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PIETERMARITZBURG

WE WISH to congratulate Mr J. A. Berthoud who has received the English Academy's 1968 Pringle Award for literary articles. We would also congratulate those in whose gift the Pringle Award lies for their fine discernment and the excellence of their judgment. The essay which has brought Mr Berthoud such well-deserved honour was 'The Vision of Eternity: an Introduction to Dante's *Inferno*', published in *Theoria* 25.

OF LEARNED IGNORANCE*

by A.-L. CONRADIE

In contemplating a suitable subject for an inaugural lecture, it seemed to me that it would be eminently suitable to discuss with you the problem: 'What is philosophy?' What indeed could be more fitting? It is the most ancient of the disciplines taught at the universities of the West. It appears to be situated, moreover, at the point of intersection of many university subjects and faculties. To define this discipline once again and its position *vis-à-vis* the subjects taught by you, my colleagues, could never be a superfluous activity, especially as both your subjects and mine undergo continual revision and development.

But in coming to this conclusion I was assailed by an uneasiness which continued to disturb me until I had established its cause. Its cause was a critical attitude on your part which I anticipated. I suspected that you would be thinking that philosophers should stop discussing what philosophy is. After all, I seemed to hear you say, other departments think about *things*: about chemicals, animals, population explosions, the habits of primitive societies, the human brain, the economic structure of the Soviet Republics and so forth. There is a certain healthy tang about these subjects; one feels immersed in a real world. One speaks of 'objectivity' without qualms. There is a sensation of coming to grips with something which initially offers resistance but later capitulates to persistent research. Progress is possible. New facts and new relations between old facts are discovered.

But if you attend a first course in philosophy, you invariably find the lecturer trying to explain to the student what philosophy is. You endure it for a while, hoping to get past the preliminaries, only to find that the whole course, developing through the years, is really only a more concentrated discussion of what philosophy is. By now your resistance is weakened. You proceed to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy with a thesis on what philosophy is. You are appointed at a university and there the whole thing starts all over again in lectures, at congresses, in learned books and articles, in inaugural lectures.

In being so candid with you, I have not rendered myself a good service, for if you did not think all this before, you are certainly thinking it now. You are thinking that there is a kind of narcissism

* Inaugural lecture of the Professor of Philosophy in the University of Natal.

about philosophy, a curiously inverted attitude. Not only does philosophy not discover new facts, but it timidly and apparently quite unnecessarily enquires: 'What is a fact?' You feel that philosophers have no grip on the real world or at most, to borrow a phrase from a contemporary French philosopher, a *prise glissante*, a sliding grip —and you begin to wonder whether after all the natural habitat of the philosopher is not only the proverbial armchair but an armchair in an ivory tower encased with mirrors.

I mentioned my uneasiness at this criticism. However, after savouring it to the full and looking at it from all sides, I was able to affirm stoutly that philosophers certainly do think about things. They think about the proletariat, about the state, history, evolution; about ideas, perception and, armed with syllogisms, about the state of the separated soul after death. They think about logical possibilities, basic propositions and whether things in general, and specifically other minds, exist. In fact, sometimes they even conclude, with considerable difficulty and after long argument, that they themselves exist because they can think all these things. In glancing through philosophy catalogues, one is amazed at everything the philosopher is capable of thinking about and with a certain awe one remembers that Aristotle had already said that the philosopher thinks all things.

But perhaps you have misunderstood me. Philosophy thinks all things, certainly, but not at random. It has never attempted to fulfil the function of an encyclopaedia. It is concerned, as is clearly stated at the beginnings of Western philosophy, with *being* as *that which is*. Moreover, for long it claimed to be certain knowledge (*scientia*) because it was held to proceed from principles which are self-evident (*principia per se nota*) such as the principle of identity and the principle of non-contradiction.

Although the criteria of what constitutes certainty, truth and objectivity have varied considerably in the history of ideas, the ideal of certain and incontrovertible knowledge has always inspired philosophers. This ideal comes into being at a certain moment in Western thinking. To situate this moment accurately is difficult. We may say that philosophy is born as questioning, as wonder—but as a questioning and a wonder which is characterised by *distance*. Hence it is no accident that the image of light and consequently of sight begins to orientate the philosopher's conception of his task. To stand off, to create a distance, is also to create the possibility of seeing, of taking something in view. The Mediaevals used the term *lumen naturale*: the natural light of reason which makes it possible to see what was concealed before.

Philosophy, despite its internal dissensions, took up its task, in the many great philosophical systems, of illuminating and articula-

ting a total view of the world. With increasing vehemence it assaulted the ontological question until, in the system of Hegel, being becomes fully transparent to the gaze of the philosopher. *Fiat lux*: there you have the norm of every self-respecting philosopher.

Having thus satisfactorily disposed of my first doubt, I could have proceeded with my discussion of the nature and task of philosophy had I not been assailed by a second and decisive doubt. This doubt did not arise from a consideration of any possible objection you might offer. It arose in me after twenty years of living in this realm of light, and I find that perversely I have to give voice to it on the very occasion that is least suitable. I would like to speak to you about the superabundance of light, of clarity, which is characteristic of the philosophic habitus. Instead I find myself speaking of the ignorance of philosophy. My only excuse is that I consider that this ignorance is more enlightening and contributes more to a proper understanding of what philosophy is.

The title of this paper, as you well know, is taken from Nicolas of Cusa's book, *De Docta Ignorantia*. I am not concerned in this paper with the great cardinal's reasons for writing this book and giving it the title which he did, or with its importance as a decisive moment in early Renaissance thought.[1] But the title seems to express perfectly what appears to be a minor key running through the major traditions of philosophy. The history of Western philosophy itself commences, in the figure of Socrates, with the enigmatic affirmation that the true philosopher is the man who knows that he knows nothing. In Plato we find the often puzzling emphasis that the philosopher is blinded by an excess of light, but this blindness is qualitatively different from the ignorance of the man who lives in the realm of shadows and opinions. Augustus speaks with authority of the *Civitas Dei* and the *Civitas Terrena*, yet the mood in which he leaves us is the mood of the *cor inquietum*, the restless heart. Aquinas is known primarily for the magnificent architecture of his 'Summas' and 'Commentaries'; we hardly ever remember his many strictures on the limits of philosophical and theological knowledge, nor do we take seriously his confession to Reginald of Piperno, towards the end of his life, that what he had written was nothing but straw. We too often forget that the *devotio moderna* and Nicolas of Cusa's *coincidentia oppositorum* refer back to Aquinas' Negative Way and to the inconclusiveness of his analogy of proper proportionality. Pascal speaks of the grandeur and the misery of philosophy. Kierkegaard's irony is directed at those metaphysical aspirations which claim to solve all problems once and for all. In spite of the fact that Descartes holds up mathematics as a model of clarity and certainty, we find that his final justification for his clear and distinct ideas is

nothing more than the claim that God is not a malignant demon and will not deceive us in our trust that the external world corresponds to our ideas.

There are many more examples but these few will have made you aware of what I am trying to put my finger on: a certain hesitant awareness, more or less explicit, in some of the most lucid and systematic philosophies, of a density and opacity in the field with which they are dealing. And so I have come to the conclusion that philosophy is much more important for what it does not say than for what it says. I also think that a consideration of what philosophy is does not primarily require excursions into the total illumination of the great systems but into those realms of darkness which co-constitute its being—but which are often too overlooked by the proponents of the *fiat lux*.

We shall have to descend briefly into these realms of darkness and I—do not accuse me of philosophical *hubris*—shall be your Virgil, reminding you that even in this darkness, this ignorance, there are structures more darkly intelligible than the upper heavens of pure reason which, for too long, have been the consolation of philosophy.

2

We have stated that Greek philosophy, by taking being *in view*, makes possible the distinction between the knower (subject) and the known (object). This distinction receives its classic expression, in the High Middle Ages, in the famous phrase of Aquinas: *veritas est adequatio rei et intellectus* (truth is the adequation of thing and mind). Already we have two entities: mind (*intellectus*) and thing (*res*), and almost imperceptibly metaphysics has become the science of that which is looked *at*. It has become *objective*.

This objectivity is the distinctive gift of Western man. He is able to fix his gaze on the object, irrespective of the exigencies of the subject. That which is uncovered or illuminated in the act of knowing is in no way qualified by the situation of the thinker himself, for the properly intellectual vocation requires him to strip himself of his particularity brought about by his body, by history and—in the Christian tradition—by the unruly inclinations of the will. This cognitive asceticism extends the meaning of objectivity to include universality: the notion of a truth which is true for all at all times exactly because man is able to renounce his particularity by identifying himself with that reason which he *is*.

Yet it is often forgotten that primitive man, too, had known objectivity. This objectivity certainly did not presuppose the dis-

tinction between subject and object, knower and known, for this distinction is as yet absent. But it makes its appearance in a different form of apperception, namely, *participation*. Primitive man participates in a horizon of meaning constituted by the exemplary events of the Great Original Time. He re-affirms his participation through the liturgy of repetition which ensures both the constancy of his world (*creatio continua*) and the success of his undertakings. For example, the appropriate ritual must be performed to guarantee the success of the crop, the hunt or the sea-voyage, and the ritual itself is a re-enactment of the original hunt, the original act of sowing and reaping, the original sea-voyage. Primitive man thus subjects himself to a reality which serves as a norm for his actions and the validation of his enterprises. Leenhardt[2] gives the following example to illustrate also a principle of verification present in mythical consciousness:

The inhabitants of a small island in the Pacific fall prey to an epidemic. Eventually they discover that one of their canoes or praus has run aground on a sharp coastal rock. This rock is the tooth of a god, and the wrecked prau is causing the god toothache. He has taken revenge by inflicting the epidemic on the inhabitants of the island. When the prau is removed with suitable gestures of remorse and affirmation of goodwill, the epidemic suddenly ceases; all is again well.

It is clear from this example that the mythical interpretation is *always* verifiable by events which take place within the framework of a pre-established system of verification provided by the myth. We may thus legitimately speak here of objectivity, but of an objectivity which is totally incarnated in the praxis of everyday life. With Strasser, we term this 'objectifying praxis' of primitive man *the first objectivity*.[3] The magnitude of this achievement is even more evident if we consider that in the myth man confirms his humanity by articulating, for the first time, a meaningful model of the universe. In spite of the degradation of myth in allegory and gnosis, it still has the power to coerce us to perceive *according to it*, as even today we do not merely look *at* the cave painting, but see *according to it*.[4]

But this objectivity has a negative side. Archaic man lacks the ability to think abstractly. This ability is the characteristic genius of Western civilisation, the genius of the *second objectivity*. On the question: 'What is it?' the philosopher replies by giving a definition which ignores whatever is accidental or irrelevant to the definiendum. Abstraction thus combines with the logic of classification to yield a kingdom of timeless essences which devaluates the everyday world to the status of appearance.

The dualism between subject and object, which made abstraction

possible, was exacerbated in the seventeenth century in Descartes' distinction between thinking thing (*res cogitans*) and extended thing (*res extensa*). It was scientism, however, which emerged triumphantly as the dominant ideology of the West. I deliberately speak of an ideology, for scientism, in claiming that the physico-mathematical sciences alone guarantee objective knowledge, in fact practised a speculative totalitarianism in no way permitted, or intended, by the universe of discourse of science itself. Following the pattern of the second objectivity, scientism too devaluates the lived world in relation to a world which it claims to be 'real' and 'objective', that is, the world discovered by the exact sciences. And it is now scientism which will present itself as mentor to a benighted humanity which nevertheless tenaciously clings to a certain pre-scientific *habit of wisdom* gleaned from its commerce with the world in labour and in leisure.

The achievement of the second objectivity is the detachment of a global universe of discourse expressed in univocal symbols, and the rationalisation of labour in technology. This achievement, too, has its negative side: an ignorance concerning the manner of its knowing and the nature of its evidences. It is thus necessary to develop a radical thinking which will expose the root of objective thinking and show how it is anchored in the *Lebenswelt*, the pre-given world of everyday experience. This radical reflection is termed *the third objectivity*.

The transition to the third objectivity is effected, in philosophy, by a return to the primary evidences of the lived world. Its point of departure is the analysis of the conceptual confusions generated by the subject-object model in epistemology. According to this critique, there is no 'real, objective' world-in-itself which confronts consciousness as there is no consciousness-in-itself which mirrors the world Man is a multiple question, and every interrogation evokes a different answer, a different zone of meaning. In every academic discipline a field of study is demarcated, certain models are chosen, a certain appropriate vocabulary is selected. But every conceptualisation refers back to that pre-abstractive, pre-reflective texture of meaning, that unity of experience, which is man himself. It must be pointed out that this in no way implies an *archaeology of reason*,[5] but a recognition of the irreducibility of man, the questioning being, to any of his own answers. Thus Heisenberg writes: 'Even in physical science . . . the object of research is no longer nature in itself but nature as exposed to man's questioning, and to this extent man here also encounters *himself* again.'[6]

And thus the problem of the third objectivity arises. If all disciplines are abstractive thematisations from the lived socio-cultural

world, how is it possible to know this world without abstraction? How, in the last analysis, is it possible to *be* man and to *think* man?

This aporia cannot be solved. In the very moment of recollection and self-reflection, the philosopher is checked. He discovers that he has to move from the antinomies of reason to the dialectics of his own being-in-the-world. He discovers that he has to formulate the problem of the contingency of his reason, which stubbornly resists formulation. He discovers that he has to think a new model of meaning itself: he has to think creatively.

The man who refuses to face this challenge, is ignorantly learned. The man who accepts the challenge, practises learned ignorance.

3

There comes a moment when one's subject rises up and points a finger accusingly at one. This is a very unpleasant experience. You discover that for long you have been disloyal to the minimum requirements of the reflective life. You have chosen to propound the ideas of classical thinkers, both ancient and modern, rather than develop your own perspective. Apparently you take a stand—of course you do—but in the sense of identifying yourself with one or more thinkers who have already taken a stand. You excuse yourself on the grounds that it is better to be the humble follower of a great thinker with whom you agree (that is, to be a sleeping member of a school) than pretentiously and unsuccessfully to start from scratch. You attempt to justify your bad faith as the virtue of abstaining from premature affirmations. Knowledge is bliss, for it absolves you from the duty of thinking.

The demand for radical reflection, if accepted as a vocation, plunges one into nothing less than chaos. What is the main characteristic of this philosophical dark night? It is not the apprehensive anticipation that what is required of one is to be absolutely original. On the contrary, it is the sobering insight that one has to take one's stand in *this* body which grafts one in the world; in *this* concatenation of events, pressures, decisions and renunciations which—if taken up as one's own destiny—grafts one in the intersubjective world of other destinies, and in the destiny of the world itself. It is from this depth of experience that philosophy rises, in different layers of reflection, and to which it must continually return in order to renew and orientate itself. This double movement of ascent and descent, of striving for articulation and enduring what cannot be articulated, is the *docta ignorantia* of philosophy.

We are here at the hub of an immense problem. The pre-reflective

life, this everyday *lived* life, is transparent to itself. It knows, without instruction, the secrets of the body; it moves with prescience in the surrounding world; it anticipates the needs of others in daily encounter; and its vivid sense of contingency sharpens its awareness of a density of being which resists exploration. Yet, at the same time, this life is opaque. It is inaccessible to the abstractive analyses of the various sciences, precisely because it is the source of all abstraction Or rather, I should say, it does lend itself to abstractive analysis but only by disengaging itself from filaments and fragments of meaning which it leaves behind it as a residue in the discourse of the analytic disciplines.

If I say that it is the unenviable task of contemporary philosophy to articulate the immediate evidences of the lived world without abstractive conceptualisation, you may consider that I am making things deliberately difficult. For is the thinker not first and foremost characterised by the ethos of humility: the recognition that whatever he knows he has received from already constituted traditions of learning, and that everything which he may achieve he achieves only by the patient re-thinking and remoulding of his intellectual heritage? I agree with you. But at the same time it is necessary to practise unceasing vigilance with respect to traditions. They are not infallible. They are formed by men, and often by hidden philosophic prejudices disguised as supra-temporal truths. Sooner or later these prejudices, hibernating in traditions, erupt in cultural crisis situations while the original prejudice remains unexposed.

We are living in such a crisis situation. As specialists exploring only one narrowly circumscribed academic discipline, we may be aware only of a surface froth, experienced as a certain intellectual restlessness at the necessity of wearing blinkers. But there is no froth without a deeper ferment. The magnitude of this ferment shows itself in numerous phenomena: in the rapid transition from primary to secondary systems in labour; in the equally rapid establishment of universal technological infrastructures which have profoundly altered the face of international politics; secularisation in all fields; the cry that God is dead; the transvaluation of values; the juxtaposition of extreme regimentation and maximum individualism; the discovery of nuclear power with its corollary, the arms race.

These are not isolated phenomena. They point back to the destruction of an old order and forward to the emergence of a new order. In the fluid interim man is subjected to a continuous pressure to devise new models for the understanding of his situation and the ordering of his world. He is driven to find quick solutions for problems the magnitude of which far transcend our collective experience. Even the man in the street has an obscure sense of fundamental

changes and tensions in the human condition and of the Promethean character of our age.

The lived world, with which philosophy deals, is therefore primarily temporal and historical. Moreover, if it is the hidden foundation of the special disciplines, it is in turn qualified by them. There is a perpetual process of osmosis between the lived world and the thought world. In a culture where the sun is worshipped as a god, it is *seen* differently. In a world of telephones and jet planes, proximity and absence are *experienced* differently. It is a commonplace in philosophy and psychology that a thing is always perceived in spatial, temporal and cultural profiles or horizons. This does not mean that the fundamental forms of meaning are changed. Architecture, for example, does not deal with an abstract conceptual space but with lived space. It is not concerned with providing enough cubic feet per body to live in, but with dwellings for persons and families. The time of the physicist, again, is not that duration which we experience in the devising and maturing of our projects, nor does music or dancing obey the demands of a linearly constituted time. The medical doctor himself knows only too well that the body, too, has its reasons and in certain circumstances prescribes to the doctor.

When we speak of the third objectivity we therefore mean not only the universes of discourse of the various sciences but also those zones of meaning by which man is incarnated in the very flesh of the world. Man does not only know in the laboratory or in the study. Through his fingers, eyes, ears, his mobility, the gestures of his body, a world is made present which, in its superabundance, invites without restraint distinctions and analyses, and awaits a discourse which will be both rigorous in the development of its hermeneutics and nourished by the enigma of the inexhaustible richness of the world.

