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VALUES

THE DIALECTICS OF ROMANCE AND TRAGEDY I

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NEXT MONTH
DIALECTICS OF
ROMANCE AND TRAGEDY

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Editorial

In this and the succeeding number we show how dialectics is the essence of art. Scholastic philistines may assume that such a wisdom as we harp on in these pages either does not exist or, if it does, cannot be taught. But would the great novels ever be perennial best-sellers or the great plays perennial box-office certainties if they had nothing to teach? Even ordinary watching of T–V, and habitual movie-going are plain examples of the fact that human beings prefer seeing to doing, prefer contemplation of the play of life to active (and all too painful) participation. In every case the play's the thing.

At its dazzling best, wisdom appears in the rare elusive personality of the Guru. Although not always immediately perceived, it is a fact that when we look for the sources of the universal wisdom which makes every work of art worth while, we shall find it in some liaison between the artist and a Guru or a wisdom-philosophy.

In terms of human happiness the value of our study is incalculable. It is supremely human and nothing human lies outside its scope. To imagine that it is necessarily limited to religion is a common error. True, the differences between religion and art tend to dissolve when their dialectical or unitive goal is the same, namely, the freeing of the participants from the toils of necessity and the liberation of the human Self through contemplation of the Universal or Absolute.

The university lecturer will succeed or fail in proportion to his knowledge or ignorance of the know-how of dialectics. We are really giving the preliminaries for whole courses of instruction in this forgotten subject. Our task is to show through common examples which every educated person is familiar with, that this is not something evoked out of the blue dreams of our own vanity, but a wisdom which was possessed and used by Euripides, Shakespeare, Milton and every artist worth his salt. We have not invented anything. We are but explaining and putting order into what is as common and as simple as a household proverb.

But enough; let us raise the curtain. On with the play!

[END]

Shakespeare's Dialectics

Shakespeare was such a hundred per cent artist that there is hardly a quotation which does not illustrate the absoluteness which endows him with immortality.

Be Absolute for death; either death or life
Shall thereby be the sweeter. Reason thus with life:
If I do lose thee, I do lose a thing
That none but fools would keep: a breath thou art,
Servile to all the skyey influences.—Measure for Measure, III, i, 5

If I must die
I will encounter darkness as a bride,
And hug it in mine arms. —*ibid*, 83.

I am determined to prove a villain. — King Richard III, I, i, 30.

Light seeking light doth light of light beguile. Love's Labour's Lost, I, i, 77.

A lover's eyes will gaze an eagle blind. *ibid*, IV, iii, 334.

Mine honour is my life; both grow in one;
Take honour from me, and my life is done. — King Richard I, II, i, 180.

The lunatic, the lover and the poet
Are of imagination all compact. — A Midsummer Night's Dream, V, i, 7.

And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice. — The Merchant of Venice, IV, i, 196.

You take my house when you do take the prop
That doth sustain my house; you take my life
When you do take the means whereby I live. —*ibid*, 375.

O, while you live, tell truth and shame the devil! —King Henry IV, Part I, III, i, 62.

A peace is of the nature of a conquest;
For then both parties nobly are subdued,
And neither party loser. — King Henry IV, Part II, IV, ii, 89.

There is some soul of goodness in things evil,
Would men observingly distil it out. — King Henry V, IV, i, 4.

Men at some time are masters of their fates:
The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
But in ourselves, that we are underlings. —Julius Caesar, I, ii, 139.

Cowards die many times before their deaths;
The valiant never taste of death but once. — *ibid*, II, ii, 32.

All the world's a stage ... and one man in his time plays many parts. — As You Like It, II, vii, 109.

O, how bitter a thing it is to look into happiness through another man's eyes! —*ibid*, V, ii, 47.

Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale? — *Twelfth Night*, II, iii, 123.

This above all: to thine own self be true,
And it must follow as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man. — *Hamlet*, I, iii, 75.

There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.
— *ibid*, II, ii, 271.

To be or not to be: that is the question: ....
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pitch and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action. — *ibid*, III, i, 56

Give me that man
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart,
As I do thee. — *ibid*, III, ii, 72.

I must be cruel, only to be kind. — *ibid*, III, iv, 178.

Diseases desperate grown
By desperate appliance are relieved,
Or not at all. — *ibid*, IV, iii, 9.

What is a man,
If his chief good and market of his time
Be but to sleep and feed? a beast, no more.
Sure, he that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and god-like reason
To fust in us unused. — *ibid*, IV, iii, 32.

Rightly to be great
Is not to stir without great argument,
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw
When honour's at the stake. — *ibid*, IV, iii, 53.

