for Gawain, as a reminder of their human frailty and God's mercy. In short, a symbolic poem must be interpreted on grounds of its symbolism, and the realistic irony of the first interpretation must be rejected.

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NOTES

[1] The author of this article refers to and quotes from: J. R. R. Tolkien and E. V. Gordon (eds), *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, London, 1952. (For typographical reasons, the editors of *Theoria* have substituted quotations from: R. T. Jones, *Sir Gawain and the Grene Gome*, London, 1972.)

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 81, n. 37.

[3] F. W. Maitland, *The Constitutional History of England*, Cambridge, 1950, p. 98.

[4] January 6th.

[5] J. A. Burrow, *A Reading of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, London, 1966 pp. 7-8. Although I am inclined to doubt that the implications are 'sinister'.

[6] I am indebted to Dr M. D. W. Jeffreys for this insight. Whenever the symbols of kingship are worn, their symbolic values are re-enacted. The crown must be seen to be indestructible, and thus the values symbolised by the crown are ensured continuity.

[7] M. W. Bloomfield, 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: An Appraisal', *P.M.L.A.*, Vol. LXXVI, No. 1, March, 1961.

[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 9 & 10.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 12. For further details of Speirs' and Kittredge's ideas, see (*a*) John Speirs, 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight', *Scrutiny*, Vol. XVI, No. 4, Winter, 1949; and (*b*) G. L. Kittredge, *A Study of Gawain and the Green Knight*, Gloucester (Mass.), 1960.

[10] Bloomfield, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

[11] Burrow, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-20; and A. C. Speiring, *The Gawain Poet*, Cambridge 1970, p. 30.

[12] Speirs, *op. cit.*, p. 282.

[13] Burrow, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 21.

[15] The Reverend E. Cobham Brewer, *A Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, London, 1934, p. 272.

[16] *Loc. cit.*

[17] The translation of 'fraunchise', incidentally, creates a problem: I am not satisfied that 'generosity', as glossed by Tolkien and Gordon, will do. In the context of the poem it seems to me that the meaning would be closer to 'immune from blame or sin', or 'integrity', or even 'honesty'; at any rate something a bit closer to the meaning of 'franchise' in Banquo's reply to Macbeth's promise of advancement and honour, after the proposed coronation: 'So lose I none/In seeking to augment it, but still keep/My bosom franchis'd and allegiance clear.' (*Macbeth*, Act II, sc. 1, ll. 26-28). See also Burrow's discussion of 'pité' (*op. cit.*, p. 47, n. 21). 'Pité too might well be piety rather than pity or compassion'.

[18] Each point of the pentacle represents five virtues, thus twenty-five in all. If we juggle with these figures, as Medieval necromancers customarily did, we find that $2 + 5 = 7$, and seven is one of the most powerful numerals, both in Old Testament lore and later Christian folk-lore, used in preventing the evil onslaughts of spirits and witches.

'THE LYRICAL BALLADS' AND 'THE PREFACE'

by T. OLIVIER

It should, perhaps, not be forgotten that Wordsworth 'never cared a straw about the theory'[1] with which Coleridge urged him to preface the second edition of *The Lyrical Ballads*. And while it is highly unlikely that the 'substance' as well as the idea could be truly attributed to Coleridge,[2] it seems that the latter's theoretical mind was a more probable source of such an essentially rational exercise. That is, we should not take the aged Wordsworth's impatient note quite literally, yet perhaps we should recognise the spirit of the statement. The moving spirit behind *The Preface* was Coleridge's, and it seems true that but for his pressingness, 'it would never have been thought of'.

Such a view would in some measure explain why Coleridge felt it necessary to reply to — to attack — the *Preface* in such detail as we find in the *Biographia Literaria*, why he should feel a need to 'modify and clarify the old answers'[3] to the two main questions of the *Preface*. His desire to undertake a treatise on poetry was stronger even than the planned biography of Lessing, as he admitted in a letter to Humphry Davy in 1800; and in a letter dated 3rd February 1801, this project had expanded from *An Essay on the Elements of Poetry* to one *Concerning Poetry, and the Nature of the Pleasures Derived From It*. This change in emphasis reflects his constant awareness of the *Preface* — Wordsworth insists on pleasure as the end of poetry — and a growing sense of the need to put right what Wordsworth had bungled.[4] Since the idea had been his in the first place, it seems only natural that he should feel some responsibility for a theory that he found so wrong; to label it firmly 'Wordsworth's' Preface and set about refuting it as a thing apart, was a means of showing that responsibility. The passage of fifteen years between the inception of this desire and the producion of 'what I first intended as a preface to an Autobiographia Literaria' — which grew instead into the 'critique of Wordsworth', and an extension of his treatise — seems to have effected little dulling of purpose. On the contrary, when he was eventually able to settle down to his task, the necessity of replying seemed the more pressing for the years of controversy and association of Coleridge with the *Preface*:

> I have given a full account . . . of the controversy concerning Wordsworth's poems and theory, in which my name has been so constantly included . . . I have done my duty to myself and to the public in . . . compleatly subverting the theory.[5]

But Coleridge's was perhaps the more generous spirit of the two; by the middle of chapter 18 — within three and a half reasonably short chapters — he has finished with the business of 'subverting the theory', and goes to great lengths in the remainder of the book to elaborate what he had already indicated in the fourth chapter, that Wordsworth the poet was very different from (and much better than) Wordsworth the theorist. For, once he has shown the absurdity of taking Wordsworth's tenets as general rules for the language of poetry, his aim becomes to defend the real qualities of the poems against both the theory of the *Preface*, and the 'widely and industriously propagated (mistake) of Mr Wordsworth's turn for simplicity',[6] whether critical or naively admiring. Moreover, Coleridge suggests that it was the badly-handled *Preface* that gave rise to all the controversy surrounding the *Lyrical Ballads*:

> From this preface, prefixed to poems in which it was impossible to deny the presence of original genius, however mistaken its direction might be deemed, arose the whole long continued controversy. For from the conjunction of perceived power with supposed heresy I explain the inveteracy and . . . acrimonious passions with which the controversy has been conducted by the assailants.[7]

Nor was he alone in this distinction of the poems from the *Preface*; from the very outset, before the '*Advertisement*'[8] had been replaced, reviewers had praised many of the poems while condemning the experiment or its purpose — as a deliberate intent — of replacing the recognised matter and language of poetry with something less refined. Thus Southey, in spite of his personal animus against Coleridge (whom he believed to be the author of the anonymous volume), claimed in October 1798 that 'The experiment . . . has failed, not because the language of conversation is little adapted to 'the purposes of poetic pleasure', but because it has been tried upon uninteresting subjects'.[9] Southey attacks what he regards as the pettiness, the unworthiness in the choice of topic. He rejects, that is, what the *Advertisement* had asserted, that the materials of poetry 'are to be found in every subject which can interest the human mind'. At bottom this means simply that he disagreed about what can interest the mind. His criticism is interesting because it differs radically from Coleridge's in this basic rejection of material, and it is his kind of criticism that is the target of the *Preface*. Coleridge might be thought to have felt that the *Preface* did not answer such criticism, but simply laid the language of the poems open to ridicule as misguided.

Southey was actually appreciative of at least *The Idiot Boy*, while a comment in the *Monthly Review* of May 1799 praised several poems

and the 'more constantly excellent' style and versification than that found in 'our ancient ditties'. To this writer, the author of the *Lyrical Ballads* was simply another, more proficient polisher of the old songs, of whom the late eighteenth century had produced many; one who should have realised that 'None but savages have submitted to eat acorns after corn was found', even though he cooked his acorns well! This review, according to Hutchinson,[10] probably helped the sale of the *Lyrical Ballads* considerably, as did that which appeared in the *British Critic* of October 1799; it is this review that seems to catch not only the essential note of the poems, but of the *Preface* itself, and even of Coleridge's epitome of what Wordsworth probably intended. The reviewer approved of the attempt 'to recall our poetry from the fantastical excess of refinement to simplicity and nature' since 'it is not by pomp of words, but by energy of thought, that the subline is most successfully achieved'.[11] Fifteen years later, Coleridge approved of very much the same perceived intention, of a 'reformation in our poetic diction', a return to 'the dramatic propriety of those figures and metaphors in the original poets which, stript of their justifying reasons and converted into mere artifices of connection or ornament, constitute the characteristic falsity in the poetic style of the moderns'.[12] More colourful is Coleridge's later statement that Wordsworth, clearly perceiving the 'gaudy affectations' of accepted poetic diction, 'narrowed his view for the time; and feeling a justifiable preference for the language of nature and of good sense, even in its humblest and least ornamented forms, he suffered himself to express . . . his prediledtion for a style the most remote possible from the false and showy splendor which he wished to explode'.[13]

There would be no point in showing how Wordsworth's use of language in his ballads is at variance with some of the statements about poetic language in the *Preface*; this would be a superfluous reworking of one aspect of Coleridge's specific task. But it might be useful to look more closely at what the poems offer us in relation to this epitome of Wordsworth's perhaps overstated theory. Perhaps his initial mistake, the perpetuated centre of complaint, was to speak of the volume as an experiment in *language*, when it is surely patent that the language he must use is that most dramatically appropriate to the material he wished to present. The problem is that Wordsworth wanted it both ways; to use the language 'really used by men', and to write about 'men in a state of vivid sensation'. There is an immediate sense of discord in this juxta-position stated thus baldly, a desire to bring poetry down to where men can understand it, and a need to elevate the men involved — and Wordsworth seems to have been aware of it. He edges his way into the *Preface* 'Several of my friends

are anxious . . .', 'But I was unwilling to undertake the task . . .', 'I have therefore altogether declined to enter regularly upon this defence; yet I am sensible . . . impropriety . . . Poems so materially different . . .' And he soon modifies the initial assumption of a state of vivid sensation to the more truly representative object, 'to choose incidents and situations from common life', these to be given in such a way as to make them more vivid, 'presented to the mind in an unusual aspect'.

But the contradiction is only in his handling of the connected thread of theoretical justification, and Coleridge took the trouble to point out the pitfalls; Wordsworth's poetic discretion was far sounder. In the *Preface*, by the time he has said 'I have wished to keep the reader in the company of flesh and blood', he has said virtually all he needed — or perhaps even wished — to say. And as he suggested in the *Advertisement*, readers who will 'look round for poetry . . . should not suffer the solitary word poetry, a word of very disputed meaning, to stand in the way of their gratification'. What he wants to do is to present poems '*materially* different from those upon which general approbation is at present bestowed', poems about ordinary people, but not therefore trivial or unworthy of poetry; on the contrary, *only* therefore worthy. It is an attempt to change the focus of poetry. His concern is to show the dignity and value of such ordinary beings and their lives: it is the feeling developed in the poems that 'gives importance to the action and situation', and he stresses the significance of this for 'the general importance' of the subject. 'The subject is indeed important! For the human mind is capable of being excited without the application of gross and violent stimulants; and he must have a very faint perception of its beauty and dignity who does not know this . . .' His volume of ballads is a 'feeble endeavour' to 'counteract . . . the general evil' of a taste that preferred 'frantic novels, sickly and stupid German Tragedies, and deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse', to Shakespeare and Milton. A taste, that is, estranged from the valuable. What separated these 'elder' writers from his contemporary scribblers was not a mere difference of language or style, but an awareness of values, a concern with what really matters to men. Wordsworth had learned to care about men; that is why he wanted to be, as a poet, 'a man speaking to men'.