And yet it is not merely the inexhaustibility of the world which constitutes the enigma. Its inexhaustibility only provokes the mind to assault it ever more vehemently. No: this world which suffuses me has this ascendency over me—that I cannot fully, or even partially, suffuse it. It is a world which burgeons from an immeasurable ontological secrecy; from a resonant silence which confers language on me but hushes a language which would brashly break back into that silence. It is a world where the lightning of being plays and strikes, but a lightning which is yet, as Dionysus the Areopagite writes, 'a ray of darkness for the mind'.

'Contemplation does not rest until it has found the object which dazzles it.'[7] Is this not exactly the quality of learned ignorance: the quality of renouncing our learnedness, not from despair but from that courage which surrenders to enigma?

Thus the third objectivity also raises the question of the horizon of meaning. We have stated that since its origin philosophy has always been concerned with such a horizon according to which the whole of knowledge could be interpreted and ordered. We have also shown that this horizon of meaning was conceived rationalistically, in both the metaphysical and scientistic sense, for it disregarded that pre-reflective, intersubjective experience where all meanings are fused in the socio-historical world of man. In using the word 'history' and 'historical' we do not, of course, mean the history of the historians but that vital movement by which essence is transformed into existtence and the kingdom of ideas into the eschatology of the world. The crisis of certitudes of which Chestov speaks has made us aware that the ideal of certain and immutable knowledge, of a philosophy which is a perfect and completed work of reason, is impossible to realise and even dangerous, for it estranges thinking from a history which is forged in the double contingency of man and world. History is born, not in the zone of clarity and freedom, as the idealists would have it, nor in the faith that our free decisions confirm the divine decision, but in and with the manner in which we form the world. Contemporary man must form the world in a manner never before conceived. The world has become his 'work' as he has become the 'work' of the world.

We need another notion to interpret the idea of a horizon of meaning and this is the notion of symbol. For the horizon of meaning may no longer be conceived rationalistically and statically but as a dynamic contour of meaning ignited by symbols. Symbol, *symballein*, means throwing, gathering, binding together. It is the great symbols of mankind which have always gathered time together in that duration which we call a culture or a civilisation. We may only refer in passing to some of those with which we are most familiar, such as the Eucharist, or the Logos, or the various feasts and carnivals, to realise that the symbol, unlike the essence, cannot be exhausted by *theoria*. In participating in them man is related to a richness of signification which was already there and precedes rational elaboration.[8] This is already implied in the Greek word for truth, *aletheia*, which originally means not only the experience of the unhiddenness of that-which-is, but also a recalling of a togetherness which has been forgotten. And it is in this context that the first objectivity, that of participation, achieves a fuller meaning.

But at this moment an abyss opens before us, for we find ourselves in a situation where old symbols have effaced themselves and new symbols have not yet manifested themselves. I say 'we', for in identifying myself with man and with the world, I, too, experience the absence of the symbol and the breaking up of my world. But just

because of this identification, I also share in the privilege of watching and waiting *en hypomene*; in the privilege of hope: for what does hope mean but the creating of a space in which the symbol may again manifest itself?

In this created or creative space, the philosopher vigilantly guards the fragments of old wisdom which may be lost in the forging of a new humanism. His learned ignorance is a vigil—but a vigil which, as Heidegger says of the poetry of Hölderlin, is a shrine without a temple.[9] Hence, the philosopher most fiercely guards, not merely the right to question—for this is also the prerogative of fools—but the question which respects enigmas.

The search for the new horizon of meaning is thus primarily an examination of the exigencies of contemporary culture which, in grappling with the crisis of certitudes, itself becomes the prototype of creative thinking. Far from pursuing its role as the abstract guardian of truth, philosophy has discovered itself as that very 'fluid interim' which it must both articulate to the best of its ability and endure as its unavoidable condition.

4

Let us in conclusion look briefly at the physiognomy of the philosopher who practises learned ignorance.

First of all, this philosopher is not a serious man, or if he is, he pays the penalty, like Thales, of falling into a well and being laughed at by a Thracian maid. The Platonic dialogues reverberate with allusions to the playful character of the philosopher who even plays, at his peril, with the gods of the city. In fact, the matters with which the philosopher is concerned are too serious to be serious about. In another sense the philosopher is too often and too intimately confronted with the seriousness of the man who takes everything for granted, for whom nothing is transparent, to ape this attitude. Thus Merleau-Ponty writes:[10]

> (Philosophy) is never a *serious* occupation. The serious man, if he exists, is the man of one thing only, to which he assents. But the most resolute philosophers always wish the contrary —to realise, but in destroying; to suppress, but also to conserve. Always, they have an afterthought. The philosopher pays attention to the serious man—of action, of religion or of passion—perhaps more acutely than anyone. But precisely in doing this, one feels that he is different . . . Even if he has never betrayed any cause, one feels, in his very manner of

> being faithful, that he would be able to betray. He does not take sides like the others, and in his assent something massive and carnal is lacking. He is not altogether a real being.

These are strange words. The philosopher lacks seriousness. He is able to betray. He is not altogether a real being. But this is true. He is not a real being according to that naïveté which Edmund Husserl called the natural attitude (*Natürliche Einstellung*). The natural attitude in the affairs of men is the unquestioning acceptance of the solidified contours of tradition, of congealed speech and the barren certainties of the majority. The philosopher, however, is always the fool in the court of the natural attitude. He says the wrong thing at the right time and the right thing at the wrong time: thus he lacks worldly prudence. For the philosopher hell is not other people; hell is the massive seriousness of the natural attitude incarnated in institutions and above everything else in words. The arch enemy of the philosopher is the man who takes refuge in words in order to escape meaningful utterances.

If the philosopher is opposed to the serious man of the natural attitude, he is even more opposed to those brave opponents of this man who cultivate the extraordinary in conformity with the ordinary conception of the extraordinary. These blustering campus and committee rhetoricians, non-conformists, weary betrayers of tradition and absolutes, have a seriousness even more solid than that of the conventionally serious man. The philosopher laughs at those who conceive of God as a commodity to make the world a cosier place and to assuage the greed for immortality, but he is even less at home in the soirée, where the languid aesthete affirms that he is an atheist inbetween the clink of whisky glasses, or free love is discussed by those cardboard-like fellows who have never encountered the mystery of the other. The philosopher is never an insider. He is never an outsider, for outsidedness is determined by our conception of insidedness. The philosopher has an ineradicable love of tradition; he is a critic of tradition. He loves those who are humble before the *mysterium tremendum fascinans*; but he also loves those who, searching ardently, find that God is absent. The philosopher is alienated from the world because he lives at its centre; he is at home in the world because his consciousness is tentacles into the surrounding zone of darkness and opacity.

Of course the philosopher is a traitor. He is always in the resistance, for he knows that justice is a 'fugitive from the camp of conquerors'.[11] He avoids those who wield power, for his task is not to wield but to understand power. He avoids causes and parties, for he has the disconcerting ability to perceive the common root of conflicting credos. Unconditionally committed to the meta-existential

horizons, he will not break bread in those shelters erected to keep out the darkness.

Hence his learned ignorance is not primarily the ethos of humility but the ethos of hope, for although this philosopher faces the risk of defeat before he has even begun his task, he also accepts the risk of saying *yes* to a vocation which traditionally crowns the intellectual life.

Nevertheless he knows that in saying *yes* he is not the *magister* but only the *excitator* of wisdom; not the sage but a wandering scholar with something of the vagabond in his make-up; not the conqueror of new territories—the aim of muscular knowledge—but the blind man who finds his way only with a stick.

I hope I will not offend your sensibilities if I say that this careful tapping in the dark is a thinking which is a thanking. At the height of concentration, when awareness is extended to its furthest limit, thinking becomes thanking. The meaning of being is not disclosed to the busy mind. It demands humility and patience but above all the quality of a man who, equipped with much knowledge, well-versed in methodology, trained in analysis, nevertheless accepts the risk of moving into a darkness where all is ignorance and who, at the extreme point of tension and attention, waits for the moment of unconcealedness, *aletheia*.

Wir kommen nie zu Gedanken,
Sie kommen zu uns.[12]

University of Natal,
Pietermaritzburg.

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[2] Cited by G. Gusdorf: *Mythe en Metafysica* (Erven J. Bijleveld, Utrecht, 1963), p. 34.
[3] Stephan Strasser: *Fenomenologie en Empirische Menskunde. Bijdrage tot een nieuw ideaal van wetenschappelijkheid* (Van Loghum Slaterus, Arnhem; W. de Haan, Zeist, MCMLXII), p. 95.
[4] M. Merleau-Ponty: *The Primacy of Perception* (North-western University Press, 1964), p. 164.
[5] *Mythe en Metafysica*, p. 14.
[6] Werner Heisenberg: *Das Naturbild der heutigen Physik* in *Deutsche Enzyclopädie*, Hamburg, 1955, vol. III, pp. 18-21.
[7] Quoted by J. Pieper in *Happiness and Contemplation* (Faber and Faber, London), 1958. Pieper writes on p. 115: 'The motto by Konrad Weiss is taken from a posthumous fragment which I have had the opportunity of reading through the kindness of Frau Maria Weiss. The title of this fragment, which Weiss reworked no less than nine times in the course of a decade, is *On Poverty in the Spirit*.'

[8] Cf. Paul Ricoeur: *Le symbole donne à penser*. In *Esprit* 27 (1959), pp. 60-76.
[9] *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlin's Dichtung* (Frankfurt, 1951), p. 7
[10] *In Praise of Philosophy* (North-western University Press, 1963), pp. 58-60.
[11] Simone Weil: *Gravity and Grace* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952), p. 151. This statement, to be understood properly, must be seen in the context of her conception of *counterbalancing*.
[12] Samuel Ijsseling: *Heidegger. Denken en Danken. Geven en Zijn* (De Nederlandsche Boekhandel, Antwerpen, 1964), p. 6.

THE TEENAGER: A BY-PRODUCT OF INDUSTRIALISM*

by J. W. MACQUARRIE

In the strict chronological sense, teenagers are as old as the human species. Chronologically, every person who attains the mature age of thirteen must be, or have once been, a teenager. It is a solemn but salutary thought that the Cabinet of South Africa, the Councillors and Senators of the University of, say, the Witwatersrand, and the inmates of the Queen Mary Home for the Aged were all at one time, technically at any rate, teenagers.

In the psychological and sociological sense, however, teenagers are of more recent origin. They are a product, or more correctly, a by-product of the Industrial Revolution. Until that event, or series of events, human beings tended to be one thing or another—children or grown-ups. Two hundred and three years ago James Watt invented a workable steam engine. About the same time, three years previously to be exact, the political philosopher, Jean Jacques Rousseau, invented or discovered a third type of human being, the adolescent, the person between, say, twelve and twenty, or rather more.

Adolescents, as they often remind their parents, are not children and should not be treated as children. But adolescents, as parents sometimes remind them, are not adults and are not going to be treated as adults. Since their discovery, or invention, in the 1760s, adolescents have grown so different from children on the one hand and adults on the other that a brand new name has had to be coined for the new and improved model, a name so new—it is only about thirty years old—that it is not yet in the best dictionaries: the teenager.

The teenager is closely associated in time with the steam engine; he (or she) is also causally related. I don't mean the obvious facts that they both generate a lot of noise and heat and blow off steam. Nor do I infer that they *both* do useful work nor that as machines their mechanical or thermal efficiency is about 20%. I mean that teenagers, like fall-out and nuclear missiles, are an important result of the Industrial Revolution. Let me explain.

Before the Industrial Revolution, the family was, in general, the economic unit. Children lived at home and worked at home, with their parents and under parental authority. The carpenter's shop

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adjoined his house. The merchant's warehouse and office were attached to his house. Even apprentices, though not in their own homes, were boarded in someone else's.

Education was centred in the home. The children of the poor and of the lower middle class learned on the job, doing housework, and picking up from father and mother the skills which would later yield a living. The sons of the aristocracy, the wealthy, had private tutors. Well, not quite all. In England, for example, there were a few public (or rather private) schools mainly for the upper classes and mainly for younger sons and problem children. They were even more turbulent than university campuses today and at times the authorities of Eton, Winchester and other centres of learning had to call out the army to restore order.

The Industrial Revolution took workers out of the home and placed them in factories and other centres of mechanical power. It gave employment to parents and children, especially the older children, the teenagers. At first there was a tendency, both in the mines and factories, to work in family units with father as the boss-boy. But very soon the family was broken up and young people came to work together in ever larger groups. This working together created a feeling of solidarity. Factory Acts, aimed at improving their terrible hours and conditions of work, tended to separate them further from the adult population.

So much for the working class. What of the middle and upper classes? The rapid rise of a new wealthy middle class, the reform of public schools under men like Arnold of Rugby, the demands for rulers for an ever-expanding Empire, made the public residential schools very popular. As Harold Laski has said: They produced gentlemen when gentlemen were a marketable commodity. These schools shed their younger pupils to separate institutions—preparatory schools. They themselves became concentrations of teenagers governed largely by teenagers—prefects. Hence they emphasized the teenager as a separate group.

The Industrial Revolution, through the application of science to technology, medicine and other spheres, led in time to an enormous improvement in the standard of living and of health. In the long run, though for many not by any means the short run, it gave us more food, better clothing, better bodily care, a richer material life. We fathers may boast about our athletic and other bodily achievements, but our children are bigger and stronger and more physically mature than we were at their age. Western European statistics, particularly from Norway and England, show that the adolescent boy of today is an inch taller than his father and two inches taller than grandpa.[1] Boys and girls reach puberty about a year earlier than their parents

did and two years earlier than did their grandparents. In other words, teenagers are physically ready for marriage, are physically adults at a much earlier age than their forebears.

On the other hand, work nowadays has become or, note this, is believed to have become, more complicated. Father's work is, we are told, much more specialized than grandpa's. The rising generation's work will be more complicated—much more. Grandpa and great-grandpa learned by working on the family farm, a very simple farm. They planted and trusted to luck. They turned the animals out to breed and to fatten—or to wither and perish. They waited till the rains came—or didn't come. Or they were employed in a workshop, and a very simple workshop. They learned on the job; they were taught, in so far as they were taught, by father.

Teenagers, or so society holds, cannot learn that way today. We have compulsory education to a later and later age. We have lengthy, elaborate apprenticeships. We have technical colleges with courses that increase in length and difficulty. We have high failure rates. Most of our university students will be lucky to achieve economic independence by the age of 21 or 22, some nine years after puberty. For some alas! it will be longer. We still have in our own university an odd old-age pensioner of thirty or thereabouts economically dependent on father or some other charity. Physically we are becoming adults earlier; socially we are held back; socially we remain dependent, and nobody, and certainly not a teenager, likes that.

The situation is complicated by strong and well-founded suspicions. Is industry so much more complicated today than it used to be? Isn't it for many really much simpler? Compare the work of an assistant in a departmental store with that of the old village shopkeeper. In the old days he had to know cheeses, to carve exquisitely slender slices of ham, to twist paper packets, to know about Mr X's corns and when Mrs Y was expecting. Today you point to or pick out the pre-packed articles you want. She (note the change of sex) looks at the hieroglyphics on them, prods the corresponding keys of a cash register, turns the handle and hey presto! It may be fanciful but I suggest that our psychology department, in a short intensive course, could impart some of the skills demanded by today's labour market to unselected chimpanzees and rats.

It is widely considered that apprenticeship is on the whole a wasteful and protracted method of instruction and that the constantly rising standards of entrance to many occupations are not educationally justified. They are, it is felt, designed to safeguard the older worker, the entrenched worker, against the adolescent and young adult. In my own profession, the retiring age has been in my time raised from 55 to 60 to 63 to 65. It looks like going up to 70.

These steps, I may add, have not been taken by adolescents or young adults whose place in the queue of life is adversely affected by them.

The teenager and young adult have no doubt about their capacity to do anything as well as, nay, better than, the older adult. And they have some support from biology, medicine and psychology. In adolescence, as Musgrave[2] reminds us, we attain physical maturity, the height of our sexual powers, the peak of intellectual capacity. And what then? *Post molestam senectutem.* From 25 comes senescence, 'the long weary twilight of approaching death'. All these characteristics are open to objective verification.

What can the older generation oppose to them? Experience and wisdom? Great qualities but regrettably not readily susceptible to rigorous verification.

At the same time parents have complicated the situation in a contrary direction. In pre-industrial days the family tended to be patriarchal. Father was boss. He knew what was right and what was wrong; he knew what he wanted; from his children he exacted obedience, prompt and unquestioning. If ever in doubt he reached for his infallible guide, the Bible, preferably the grimmer portions of the Old Testament and, according to its directions, he lovingly admonished or chastised.

Industrialism has changed him. The more industrially advanced a country, the less authoritarian the father. The cultural clashes of city life, of travel, of education, of the mass media, convulsions like the two world wars, have shaken him. Moreover, unless he is a farmer or a merchant prince he no longer runs the joint family economic enterprise, he no longer controls the means of production. Thus he is no longer so sure of himself. He is less inclined to order, to command; he is more inclined to argue, to persuade, to suggest. Some of us broken-spirited fathers do none of these, but just 'trust and obey for there's no other way'.

This tendency—to be permissive rather than authoritarian—is more marked in the U.S.A. than in South Africa. It is more marked among city people than among farmers; it is more marked among English-speaking than among Afrikaners, more marked in the middle class than in the working class. So students from the English-speaking, city-dwelling, middle class have the most permissive of fathers. But our whole society is going this way.

In short, the modern parent gives teenagers their freedom. In the memorable words of Jean Paul Sartre we are condemned to be free. Freedom is a wonderful gift but it is a monstrous burden for anyone to bear, particularly a teenager, and more particularly a female teenager. It means making choices, and choosing is fearfully hard.

Before the Industrial Revolution most people lived in the country, in rural areas. In 1800 one-fifth of all English people lived in towns, and often not very big towns; now four-fifths of them live in towns and cities. Our Industrial Revolution was about a hundred years later. In 1904, a quarter of our population, of all races, lived in urban areas. By 1960, nearly half of us, of all races, did so. Keeping in mind the enormous growth in population—it doubles every thirty years—we find that there are now six times as many South African town-dwellers as in 1904. The conventional picture of a White South African as a weather-beaten son of the veld, as a farmer, is a myth. Five Whites out of six live in towns and cities.

Our schools become larger. They cater, not as they used to do, for all children, but for increasingly narrowing age groups. Thus we make young people, and especially teenagers, more aware of themselves as distinct social groups. We emphasize this distinctiveness by uniforms, by age-group organization of work, by youth groups, increasingly segregated according to age. Even when they do not reside at a school we isolate them through homework, through plays and galas, etc., etc. This is not to deny these often excellent mores and institutions. But they do isolate teenagers from the mainstream of adult work and life.