One touch of nature makes the whole world kin. — Troilus and Cressida, III, iii, 175.

Our doubts are traitors
And make us lose the good we oft might win
By fearing to attempt. — Measure for Measure, I, iv, 77.

Some rise by sin, and some by virtue fall. — *ibid*, II, i, 38.

The worst is not
So long as we can say 'This is the worst.' — King Lear, IV, i, 29.

Wisdom and goodness to the vile seem vile:
Filths savour but themselves. — *ibid*, IV, ii, 38.

Yet I do fear thy nature;
It is too full o' the milk of human kindness ....

(continued on page 294)

The Doukhobors - Some Corrections

MR. K. J. TARASOFF, Editor of the Doukhobor *Inquirer*, Saskatoon, Canada, in a letter of May 20, 1958, has the following corrections to give to our review of the magazine in VALUES of April 1958 :

"You are quite correct when you state that the Doukhobors are 'thoroughly opposed to war and conscription.' But when you go on to state that they 'refuse to pay taxes' or refuse to send 'their children to state schools where killing is taught as patriotic,' and that 'they often clash with authority,' these statements give a false impression. The same false impression is given by the statement; 'They made headlines some time ago by resorting to nudism in towns when forced by authorities to conform.'

"To some extent this is true of a splinter-group of some 2,500 in the Kootenay regions of British Columbia, who are known as the 'Sons of Freedom.' Although this group evolved from the larger Doukhobor group of about 17,000 in Canada, it is erroneous to equate them as being 'equal.' The 'Sons' are the 'extremists' and should not be classed as Doukhobors. It is a well known fact among the Doukhobors that the moment one participates in a violent act towards his fellow men he automatically ceases to be a Doukhobor, because this would be contrary to the concept of love, humanitarianism and universal brotherhood.

"While many of the 'Sons' refuse to send their children to public schools, most of the Doukhobors do send them to school — in fact many of the Doukhobor students have excelled in higher education, even gaining scholarships to other countries for advanced studies. While the Doukhobor is aware of the fact that some patriotistic and militaristic thinking is present in public schools, yet he is equally aware that a sound home upbringing can overcome this detrimental influence, and consequently lead on to higher and wider basis of understanding of self and the universe.

"On the other hand, it should be noted that the 'Sons of Freedom' group have been discriminated against by the forceful go-to-school measure of the provincial government of British Columbia. Because the 'Sons' failed to send their children to public schools the B.C. government forcefully took these children from their parents and sent them to a state school surrounded by a high wire fence, called New Denver School Dormitory, some 66 miles from Nelson, B.C. It is this action of the government that we disapprove of, since in a sense, it is a breach of the international United Nations principles of human rights. In a sense, this may be termed 'genocide.'

"Regarding nude parading as a protest action, this is not a characteristic of the Doukhobors. Rather the 'Sons of Freedom' group uses this technique of protest occasionally.

Korhos — Hubris — Ate

By Arnold J. Toynbee

These words (*korhos, hubris, ate*) have a subjective as well as an objective connotation. Objectively *korhos* means 'surfeit,' *hubris* 'outrageous behaviour' and *ate* 'disaster.' (The casual relation between surfeit and outrageous behaviour is neatly expressed by a Hebrew poet in the line "Jeshuran waxed fat, and kicked."* He kicked (*hubris*) because he had waxed fat (*korhos*), and the subsequent verses indicate that *ate* was in store for him. The Jeshuran of this passage is Israel, when, in the prosperous days of Jeroboam II, he forsook Yahweh. The Captivity that was to lead to the extinction of these 'Ten Tribes' was only half a century ahead in time.)

Subjectively *korhos* means the psychological condition of being spoiled by success; *hubris* means the consequent loss of mental and moral balance; and *ate* means the blind headstrong ungovernable impulse which sweeps an unbalanced soul into attempting the impossible. This active psychological catastrophe in three acts was the commonest theme — if we may judge by the handful of extant masterpieces — in the fifth-century Athenian tragic drama. It is the story of Agamemnon in Aeschylus' play of that name, and of Xerxes in his *Persae*; the story of Ajax in Sophocles' play of that name; of Oedipus in his *Oedipus Tyrannus*, and of Creon in his *Antigone*; and it is the story of Pentheus in Euripides' *Bacchae*. In Platonic language:

> 'If one sins against the laws of proportion and gives something too big to something too small to carry it — too big sails to too small a ship, too big meals to too small a body — the result is bound to be a complete upset. In an outburst of *hubris* the over-fed body will rush into sickness, while the jack-in-office will rush into the unrighteousness which *hubris* always breeds.'— Plato, *Laws*: 691 C.