This patient concern can be extrapolated from (and from between) the lines of the *Preface*; but it is more apparent in the poems themselves. A brief glance at the poems reveals, amongst others, the following subjects: a moral tale of the consequences of unfeeling harshness to the needy; a sympathetic portrait of an old man sadly debilitated, containing no tale, yet worth the narration for the

insight it gives into human ingratitude; an anecdote about the influence of men on their children and another about children's adaptation to life's vagaries, both showing what men can learn from children; a paean on the power of love to provide the will to live; another on 'a great triumph of the human heart',[14] the all-meaning love of a mother for her near-helpless child. It is an apparently random collection of subjects, uneventful incidents and situations, intended to be read as an effective statement of concern — felt to be new — for the ordinary beings who form their common and constant subject. Wordsworth is at pains to show people important and worth learning from in spite of the seeming inconsequence of their lives.

Hence, surely, he chose the popular ballad as a vehicle — the formulae for reaching people have been long established and recognised. Not that Wordsworth wished to turn pamphleteer, but here was a form that had been popular again since mid-century, and might well serve as a means of communicating worthy feelings concordant with the new hopes and emphases of the age. Not many years before, his awareness of the dignity and worth of man had been borne in on him through the agency of shepherds in their closeness to nature. We learn from Book VIII of *The Prelude* that

> Philosophy, methinks, at Fancy's call,
> Might deign to follow him through what he does
> Or sees in his day's march; (249)

and that

> Thus was man
> Ennobled outwardly before my sight,
> And thus my heart was early introduced
> To an unconscious love and reverence
> Of human nature; hence the human form
> To me became an index of delight,
> Of grace and honour, power and worthiness. (275)

These are the very responses that are surely inescapable in reading the *Lyrical Ballads*; and those who would 'look round for poetry', unable to recognise it, are surely

> ye who pore
> On the dead letter, miss the spirit of things;
> Whose truth is not a motion or a shape
> Instinct with vital functions, but a block
> Or waxen image which yourselves have made,
> And ye adore[1] (296)

The scathing bluntness of this is in essentially the same voice as that which warns those 'accustomed to' gaudiness and inane phraseology, 'for their own sakes' to side-step their self-raised barrier and 'consent to be pleased in spite of that most dreadful enemy to our pleasures, our own pre-established codes of decision'.

This voice is clear too in the warning to the 'stranger' — reader of the *Lines on a Yew Tree*:

> he, who feels contempt
> For any living thing, hath faculties
> Which he has never used.

The fact that *The Female Vagrant* is an earlier work and 'has little in common with the experimental poems of 1797-8',[15] does not discount it, since Wordsworth chose to include it in the volume. It is there, and is clearly part of his 'psychography', recording 'recognition and respect' for life through the eyes of one who has disrespected it:

> Oh! dreadful price of being to resign
> All that is dear in being!

Wordsworth here is not very far from Hamlet's position; to live in a state disrespectful of life is to make death more valuable, and war is such a state:

> Or in the streets and walks where proud men are,
> Better our dying bodies to obtrude,
> Than dog-like, wading at the heels of war,
> Protract a curst existence, with the brood
> That lap (their very nourishment!) their brother's blood.

To speak thus is surely not to be 'the sanguine enthusiast of 1793',[16] nor is *The Female Vagrant* 'separated by a wide gulf from the poems of 1797-8'.[17] Her recognition of the complex nature of the Gypsies, her 'first relief,' yet 'not for me, brought up in nothing ill', is an awareness of estrangement from men, a collapse from community; and this is precisely her regret and burden. She wanders:

> Oh! tell me whither — for no earthly friend
> Have I. — She ceased, and weeping turned away,
> As if because her tale was at an end
> She wept; — because she had no more to say
> Of that perpetual weight which on her spirit lay.

Like the ancient mariner's, her relief is ever a temporary one, gained in relating her tale, in finding, however momentary, an outlet for the respect she has abused.

The implication of a divine power that befriends Goody Blake and answers her prayer with instant revenge —

And icy-cold he turned away

— is perhaps more direct, closely akin in effect to the mariner's tale. There is an inevitability in both cases: the mariner is called on by an anguish that 'makes' him tell, 'teach'; his listener 'must' hear him, he is held by the 'glittering eye', 'he cannot chuse but hear'. Harry Gill's waistcoats, coats, and blankets fight no ordinary cold, and therefore they are 'all in vain, a useless matter'. Wordsworth metes out poetic justice to him for the same reason that the mariner must tell his tale: all life is valuable and must be respected, and the point can be made equally in a moral tale of uncharitableness and its reward, or in the lament of one who has sinned against life.

More positive still are the poems recording recognition of essential values in simple acts; of Simon Lee, the old man who 'once was tall' and could outrun all the country, Wordsworth has no tale to relate, yet the want will be made up by a moment's thought:

but should you think
Perhaps a tale you'll make it.