I have said that economically teenagers are long dependent on their parents. But, in the working class and perhaps the lower middle class, this is true only up to the minimum school-leaving age. We live in an era and in an area of economic expansion and full employment. Industry is short of labour and often makes the most tempting offers to adolescents. From about sixteen, despite what I have already said, many working-class and lower middle-class teenagers are economically independent. Indeed the process goes further.

Whatever adolescents may sometimes feel, parents generally love their offspring. They want their children to lead fuller, happier lives than they (the parents) did; they don't want to exploit them; they want to give rather than to get. Many parents, particularly in the working class, demonstrate their love by allowing their sons and daughters, even when they are earning high wages, free board and lodging. Others let them pay very little. Thus, often the teenagers are better off than Dad, and sometimes rather contemptuous of their poor old stick-in-the-mud of a father who spends all his money on such dull sordid unimaginative things as rent and rates, butcher-meat and milk, bread and potatoes and dental care—for the whole family. A researcher, Mark Abrams,[3] calculated that in Great Britain such teenage boys have about R7 per week free spending money—girls rather less. This money, to do what they like with, comes to nearly R17 million rands per year. In the U.S.A. the

twenty-four million teenagers spend annually in this way something over nine thousand million rand—rather more than the entire South African national income.

And so we have come, within the last generation, to a new form of commercial enterprise, the exploitation of the teenage field. We have Carnaby Street and Twiggy and a host of others pushing teenage clothes—Edwardian drapes, stovepipes, baggies, minis and maxis, not to mention lipsticks, jungle perfumes, beehives, charm schools, pimple-removers and other appurtenances to 'with-itness'. We have Beatles and Shadows and Rolling Stones, Springbok Radio and Lourenço Marques, peddling, nay plugging, top-twenties and star-ratings in records and films. And, of course, we have buzzbikes and racing jobs, old crocks and student specials. All these tend to intensify a distinctive teenage culture and to isolate the group from the normal adult mores and folkways.

Until the coming of industrialism, societies, at least in Europe, tended for centuries to be rooted in the same spot, in the same geographical location. People were born, grew up and died in the same village, often in the same house. Their fathers, their grandfathers, probably lived and died there before them. Their farthest probing of outer space may never have carried them beyond the nearest market town, say twenty miles from home.

It is different today. An indefatigable American research worker made a detailed study of that not very exciting text, the telephone directory of Chicago.[4] He found that the average subscriber (representing more than half the population of the city) spent 2.83 years at the same address. Probably South Africans are less mobile though in Johannesburg, for example, many frugal citizens find it more economical to move frequently and unostentatiously than to pay rent on the house or hire-purchase on the furniture.

Consider the effects on youth. Attachment to the home, to the place of birth, is one of the most stabilizing influences in human society. Homesickness is a poignant but most praiseworthy emotion.

Literature abounds with references:

I remember, I remember
The house where I was born,
The little window where the sun
Came peeping in at morn . . .

or

Mid pleasures and palaces
Though we may roam,
Be it ever so humble
There's no place like home.

Yes, but which home? If he's moved every 2.83 years, even an adolescent must have rather confused and disrupted recollections.

When these numerous homes are also broken homes, the degree of isolation is intensified. In pre-industrial days divorce was unheard of; now in South Africa it happens to one marriage in seven, and in the U.S.A. close to one in four.

The father's occupation is now often remote from the home. The railway train, the bus, the motor car have enabled us to live farther and farther from our place of work. To some degree one can measure the affluence of a family by its distance from the city centre; the railway station, Town Hill bottom, Town Hill top, Sweetwaters, to the rarefied heights of Hilton. The father is often away from morning till night—a stranger to his own family, though perhaps the balance is being restored by shorter hours and longer week-ends. The main direct effect is probably on the younger children and does not immediately concern us here. The adolescents may well be out of the house as long as the father.

But, as Dewey, Washburne and others have shown, there has been one profound effect on teenagers of the removal of work from home to some remote point. Young people used to be familiar with the processes by which life is maintained. They saw their own family and the neighbours engaged upon producing food, clothing and shelter. They learned from their earliest years the interdependence of human beings. If the hunter came home empty-handed, no meat. If the baker had a heart attack, no bread. Further, they had a stake in these activities; they took part in them. In short, they belonged. Now they are on the periphery, spectators not participants. The processes by which life is maintained in a city are too remote, too impersonal, too complicated to be apparent or comprehensible to the child or teenager. In typical human fashion, they take things for granted. They do not realize their dependence on others. They are desocialized human beings.

I need not remind you that what economic forces have done to the Whites in our country, the same forces, reinforced by ideology and legislation, have done to the non-Whites—in greater measure. Our African locations are farther and farther from employment centres; our migratory labour system removes the father—a traditionally authoritarian father—for long intervals from more and more homes.

Living in cities, urbanization, has conferred greater freedom upon adolescents in that it has relaxed adult supervision. Paradoxically, the less populous an area, the less privacy. That's why criminals on the run make for the Big Smoke. In the countryside in the olden days if one bathed on the Sabbath, went strolling not alone down Lovers'

Lane or danced twice in succession with the same partner, one could be sure that, before nightfall, the postmistress or other custodian of public morals would have conveyed a circumstantial and highly coloured report to one's parents and the community at large. In the city, one need but go round the next corner and a cloak of anonymity and privacy enshrouds one. We have found in Durban that quite often parents do not know their children's friends. Some teenagers, it is reported, may spend a night or more away from home without informing, or even alarming, their parents.

The motor car and the motor bike have intensified this freedom. Even rural teenagers can now whisk themselves—and their companions—speedily and easily away, if the battery will start, from the vicinity of the home and its vigilantes. The motor car has a further influence. With its seventeen to seventy horses champing at the accelerator-foot it can act as an intoxicating power symbol upon rebellious youth.

I have tried to suggest to you some of the main forces which have moulded this social group. How do teenagers react to their situation? David Matza[5] neatly summarizes a fairly general sociological view. Teenagers, he says, react in one or more of three distinct ways:

First by delinquency and crime. Crime, as someone has said, is an ideal means for anyone to cock a snook at society and to acquire status. You may be a nonentity but if you poison your wife or hold up a bank, people do at least have to take notice of you. In some teenage groups one acquires a certain cachet, a certain prestige from having defied society by committing a crime, and even greater distinction if one has been 'shopped' for it. Gang fights between mods and rockers, ton-up boys and surfers are not very frequent in our environment, but even in Maritzburg we have light skirmishes and duels between members of rival groups. We don't seem to have much resort to flick-knives, drink or drugs. But we do have doctored silencers, hot rods, cutting-in and cutting-out on the highway, exuberance at dances and—something new to us older people—gate-crashing of parties and, sometimes, taking over from the hosts. But, in point of fact, there are relatively few teenage delinquents and criminals, probably not more than 2% or 3% of the whole teenage population. Our tentative inquiries in Maritzburg and Durban seem to confirm that there is singularly little teenage violence and crime. Our teenagers are nearly all law-abiding and not too obstreperous.

Secondly, they may respond by radicalism. People of teenage have always tended towards protest, towards revolt. Boys and girls have always claimed to know better than their elders. The present teenage generation in the Western World—it is doubtful if one should include

White South Africa—is even more rebellious than has been traditional. It has been called the rebel generation, the sceptical generation. There is a stronger tendency than perhaps ever before to protest against parents, against institutions, against the establishment, against 'squares'. Ban the Bomb, Ban Polaris Missiles, Anti-Vietnam, Civil Rights, Defiance Campaigns, Protest Stands and Protest Marches are but some of the activities which attract ardent youth.

Well, no sane adult, (and, to the best of our knowledge, some adults are sane) can maintain that this is the best of all possible worlds. Rebelliousness in youth, the generous flame—up to a point, at any rate—is not only understandable but may be positively desirable, indeed, laudable.

Thirdly, teenagers may respond by bohemianism, by a retreat from society, by an opting out of it, by an irregular and unconventional attitude to life, by disregarding and, indeed, flouting, the customs and conventions, particularly of their parents. The beatniks and flower children of the Californian coast and the great metropolitan areas are the most vivid example of the Bohemian cult, but even here in Maritzburg we have our own local manifestations.

Take hair. Teenagers experiment with its colour and arrangement. They let it grow longer and more diffusely than is conventional. Admittedly, school and university teachers find that scholastic efficiency is in proportion, inverse proportion, to the length and distribution of the hair. But need we adults be quite so censorious? After all, Drake and Samson didn't favour crew cuts, and Blake and mightly Nelson tied it in ribbons.

Take clothes. Our Beau Brummells favour scarlet and gold, but so did Wellington's guards and Rob Roy. Both sexes have adopted jeans—not so long ago the apparel of the under-employed, underprivileged American hired man. Young men get themselves up like shipwrecked mariners or lumberjacks; our maidens aspire to outrival—I almost said outstrip—the houris of the Mohammedan paradise.

Then there is language. It changes even more rapidly than fashions in clothes but, in Pietermaritzburg, this venerable seat of law and learning, father may be the 'old toppie' and mother the 'old queen' or even the 'old goose'. Girls are 'dollies', 'stukkies' and 'broads'; if specially well-mannered they are 'society stukkies'. An adolescent African is, regrettably, a 'jungle'.

In emotional crises, when, say, his stukkie has buckled with a jawler (or married a more 'with-it' young man), when the ura (or police) have given him a ticket, or a thoughtless hairdresser has

cut deep into his side-burns, the teenager is mindful of Kipling's exhortation to:

> Meet with Triumph and Disaster
> And treat those two imposters just the same.

In other words he faces life undaunted, with sang froid, as Cliff Richard or Elvis Presley would; at all seasons he aims at the supreme virtue: 'to play it cool'.

To sum up. Within the past two centuries, circumstances, mainly economic, have separated from society, have isolated from the main activities of mankind, some of its members at the very height of their physical and mental powers. Their non-participation as full active members of the community, their sometimes active opposition, must serve to impoverish society. How can we draw them into the main stream?

Should we make a fresh appraisal of the needs of the labour market? Are we forcing on most young people too much education or the wrong kind of education, too much technical or occupational training or the wrong kind? Or would limitations on education and training merely entrench privilege and social injustice? In our schools and in our leisure activities are we isolating adolescents too much from other age groups? In short, are we segregating young people unduly from the work and responsibilities of society?

Whatever the educational needs of the bulk of our teenagers, the upper echelons, the meritocracy, we must assume, will no doubt have to resign themselves to longer and more rigorous education. But is it necessary or desirable to cut them off so greatly from the general life of society? When the demand for popular education led to the founding of residential colleges in Victorian England these were regarded as a necessary evil, as an inferior substitute for day colleges. We today recognize the immense short-term advantages of the 'ivory tower'. Are we possibly overlooking some long-term disadvantages?

On the whole our most intelligent and ambitious teenagers are economically at a disadvantage as compared with their less intelligent peers. They may have free, or almost free, education but none of the generous free spending money that others have. Students in Britain, both youths and maidens, we are told, are often, for example, unkempt simply because they cannot afford the exactions of hairdressers. Should we pay our students, not just bursaries and scholarships, but an actual salary? (Provided of course that they do a fair day's work for a fair day's pay.) Should they have a voice, an effective voice, in the management of their institutions—not only of their so-called 'own affairs' but in the inner councils, in the corridors of power? The idea may seem rash, fantastic. And yet we give them the same responsi-

bility as we give adults, the franchise, in the management of the country. And we lay upon them even more than upon adults the duty of fighting and, frequently, dying for their country.

I raise these questions. I venture no answers. I don't know the answers. I don't know if there are answers.

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CRUELTY, CURIOSITY AND COMPASSION IN DANTE'S *INFERNO*

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'The three C's: Cruelty, Curiosity and Compassion, in Dante's *Inferno*.' It is with the last of these in particular that this inquiry wants to concern itself, referring to cruelty and curiosity only insofar as they are complements of and keys to Dante's concept of *pietà*.

It is doubtless because of—and not despite—the dominant and often blatant note of cruelty which pervades the *Inferno* that Dante commentators like to emphasize, by way of contrast, the one obvious and very moving example of *pietà* in Canto v (Paolo and Francesca). And indeed it is here that we most poignantly feel the beating of the human heart beneath the—dare we say—'armour' of that stern Cherub of Catholic Justice which, to many, Dante represents.

Yet even on purely philological evidence we must argue that *pietà* in the *Inferno* does not die after Canto v, nor, in fact, after Canto vii or xv, but reappears as late as Canto xxix, (v. *pio*, v. 36 and *pietà*, v. 44). Let us, however, move to a discussion on a different level, where our real difficulty arises when we want to propose that the idea of *pietà*, in a particular definition to be arrived at, pervades and indeed is an integral part of the whole of the *Divina Commedia*, for the purpose of this examination, the whole of the *Inferno*. Compassion, we would argue even on this ideological level, is carried to the nethermost pit of Hell to make its reappearance still in Canto xxxiii. We must eliminate from this discussion the instances of *pietà* in Canti i:21, ii:106, vii:97 and xviii:22, where, as philologists will agree, *pietà* signifies *affanno*, *tormento*, *pena* or *angoscia*, thus a passive and purely self-directed state which may or may not evoke pity but which is not, or need not be, consubstantial with the latter.

We can then proceed to explore the concept of *pietà* proper in its many and varicoloured modes and manifestations throughout the *Inferno*, in its many nuances of meaning and varied degrees of intensity, in some of its causes and some of its effects. At some time in our discussion we may find that cruelty, curiosity and compassion are often strangely and closely linked in the *Inferno* and that Dante—as poet and pilgrim—will have to resolve this *coincidentia oppositorum* in the long process of his purification. The systematic canto-by-canto examination which this study proposes naturally suggested itself as the most thorough method of inquiry.

Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita . . .

The opening note of the *Inferno* is one of confusion and fear ('Che nel pensier rinnova la paura,' v. 5) which, in turn, quickly leads to the first mention of pity in Dante's invocation to Vergil:

> Miserere di me, . . .
> Qual che tu sii, od ombra od omo certo! (vv. 65-66)

Vergil's reply to Dante in its quiet nobility and grand simplicity in turn evokes pity—mingled with awe and *vergogna*—in the poet, whom we now find weeping at the fate of him whom he lovingly and reverently calls 'lo mio maestro e'l mio autore' (v. 85). It may not be amiss to assume that when Dante says, at the end of Canto i:

> Che tu mi meni là dov' or dicesti,
> Sí ch'io veggia la porta di san Pietro,
> E color cui tu fai cotanto mesti (vv. 133-135)

there is already apparent a double motivation to follow his newly chosen master, that of fear and anxiety to escape his own terrible plight on the one hand, and that of curiosity, if not pity, on the other. For it is the sadness underlying Vergil's description of those who suffer in Hell and Purgatory which makes Dante all the more ready to follow him into the lower world. May we not say, then, that—viewed in a different light—this double motive represents but two different manifestations of pity: self-pity, of which the poet will soon struggle free, and pity for others, which will then find expression—if not already voiced—in Dante's attitude towards Vergil.

One might still argue that the second motive in Dante's willingness to descend into Hell is mere curiosity, a view tenable perhaps if we could confine ourselves to Canto i as a separate or separable entity. If, however, we contine our examination, we are struck by the fact that Canto ii opens with an explicit expression of *pietate* when Dante says,

> . . . e io sol uno
> M'apparecchiava a sostener la guerra
> Sí del cammino e sí de la pietate (vv. 3-5)

And immediately we are struck by the oxymoron, 'guerra de la pietate,' a war of which, furthermore, Dante is afraid. In order to reassure him, Vergil tells Dante of a higher power compassionately watching over the poet's journey, and we observe that Vergil in turn is carrying out, through pity, the command of this higher power:

> Dirotti perch'io venni, e quel ch'io 'ntesi
> Nel primo punto che di te mi *dolve* (vv. 50-51)

Upon Dante's expression of fear, and in striking contrast to it, there follows the speech of 'la donna beata e bella' (v. 53), inspired by love ('Amor mi mosse che mi fa parlare,' v. 72), and self-defined in the verses:

> Io son fatta da Dio, sua mercè, tale
> Che *la vostra miseria non mi tange*,
> Né fiamma d'esto incendio non m'assale (vv. 91-93).

Beatrice knows that *by the grace of God*—'sua merce'—she has risen above fear and hurt, risen also, perhaps, above *pietà*? We must remember, however, that if Beatrice comes as a manifestation of Divine Grace, she also comes upon the request of Lucia, 'donna gentil nel ciel che si *compiange*' (v. 34). Let us note further that, at the end of her speech, Vergil is made to observe:

> Poscia che m'ebbe ragionato questo,
> Li occhi lucenti *lacrimando* volse (vv. 115-116)

which, surely, is more than just another beautiful alliteration.

In this portrayal of Beatrice as the woman of love and tears, yet untouched by human *miseria*, we should like to see the key to an interpretation of Dante's concept of *pietà*, for here is raised the very important question of whether human and divine pity are perhaps two different things and whether both have a separately valid existence in Dante's mind. Here we must ask why *pietà* has the danger of contamination for Dante the pilgrim, while Dante the poet sees in it an exalted quality portrayed in the *pietà* of Lucia as in the tears of Beatrice. While we cannot resolve these questions as yet, it has now become quite clear that Dante is spurred on along the 'cammino alto e silvero' by his realization of a triple *pietà* guiding his steps: that of Vergil, that of Lucia, and, finally, that of Beatrice which he acknowledges in the verse:

> O *pietosa* colei che mi soccorse (v. 133).

As Dante enters the vestibule of Hell, he weeps at the sight of the great horrors suddenly confronting him, but surely these are not tears of pity. Vergil gives expression to his disdain for those unhappy spirits who continue their meaningless existence in Hell without hope of death:

> Misericordia e giustizia li sdegna (v. 50)

he says and urges Dante away:

> Non ragionam di lor, ma guarda e passa (v. 51).

But Dante's curiosity compels him to stop and look, and it is only when he recognizes Celestine V, 'che fece per viltà il gran rifiuto' (v. 60), that he can join in Vergil's indignation and condemnation of

Questi sciagurati che mai non fur vivi (v. 64)

It would seem here that Dante needs a point of identification with the sinner, a personal relationship beyond theological virtues, to take a stand towards a punished offence. While he feels indignation, his curiosity leads him to other inquiries, which are, however, followed by a sense of shame. As the Canto ends, the earth trembles and Dante swoons, perhaps only a dramatic convenience, allowing him to cross the Acheron as it were despite himself, but perhaps also a first sign of reproach and atonement for the excess of disdain and pride which had made Dante incapable of *pietà*. While he cannot show human compassion towards these *sciagurati*, he must never lose, as we shall find confirmed later, the capacity for that Divine *pietà* which is receptive to human misery while not being touched by it (v. Beatrice) and independent of personal identification.

When Dante awakens in Limbo (Canto iv), he is dumbfounded with fear, while Vergil turns pale with pity:

L'angoscia de le genti
Che son qua giù, nel viso mi depigne
Quella pietà che tu per tema senti (vv. 19-21).

Once again, is not pity born here out of the close identification with the sinners? We remember that his own beloved master, Vergil himself, is amongst those punished here. Dante is touched to a point where he feels a 'gran duol,' although he does not speak explicitly of pity, conforming to the atmosphere of nobility and *cortesia* reigning in this circle. Is there, perhaps, a latent expression of pity in the much debated verses:

Parlando cose ch'il tacere è bello
Sí com'era'l parlar cola dov'era (vv. 104-105)?

It is in the second circle or proper beginning of Hell (Canto v, in which *lussuria* is punished) that Dante pools all of his poetic and philosophic resources—the delicateness of his descriptions, the gentleness of Francesca's speech, the pathetic and all too human failing which brought condemnation upon her and Paolo—to produce the *Canto della Pietà*. Here everything speaks of pity. The very elements seem to feel it as the tempests stop for Paolo and Francesca that they may tell their tale of sorrow.

Pietà mi giunse e fui quasi smarrito (v. 72)

says Dante at the sight of those

Ch'amor di nostra vita dipartille (v. 69).

He calls the sinners by 'quello amor che i mena' (v. 78) and addresses them with extreme delicateness and sympathy in his

O anime affannate (v. 80).

Paolo and Francesca answer the call as they come as 'colombe dal disio chiamate' (v. 82). We notice Francesca's great *cortesia* and *umilta* in her opening words to Dante:

O animal grazioso e benigno (v. 88)

and remember that if she could, she would willingly pray God to have pity on him that had shown *pietà* towards her. The Canto closes on the very striking and memorable triple repetition of the word *amor*, the 'amor ch'al cor gentil ratto s'apprende' (v. 100), the *amor* which led Paolo and Francesca 'ad una morte' (v. 106), and above all, the 'amor ch'a nullo amato amar perdona' (v. 103).

Although these words are put into the mouth of Francesca, may we not assume (from internal as well as from external evidence) that Dante the pilgrim is here in complete agreement with the sinner? All the prerequisites for compassion are found in Francesca's speech: gentleness, *cortesia* and *umilta*. We know, moreover, that there is here an identification with the sinner's fate, for in it we may see a parallel to the dangers underlying (perhaps even undermining) Dante's own love for Beatrice. Nevertheless the question must be raised whether the pilgrim's compassion is admissible, or whether the 'amor ch'a nullo amato amar perdona' is not almost a justification of the sinner's sin and therewith a challenge to Divine Justice?

As the Canto ends, Dante falls to the ground 'come corpo morto cade' (v. 142), and we note that this time his fall is internally motivated and not brought about by any external phenomena (cf. Canto iii). We would like to see in it a double atonement for a twofold transgression. It seems apparent that in his very compassion Dante, led astray by his excessive curiosity, demonstrated extreme cruelty when urging Francesca to tell the story of her ill-fated love. ('Ma dimmi . . .,' v. 118 ss.). Perhaps he is punished, then, for this excess of curiosity, but can we not also say that even his compassion, which challenges the will of God, is punished in his fall?

There can be no dualism for Dante. Thus, as the pilgrim travels on through Hell and Purgatory, he will have to attain, with the purification of his love, a purification of his pity, for as he must unite his love for Beatrice with the love of God in a single passion, so also must he reconcile his human compassion with Divine Justice to experience the highest concept of Divine *pietà*.

Upon awakening in the third circle (Canto vi), Dante will point out that his mind, his reason had closed itself 'dinanzi a la pietà de' due cognati' (v. 2), for with his intellect he cannot yet grasp the meaning of pity. Vergil gives open expression to his disgust for the Epicureans and gluttons when he throws a handful of earth into the gullet of Cerberus. Dante the poet joins in this indignation by calling the sinners 'i miseri profani' (v. 21). But Dante the pilgrim cannot refrain from pity and says to Ciacco:

> . . . il tuo affanno
> Mi pesa sí ch'a lagrimar m'invita (vv. 58-59).

On notes the similarity with the Francesca episode but wonders whether the object of the pity here expressed is not perhaps Dante's native city rather than the sinner himself. In any case, it is interesting to see how curiosity once more gets the better of him when he says to Ciacco, as to Francesca: 'Ma dimmi . . .'' (v. 60).

In the fourth circle (Canto vii) of the prodigal and avaricious, where we find Plutus (unable even to utter intelligible speech), the bestiality of the sinners becomes progressively more pronounced. Yet even here there is a remnant of pity in Dante's

> E io, c'avea lo cor quasi compunto (v. 36)

although, of course, it is once more mainly his curiosity which makes him desire to see the punished.

It is in the circle of the wrathful (Canto viii) that Dante, for the first time, momentarily abandons all signs of sympathy and participates in the sin punished. He parries Filippo Argenti's arrogance with equal cruelty, indignity and wrath, so that this canto may bear out the assumption that *cortesia* and *umiltade* are prerequisites for any form of *pietà* whose surest opponents are arrogance and *superbia*. Dante's wrath may thus be a righteous anger, for theology teaches us not to show pity at the sight of justly punished sin. He is praised, embraced and kissed for his seemingly just condemnation by Vergil, the gentle Vergil who here likewise gives in to wrath and comments in biblical reminiscence:

> . . . Alma sdegnosa,
> Benedetta colei che in te s'incise.
> Quei fu al mondo persona orgogliosa;
> Bontà non è che sua memoria fregi (vv. 44-47).

But may not reason also err? In this fifth circle, the passage is suddenly blocked to both Vergil and Dante, and only by the intervention of a higher power can the way be re-opened to the poets. May we not consider the subsequent doubt, great fear and impotence

in the poets an atonement for their sin, a punishment of Dante's cruelty towards Filippo and Vergil's approval of Dante's wrath?

Pale with fear, the poets have to await the Messenger of Heaven, who will open the gate to them and pass on amongst the sinners, untouched by their filth. The question whether or not Dante and Vergil have been guilty is raised again in the appearance of the three Furies, followed by the verses:

> O voi c'avete li intelletti sani,
> Mirate la dottrina che s'asconde
> Sotto il velame de li versi strani (vv. 61-63).

One commentator (Grandgent) interprets this 'dottrina' as follows:

> A bad conscience (the Furies) and stern obduracy which turns the heart to stone (Medusa) are impediments that obstruct the path of every sinner intent on salvation. Reason (Vergil) may do much to obviate these evil influences, but Divine aid is necessary to dissipate them altogether.

Rather than 'obviate these evil influences,' does not Vergil provoke them as much as Dante? Both have participated in the sinner's sin, and indeed it is wrathfulness and 'stern obduracy' which blocks their road to salvation. This again does not mean that Vergil and Dante ought to have shown human compassion for Filippo (the angel himself, after all, did not), but it points to the fact that *pietà, pietà* in an abstract form, as a noble disposition of the soul to feel and receive pity, is necessary for salvation, and perhaps we have here the essence of that *pietà* which Beatrice and Lucia could feel, but which Dante has yet to learn.

In the circle of the heretics (Canto x), curiosity spurs Dante on to see Farinata, who opens on a courteous note, 'Piacciati di restare in questo loco' (v. 24), but soon speaks in a challenging tone, so that the conversation with Dante becomes, for a moment, a matching of wits. Yet there is still *cortesia*, if not *umiltà* in Farinata, and Dante, in turn, addresses him with the respectful 'voi' and refers to him as 'quell'altro magnanimo,' which is more than ironic commentary.

At this point, however, Dante is much more concerned with his own fate than with that of the sinners, and there is cruelty in his questioning, although it is, of course, Farinata himself who begins the interrogation. A further proof of his possible contamination and dangerous hardening is seen in the episode of Cavalcante dei Cavalcanti, who when courteously (and pathetically) inquiring about the fate of his son, is denied an answer by the pilgrim. Dante, however, recognizes his fault, feels ashamed and tries to make amends with the words:

Or direte dunque a quel caduto
Che'l suo nato è co' vivi ancor congiunto.
E s'i' fui dinanzi alla risposta muto,
Fate i saper che'l feci che pensava
Già ne l'error che m'avete soluto. (vv. 110-114)

As Canto xi only recounts the poets' passage into Circle vii and is but a theoretical exposition of the nature of the offences punished in the lower Hell, it need not concern us here.

In the seventh circle of violence, where the bestiality of the sinners is most apparent in the portrayal of the Minotaur, Dante the pilgrim remains silent, while Dante the poet can only exclaim:

O cieca cupidigia, e ira folle,
Che sí ci sproni ne la vita corta,
E ne l'etterna poi sí mal c'immolle! (vv. 49-51)

It is in Canto xiii, in the *bolgia* of the suicides, that we find once more that strange alliance of cruelty, curiosity and compassion which Dante had shown towards Paolo and Francesca, and, indeed, this episode of Pier delle Vigne recaptures in its loftiness and pathos much of the atmosphere of Canto v. It is curiosity and disbelief which first motivate Dante to inflict hurt, as he stretches out

. . . la mano un poco avante
E colse un ramicel da un gran pruno (vv. 31-32).

This curiosity is a cruel one soon abandoned when Pier reproaches Dante with the pathetic

. . . Perchè mi scerpi?
Non hai tu spirto di pietà alcuno? (vv. 35-36).

Pier's speech which follows is courteous, gentle and so moving that Dante, even when urged by Vergil to further inquiry and thus further cruelty, for once cannot speak,

tanta pietà m'accora (v. 84)

Love led Paolo and Francesca to damnation; a particular sense of justice and honour led Pier delle Vigne to suicide. If in the Francesca episode we see a parallel to Dante's own love for Beatrice, we may see in Pier delle Vigne a parallel to Dante's own exile, therefore, an identification. In both cases this deep sense of identity still enhances an already profoundly pathetic human tragedy which moves Dante to compassion. Pier delle Vigne is all the more pitiable in his punishment because he resigns himself to it with great humility in the recognition of Divine Justice, when he says:

Che non è giusto aver ciò ch'om si toglie (v. 105).

Equally pathetic in its humility is the plea of the Florentine who says to Dante and Vergil:

> . . . O anime che giunte
> Siete a veder lo strazio disonesto
> C'ha le mie fronde sí da me disgiunte,
> Raccoglietele al pié del tristo cesto (vv. 139-42).

And indeed Dante cannot go on (Canto xiv) before having gathered the scattered leaves, moved this time by the 'carità del natio loco' (v. 1), by the love for his native Florence, yet another means of identification which makes him all the more readily disposed towards pity. But how quickly do his feelings change, and how different is his attitude towards Capaneus, who addresses the poets in pride and fury. Like Farinata, he holds on to his *superbia* even in Hell and is therefore not ready to receive pity. But it is interesting to observe that—in contrast to Canto viii—neither Dante nor Vergil here indulges in hurling insults at the sinner. The latter contents himself with pointing out

> O Capaneo, in ciò che non s'ammorza
> La tua superbia se' tu punito (vv. 63-64).

Thus, while compassion is lacking, the idea of *pietà* in its largest meaning may not be absent in this aloofness of the poets which makes them acknowledge Divine Justice. They remain receptive to the suffering of the sinner without, however, partaking of it. And again we remember the

> La vostra miseria non mi tange

of Beatrice.

But human misery still *does* touch Dante very much. He has not yet risen above it whenever he can feel an identification with it. Thus it is with great beauty, warmth and respect that he portrays his friend Brunetto Latini (Canto xv), a noble soul doomed by but one tragic flaw. Brunetto's speech shows humility, courtesy and affection when he first addresses Dante as 'O figliol mio' (v. 31, a phrase twice repeated). Dante in turn walks bowed in reverence while listening to Brunetto's prophecy, full of friendship and love:

> E s'io non fossi si per tempo morto
> Veggendo il cielo a te così benigno
> Dato t'avrei a l'opera conforto (vv. 58-60).

Dante answers this proof of good will with gratitude in his words:

> Se fosse tutto pieno il mio dimando
> . . . voi non sareste ancora
> De l'umana natura posto in bando.
> Che'n la mente m'è fitta e or mi accora
> La cara e buona imagine paterna
> Di voi . . . (vv. 79-84).

We note the attitude of filial love and reverence which Dante maintains towards his friend (as to Farinata, he uses the 'voi'), while morally he has to condemn him. There is here, certainly, much of love and of regret, and if the word 'pity' is absent from this canto, the idea of *pietà* is nevertheless exemplified in Dante's portrayal of and attitude towards Brunetto.

Love of his native city is once again the connecting link between Dante and the next group of sinners (Canto xvi). The fate of these noble Florentines moves him so deeply that he is ready to throw himself among them, partly perhaps out of curiosity, but in good part also from compassion. It is only fear that keeps him back:

> Vinse paura la mia buona voglia
> Che de loro abbracciar mi facea ghiotto.
> Poi comminciai: Non dispetto, ma doglia
> La vostra condizion dentro mi fisse.
> .....
> Di vostra terra sono; e sempre mai
> L'ovra di voi e li onorati nomi
> Con affezion ritrassi e ascoltai (vv. 50-53, 58-60).

It is noteworthy that Dante the poet here speaks of 'mia *buona* voglia,' and that even Vergil urges Dante to reverence (vv. 14-18), if not to pity. The canto closes on the mysterious and much discussed symbol of the cord which Dante, at Vergil's bidding, has to cast away before descending further into Hell. Amongst the various possible interpretations of this act, Mr Grandgent's view of the cord as the symbol of pride and self-confidence seems a plausible one.[1] If we accept his interpretation, it may aid us further in our discussion of Dante's concept of *pietà*. For as he proceeds ever more deeply into Hell, as the sinners become more beast-like, the pilgrim must beware not to fall back into the fault punished in him before, namely, an excess of pride, self-confidence or self-righteousness. As the bestiality of the sinners becomes ever more pronounced, the pilgrim will require an ever greater measure of humility to remain open to their sufferings and to attain that ideal of *pietà* which remains receptive while impervious to contamination.

The usurers of Canto xvii (to be recognized only by their money-bags) no longer really have a separate human existence. Dante passes amongst them silent and alone. He looks and listens, but cannot feel compassion and thus leaves their midst with only a heightened feeling of fear. Likewise, when he reaches the circle of the panderers, seducers and flatterers (Canto xviii), Dante only 'guarda e passa'. He remains the silent observer, refraining from expressions of both pity and scorn.

As Canto xix opens, Dante the poet finally voices his great disdain for the simonists, 'che le cose di Dio . . . voi rapaci' (vv. 2-3) and fully approves Divine Justice when he says:

> O Somma Sapienza, quant'è l'arte
> Che mostri in cielo, in terra e nel mal mondo
> E quanto giusto tua virtù comparte! (vv. 10-12)

While Dante sometimes condemns the office a person holds without condemning that person himself (Guido da Montefeltro, perhaps Ulysses), the reverse is also true, as we see in the example of Nicholas III, of whom he says:

> E se non fosse ch'ancor lo mi vieta
> La reverenza de le somme chiavi
> Che tu tenesti ne la vieta lieta,
> Io userei parole ancor più gravi (vv. 100-103).

Here (as in the case of Boniface, *Purgatorio* xx, vv. 86-93) Dante is very careful to remain courteous to a man whom he hates because he respects the office which he held on earth, the 'somme chiavi.'

Qui vive la pietà quand'è ben morta

In the first nineteen canti of the *Divina Commedia*, we have thus seen the juxtaposition of two conflicting ideas of *pietà*, one an unchanging *Leitmotif*, against which the other is modulated as a theme recurring with many variations. Against the ideal of Divine *pietà*, exemplified by Beatrice, we saw Dante's own reactions to the sinners, sometimes indignant and scornful (Canti iii, viii), at others profoundly compassionate (Canto v). Dante's pity may be aroused by a love for his country ('la carità del natio loco'), by a tie of friendship with the sinner (Canto xv), or by a personal identification with the situation portrayed (Francesca, Pier delle Vigne). Yet both attitudes, scorn and human compassion, are wrong, as we see when for both of them Dante is made to atone.

Before descending into the lower depths of Hell, Dante, we saw, had to cast off pride and accept extreme humility in order not to fall back into his previous sins of compassion or scorn (Canto xvi). Having done so, does he now only look and continue on his way ('guarda e passa' Canti xvii, xviii), and has he perhaps reached that purification which would lie somewhere in between or above human compassion and superhuman disdain? In this illusion we are soon undeceived.

In Canto xx are confronted the two conflicting ideas of *pietà* (expounded in the previous episodes) in the one powerful, striking and much-debated verse just cited. When Dante sees the distorted figure of a sinner, he cannot hold back his tears, whereupon Vergil promptly addresses to him the stern and bitter reproof:

> . . . Ancor sei tu de li altri sciocchi?
> Qui vive la pietà quand 'è ben morta
> Chi è più scellerato che colui
> Che al giudizio divin passion comporta? (vv. 27-30)

The pilgrim is then urged to look upon these sinners without 'passion,' surely, here, a synonym of 'compassion.' And we are reminded that pity in the traditional sense of compassion which we feel at the sight of something pathetic—without considering the justness of God's punishment—is a theological offence. Thus Vergil may just mean to say, in disdain, 'You fool feel pity here when it ought long to be dead. Who is more wretched than he who, by his pity, would challenge Divine Justice?' This is the most frequent, and certainly possible, although to our mind incomplete interpretation of the verses quoted. For we would rather see in them the double concept of pity, human and divine, juxtaposed to show that the former has no rightful existence without the latter. Human compassion has, indeed, no place here, since it pities the punishment and thus questions Divine Justice. Dante is rebuked, then, because his compassion at this moment ought to be dead. But there is a pity which lives on even when compassion has died, and that pity is Divine Grace—sua mercè—, combining *giustizia* and *pietà* into one inseparable concept and existing here in opposition to and at the exclusion of human compassion, incompatible with it. And if we reread this verse as 'Here pity (Divine Grace) lives on when pity (human compassion) should be dead,' we have in it the juxtaposition of the two opposing poles of *pietà* which mutually define each other. If we accept this interpretation, we can see in this verse the key to an understanding of that pity which condemns and is above scorn and *passione* alike, and which for Dante—pilgrim and poet—represents the highest and ultimately only independently valid form of *pietà*.