What we are expected to supply is suggested by the result of the poet's simple act of help:

— I've heard of hearts unkind, kind deeds
With coldness still returning.
Alas! the gratitude of men
Hath oftener left me mourning.

The old man's gratitude is so easily brought out that it reveals the want of gratitude in others. That he should be so grateful for so little tells its own tale of neglect and forgetfulness, and this is a cause to mourn in common with the disrespect for life seen previously.

In the two poems *Anecdote for Fathers* and *We are Seven*, Wordsworth is intensely aware of both the adult's distance from essential values, and the child's instinctive unity with them. It is part of the point that, in each case, the adult is characterised as gently sympathetic and evidently full of understanding, assured that he has something to teach the child. It is a happy mood:

A day it was when I could bear
To think, and think, and think again;

With so much happiness to spare,
I could not feel a pain.

He is proud of his child,

so slim
And graceful in his rustic dress!
And oftentimes I talked to him
In very idleness.

And

— Her beauty made me glad.

In this glad mood of contact with the children, the adult puts his questions — the pointless teaser, 'which pleasant place do you prefer?'; the persistent arithmetical rationality of 'two from seven leaves *how* many?' They are clearly meant to be stupid questions since Wordsworth sets them up for the express purpose of showing the wisdom of the irrational answers. He wants his readers to see the 'lore' of the boy as a fundamental contact with truths rooted in nature; to realise that the words thrown away on the girl *must* be thrown away. What more direct way of showing respect for life than to see one's folly thrown into relief by a child?

Likewise in *The Thorn* and *The Idiot Boy*, the utter lack of complexity in situation or in the narration is part of Wordsworth's simple intention, to convey in the former a simple man's compassion for the misery of a woman probably guilty of an abominable crime, and in the latter a direct tale of protective love realised in the fear of its loss. The garrulous old sailor meanders his way through his tale with constant dark hints of the terrible belief and its probability, yet he feels the suffering of the woman —

A cruel, cruel fire, they say,
Into her bones was sent;

he places the blame:

Oh me! ten thousand times I'd rather
That he had died, that cruel father!

And he concludes that the truth will always be a matter of conjecture:

I cannot tell how this may be.

What is plain is that the thorn is bound

With heavy tufts of moss, that strive
To drag it to the ground,

— as if nature were trying to get rid of this bleak apparent monument to the fact of the crime. He *knows* (as opposed to what 'they say')

That I have heard her cry,
'O misery! O misery!
O woe is me! oh misery!'

Her plight is that of the female vagrant, her penance to weep for disrespect.

Betty Foy is perhaps lucky that her lapse from realisation of the care needed brings her no cause for such misery, and it is in an awareness of the dangers of 'the roaring waterfall', dangers not brought to fruition by nature but fully realised by her imagination, that she finds the full meaning of her love; the boy's restoration is all that matters, and even the sickness of Susan Gale, the origin of the events, must be put aside in the poem's demand for celebration. She rises from her bed

As if by magic cured

It *is* magic of a kind, the magic of poetic necessity; the poem begins with one set of urgencies, and ends with another more important than the first. The change reflects Wordsworth's intention of conveying the importance of the love thus recognised, for the whole tale is designed to this end, as are all the poems.

We have thus poetry that is indeed ordinary and yet sublime. The sublimity — the exaltedness — comes indeed from the 'energy of thought' and its inseparable concomitant, feeling, plain in the motive and choice of material as in the simple mode chosen to convey it. Wordsworth felt he had something important to say about ordinary people; being a good poet, he realised he could say it best in ordinary language. Not in simplistic language — not in crass imitation of the dialectal idiosyncrasies of unlearned rustics, but after the example of those who 'convey their feelings and notions in simple and unelaborated expressions'. In justifying this aim to learned critics he might occasionally trip over words in the need to maintain the 'pomp of words', the lofty tone of high seriousness; but in writing his poems he does not stumble.

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DISINTEGRATION OF A TRIBAL SOCIETY

THE DECLINE OF THE CLANS IN THE HIGHLANDS OF SCOTLAND

by F. CLIFFORD-VAUGHAN

In his study of the disintegration of civilisations, Toynbee describes the 'history of the incorporation of the Scottish Highlanders' into a wholly alien society as 'a test case', since they were 'one of the rare enclaves of untamed barbarians bequeathed to the modern Western world by a medieval Western Christendom'.[1] Indeed, the bloody battle of Culloden on 16 April 1746 marked not only the end of an ill-starred and badly organised struggle for the Crowns of England and Scotland, but also meant the end of an ancient way of life: a way of life feudal in its structure but patriarchal in its outlook and still close to its tribal origins.

Some modern historians[2] have regarded this 'feudal-tribal' society, the clan system and its ramifications of paternalistic chieftains, loyalty to the clan and the chief, community farming, fighting and feuding — as a vestige of savagery best destroyed. Society, however, whether tribal or modern, has a need for community. When this basic human need for security within a closely knit group was destroyed by the 'inevitability' of historical advancement, it was to be resurrected in various forms of totalitarianism.

What was this system of clanship, adopted by the 'hairy savages'[3] of the North before they were tamed by the advancing culture of a 'superior' age, the age of Reason and the Rights of Man? Most of the romantic fabrications of nineteenth century writers must be discarded if one is to approach the subject with anything resembling objectivity. These writers have romanticised the Highlands and the people of the Highlands to such an extent that extreme care should be taken not to fall into the rhapsodising style of the times. Obviously, the Highlanders of the eighteenth century were basically as other people. That they were materially poor we know from contemporary sources; that they were somewhat different in their social and political life from the other peasants of Europe we know too. It is this social and political difference which was preserved by the clan. The Highlanders were unique in that they remained tribal so late in the day whilst the rest of Europe was in the throes of a new nationalism.