Among the barrators (Canto xxi) Dante perhaps exhibits more fear than anywhere else in the *Inferno*, and yet he is obviously fascinated with the horrors unfolding before his eyes. His alarm is sometimes ascribed to an alleged resemblance of this canto's demons to Dante's own enemies in Florence (who, we remember, exiled him on false charges of barratry). But the pilgrim does not stop to speak to these sinners; thus there is no personal identification with the condemned, therefore neither pity nor scorn, but merely a strange fascination with the punishment itself.

This fascination, recorded in wonderful mock-heroic style ('Io vidi già cavalier muover campo,' v. 1),[2] is continued amongst the grafters of Canto xxii. While Dante the poet here cries out in anger: 'Ah, fiera compagnia!' (v. 14), the pilgrim is not concerned with the sinners, but with sights and sounds alone: 'Pur a la pegola era la mia intesa' (v. 16). He shudders, but curiosity once more makes him bid Vergil address the punished, while he himself remains silent.

Dante still refrains from speech as he proceeds into the *bolgia* of the hypocrites (Canto xxiii), up to the moment when Catalano addresses him as 'O Tosco' (v. 91). From the pilgrim's sudden reaction and the poet's subsequent affectionate description of his birthplace ('I' fui nato e cresciuto sovra il bel fiume d'Arno a la gran villa') we may infer that again it is the 'carità del natio loco' which makes Dante receptive to, if not compassionate with the sufferings of the punished:

> Ma voi che siete, a cui tanto distilla,
> Quant'io veggio, dolor giù per le guance? (vv. 97-98)

Only a few verses further on, the pilgrim starts out to say:

> O frati, i vostri mali . . . (v. 109)

and then, at the sight of one 'crucifisso in terra con tre pali' (Caiaphas, v. 111), stops short. From the preparation in the previous verses, as well as from the movement of this line which is identical with that of Canto v, v. 116 and Canto vi, v. 58 (where Dante expressed compassion for Francesca and Ciacco), we may infer that Dante here was about to express pity again. However, the cross is a significant and fit symbol to stop the pilgrim from the expression of compassion at the sight of this reminder of Divine Justice which he must not question, but strive to understand.

When Dante has reached the circle of the thieves, he is about to give in to exhaustion, when Vergil reminds him that 'più lunga scala convien che si saglia' (v. 55), whereupon he travels on, strangely fascinated once more by what he sees. He does not speak himself, but urges Vergil to address Vanni Fucci. How full of *superbia* and

wilful hurtfulness is this sinner's speech, how different his malignant prophecy from that of Brunetto Latini. But, even though far more aggressive than Farinata, he does not draw upon him Dante's verbal scorn or even reproach, nay even when Vanni shows himself to be the most blasphemous of sinners, a fact of which Dante is aware ('Per tutti cerchi de lo 'nferno scuri/Non vidi spirto in Dio tanto superbo'), he does not indulge in an invective against the sinner, but against the city of Pistoia:

> Ah, Pistoia, Pistoia, chè non stanzi
> D'incenerarti, sí che più non duri
> Poi che in mal fare lo seme tuo avanzi (vv. 10-12)

The image of Vanni's repugnance is thus born solely out of the poet's vivid physical description of him and of the sinner's own arrogance.

Dante finds himself next (Canto xxvi) amongst the evil counsellors who used eloquence for concealment of mind. Sorrow, shame and tenderness are mingled in the poet's words to his native Florence on which the Canto opens, and again love and a direct identification with the sin here punished evoke compassion in him:

> Allor mi dolsi, e ora mi ridoglio
> Quando drizzo la mente a ciò ch'io vidi;
> E più lo 'ndegno affreno ch'i' non soglio,
> Perché non corra che virtù nol guidi;
> Sí che se stella bonna o miglior cosa
> M'ha dato 'l ben, ch'io stessi nol m'invidi (vv. 19-24). ....

Dante's curiosity to see the sinners is a dangerous one, as we realize when he says:

> Io stava sovra 'l ponte a veder surto
> Sí che, s'io non avessi un ronchion preso
> Caduto sarei giù san'esser urto (vv. 43-45)

This is a dangerous fascination because the pilgrim is not yet immune to a contamination which would result in an expression of that human compassion forbidden by Divine Justice. And indeed one may ask whether in Dante's magnificent portrayal of Ulysses there is not a sense of admiration and sympathy, even to the point of compassion. Surely this time there is more than just avid curiosity (or 'baroque' intoxication) in Dante's speech when he begs Vergil:

> S'ei posson dentro da quelle faville
> Parlar, . . . maestro, assai ten priego
> E ripriego, che il priego vaglia mille

Che non mi facci de l'attender niego,
Feci che la fiamma cornuta qua vegna
Cedi che del disio ver lei mi piego (vv. 64-69).

The emphasis on the word 'priego' and Dante's readiness to bend towards the flame show the pilgrim in a light of great humility, the first prerequisite of pity.

Deep sadness is felt in Dante's words when he addresses Guido da Montefeltro (Canto xxvii) as:

O anima, che se' la giù nascosta,
Romagna tua non è, e non fu mai
Sanza guerra ne' cor de' suoi tiranni (vv. 36-38)

And there is deference and great *cortesia* in his words as he begs the flame to speak to him. This is the only time in the *Inferno*[3] that Dante makes good and evil spirits contend for the soul of a sinner, a device which, whatever interpretation we may give to it, clearly emphasizes the extreme delicateness of Guido's case (who by deceit of another became himself guilty of conceit). Here in Hell, Guido is courteous, humble and repentant. He acknowledges Divine Justice and walks in sorrow and shame. A man deceived, grieving, repentant, this certainly makes Guido as pathetic a case as Pier delle Vigne and Francesca, yet Dante refrains from a direct expression of compassion. Two opposed interpretations of this fact suggest themselves: Dante may have become cleansed of human pity, or he may have become so hardened through contamination with the sin that even the most pathetic example of human failing can no longer touch him. The great tone of sadness pervading this Canto would support the former, the canti following it might support the latter interpretation.

In the canti directly following this episode, the emphasis is once more on seeing, which in Canto xxviii is interrupted only once by Dante's scornful 'E morte di tua schiatta' (v. 109). As Canto xxix opens, the pilgrim is again reproached by Vergil for an excess of curiosity:

. . . Che pur guate?
Perchè le vista tua pur si soffolge
Là giù tra l'ombre triste smozzicate? (vv. 4-6)

And again there is a twofold imminent danger in the pilgrim's gazing, that of pity and that of scorn. Dante's tears at the opening of this Canto (v. 3) lead themselves to this double interpretation, and we learn that the former here is the more immediate danger.

A new and direct identification (of blood relationship) makes Dante feel compassion for Geri del Bello, his father's cousin, whom

he pities though he cannot speak to him. ('Ed in ciò m'ha el fatto a sè più pio,' v. 36). We note that Dante not only accepts Geri's vehement and threatening gesture, he even tries to condone it, and pity at this point is born without the prerequisites of *umiltade* and *cortesia.* Once more, even in this very bottom of Hell, the word *pietà* appears, though perhaps with its alternate meaning of *angoscia* or *affanno.*

> Lamenti saettaron me diversi,
> Che di pietà ferrati avean gli strali (vv. 43-44).

Dante's reaction to these 'strali di pietà ferrati' is significant: 'Ond'io li orecchi con le man copersi' (v. 45). He covers his ears to the cries for pity, not because he has now become hardened to it, but because he is still much too vulnerable ('lamenti *saettaron* me . . .') and knows that in listening he would be led to that expression of pity which would preclude his praise of the 'alto Sire, infallibil giustizia' a few verses further on.

Curiosity and fascination with cruelty reappear in Canto xxx, and immediately Dante is once more rebuked by Vergil, who ends the Canto with:

> Che voler ciò udir è bassa voglia.

Thus at the opening of Canto xxxi we find Dante ashamed, but unabashed in his curiosity, when he asks to be shown Briareus. Fascination, however, soon turns into horror at the sight of Antaeus, and a deathly fear (a fear of death) overtakes Dante as he is transported into the nethermost part of Hell.

Disgust and indignation are all he can feel as he enters the Ninth Circle. He is infected with its cold and cruel atmosphere, so much so that his unprovoked wrath expresses itself even in physical cruelty when he tears the hair from the frozen head of one of the 'weary and wretched brothers' (Bocca degli Abati).

Cruelty and sadness are mingled in Count Ugolino's opening remarks in Canto xxxiii, and on this double note he proceeds to set before our eyes his story, as overwhelming and magnificent in its horror and brutality as that of Paolo and Francesca was in its warmth and delicateness, and surely both episodes are equally profoundly moving. We note Ugolino's startling exhortation:

> Ben se' crudel, se tu già non ti duoli,
> Pensando ciò che'l mio cor s'annunziava!
> *E se non piangi, di che pianger suoli*? (vv. 40-42).

His appeal is not without effect, for his story does evoke both wrath and compassion in Dante the poet who launches a long and bitter invective against Pisa (vv. 79-90) and laments the unjust fate of Ugolino's sons (vv. 87-88).

But Dante once more participates in the sin punished and, prompted by his insatiable curiosity (which has so often led him to cruelty) practises treachery towards a traitor (Friar Alberigo). Even more disconcerting than his treachery, however, is Dante's own satisfaction with it when he says:

E cortesia fu lui esser villano (v. 150).

Why was it courteous to cheat the sinner? Clearly here Dante is not concerned with theological approbation, but with the sheer delight in cruelty. His joy does not express recognition, acceptance or affirmation of Divine Justice, but represents, rather, a return to his old pride and self-righteousness.

How prone Dante has been to the contamination by sin is pointed out when at the sight of Lucifer, Vergil warns him that here 'convien che di fortezza t'armi' (Canto xxxiv, v. 21). The pilgrim has not escaped the attraction of sin and remembers even now that Lucifer was once beautiful. It is only with great difficulty that he finally succeeds in wresting himself free from the lures of the *Inferno* to ascend to light, 'a riveder le stelle.'

We have tried to show that the concept of *pietà* pervades all of the *Inferno* and, indeed, all of the *Divina Commedia*. We have tried to explore the nature of this concept and have raised the question whether there were not two kinds of pity, human and divine, and whether both of these had not a separate and valid existence for Dante. We have attempted to point out that the prerequisites for any form of *pietà* must be *cortesia* and *umiltade*, opposed by cruelty and curiosity. We have argued that *compassione*, usually born of identification, is not the highest or purest expression of *pietà*. At various points in our examination we have touched upon a definition of the concept of *pietà* which would propose that for Dante, human compassion may have a separate, but not a separately valid existence, for the purest and only separately valid form of *pietà* is Divine Grace, exemplified in Beatrice. This pity which, we would claim, is very much akin to Dante's concept of love in its oneness of source, existence and direction, is the quality which, while making the mind open and receptive to all human suffering and sin, does not allow of participation in or identification with it. By its aloofness it recognizes, affirms and even includes the existence of one infallible justice with which it is in perfect harmony. It sometimes includes the idea of *compassione*, but it can also be in direct opposition to it (*Inferno* xx, v. 28).

Thus, although via a different method of inquiry and even disagreements on specific points, we have arrived at somewhat the same conclusion as Edgar Glaesser in his interesting *Dantes Pietas in der Wertwelt der Commedia*, in which he says (p. 49):

> Ja, das Wesen der *Commedia* selbst als solcher ihres Namens ist geprägt von der Pietas Dantes, geprägt von seiner der letzten Verantwortung enthobenen und dieser Enthobenheit demutsvoll bewussten Weltanschauung im Sinne der Theodizee; dies nämlich scheint der letzte und bedeutsamste Sinngehalt von Dantes *Commedia*-Begriff zu sein, dies Enthobensein von der Verantwortung und der Tragik eines Schicksals, dessen göttlicher Fügung nur der Geist der Demut und der Unterordnung gemäss wird.

While Dante the poet and philosopher has this image of Divine *pietà* clearly before his eyes when he first makes Beatrice say: 'La vostra miseria non mi tange,' Dante the pilgrim has yet to learn its meaning as he travels on through Purgatory and Paradise.

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[1] 'This rope must stand for something upon which Dante at one time built false hopes, but now, at the command of Reason, discards; something, moreover, to be appropriately replaced by humility, and, lastly, something which shall attract Geryon and bring him to view. This something may well be self-confidence, the opposite of humility; a seeming strength, which the poet formerly deemed adequate for the mastery of his faults . . . ' *Divina Commedia* (New York: D. C. Heath), p. 143.

[2] Note also the first instance of the Ariostian favourite: 'Di qua, di là,' Canto xxii, v. 148.

[3] But not in the *Commedia*. Cf. *Purgatorio*, Canto v.

NOTES ON THE SOCIOLOGY OF PUNISHMENT

by R. W. SMITH

Nothing seems more natural to us than punishment, nothing seems to require less explanation. Yet Nietzsche declared without hesitation that 'it is impossible to say with certainty today *why* people are punished'.[1] A century later we still know too little about punishment: could it be that punishment has seemed so natural to us because it has seemed so necessary? In any case, it is the task of the social theorist, as a kind of intellectual *voyeur*, to peer at those aspects of ourselves which are ordinarily kept out of view, curtained off, as it were, from the world. In the notes which follow I try to point to certain aspects of punishment—its functions, social variations, and consequences—, but no attempt is made to treat these problems exhaustively. The basic thrust of the notes, however, is this: punishment, rather than being an isolated event, reflects and mirrors all that a particular society is. Considered in this way, punishment becomes an index of the nature and quality of that society. Sketched from this perspective, a portrait of desperation emerges from modern society: a portrait marked deeply by lines of separation, constricted sympathy, and indifference.

I

Punishment is a symbolic expression of an inner state; a notation, a language by which society reveals its attitudes toward guilt. Punishment is thus a kind of theatre (it is certainly a *drama*) written by the society for its own instruction. To treat punishment as a form of compensation by which one exacts payment for a debt, as in *lex talionis*, is to instruct men in a private and pre-political view of society. On the other hand, the advantages of political society—even for those who violate the laws—become apparent when a few offenders have been thrust into the 'state of nature', when public protection has been withdrawn from the offender, exposing him to private vengeance. So it was with the man in olden times who was declared to have a 'wolf's head'[2] upon him, with the 'outlaw' on the American frontier, with the Communist in Indonesia after the abortive coup of 1965. In the hierarchical society, punishments are devised to convey, and to maintain, the immense social distance that exists between ruler and people. Consequently, in this type of society, men are necessarily

degraded to the level of the non-human: they are mutilated, trampled on by elephants, eaten by lions, smeared with honey and left as prey for flies. By almost total contrast, punishment in a republic consists, for the most part, of the deprivation of liberty and foreclosure on the right of participation; the prison, in fact, is a republican invention.[3] Moreover, sensing the seeds of violence within, some republics have abolished the death penalty, thereby instructing the people in the need for tolerance and non-violence. In punishment, then, one finds, expressed dramatically, the minimum foundations of the various types of societies.

II

We have commonly assumed, since the seventeenth century, that society is concerned with the external rather than with the internal, with the act rather than with the man.[4] In modern society, consequently, we have viewed punishment as a deterrent, a device for restraining behaviour through fear. Implicitly, we have accepted the idea that moral norms are conditions for action, that is, obstacles standing in the way of desire. Logically, punishment thus becomes a substitute for moral authority—the internal check on external behavior.[5] In fact, though, it is only where moral authority *has broken down* that punishment becomes simply a deterrent. Ordinarily, punishment is an expression of that general social ethos which Durkheim called the 'collective conscience':[6] the violation of a rule that society is attached to arouses the sense of nemesis, resulting in punishment more or less in proportion to the indignation felt. Punishment, consequently, not only deters those who regard social rules as conditions for action, but also re-awakens and intensifies the ordinary citizen's attachment to society. Punishment, which Durkheim notes, is above all designed to act on upright people . . .,[7] purifies society by increasing the sense of social solidarity and by heightening the individual's sense of virtue. It is highly significant, however, that Durkheim says nothing about eventual acceptance of the offender, who had been exiled from society as a result of his transgression. Punishment, it would seem, is a method of purifying society rather than of expiating the offence of the transgressor.

III

Modern society, on a manifest level, operates on the assumption that guilt is a form of debt: suitable compensation, usually in a non-monetary form, can therefore remove blame. Guilt is an act

separable from the person: the debt discharged, one can expect reconciliation with the other members of society. In practice, however, we operate on other assumptions. To describe a man as a 'thief', for instance, is not, in modern society, to say what he has done, but rather to describe what he is. His public identity is that of 'criminal': a man who not only will steal again, but, because he lacks respect for law, will probably commit other offences as well. His guilt cannot be compensated for; it has become cumulative. In this we do not depart so much from the metaphor of debt as might appear: rather we articulate another facet of economism, the stare of Medusa. By turning men into stone, that is, freezing them into solid and permanent categories, we force the offender to become regular, calculable, predictable. This certainty and economy of thought, however, comes with a price attached—it denies the offender the possibility of change and, consequently, the possibility of reconciliation. Like the Puritans of old, we brand the transgressor, condemning him to wander outside the confines of society. Indeed, Kai Erikson, in his excellent book, *Wayward Puritans*, argues that Puritanism has shaped the way one country at least (America) views the transgressor.[8] The old gods, in this account, ascend from their graves to dominate our lives. The explanatory power of Puritanism, however, is weak in this instance: the classic description of the 'thief' and his rejection is Sartre's portrait of Saint Genet in contemporary France.[9] Moreover, the Puritan rejection of the 'damned' rested on ideology; our rejection of the transgressor is a product of foreshortened identification. For us the sense of separateness is prior to nemesis; what we share is not each other, but rather an attachment to society. Nemesis, in reasserting the collective conscience, exploits the pre-existing separation: virtue now stands in sharp contrast with transgression. What we punish is not a man—who shares some resemblance to us—, but a transgressor—a being, as Durkheim put it, 'unlike us'.[10] Punishment takes on an impersonal quality: we punish 'without regard to the person in question, . . . without hate and without love, without personal predilection and therefore without grace . . .'.[11] In contrast to Yahweh's 'fervent quest for vengeance', we offer the 'impersonal retribution of *karma*'.[12] Punishment in modern society is without malice, but it is also without redemption.