Having little intercourse with the rest of the world, and pent up for many centuries within the Grampian range, the Highlanders acquired a peculiar character and retained or adopted habits and manners differing widely from those of their lowland neighbours.'[4] One of these peculiar and indigenous ways was that of clanship.[5] Under their chiefs, men of the clan fought, and farmed, lived and litigated.[6]

However, in spite of the great power of the chief, his authority was not absolute. In matters regarding lawsuits, the punishment of injuries, redress and removing differences between members of the clan, he was obliged to consult the leading elder members of the clan.

The clan appears to have been rather military in its organisation and the warlike prowess of the chief very important. Indeed, they 'were regarded or despised according to their military or peaceable disposition'.[7] This military aspect was necessary in a country where the writ of the King (i.e. the State) did not run and where *lex talionis* was administered by the man with the longest sword and the strongest arm. But the tribal conflict, clan against clan, and the slaughter caused thereby, seems to have been greatly exaggerated by the bards of the time. The addition of a few hundred corpses in a song of praise lent no small amount of lustre to the victors. It is said that each warrior was killed and sung about four times before he died of old age.

The mutual defensive, at times offensive, potential of some clans was considerable. The Campbells, for example, in 1724, could put 5 000 men into the field and together with their allies some 8 000.[8] In this strength, the clansmen lived securely — as securely as the times allowed at any rate. A collective security for man, cattle and property, and a reverence and attachment of the clansman towards his chief was the order of things. There is no doubt that the loyalty of the common man of the clan towards the chief was quite uncommercial and did not depend upon any material benefits the latter might be in a position to confer. Loyalty was not paid for and stemmed from something much deeper in the mind of the clansman. 'This power of the chiefs is not supported by interest, as they are landlords, but as lineally descended from the old patriarchs or fathers of the families, for they hold the same authority when they have lost their estates, as may appear from several, and particularly one who commands in his clan, though, at the same time, they maintain him, having nothing left of his own.'[9] Some clansmen even paid rents to their chiefs in exile.

Land was regarded before 1746 as belonging to the clan, and the chief as its representative and head.[10] He distributed it fairly amongst them as their leader and, in the absence of formal title deeds and legal papers, watched over the interest of his kinsmen's land. The formal facets of land tenure in any case would probably have been rejected by the highlander with contempt.[11] This attitude of distrust and disregard for legal forms may have been encouraged among the commonalty of the clan by the tacksmen and chiefs in order to make capital out of the ignorance and pride of the rightful owners of the land. Indeed, Burt in his *Letters*[12] — a contemporary account of the

state of the country and in no way prejudiced in favour of the common man of the Highlands — says that some unscrupulous chiefs acted from purely selfish motives in order to keep the tenants, that is to say the clansmen, poor. He cites the case of Lord Lovat, chief of Clan Fraser: 'To prevent any diminution of the number of those who do not offend him, he dissuades from their purpose all such as show an inclination to traffic, or put their children out to trade, as knowing they would by such an alienation shake off at least a good part of their slavish attachment to him and his family . . .' However, the benefits to be obtained by such a policy were probably regarded by the chiefs as for the good of the people — they being the fathers of their people.

All were not so venal, however, and one of the Lovats, after the Battle of Auldearn in 1645, looked after 87 widows of his clansmen killed in the fight[13]; and a Campbell of Glenurchy, in a letter dated 1570, ordered the keeper of his castle of Kilchurn not to spare his gear in supplying the wants of his people who had lost everything in a raid. All were to be provided for. There were even provisions made for those who fell into arrears with their rent or found themselves in straits of poverty through accident or war — these were given 'rests' from the paying of rent.[14] Orphans and, has been noted, widows were the charge of the chief. Thus it was considered the duty of the chief, as well as his interest, to see to it that all his clanspeople were provided for. They, on the other hand, were bound by the nature of things to him.

Some writers[15] are of the opinion that this bond was a hardship and that the clansmen were forced, for example, to fight for the Jacobite cause against their will by threats.[16] However, it seems unlikely that a chief would actually destroy the property and lives of the very people to whom he owed his existence, in spite of the actions of the landlord-chiefs of the nineteenth century who were responsible for mass emigration and misery as a direct result of turning the clan lands over to sheep and deer for profit.[17]

There were several ranks below that of chief within the clan, the organisation of which at this time was a result of Celtic interpretation of the Norman feudal system,[18] imposed earlier by the Crown.[19] Next in line came the *tanist*, the successor to the chief according to the law of tanistry, followed by the chieftains, the captain, the gentlemen and the main body of the clan.[20]

The formal induction of the chief took place by his taking up a stand on a raised rock or stone and declaring before the assembly to preserve the ancient customs of the people. After being presented with a sword and a white wand, he was exhorted by the bard to follow

the noble example of his forbears; a hagiographical ode was then recounted as well as the chief's pedigree.[21]