IV

Punishment does not fulfil the rhythm (separation, transition, incorporation) implicit in the rites of passage:[13] the transitional stage of outsider becomes permanent. In an attempt to provide an exit from punishment, the social theorist has therefore offered an ideological

substitute for the ritual of acceptance. Freud, for example, seeks to pry open the door of reconciliation, using the leverage of punishment interpreted psychoanalytically.[14] Basically, psychoanalysis works toward reconciliation because it dissolves any sharp distinction between offender and offended: in accepting the transgressor we are accepting ourselves. Prohibitions, Freud argues, do not eradicate desires, but only control them through a more or less internalized, countervailing fear.[15] Consequently, we are emotionally ambivalent toward the rules laid down by society—not even the prohibition against murder has our full support. The primary reason we punish the transgressor is because his example is contagious, serving to arouse our own repressed, ambivalent desires to indulge our passions in prohibited activities. The transgressor tempts us and makes us anxious in the face of our aroused, fearful desire. Moreover, we ask ourselves, why should *he* be allowed to do what we are forbidden to do? We grow envious of the other.[16] Finally, to resolve the tension and eliminate the frustration that the transgressor has created in us, we punish him. 'If the violation were not avenged by the other members', Freud says, 'they would become aware that they wanted to act in the same way as the transgressor'. Punishment represses the source of temptation; it dampens the awareness of our own criminal desires. Yet the very punishment which is supposed to protect the community against the prohibited act, often is a repetition of it. Thus, under the cloak of expiation, the community gains the opportunity to commit the same outrage that led to punishment in the first place. In effect Freud asks: who really is the criminal? Despite this dark and unanswered question, Freud still accepts the throwing of stones: punishment is rational in that it prevents the dissolution of the community. At the same time, by stressing that the 'prohibited impulses are present alike in the criminal and in the avenging community', he dissolves the assumptions of virtue which stand in the face of reconciliation. Indeed, Freud suggests implicitly that the inability to accept the offender who has undergone punishment is an indication that we still view him as a source of contagion, i.e., that we have not yet got our own criminal impulses under control.

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[1] *The Genealogy of Morals* (1887).
[2] Dorothy Whitelock, *The Beginnings of English Society* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1952), p. 140.

[3] For a concise history of the prison, see Emile Durkheim, 'Deux lois de l'évolution pénale', *L'année sociologique*, Vol. 4 (1899-1900), pp. 65-95. He states that the prison, as the basic form of punishment, came into widespread use with the French Revolution.

Given the connection between the prison and the republic, it is perhaps not surprising that Alexis de Tocqueville went to the 'new world' to study both. Besides the better known *Democracy in America*, he wrote, with Gustave de Beaumont, *On the Penitentiary System in the United States and Its Application in France* (1833).

[4] Locke expressed this view most fully in *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689).

[5] 'Respect for the rule is an altogether different thing than the fear of punishment and the wish to avoid it . . . ' Emile Durkheim, *Moral Education* (1925).

[6] *The Division of Labor in Society* (1893).

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[9] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Saint Genet: Actor and Martyr* (1952).

[10] *The Division of Labor in Society*.

[11] Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (1922).

[12] ibid.

[13] Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (1909).

[14] *Totem and Taboo* (1913). The quotations below are from this work.

[15] This is a sophisticated version of the Lockean assumption, but, in Freud's hands, it is used as a way of defending the individual without, at the same time, becoming indifferent to him.

[16] This is the theme also of the Danish sociologist, Svend Ranulf. Moral indignation is a form of disguised envy; envy leads us to look for an opportunity to ruin others; punishment is the form that ruin takes. All of which Ranulf associates with the presence of a middle class. See, *The Jealousy of the Gods and Criminal Law at Athens* (1933-34), *Moral Indignation and the Middle Class* (1938).

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TIBERIUS GRACCHUS AND THE FAILURE OF THE ROMAN REPUBLIC

by M. M. HENDERSON

Recently the blame for the failure of the Republic has been laid on the Gracchi. In a stimulating book[2] Professor R. E. Smith maintains that 'the Gracchi by the means they adopted in pursuit of their ends precipitated a spiritual crisis in Rome which was the first cause of all that followed'.[3] According to Smith, as to Sallust, the destruction of Carthage, the removal of the *metus hostilis*, was the turning point. Rome found herself with a government whose minds were 'temporarily devoid of policy' from 146 until 133 B.C. They would not, he maintains, have been without a *ratio imperii* for long, but into this governmental ideological vacuum came Tiberius Gracchus offering a solution to Rome's social and economic problems, a solution worthy of 'a philosopher rather than a statesman'.[4] Tiberius Gracchus' aims were unoriginal; the tragedy lay in the fact that his methods were *not*. Until 133 B.C. the state had been characterised by harmony. Up to that point in its history, there may have been occasionally a conflict of interests between the various political groups and social classes, but men then were conscious of their ultimate loyalty to the State. In a conflict between their own ambitions and the interests of the State, the State always won. This harmony in the State was shattered by the Gracchi. Text-book reformers, they pushed forward with reforms against the wishes of the majority of the Senate, and the result was that Rome was split thereafter by the party strife of *populares* against *optimates*. The pressing problems of the State, the adaptation of the machinery of government to Rome's new role as a world power, were completely neglected until the Republic was dead, precisely because the Gracchi had forced the Senate on to the defensive. The next hundred years were spent trying to solve 'that irrelevant question' posed by the Gracchi, namely, 'who was to govern Rome'—the Senate or the People?[5] The Gracchi, vaunting their individualism, revolted against their society and brought about its destruction. Not so would have acted Scipio Aemilianus. He knew that the task of the individual was to strengthen society. This contrast between Scipio and Tiberius is stressed.[6] Scipio, we are told, showed clearly that Tiberius Gracchus had done a 'far more terrible thing than many historians suppose'

when, on learning at Numantia about the death of Tiberius, he cursed him, quoting Homer:

> 'So perish all others who do likewise.'[7]

There is much in Professor Smith's book with which it would be unwise to disagree. But his main thesis, that the Gracchi precipitated a crisis, is, it seems to me, untenable.

I do not intend to speak about both the Gracchi, since there are important differences between them which would be confused if they were dealt with together. In this paper I hope to show that Tiberius Gracchus was not set upon revolution. Tiberius, far from being a philosopher trying to foist alien ideas upon Rome, was very much a practical politician of his time. His methods (*pace* Smith) had been tried before. In these he was unexceptional. In his end he was not. Professor Smith bases a good deal of his confidence that the Senate (had the Gracchi not interfered) would have recovered its power after 133, on the supposition that, generally speaking, all had been well with Rome until the destruction of Carthage, and that prior to 133 there was harmony in the State. But if the political crisis goes back much further than 146 B.C.; if, in fact, the political malaise from which Rome was suffering was evident much earlier, then it will be apparent that the tribunate of Tiberius Gracchus marks not the beginning of the failure of the Republic, but merely the end of the beginning. Scipio Aemilianus, with whom Tiberius Gracchus has been contrasted, is not the antithesis of all that Tiberius Gracchus stood for, as Smith maintains, but in many ways his precursor. The question 'who was to govern Rome' was far from being irrelevant. If the government is so constituted that it is patently not fulfilling its duties then chaos is almost certainly bound to result. What is true is that the tribunate of Tiberius Gracchus, in many ways accidentally, brought to light the seriousness of the deficiencies of Rome's political structure.

What evidence, then, is there for the view that the destruction of Carthage was the turning point? Sallust, it is true (towards the end of the first century B.C.) searching for the first beginnings of the decline which was all too evident in his own time, fixed on 146 B.C. In the *Conspiracy of Catiline*[8] and in the *Jugurthine War*[9] he maintains that what destroyed Rome was a decline in *virtus* brought about by *otium* when a 'lust for imperium and riches arose'; until the destruction of Carthage Roman morals had been held in check by fear of the enemy (*metus hostilis*), and there was *concordia* (harmony) between the Senate and people. But after the destruction of Carthage the lust for, first, money and then *imperium* grew; the nobles gave themselves over to *ambitio*, *avaritia* and *luxuria*; and the State was

torn to pieces by opposing factions. The nobility mercilessly oppressed the plebs, and crushed the Gracchi who tried to assert the *libertas* of the plebs.[10] The Gracchi themselves were not blameless (et sane Gracchis cupidine victoriae haud satis moderatus animus fuit)[11] but the nobles were more blameworthy. Now Sallust's view of the period is obviously tendentious, for it interprets the politics of the second century as though it were the first, in terms of a conflict between *optimates* and *populares*. There is no evidence that the Senate at the end of the second century was as decadent as Cato depicts that of the first century. And Sallust is guilty too of idealising the first half of the second century. Evidence,[12] based mainly on Livy, shows a steady decline in morals, and more important, increasing political strife and trouble with the army throughout the century. Livy himself places the turning point in 187 B.C. when an army returning from Asia infected Rome with luxurious habits, luxurious habits which were the seeds of the corruption that followed. Polybius, writing in the middle of the second century and thus a contemporary witness of these events, thought that 'this present tendency to extravagance declared itself first of all because they (the Romans) thought that now after the fall of the Macedonian kingdom their universal dominion was undisputed, and next, because after the riches of Macedonia had been transported to Rome there was a great display of wealth both in public and in private'.[13] Polybius thus places the crisis in 168 B.C. Sallust rejects the idea that the crisis came earlier than 146 B.C. because he is concentrating on *concordia*. What is important to him is the start of the conflict between senate and people. This becomes more evident after 146, so in Sallust's eyes the decline begins then. But in looking for disruptive forces in Rome of the second century, Sallust, obsessed by the political conflicts of the first century (which were of *optimates* against *populares*) misses the most important disruptive factor. He chooses to ignore that in the second century Roman politics were characterised by a tussle for power amongst certain factions of the nobles. He may recognise that the Gracchi were *ex nobilitate*—members of the nobility; but he does not see that that is the crucial fact.[14] The decline in morality on which the ancient historians concentrated disguises something far more serious. The Romans tended to see a political crisis in moral terms.[15] If the State undergoes a political crisis, then a decline in morals must be the ultimate cause. But the factor which helps most to explain the catastrophe of 133 B.C. is not a decline in morals, but the increase, throughout the second century, of struggles between certain rival groups within the Senate, and of a growing disrespect for the law and the political *mores maiorum*. Politicians were attempting to overcome legal

obstacles placed in their path, and sometimes they succeeded. Some were prompted in their actions by base motives such as overweening ambition, others perhaps acted in the belief that if constitutional difficulties could be brushed aside for the advantage of individuals then there was a far stronger case for these obstacles being disregarded, if the common weal so demanded. To this latter category Tiberius Gracchus, I believe, belongs. That his tribunate ended in bloodshed was not due to his methods or his aims. Nor is the alleged degeneracy of the senatorial order the cause. What caused it was the system of *clientela*, the jealous fears of rival political groups and an accidental riot. Gracchus himself was not, by any means, innocent of blame; but he was not responsible for all that followed; and he had good precedents for most of the political tactics he employed—the very tactics which have, until recently, largely been condemned as revolutionary.

In 133 B.C. Tiberius Gracchus, a tribune of the plebs, brought forward an agrarian bill which proposed that a commission of three should distribute to landless Roman citizens[16] plots of land in the *ager publicus populi Romani*. Legally no one person was allowed to hold more than five hundred *jugera* of the *ager publicus*. In practice rich investors had taken over a great deal of it, mostly for pasturing. So Gracchus' plan was to reclaim all *ager publicus* held in excess of the maximum legal limit and to allocate it to the poor. In this venture Tiberius Gracchus had such powerful support within the Senate that one might be inclined to doubt whether the scheme *was* drawn up by him. Of his supporters the most important were Appius Claudius Pulcher (Tiberius Gracchus' father-in-law), the Princeps Senatus;[17] P. Licinius Crassus Mucianus; and P. Mucius Scaevola, (both of whom were later *Pontifices Maximi*). M. Fulvius Flaccus too was a supporter, as were C. Porcius Cato and C. Papirius Carbo. Such distinguished support from men who either held or were later to hold some of the most important offices in the State ought to make one chary of dismissing the bill and its author as revolutionary. Nor may one refer to the law limiting holdings of *ager publicus* as a 'dead letter', for Cato[18] specifically referred to the provisions of this law as recently as 167 B.C. If investors *had* contravened its provisions then they could hardly plead that they were unaware of the illegality of what they had done. The motives which Tiberius Gracchus and his supporters had for proposing this bill will be discussed shortly. What is important at this point is to describe briefly how he went about making it law.[19]

Gracchus took his bill directly to the assembly without consulting the Senate beforehand. Peasants flocked into Rome from the countryside to support the bill and the opposition too rallied its supporters.

When the bill was about to be voted on, the proceedings were vetoed by another of the tribunes, M. Octavius. At first, pressure was applied to make him withdraw his veto; but Octavius remained obdurate. So Tiberius brought public business to a standstill until the *lex agraria* should be passed. When, at the next meeting of the assembly, Octavius yet again vetoed the bill, Gracchus was persuaded to take the matter to the Senate; but discussions proved fruitless. Tiberius therefore proposed to the next meeting of the assembly that Octavius be deprived of his office; and since Octavius would not give way he was stripped of his tribuneship, a successor found, and the agrarian bill passed. The Senate retaliated by granting only a ludicrously small sum of money for the expenses of the agrarian commission. It is significant that this obstructionist tactic was proposed by Scipio Nasica. However, it did not stop Gracchus, for at that time there arrived from Pergamum an envoy bringing news of the death of Attalus III, and of his having made the Roman people his heir; Gracchus immediately proposed a bill appropriating this fortune to assist the agrarian scheme. The opponents of the scheme, thus foiled again, threatened to prosecute Gracchus once his term of office was over. Since there was every likelihood that they would succeed the only course open to Tiberius was to seek re-election to the tribunate for the following year. This precipitated a further crisis. The opposition threw itself into a vigorous campaign to prevent his re-election. On the first day of the elections something went awry —probably a veto was imposed on Gracchus' candidature. Both Appian[20] and Plutarch[21] agree that Gracchus made a last appeal to his supporters at this point. Appian has it that 'in utter despair he went about in black, though still in office, and led his son around the forum and introduced him to each man and committed him to their charge, as if he himself felt that death, at the hands of his enemies, was at hand'. On the following day the meeting was crowded— perhaps too much so. The Senate too was meeting in the temple of *Fides*. Reports came in to the Senate of disturbances at the elections, no doubt provoked by an attempt to veto Gracchus' candidature again. What exactly happened is difficult to discover; guesswork must suffice. Undoubtedly there would be outbreaks of violence among the tightly packed crowd. Evidently the opposition in the Senate, hearing an exaggerated report, concluded that Gracchus was resorting to violence to secure re-election. Scipio Nasica, failing to gain the support of the Consul (who was a pro-Gracchan) 'sprang to his feet and said: "Since then the chief magistrate is betraying the State, all who wish to succour the laws follow me," '—and led the opposition, armed with broken bits of benches, to the assembly. The fact that Nasica's supporters were not already armed with

knives shows clearly that they had not been planning to murder Gracchus; their aim was surely merely to break up the meeting and prevent his re-election to the tribunate. Whether there was any real disturbance before this we cannot tell. What is certain is that the arrival of Nasica and the armed Senators in the assembly provoked a bloody riot in which Gracchus and many others lost their lives.

It is, I believe, important to realise that the agrarian scheme, *as such*, had little to do with the political strife engendered by it. The crisis of 133 hinged upon the fact that one political group was making a bid for power, based on a scheme which might be of immense benefit to Rome; while another political group—indeed almost all the other nobles—could not afford to let this happen and were determined to stop it at all costs. All the major families—the Claudii Pulchri, Mucii Scaevolae and Fulvii—who supported Gracchus had throughout the second century a long history of political association, reinforced now by marriage ties.[22] Tiberius Gracchus was married to Claudia, the daughter of Appius Claudius Pulcher; P. Licinius Crassus Mucianus to Claudius' sister; and again Mucianus' daughter, Licinia, to Tiberius Gracchus' brother Caius. P. Mucius Scaevola and P. Licinius Crassus Mucianus were brothers.[23] In the past there had been, for instance, as Earl points out, a striking series of joint consulships held by Claudii and Sempronii which can hardly be accidental. The group then which supported Gracchus was a powerful one based on traditional political alignments. The same too can be said of their opponents. The Cornelii Scipiones, the Octavii and the Popilii were constant political associates. Of even greater importance is the fact that throughout the second century the Claudii and Cornelii Scipiones were of paramount influence in politics and, as is proved by *Plutarch's Life of Aemilius Paullus* 38, 3-5, they had always been enemies. Any proposal, therefore, emanating from the *factio* led by Appius Claudius Pulcher was certain to be opposed by the Cornelii Scipiones and their associates, especially if it were to lead to increased power and prestige for the Claudii. For, in the second century, the jealous fears of rival political groups had stopped many necessary proposals to reform Rome.[24] What the opponents of reform feared in each case was that the proposers would vastly increase their *clientela by* the *beneficia* they proposed to confer. Such an increase in *clientela* would upset the balance of power, perhaps permanently; no group of *nobiles* could afford to tolerate a reform—no matter how good—on those conditions. Colonisation may, for this very reason, have ceased in the second century.[25] Certainly the peaceful enfranchisement of the Italians was bedevilled by similar fears on the part of the nobility.[26] This resistance to reform was caused more by the nature

of Roman politics and the system of *clientela* than by any innate conservatism of the Roman nobles.

The clash of 133 B.C. was exacerbated by the fact that at the head of the *factio* proposing to redistribute *ager publicus* to the landless, there stood Appius Claudius Pulcher, the head of the Claudian gens. The gens Claudia had a bad reputation for arrogance towards rival *nobiles*.[27] The opponents of Tiberius Gracchus might well be forgiven for wondering to what lengths the *vis Claudiana* would go if the landless of Rome were put under an obligation to Appius Claudius and his associates.

One example of this *vis Claudiana* will help to illustrate this point. In 143 B.C. Appius Claudius Pulcher had claimed a triumph from the Senate, after his war against an Alpine tribe, the Salassi.[28] The Senate refused. Normally there were now two courses open: either to abandon the idea or to celebrate a triumph at his own expense on the Alban Mount. Claudian arrogance, however, would brook no obstacle. Claudius went ahead with the triumph he had been refused, taking with him in his chariot his daughter, who happened to be a Vestal Virgin. When a tribune attempted to drag him from his chariot and stop the triumph, the presence of the Vestal protected Claudius since violence would first have to be offered to her sacrosanctity before Claudius could be reached. Thus the Senate was foiled. The relevance of this to the tribunate of Tiberius Gracchus is clear. Much of the violence of the opposition may have derived from hatred of Appius Claudius Pulcher.