The chieftains were the heads of the houses or septs, the divisions within the clan, the eldest cadet being next to the chief, and often commanding the whole clan in the latter's absence. These chieftains held lands and farms of varying sizes as tenants, often paying only a nominal rent in kind. Sept members paid *calpich* to the chief, another form of rent being known as *cain* and consisting mainly of the first fruits of the land held. They became known later as *tacksmen*. Sub-letting on the part of the tacksman and chief alike sometimes led to the impoverishment of the tacksman as his holdings grew less and he gradually declined down the social scale into the commonalty of the clan. This latter factor could account for the well marked pride of the highlander when face-to-face with lowlanders or foreigners such as the English.[22]

Between the common clansmen and the chief, through the tacksmen, there was a great personal bond.[23] Both parties were interdependent; the chief defended his possessions, the wealth of which consisted of land, through the warlike propensity of his clansmen The man of the clan in his turn depended on the chief as on a father, all government and power for him being represented in the person of the chief. It is doubtful whether the ordinary men of the clan cared about the king or had even heard of the central government of the country. The relations between chief and clansmen seem to have been at a very personal and familiar level. English visitors to the Highlands at that time all seem to have been struck by the manner in which chiefs greeted their people and by the familiarity shown all round by chief and commonalty; indeed, to the southerner used to the squire-and-yokel relationship, this Celtic democratic behaviour must have appeared extremely bizarre.

There were exceptions to this state of affairs, however, in some cases the clan through its elders applying sanctions on its chief. This power of the clan to act against the chief seems to have been noted on several occasions; for example, a chief of Keppoch was deposed by the elders for handing over a fellow clansman, a fugutive from justice, to the Steward of Lochaber.[24]

Other safeguards against arbitrary decisions on the part of the chief were written agreements, contracts entered into in the form of bonds, called *Mansren* or *Manred*, between chief and commoners or clan.[25] These bonds enlisted the clan into the protection and leadership of the chief, who was not necessarily of the same name or blood. Such elective procedures were similar in essence, if not in scope, to the election of kings in some European countries of the period.[26]

This system of bonds and pacts between chief and clansmen was not quite as democratic as may be thought at first sight. The elders of the tribe were the responsibles in the election and dismissal of chiefs, and theirs was the final word in such arrangements. However, there were probably small pressure groups of interested parties within the clan, although there appears to be no record of such in the documents of the period. Human nature being as it is, it seems safe to assume that the more enterprising of the tacksmen and their children and dependents would have had some kind of say in the election of a chief, although this would have been very far from the modern notion of election by common suffrage.

The king's authority in all this was little regarded by the great chiefs of the Islands and Highlands, and on several occasions the kings of Scotland tried to gain control in the Highlands. In 1540 James V took strong action against the troublesome chiefs of the Western Isles and in a machiavellian scheme sailed from the port of Leith with twelve warships, accompanied by the most powerful Lords of the Realm. In Sutherland, Skye and Wester Ross he invited chiefs aboard the ships under various pretexts and then kept them there. 'By the time he reached the Clyde and berthed at Dumbarton he had the largest collection of clan chiefs ever seen walking down a gangplank together without fighting.'[27] They were kept in confinement until a promise of better behaviour and obedience to the sovereign was obtained. James VI also tried his hand, and in 1587 Parliament enacted a 'General Band' by which all chiefs of clans and all 'landlords and bailies of the lands on the Borders and in the Highlands where broken men have dwelt or rpesently dwell' were to provide sureties for the peaceful conduct of those on their lands.[28]

The central government had no other recourse than to demand of the chiefs that they rule in their own lands, which of course did nothing to diminish the power of the chiefs. The feudal powers granted in the first place by Royal Charter to the clan chiefs over the lands they occupied — and the fact that the king at each turn relied on the chiefs, as on the nobles of the lowlands, as royal lieutenants — also helped to perpetuate the power of the chiefs. A further example of this, if any were needed, is that the Committee of Estates, in 1660, after a number of 'louss and idle men in the Hielands', taking advantage of the lack of regular authority to steal cattle from their lowland neighbours and having no force at their command for the repression of these disorders, were glad to revert to the old practice of holding the chiefs of the clans 'bund for the peaceable behaviour of their clan, kinsmen, followers and tenants'. On the 29th August of that year, then, they sent letters to the principal clan chiefs, a list of which 'reads like thunder', calling on them 'to supervise their

dependents' and all others travelling through your bounds whom you may stop or let', that they carry themselves inoffensively; certifying these heads of clans that they will be called to account for any depredations or insolencies hereafter committed'.[29] These powers to hand criminals to, or reclaim them from, the Royal Courts were not revoked until the Act of 1748, when hereditary jurisdiction was abolished. The clans, however, continued to regard the chiefs as paternally responsible for their welfare, as before.[30]

This fidelity to the chiefs in spite of decree, death and governmental disapproval, was surely one of the characteristics which was most marked. Perhaps the feeling of kinship and brotherhood, caused through centuries of fosterage and feudality was the reason for this loyalty. The system of unwritten contracts of fosterage[31] by which the sons of chiefs were brought up by clansmen, and the personal bonds thereby created, was undoubtedly one of the reasons for continued loyalty.

It was indeed extremely difficult to break down this link, even, as was proved on occasions too numerous to mention here, by the threat of death or torture. This trust, however, could not stand against the pressure of social change in the south of the island. After the fall of the Stewarts, the evolution of the chiefs, from feudal chiefs with a paternal interest in their people into landlords with an interest in monetary profits, under the influence of a culture stronger than the native, was too much in the end even for this bond. The long sojourn of many chiefs in the south was also responsible for the breakdown in this relationship, according to contemporary writers.[32] Economics was undoubtedly the reason for the new approach to land and tenants; there were certainly strong political reasons which, reflected in the field of demography, caused the common people of the Highlands much misery and suffering. The retainers of the chiefs became redundant under the new laws and the glens filled with people deprived of leadership.

'The middle ranks by a sudden revolution of circumstances, found themselves in every quality acknowledged as a distinction in a refined age; and in the possession of the comforts and conveniences of life, far below the corresponding class in the south.' The 'subordinate class', wretched as they were, were bereft of protection and 'the attractive pleasures of a semi-barbaric life' [33],whilst the landlords became part of the aristocratic 'establishment' and turned increasingly to the south of the British Isles. The network of close inter-personal relationships was destroyed for ever, and this, in the context of the times, was a hardship for the 'subordinate class'.

The clan system was further broken down by the policy of the English government to form regiments of broken tribesmen under the Crown and to send them overseas. The Highlands were thus deprived of men and the process of depopulation became complete with mass emigration, induced by economic pressures.

When Western societies have been confronted with the primitive societies which Toynbee calls their 'external proletariats' whether on the borders of their territories or overseas,[34] 'extermination or eviction or subjugation has been the rule and conversion the exception . . . we can count on the fingers of one hand the primitive societies that our modern Western Society has taken into partnership with itself'.[35] The history of Scotland in the last two centuries and the present record of depopulation and economic under-development in the Highlands point to the ambiguity implied in the notion of conversion. They show the heavy price paid in return for the benefits of a civilisation which is now, paradoxically, replacing the emphasis on individual freedom by a growing concern with security and welfare. The functions once performed by the clan chief with the advice of elders and the 'brieve', the hereditary judges, are now the prerogatives of the State, and governmental processes have replaced the guarantees derived from interpersonal relationships within the clan.

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NOTES

1 *A Study of History*, Oxford University Press, 2nd ed., 1949, p. 414.

2 Cf. G. D. H. Cole and R. Postgate, *The Common People* (1746-1946), Methuen, London, 1969, p. 1: 'Here in the common graves, is clearly shown the last of a form of government which has ruled humanity for as far back as human history can go indeed, or further yet, for in a crude form it can be seen in the apes . . .' An attack on the clansmen's lack of individuality is — rather speciously — based on their burial in a common grave after Culloden.

3 Cf. Fordoun, *Chronicle of Scotland*, Vol. II, 1878 ed., p. 38, who says: 'The Highlanders and people of the Islands are a savage and untamed nation, rude and independent . . . They are however, faithful and obedient to their king and country, and easily made to submit to law, if properly governed.' This, written in the 13th century, was also true of the 18th, at least in the minds of outsiders. Cf. W. F. Skene, *Celtic Scotland: a history of Ancient Alban*, Vol. III, Edinburgh, 1890.

4 Cf. J. S. Keltie, ed., *History of the Scottish Highlands, Highland Clans anp Regiments*, Vol. I, Chapter XVIII, Mackenzie, London (n.d.), p. 299.

5 In speaking of Celtic Britain, R. C. van Caenegem says: 'Les clans y étaient une institution centrale', in *La Paix*, 'Receuils de la société Jean Bodin pour l'Histoire Comparative des Institutions', Brussels, 1961, p. 6.

6 (The Scottish) 'Clans consisted of 'native men' and 'broken men'. The 'native men' were those related to the Chief and to each other by blood ties . . . The clan also contained septs or branches composed of clansmen who had become

powerful . . . and founded families . . . The 'broken men' were individuals or groups from other clans who had sought and obtained the protection of the clan.' Robert Bain, *The Clans and Tartans of Scotland*, ed. by M. O. MacDougall, 4th edition, London, 1959, p. 15.

[7] Cf. Keltie, *op. cit.*, p. 317.

[8] Although the great clans following Argyll and Seaforth (i.e. the Campbells and the MacKenzies) were so powerful, there were some much smaller clans such as the Grants with 850 men and the MacDonalds of Glencoe with 130. Cf. I. F. Grant, *Highland Folkways*, London, 1961, p. 29.

[9] Cf. Rev. T. Maclauchlan, 'General History and Social Conditions of the Highlands', in Keltie, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

[10] T. G. E. Powell, 'The Celts', *Ancient People and Places*, Vol. VI, London, 1958, p. 76, in describing the ancient customs of the Irish Celts, says: 'The ownership of land was not held by an individual, even by the head of a household, but by the kin from whom it could not be alienated'. This Celtic trait was evidently prevalent in the Scottish Highlands.

[11] Cf. Grant, *op. cit.*, p. 21: 'No title to possession (of land) was worth anything without the backing of an armed force to hold it. Chiefs able to protect their dependents were able to pay rent and so were successful in obtaining leases and feus (a Scots form of land tenure giving tenure in return for the payment of an annual feu duty), and for years together others occupied land against the wishes of its rightful possessor and sometimes of the king.'

[12] E. Burt, *Letters from a gentleman in the North of Scotland*, Vol. I, p. 51. Burt writes at the beginning of the 18th century.

[13] Cf. J. Fraser, *Wardlow Manuscript*, Scottish Historical Society.

[14] Cf. Grant, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

[15] For example, Maclauchlan, *op. cit.*, p. 4, and John Prebble, *Culloden*, London, 1961, p. 53: '. . . Lochiel's brother, Dr. Archibald Cameron passed through Cameron country, 'declaring to all men of the chief's name that if they did not come off directly he would burn their houses and cut them in pieces'. . . A chief's declaration of war agreed to by his elders . . . was binding on all the clan and disobedience was dishonour.'