Any impartial assessment of Gracchus' tribunate—if such a thing is possible—must be based on a comparison of Tiberius' tactics with those of his contemporaries, and not on the *post-eventum* propaganda of his supporters or detractors. Granted that he showed an alarming tendency to push his bill through against all constitutional obstacles, what would his opponents have done in a similar situation? There is, I think, little doubt that they would have acted as he did. Some of his leading contemporaries were guilty of many of the crimes with which he is charged, and not least among the guilty is Scipio Aemilianus.

One of the most serious charges against Tiberius Gracchus is that he was steering Rome in the direction of ochlocracy by putting decisions on matters of national importance in the hands of a chance gathering of the Roman mob. Gracchus took his agrarian bill directly to the assembly without seeking the prior approval of the Senate. This was not illegal; it was not intended as a slight to the Senate; and it had a recent and distinguished precedent. For the *Lex Cassia* of 137 B.C. was (probably) an instance; this too was put through against the wishes of the majority of the Senate; and the

auctor of the bill was none other than Scipio Aemilianus.[29] In fact, among the political trends of the second century, besides a growing tendency to thrust aside legal obstacles wherever advantage could be gained, there was a trend towards using popular support in politics, and also to liberating the votes of *clientes* from the control of their *patroni*. We have already seen Gracchus stirring up popular support before the fatal election meeting. Exactly the same technique was used by Servius Sulpicius Galba in 149 B.C. in order to avoid prosecution.[30] 'He almost lifted on to his shoulders his ward Quintus, the son of his kinsman C. Sulpicius Galus, so that he should move the people to tears by the living memory of his illustrious father; he committed his own two small sons to the guardianship of the people and, like a soldier making his will on the eve of battle, said that he appointed the Roman people to be their guardian in their fatherless plight.'[31] But above all other groups in the second century the Cornelii Scipiones were characterised by their reliance on popular support, starting with the great Africanus himself;[32] and this is particularly true of Scipio Aemilianus.[33] At every point in his career Scipio Aemilianus relied upon the People for political advancement even to the extent of flouting the constitution. In 148 Scipio was a candidate for the aedileship for which he was qualified, but was elected to the consulship for which he was not.[34] 'This, (as Appian observes) was illegal, and when the consuls showed (the people) the law they persisted, *and became vehement and raised a clamour. . .* In the end one of the tribunes said that he would deprive the consuls of their right to conduct the elections unless they complied with the wishes of the people.' So the legal barrier was removed for one year on the instructions of the Senate. Astin[35] points out that such a result would have been impossible if the voting had been carried through in an orderly way. Scipio must have achieved this dramatic rise to power by using a mob of roughnecks to stir up a violent demonstration in his own favour. The passage in Appian (just quoted) together with Plutarch's *Life of Aemilius Paullus* 38.4 gives the game away. Here an anecdote is related about Aemilianus' canvass for the censorship of 142 B.C. Scipio is portrayed as 'bursting into the forum accompanied by men of low birth and former slaves . . . who frequented the forum and were able to gather a crowd and to force all issues *by shouting and inciting passions*.' The dangers inherent in such a practice are obvious. Again, when it came to the allocation of provinces for the consuls of 147 B.C., lots were not drawn, as was customary; the province of Africa was assigned to Scipio by the People—a foreshadowing of a similar interference by the People in favour of Marius during the Jugurthine War. Similar tactics also won Scipio the censorship. When Scipio at the end of 135 B.C. was

elected to a second consulship (despite the fact that at the time iteration of the consulship was forbidden by law) we need not wonder how he achieved his success.

Not only was the People being stirred up, it was also acquiring more power. The political power of the Roman nobility depended very largely on their ability to direct the large blocks of votes of their *clientes*. The introduction of the secret ballot would therefore strike at the very heart of their power. Yet in 139 B.C. we find Aulus Gabinius successfully carrying a law which made secret the ballot at the election of magistrates.[36] In 137 B.C. the *Lex Cassia* extended secret voting to all trials before the People except in cases of *perduellio*. And, as we have seen, this bill was strongly supported by Scipio Aemilianus. Scipio, we may be sure, was not trying to cut his own throat. He depended, unlike the majority of the nobles, less on *clientes* and much more on courting popular favour. He must, nevertheless, have been very confident that he could continue to win the support of the People. And this may be one of the reasons why opposition to the *lex agraria* came so strongly from the Scipionic group. For Tiberius Gracchus' proposal wrested from the hands of Scipio the favour of the People. Tiberius Gracchus' tribunate was not unusual in its reliance upon popular support. Yet there is an important feature of his legislation which is different. In canvassing for his bill Gracchus was offering the landless land; the unemployed gainful employment. He was not, like Scipio, merely furthering his own interests.

Nor is Tiberius Gracchus so unusual in his attitude to the tribunician veto. Admittedly no one before had gone so far as to depose a tribune while in office, but they had achieved the same effect by other means. We have already quoted the example of Appius Claudius Pulcher foiling a veto on his triumph by using a Vestal Virgin to protect himself, thus indirectly contributing to the idea that it was, in some circumstances, desirable to sweep aside this fundamental right of the tribunes. In 151[37] when certain tribunes had vetoed the levy, the consuls had to be incarcerated; this must mean, as Astin points out, that the consuls had actually carried on in disregard of the Veto. And again when M. Antius Briso vetoed the bill introduced by Cassius Longinus, Scipio Aemilianus induced Antius to withdraw his veto.[38] So that, as a background to the events of 133, we must remember that ways and means had been found in the past to get around a tribunician veto. Unfortunately in 133 Octavius remained unmoved by the pressure brought to bear by Gracchus, presumably at the insistence of the *factio* to which he belonged. For what it is worth, Plutarch[39] records that Octavius was not unmoved by Gracchus' entreaties but 'when he

turned his gaze towards the men of wealth and substance who were standing in a body together, his awe of them, it would seem, and his fear of ill repute' kept him firm in his purpose.

If ways had in the past been found of circumventing the tribunician veto, so had they, too, to avoid the obstructionist tactics of the Senate. Polybius,[40] in demonstrating that a consul does not, in fact, have the absolute authority he appears to have, since he needs the co-operation of Senate and people, points out that the Senate had the power to supply corn, clothing and pay—all of which could be withheld, if the Senate disapproved of a consul's plans. Yet Scipio Aemilianus had found a way to thwart the Senate's purpose. When in 134 B.C. the Senate refused Scipio permission to levy fresh troops for Spain or to give him the necessary money, Scipio retorted that 'he had no need of (their money); his own and that of his friends would suffice.'[41] And he went off to Spain with what amounted to a private army. The lesson, well learnt by Gracchus, was that if the Senate refused necessary finance then the money must be found elsewhere.

The history of the tribunate in the second century makes it clear that the tribunate of Tiberius Gracchus was not alone in striking a blow against the authority of the Senate.[42] The Levy was frequently the cause of the trouble, especially during the Spanish Wars. In 138 B.C.[43] tribunes had actually imprisoned Scipio Nasica who had thus good reason to abhor the renaissance of tribunician independence. (Smith will not allow action by the tribunes in connection with the levy to provide precedents for Gracchus' behaviour since here he maintains 'the tribunes were really exercising their primary function of protecting the people'.[44]) But tribunician initiative was not limited to the hallowed function of protecting the people; it had extended too to legislation which was unpalatable to the Senate.[45]

The methods adopted by Tiberius Gracchus have been impugned by historians in order to account for the vehemence of the opposition to his bill. Now we can see that his methods were not as revolutionary as they seemed, and also that the vehemence of the opposition may be explained in terms of conflicting factions. But before this was realised, it was argued that the agrarian bill was unexceptional, since Laelius had made a similar proposal shortly before 133 B.C.; hence the insistence on the revolutionary nature of Gracchus' methods. Since Laelius' proposal was, perhaps correctly, assumed to have the support of Scipio Aemilianus, herein lies the basis of the alleged contrast between Gracchus and Scipio. Laelius' bill was withdrawn in the face of opposition. But Gracchus would not compromise, like Laelius and Scipio. This will not do. First of all we know little or nothing about Laelius' proposal, neither its content

nor even its date.[46] Inevitably it has provided great scope for contrast with Gracchus' proposal; but whatever Laelius' bill proposed, the background was quite different from that of 133 B.C. Between 140 B.C. (the latest suggested date for Laelius' proposal) and 133 Rome's social and economic problems had escalated dramatically. The length and severity of the Spanish wars had drained Rome of manpower and finance; in 138 B.C. famine had taken its toll; and Rome's problems were increased by the outbreak of the Sicilian Slave War. But perhaps the most serious difference lies in the increase in inter-factional strife among the nobility, exacerbated by the reverses in Spain. Whilst Rome's problems were increased, the political atmosphere in which reform could be carried out was increasingly absent. Rome desperately needed a solution to its social and economic problems in 133 B.C.; but no less opportune moment could have been selected for such a solution.

Like almost everything else connected with his tribunate, Tiberius Gracchus' motives for proposing the agrarian bill have been questioned by later writers. He is reputed to have been provoked by anger at the Senate's refusal to ratify the treaty with the Numantines by which he had saved a Roman army.[47] The repudiation, which cost him a loss of *dignitas*, may help to explain why Tiberius himself pressed forward so energetically with the proposal. He could not, after all, afford to fail again. Such provocation by the nobility may be admitted as a motive in the case of a Saturninus; but it must be rejected as a powerful motive for the *lex agraria*—because what we are dealing with in the case of the agrarian law of 133 B.C. are the motives of a powerful political group led by Appius Claudius Pulcher, not those of an individual.[48]

It seems that the purpose of the bill was first of all to return the poor to the land; secondly to increase the number of citizens liable for military service; thirdly to reduce the number of slaves in order to prevent slave uprisings. No doubt Gracchus' supporters were not unaware that they would also increase their own political power, but the bill has a good deal to recommend it as a genuine attempt at solving a number of serious problems.

The change in agriculture to pasturing, the growth of *latifundia* caused by the surplus of wealth for investment, was driving the peasant farmer off the land. These large estates used slave labour in such numbers that the dangers of a servile uprising were ever present. The dispossessed peasants flocked into the towns, especially Rome, constituting a dangerous concentration of unemployed when the flow of wealth into Rome stopped and a recession set in. But it was in the military sphere that the change was felt most. The Roman army was still a citizen militia; liability for recruitment depended on the

possession of a certain minimum property qualification. Since the farmer was the backbone of the army, the decrease in numbers of those who possessed the property qualification directly affected the supply of troops for the army, and that, at a time when Rome had heavy military commitments abroad. The increasing burden of military service on the remaining peasant farmers hastened the process, and was the cause of all the unrest over the levy. There were two possible solutions: to abandon a minimum property qualification, or to increase the numbers of those who qualified for military service by returning the urban mob to the land. Gracchus chose the latter course, since it would also provide an answer to the problem of the urban mob; for the recruiting crisis was not the only one, though it was probably the most important.[49]

The agrarian scheme has been criticized as an *economic absurdity*.[50] Merely to return the urban mob to the land, it is said, would not solve the problem, since the economic conditions which helped to drive them off the land still obtained. But even on economic grounds it can be defended. First of all the increase in the number of *adsidui* as a result of the agrarian scheme would ease the burden of military service on the small farmer generally. Since military service is acknowledged to be a prime factor in the decline of the peasant farmer, this would help to stop the drift from the land. Secondly the fact that the plots of land were inalienable in perpetuity *does* make sense. Earl maintains 'there is no point in forcing men to retain possession of land they have no intention of working'.[51] This assumes that the urban poor were neither interested in farming nor likely to be much of a success at it. On the contrary, there is evidence to suggest that a great many of the city dwellers were employed as casual labour in the country for harvesting.[52] Moreover many of those in the city would be recently dispossessed farmers. The enormous enthusiasm for the agrarian bill lends support to the idea that the poor were being offered what they wanted. Mere liability to recruitment is not likely to have been much of an incentive at this juncture, whatever may have been the case later. By making the plots inalienable Gracchus was protecting his farmers against one of the other potent factors in the agrarian revolution, namely, the greed of wealthy investors. It is perhaps as much an argument against this interpretation as any other, (but nevertheless true) to say that since the economic processes of that era are not fully understood, we should not be too rash in condemning what some of Rome's leading citizens proposed as a solution to their urgent problems. Tiberius Gracchus' opponents had no alternative proposals to offer. Given wholehearted senatorial support the scheme would probably have worked even better than it did.

The events of the tribunate of Tiberius Gracchus had, I maintain, a profound effect on the decline of the Roman Republic, but not in the way Smith suggests. Too much importance has, I think, been attached to mob violence as a significant factor in the disintegration of the Republic.[53] Rioting could be stopped if only the government retained the loyalty of the army. Lack of a police force made the army all the more important in this respect. But the senatorial government lost control of the army precisely because it remained indifferent to the plight of the classes from which its armies were recruited. And it is here that the tribunate of Tiberius Gracchus is important. The opponents of Tiberius Gracchus, by resorting, however unintentionally, to violence lost the sympathy of that class of citizens who eventually found their way into the army. It is not surprising that in 100 B.C. Marius' Veterans gave their support to a Saturninus. What 'sympathetic treatment' could they expect of their demands for a land pension, from a Senate which had opposed with violence a similar land grant in 133? Rome's allies too were affected—the same allies who at the end of the Republic supplied Rome with her citizen armies. The opponents of Gracchus, and in particular Scipio Aemilianus, instead of attempting to solve the real problems of the allies, contented themselves with using the complaints of the allies about the impingement by the scheme on their holdings of *ager publicus*, mainly in order to obstruct the work of the agrarian commission. The question of Italian enfranchisement was made all the more difficult of solution because of the understandable retaliatory opposition by the plebs to granting benefits to the allies.

The decline in the reputation of the Senate is directly attributable to the way the opposition behaved during the tribunate of Tiberius Gracchus. Increasingly opposed, it lost control of events until those armies, on whose loyalty the Senate depended, defected to individuals and brought an end to republican government in a bloodbath of civil wars.

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[1] This paper was originally read to a meeting of the Natal Regional Branch of the Classical Association of South Africa held in Pietermaritzburg in March 1968. I would like to acknowledge my debt to the modern authorities in this field and in particular, to the published works of A. E. Astin and D. C. Earl.
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[3] Smith, p. 5.
[4] Smith, p. 63.

[5] Smith, p. 72.
[6] Smith, p. 165.
[7] Plutarch, *T. Gracchus* 21.4.
[8] Sallust, *B.C.* 10.1-4. See D. C. Earl, *The Political Thought of Sallust* (Cambridge, 1961).
[9] Sallust, *B.J.* 41.2ff.
[10] *B.J.* 42.
[11] *B.J.* 42.2.
[12] See Earl, op cit., p. 41 for sources.
[13] Polybius 31.25.6-7.
[14] Earl, op. cit., p. 57.
[15] For a full treatment of this problem see Donald Earl, *The Moral and Political Tradition of Rome* (London, 1967); cf. Earl, *Political Thought*, p. 44.
[16] It was Roman citizens only who were to benefit; see E. Badian, *Foreign Clientelae (264-70 B.C.)* (Oxford, 1958).
[17] Plutarch, *T. Gracchus* 9.1.
[18] Cato fr.167 (Malcovati O.R.F.[2]).
[19] In this I have followed the account given in A. E. Astin, *Scipio Aemilianus* (Oxford, 1967).
[20] Appian, *B.C.* 1.14.
[21] Plutarch, *T. Gracchus* 16.3.
[22] D. C. Earl, *Tiberius Gracchus: A Study in Politics* (Bruxelles-Berchem, 1963), p. 12ff.
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[24] Earl, *Tiberius Gracchus*, p. 8.
[25] H. H. Scullard, *Roman Politics 220-150 B.C.* (Oxford, 1951), p. 8ff. Also Badian, *Foreign Clientelae*, p. 162ff.
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[27] R. Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (Oxford, 1960), p. 19.
[28] Cicero, *Pro Caelio* 34; Earl, *Tiberius Gracchus*, p. 48; Astin, *Scipio*, p. 106-109.
[29] Astin, *Scipio*, p. 130.
[30] L. R. Taylor, 'Forerunners of the Gracchi', *J.R.S.* 52 (1962); and Astin, *Scipio*, p. 59.
[31] Cicero, *De Orat.* 1.228.
[32] Earl, *Tiberius Gracchus*, p. 74.
[33] Appian, *B.C.* 1.19.
[34] Astin, *Scipio*, p. 65; Earl, *Tiberius Gracchus*, p. 75, for references.
[35] Astin, *Scipio*, p. 65ff.
[36] On these laws see L. R. Taylor, *J.R.S.* 52 (1962), p. 25ff. and H. H. Scullard, *J.R.S.* 50 (1960), p. 70ff.
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[38] Astin, *Scipio*, p. 131.
[39] Plutarch, *T. Gracchus* 12.3.
[40] Polybius 6.15.2ff.
[41] Astin, *Scipio*, Appendix II, p. 259, No. 32.
[42] See particularly L. R. Taylor, *J.R.S.* 52 (1962).
[43] See too in 151 B.C.
[44] Smith, p. 177.
[45] e.g. *Lex Cassia* and *Lex Gabinia*.
[46] L. R. Taylor, *J.R.S.* 52 (1962), p. 27, clearly points out how little is really known about Laelius' proposal.
[47] Cicero, *Har. Resp.* 43; *Brutus* 103.
[48] Astin, *Scipio*, p. 195ff. on motives and objectives of the *lex agraria*.
[49] contra Earl, *Tiberius Gracchus*, p. 37.
[50] e.g. by Earl, op. cit., p. 37, quoting Last, *C.A.H.* IX, p. 20.
[51] loc. cit.
[52] See Astin, *Scipio*, Note M, p. 345.
[53] P. A. Brunt, 'The Army and the Land in the Roman Revolution', *J.R.S.* 52 (1962), p. 69ff.

L'ORGUE DE BARBARIE: CENT ANS DE POÉSIE

by D. KATIN

Pendant plus de trois mois passés récemment à Paris j'ai rencontré une fois un vitrier qui cheminait en criant tout comme celui, inoubliable, qui parcourt le film de Cocteau; une autre fois un gagne-petit qui poussait son chariot devant lui en silence. Quant aux joueurs d'orgue, je n'en ai pas vu plus qu'un insigne en cuivre au Musée Carnavalet[1]. Et de s'émerveiller 'mais où sont les neiges d'antan', car il n'y a pas vingt ans on a pu intituler un recueil de poèmes *L'Orgue de Barbarie*[2], et c'est le titre d'un morceau de Jacques Prévert qui date, lui aussi, d'après-guerre[3].