[16] Cf. Powell, *op. cit.*, on the 'tuath', probably the basis of the clan idea, who says, p. 77: 'Armed service was owed to the lord; in its simplest form, this was called 'clientship' (celsine). In principle, an individual's rights and status existed only within his own 'tuath' and beyond it he was at the mercy of circumstances.' This was also the case in the 18th century in the Scottish Highlands.

[17] For details of this action, Cf. e.g., Alexander Mackenzie, *The History of the Highland Clearances*, Glasgow, 1883, 1946 ed., and for one incident described in greater detail, Ian Grimble, *The Trial of Patrick Sellar: the Tragedy of Highland Evictions*, London, 1962.

[18] '. . . at the end of the fourteenth century those units, (small groups, kinsfolk or feudal dependents) whether they were Gaelic or Anglo-Norman in origin, for self-preservation, and no doubt on occasion for aggrandisement, were organising themselves as 'clans' of a new quasi-feudal type', in W. R. Kermock *The Scottish Highlands: A short history* (c. 300-1746), Edinbrugh, 1957, pp. 60 ff. Cf. also I. F. Grant, *Social and Economic Development of Scotland before* 1603, p. 481-2.

[19] Cf. Kermock, *op. cit.*, p. 60 ff.

[20] Cf. Powell, *op. cit.*, for details of the Irish 'tuath' or community consisting of king, nobles and free commoners. An original Celtic social arrangement preceding feudalism by many years.

[21] Bain, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

[22] 'The poorest and most despicable creature of the name of MacDonald looks upon himself as a Gentleman of far Superior Quality than a man in England

of £1 000 a year.' Cf. *The Highlands of Scotland in* 1700, anonymous tract edited by Andrew Lang, p. 49.

[23] 'Lovat was fond of recognising and proclaiming his kinships even with the bumblest — one source of his power among his clan'. Andrew Lang, *A History of Scotland from the Roman Occupation*, Vol. IV, Edinburgh, 1907, p. 374.

[24] Cf. Kermock, *op. cit.*, p. 60 ff.

[25] For example, such a Manred was entered into by a sept of M'Gillikeyr (sic) to John Campbell of Glenurchy in 1547, who declared that they had chosen him of their own free will to be their head 'to be their protector in all great actions, as a chief does in the countries of the Highlands, and shall have lands of him in assedation . . .' In W. F. Skene, *op. cit.*, p. 319.

[26] For example, the *Pacta Conventa* in Poland were voluntary agreements passed between King and nation (i.e. nobles). After the Jagiello dynasty became extinct . . ., the first Pact was passed with Henry of Valois (16th century). It was stated in his oath that the people would be freed from their duty to obey him if he did not respect the Pact the King, after swearing to the Pact, was handed a diploma of election in Latin, in which the Estates promised on their part fidelity, respect and obedience. Z. Gloger, *Encyklopedia Staropolska*, Vol. III-IV, Warsaw, 1958, p. 314.

[27] J. A. Rennie, *The Scottish People: their clans, families and origins*, London, 1960, p. 61.

[28] Cf. W. C. Dickinson, *Scotland from the earliest times to* 1603, London, 1961, pp. 375 ff.

[29] Robert Chambers, *Domestic Annals of Scotland*, Vol. II, Edinbrugh, 1858. The list of chiefs to whom letters were addressed, p. 262, 'The Earls of Seaforth, Tullibardine, Athole, Airlie and Aboyne; The Lords Reay and Lovat, the Lairds of Ballingowan, Foulis, Assynt, Glengarry, McLeod, Lochiel, Macintosh, Grant, Glenurchy, Auchinbreck, Luss, Macfarlane, Buchanan, and Edzell, Sir James Macdonald, the Captain of Clanranald, Callum Macgregor, Tutor of Macgregor and others.'

[30] Cf. Tytler, *History of Scotland*, ed. by Sir Archibald Alison, Vol. IV, p. 169 ff., and also Keltie, *op. cit.*, Chap. XLIII, p. 30 ff.

[31] Cf. Skene, *op. cit.*, p. 321. 'One John McNeill Vreik in Stronferna and Gregoure his brother, were, in 1510, to 'receive Coleyne Campbell, lawful third son and heir of Sir Duncan Campbell of Glenurquhay, knight, in fostering, and to give him a bairns part of gear; and giving to the said Sir Duncan and his heirs their bonds of Manrent and Calps.' They were to give the best in their house and Duncan Campbell in his turn was bound to defend the lands of Stronferna and the rest of their property as law will.' This in point of fact is an example of a written contract which in time replaced the word of mouth. The result was the same.

[32] 'It is very clear', says one McLeod in the *Book of Dunvegan*, Vol. I, p. 265-6, 'that it was the habit of living in the South which has ruined our family.'

[33] John Anderson, *Prize essay on the state of society and knowledge in the Highlands of Scotland, particularly in the Northern counties at the period of the rebellion in* 1745, *and their progress up to the establishment of the Northern Institution for the Promotion of Science and Literature in* 1825, Edinbrugh, 1827, p. 72 ff.

[34] Cf. A. J. Toynbee, *op. cit.*, p. 413: 'Habits of 'frightfulness', acquired by the English in their prolonged aggression against the remnants of the Celtic Fringe in the Highlands of Scotland and the bogs of Ireland, were carried across the Atlantic and practised at the expense of the North American Indians.'

[35] Toynbee, *op. cit.*, p. 414.