Les musiciens ambulants semblent avoir quitté les pavés de la capitale avec tant d'autres marchands ou artisans, découragés dans leurs efforts, peut-être, comme les filles publiques, par les représentants d'un régime gaulliste. A Londres ou à Stamboul ils respirent toujours l'air du ciel ouvert, mais à Paris ils se sont refugiés avec Orphée dans les régions chthoniennes, où les accords lugubres et criards des accordéons viennent assiéger l'oreille distraite des usagers de métro.

Et le long des couloirs labyrinthiens ces harmonies rudes et populaires déferlent avec des remous nostalgiques qui rappellent les jours du Moulin de la Galette ou de l'entente cordiale:

> Tout en haut du Mont-des-Martyrs,
> Sous les lilas que le vent fane,
> Aux bruits des orgues et des tirs,
> On découvre un temple profane[4].

A cette époque-là, en effet, on ne conçoit guère Montmartre sans les mélodies des orgues de Barbarie. L'amant qui va à son rendez-vous voit 'en haut et en devant, la Butte', entend 'des cris d'enfants qui jouent' et écoute 'un chant d'orgue de Barbarie, une sorte de valse, le rythme d'une valse lente . . . j'entends sa voix criarde et douce . . .'[5].

Tout Paris, d'ailleurs, ne respire-t-il pas cette ambiance indicible d'un musée des Arts Décoratifs et ne semble-t-on toujours regarder

—autre Orphée—par-dessus son épaule pour s'enfoncer dans un passé à la fois figé comme dans un décor et flou comme dans un rêve? où des piètres hères décrivent leurs arabesques:

> Dans cette rue, au coeur de la ville magique,
> Où des orgues moudront des gigues dans les soirs,
> Où les cafés seront des chats sur les dressoirs,
> Et que traverseront des bandes de musique[6].

Les successeurs des poètes romantiques français sont loin d'être les premiers à explorer un paysage de rêves[7]—Shakespeare, Calderon, Grillparzer et tant d'autres y ont mis pied avant eux. De même, certains thèmes, certains symboles, hantent toutes les poésies de toutes les époques. Pourtant les poètes de celle dite 'symboliste' font d'une image littéraire un emploi qu'ils prétendent nouveau. Si de Vigny s'est écrié: 'Dieu! que le son du cor est triste au fond des bois!'[8], ce n'est pas la préfiguration inévitable des 'sanglots longs Des violons De l'automne'[9].

Car le cor de Roland et de Roncevaux n'en reste pas moins un instrument historique et (malgré la fêlure) jouable.[10] Pour les poètes symbolistes, au contraire, la musique restait le moins substantiel des arts. On connaît leurs efforts pour y rapprocher la poésie, en faisant des voyelles des notes[11] et des mots des motifs. Les pianos de Laforgue, geignant leurs complaintes de saison[12]; le multiple orchestre de Verlaine dont le docteur Zayed a dressé le long inventaire[13]—sont plus ou moins des instruments subtilisés, sans caractère propre. Ils nous font entrevoir, d'une part un monde idéal ou la Mélancolie (ou la Grâce ou même la Joie) serait immanente à un instrument primordial, et puis ils nous coulent dans le monde intérieur du poète pour y partager ses rêveries intimes.

N'échappe pas à tel sort l'orgue de Barbarie, qui célèbre si bien les piteuses joies et misères des gens du commun. Ses pauvres mélodies n'ont pas retenu longuement l'attention de la critique littéraire. Cependant, les poètes ont aimé cet humble instrument et son humble maître:

> Des pays du passé . . . Le joueur d'orgue vient . . .
> Voici que les rouleaux dévident,
> Des paysages, D'automne dépouillé . . .
> Des sensations qu'on ne sait plus, d'anciens visages,
> Tout cela qui jadis aux vieux airs s'est mêlé[14].

Cette quasi-apothéose n'aura aucun lieu d'étonner celui qui, au théâtre des bouffes parisiens, aurait écouté cet éloge raisonné:

'L'orgue de Barbarie n'est plus cet instrument discordant qui écorchait les oreilles; grâce aux perfectionnements que vient d'y apporter un de nos plus habiles facteurs . . . l'orgue a aujourd'hui des sons doux et harmonieux.'[15]

Mais attention, ce n'est pas les 'sons doux et harmonieux' qui ont leurré les poètes—pas plus que ceux des accordéons de métro qui nous attirent de nos jours. Gautier n'a pas laissé aucun doute sur son opinion:

> Il est un vieil air populaire
> Par tous les violons raclé,
> Aux abois des chiens en colère
> Par tous les orgues nasillé'[16].

Verlaine le suit de près et ménage encore moins ses paroles:

> 'C'est écorché, e'est faux, c'est horrible, c'est dur,
> Et donnerait la fièvre à Rossini, c'est sûr;
> Ces rires sont traînés, ces plaintes sont hachées . . .'[17].

Ces jugements ne sont hostiles qu'en apparence:

> 'Mais qu'importe! l'on pleure en entendant cela!
> Mais l'esprit, transporté dans le pays des rêves,
> Sent à ces vieux accords couler en lui des sèves'[17].

Voilà que tous nos souvenirs d'enfance—et par-delà eux, toute la nostalgie d'un passé légendaire[5] surgissent dans ces faux accords qui gardent le secret d'une langoureuse mélancolie, évocatrice de sensations troubles et ambiguës:

> 'Bruit humain, fait de cris et de lentes souffrances'[18].

Le pauvre Lélian, souffre-douleur universel, a néanmoins exercé une influence capitale sur tous les poètes de sa génération ou de celle qui le suivait. Le côté rêveur et lugubre qui l'a si fort attiré chez l'orgue de Barbarie reparaît dans maint poème de cette époque, que ce soit le symboliste belge Grégoire le Roy:

> 'Ecoutez le joueur d'orgue
> Qui traîne sa pâle chanson
> A travers les heures mornes'[19];

que ce soit l'académicien Jean Richepin:

> 'La voix lamentable et meurtrie
> Des vieux orgues de Barbarie . . .
> Semble la voix triste et falote

D'un fou qui ricane et sanglote
Sur son lit de mort'[20].

D'autres, comme Prévert (op.cit.), sont plutôt fascinés par la libre fantaisie qui caractérise la vie des joueurs d'orgue. Mallarmé ne paraît pas loin de jalouser cette vie de bohème: 'Peut-on rêver une vie plus belle que celle qui consiste à errer par les chemins et à faire l'aumône d'un air triste ou gai à la première fenêtre qu'on voit'[21]. L'orgue de Barbarie singe les vraies orgues tout comme, peut-être, notre vie d'ici-bas n'est que le reflet d'une vie idéale: 'Transformez leur boîte à polkas en un orgue d'Alexandre et la main qui tourne leur manivelle en celle de Lefébure-Wély, et vous ne rirez plus'[21].

Pour Mallarmé, comme pour Verlaine, peut-être aussi pour Gautier, c'est le caractère fautif même de la musique qui prête tout son sens et tout son charme à cet instrument. Il semble être fait à plaisir pour l'esthète moderne entiché d'ambiguïté, puisque, autre dichotomie, le dispensateur princier de tant de richesses musicales, n'est autre—Mallarmé le souligne dans la même lettre—qu'un 'pauvre hère qui mendie son déjeuner dans le square.' Quel sujet de méditations sur la nature du réel!

On estime trop souvent que les 'symbolistes' se refugiaient dans une tour d'ivoire d'où[22] ils adressaient des chants ésotériques aux oreilles extasiés des fidèles, et détournaient leurs regards hautains loin de la populace. Il est vrai qu'à cet égard on établit souvent une différence entre décadents et symbolistes, en rattachant les premiers à une certaine tradition 'populiste' qu'on peut aisément suivre, en poésie, à travers un Coppée, un Ste-Beuve, un Victor Hugo, un Pierre Dupont . . . Mais ces tentatives de différenciation ingénieuses ne sont pas toujours trop bien fondées; on peut se laisser égarer par les déclarations souvent fulgurantes des théoriciens sans prendre garde aux poémes eux-mêmes.

Mallarmé est-il décadent à la Huysmans ou symboliste à la Verlaine quand il nous fait part de ses réflexions? 'Je lisais donc un de ces chers poèmes (de la décadence Latine) . . . et plongeais une main dans la fourrure du pur animal (son chat), quand un orgue de Barbarie chanta languissament et mélancoliquement sous ma fenêtre . . . L'instrument des tristes, oui, vraiment . . . Maintenant qu'il murmurait un air joyeusement vulgaire et qui mit la gaîté au coeur des faubourgs, un air suranné, banal: d'où vient que sa ritournelle m'allait à l'âme et me faisait pleurer comme une ballade romantique?'[23].

Et les auteurs de ces fameuses 'Déliquescences d'Adoré Floupette', faisaient-ils le pastiche du symbolisme ou du 'décadisme' en déplorant 'la voix verte d'un orgue,

Agonisant sur le pavé,
Un petit enfant conservé,
Dans de l'eau très verte à la Morgue'?[24].

Dans quelle catégorie ferait-on entrer tel poème d'Eugène Manuel —parnassien, décadent avant la lettre, ou romantique après la lettre?

'Une joueuse d'orgue était là, dans la rue;
Et de joyeux enfants une bande accourue
S'empressait alentour, et criait, et dansait,
Sans voir que la pauvresse en jouant pâlissait'[25].

L'orgue de Barbarie recèle et décèle en effet tout le drame de la vie populaire. 'C'est l'instrument qu'un pauvre éveille sous sa main,' avait proclamé Verlaine, et on n'a qu'à regarder l'illustration un peu 'folklorique' dans le Petit Larousse—

'L'orgue de Barbarie a forme de gargouille
Et pleure pour des sous dans les arrières-cours'[26].

Des larmes et des gémissements, soit, mais ne négligeons pas, dans le répertoire de l'orgue de Barbarie, la part des rires. Verlaine, encore une fois, semble avoir indiqué la voie à suivre; de toute façon ce sont ses chevaux de bois[27] qui avaient inspiré, dans la joie folle de leur course, ces vers de Richepin:

'Parmi les nasillants hautbois
Des vieux orgues de Barbarie,
Vire sous la verroterie La cavalerie
Des chevaux de bois'[28].

Voici le même thème repris par Jean Ajalbert, constant admirateur de Verlaine, dans son évocation d'une fête champêtre: 'Ah! comme je comprendrai Verlaine plus tard: 'Tournez, tournez, bons chevaux de bois'. Toutes ces musiques, de l'orgue à manivelle, du manège aux tambours . . . que de révélations . . .'[29]. Il voit à travers des yeux de jeune garçon, bien sûr, car comme toujours des souvenirs d'enfance viennent enlacés inextricablement à des accords d'orgue.

Ce n'est évidemment pas le hasard qui avait amené Tchaïkovski, ami des jeunes, à écrire pour eux son 'orgue de Barbarie'[30]. Dans un volume récent[31] Herman Braet a fait ressortir tous les charmes candides qu'avaient les enfants pour les poètes de l'époque symboliste. Leur regard ingénu fait reculer le laid désordre d'un monde vicié, résout comme dans un conte de fées les complexes personnels et les complications sociales de la vie moderne industrielle, ramène les

adultes posés ou désorientés que nous sommes vers l'âge d'or de l'innocence—'et tout le reste est littérature'.

Dans un de ses morceaux géniaux Apollinaire a su dégager tout ce que la pureté enfantine peut avoir d'émouvant et de révélateur: les spectateurs regardent sortir de dessous l'orgue de Barbarie 'un tout petit saltimbanque', qui danse d'une façon tellement féerique que le joueur arrête son orgue et se cache les mains dans la figure.[3 2]

Quant à Prévert, dans la chanson déjà citée, il ajoute encore le thème du franc vagabondage qui avait tenté Mallarmé et nous fait voir 'la petite fille (sortir) de dessous le piano où elle était couchée endormie par l'ennui,' pour aller accompagner le joueur d'orgue à travers les pays.

Et c'est peut-être Prévert (populaire dans tous les sens du mot) qui nous met mieux que ses prédécesseurs sur la piste de la vraie et sempiternelle fascination de l'orgue de Barbarie. 'Les uns et les autres parlaient, parlaient, parlaient,' écrit-il, 'de ce qu'ils jouaient, on n'entendait pas la musique . . .' Et d'un coup on reconnaît cette recherche meurtrière de la vérité qui avait épuisé un Mallarmé, fourvoyé un Ghil, torturé un Valéry, et ce mépris des vaines subtilités qu'exprime ce vers de l'Art Poétique du grand Verlaine que j'ai cité plus haut.

Mais laissons le dernier mot à l'académicien. 'Ce jour-là,' nous avoue-t-il, dans des vers qui reprennent presque tous ces thèmes—rêves, nostalgie, enfance, misère, pleurs, simplicité . . ., 'Ce jour-là,

> je pleurais, oh! comme un enfant pleure . . .
> 'Il suffit d'un enfant qui chante et qui mendie,
> D'un violon criard ou d'un orgue aux abois
> Pour nous remémorer la vieille mélodie
> Exodée aussitôt des choses d'autrefois'[3 3].

Armitage, Staffordshire.

NOTES

[1] Celui-là fait partie d'un étalage de tels insignes et de gravures des 'cris de Paris'. Il est numéroté 96 et porte le nom d'un certain Hoffman.
[2] Voir 'L'orgue de Barbarie' par Charles-F. Landry, Paris, 1951 (Collection PS, Cahiers bi-mensuels).
[3] Dans 'D'autres chansons' par Prévert (paroles) et Joseph Kosma (musique), Paris, 1947 (2 vol.).
[4] Citation du 'Chat Noir' (Revue hebdomadaire, 'organe des intérêts de Montmartre'), 1ère année, le n°10 du 8 mars 1882, à la page 2.

[5] Citation d'un volume d'Edouard Dujardin, 'Les Lauriers sont coupés', roman publié à partir de 1887 dans la *Revue Indépendante*; ces remarques se trouvent à la p. 302 et à la p. 316 de l'édition de 1897 publiée à Paris avec d'autres contes ('les Hantises').

[6] Verlaine, 'Jadis et Naguère' (1873)—'Kaléidoscope'.

[7] A consulter, A. Béguin, *L'Ame Romantique et le Rêve*, Paris, 1937 et seq., surtout Livre 5°, 3ème section sur les poètes symbolistes. Edn. de 1963, aux pages 387/9: '(Les rêves) des symbolistes ont quelque chose d'artificiel,—qui en fait d'ailleurs le charme infini . . . '

[8] Poème 'Le Cor' (dans *Livre Moderne*), écrit en 1825.

[9] Verlaine, 'Chanson d'automne' (?1866) (dans les *Poèmes Saturniens*).

[10] Voir J. Bédier, *les Légendes Epiques* (1910 et seq.) sur le pèlerinage de Compostelle et l'olifant de Roland à Bordeaux.

[11] Tout le monde connaît le sonnet des Voyelles de Rimbaud (écrit en 1871, publié en 1883). René Ghil reprend une idée semblable dans son *Traité du verbe—théorie de l'Instrumentation Poétique* (1886); il fonda et dirigea, à partir de 1887, une revue mensuelle, *Les Ecrits pour l'Art*, qui représentait (sous 'la règle du Maître, M. Stéphane Mallarmé') le groupe 'symbolique et instrumentiste'. L'année suivante ce groupement se mue dans le 'groupe philosophique-instrumentiste'.

[12] Laforgue, *Les Complaintes* (1880/5). Par exemple, 'Complainte des Pianos qu'on entend dans les quartiers aisés'.

[13] Georges Zayed: *La Formation littéraire de Verlaine*, Edns Droz, 1962; voir aux pages 213/4.

[14] Citation d'un poème, 'Le joueur d'Orgue', par Paul Aeschimann, dans *L'Occident* (Revue mensuelle), tome xix (1912), n° 116 du mois de juillet, aux pages 8/11.

[15] Citation d'un discours de *L'Orgue de Barbarie*, opérette bouffe en un acte par M. Léris (nom-de-plume de M. A. Desrozier), musique de M. G. Alary, représentée pour la 1ère fois sur le théâtre des bouffes parisiens le 24 déc. 1856. Voir édn. de 1857, à la p. 3.

[16] Gautier, 'Variations sur le Carnaval de Venise'—I: 'Dans la Rue' (dans *Emaux et Camées*, 1852).

[17] Verlaine, 'Nocturne parisien' (dans *Poèmes Saturniens*, 1866).

[18] Ibid.

[19] Poème 'Le Joueur d'Orgue' dans 'La Chanson du Pauvre' (à la p. 42 de l'édn. du *Mercure de France*, 1907, poème non daté).

[20] 'La Chanson des Gueux' (1ère édn. 1876)—'Gueux de Paris', xii: 'Variations d'Automne sur l'Orgue de Barbarie'.

[21] Lettre adressée à Henri Cazalis de Londres le 27 nov. 1863 (dans 'Propos sur la Poésie' recueillis par Henri Mondor, Edns du Rocher, Monaco, 1953, à la p. 38).

[22] Cf. Rimbaud, 'Chanson de la plus haute tour'.

[23] Citation de la revue *la Vogue* (hebdomadaire), 1ère série, n° du 4 avril 1886; voir à la p. 1 et seq., 'Pages oubliées—Plainte d'automne et frisson d'hiver' par Mallarmé.

[24] Cette parodie de la manière symboliste-décadente, composée par H. Beauclair et G. Vicaire, parut en 1885.

[25] Voir ses *Poésies Populaires* (publiées en 1871). Ce poème, 'Orgue de Barbarie', date de 1863.

[26] Citation de l'oeuvre de Landry—voir note 2.

[27] Voir dans *Romances sans Paroles* (1874) la section 'Paysages belges'; 'Bruxelles'—'Chevaux de Bois' ('Tournez, tournez, bons chevaux de bois . . .').

[28] Citation de 'Types des fêtes forains', long poème publié dans *Les Types de Paris* (Edns du Figaro, 1889, avec illustrations de J.-F. Raffaelli; fasc. n° 5, à la p. 71).

[29] Voir ses *Mémoires en vrac au temps du symbolisme* (1880-1890), Paris, édn. de 1938, ch. 1er., à la p. 19.

[30] Le morceau n° 23 de son *Album pour enfants*, publié, sans date, à Paris, s'intitule, en français, 'l'orgue de Barbarie' (littéralement, c'est 'le poète de l'orgue').
[31] Voir *L'accueil fait au Symbolisme en Belgique, 1885-1900*, Bruxelles, Palais des Académies, 1967, ch. iii, p. 73 et seq.
[32] C'est 'Un Fantôme de Nuées' qu'on trouvera dans *Calligrammes*.
[33] 'Variations de Printemps sur l'orgue de Barbarie', op. cit. note 20.

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