In order to bring out the difference between the passive and the active methods of courting destruction, let us begin our survey of *korhos-hubris-ate* in the military field. . .

Both modes happen to be exemplified in the behaviour of Goliath. On the one hand we have seen how he incurs his doom by vegetating in

* *Deut.* xxxii. 15

"One of the common journalistic faults in this country and other countries is the failure to differentiate the Doukhobors from the 'Sons of Freedom' group. The public has been generally conditioned to believe that the two groups are synonymous — which is false. In fact that is the sort of confusion that the 'Sons' group apparently would like to see, for they feel that they are the 'forefront of the Doukhobor movement.' So you can see why we are so insistent in clearing up this confusion and bringing certain errors to the attention of your readers.

"Thank you kindly for your warm greetings to the Doukhobors of Canada. We are indeed honored.

"In our turn too, we would like to greet you for your efforts in helping to promote human understanding." [END] the one invincible technique of the individual hoplite champion without foreseeing or forestalling the new and superior technique which David is bringing into action against him. At the same time we may observe that his destruction at David's hands might have been averted if only his unenterprisingness in technique had been accompanied by a corresponding passivity of ethos. Unfortunately for Goliath, however, this *miles gloriosus's* technological conservatism was not offset by any such moderation of policy; instead he went out of his way to ask for trouble by issuing a challenge; he symbolizes a militarism at once aggressive and inadequately prepared. Such a militarist is so confident of his own ability to look after himself in the social — or anti-social — system in which all disputes are settled by the sword that he throws his sword into the scales. Its weight duly tips the balance in his favour and he points to his triumph as a final proof that the sword is omnipotent. In the next chapter of the story, however, it turns out that he has failed to prove his thesis *ad hominem* in the particular case which exclusively interests him; for the next event is his own overthrow by a stronger militarist than himself. He has proved a thesis which had not occurred to him: 'They that take the sword shall perish with the sword.'

— pp. 336–8 *A Study of History* (Abridged)

[END]

Shakespeare's Dialectics *(continued from page 291)*

What thou wouldst highly,
That wouldst thou holily; wouldst not play false,
And yet wouldst wrongly win. — MACBETH, I, v, 17.

The silence often of pure innocence
Persuades when speaking fails. — THE WINTER'S TALE, II, ii, 41.

The selfsame sun that shines upon his court
Hides not his visage from our cottage but
Looks on alike. — *ibid*, IV, iv, 454.

He that dies pays all debts. — THE TEMPEST, III, ii, 140.

The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep. — *ibid*, IV, i, 152.

How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world,
That has such people in't! — *ibid*, V, i, 183.

Beauty itself doth of itself persuade
The eyes of men without an orator. — THE RAPE OF LUCRECE, 29.

Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds. — SONNET, XCIV.

Crabbed age and youth cannot live together. — THE PASSIONATE PILGRIM, xii.

[END]

The Dialectics of Romance and Tragedy — I

By Nataraja Guru

The universal appeal of all great art, and at its highest in tragedy, depends upon the Absolutism it portrays or expounds, through the dialectical interplay of apparently opposing counterparts, with all conflicts resolved in the attainment of a supreme human value. Your attention is drawn to the very first sentence of this essay.

Art Begins when the Absolute is imitated in creative action. Action can refer to the inner world as well as to the outer. It can have a field or ground both cosmological and psychological. The Self is its living core. When we sit back and enjoy a play that is filled with action, we are sometimes moved to tears or overpowered by laughter. Our own interior is what the play represents as possibilities in a fluid form. There is an interplay that takes place subtly between overt or innate action whether subjectively or objectively or both, in the harmonious unravelling of which the greatness of the artist consists. An element of conflict or a complicating factor, whether in the mild form of a frustrated love or in the intense form of a life and death struggle, is common to both tragedy and comedy. Romance and tragedy both arise from the same stem of the tree of life.

In the West the mystery rites, round the figure of Dionysos, offered the archetypal pattern for the later development of both Tragedy and Romance or Comedy as also of that intermediate type under which much modern literature could be included indifferently. The split between classicism and romanticism after the eighteenth century, of which latter school Victor Hugo may be said to be the champion or high priest, was merely in the name of greater "liberalism in art" as he himself explains in his preface to *Hernani* (para 2) which play itself holds much in common with Greek tragedy.

In oriental literary tradition pure tragedy with its gruesome outwardness tended to be toned down. Tragic elements became blended and subdued more harmoniously in a general mystical and contemplative setting. In Kalidasa's *Kumara Sambhava*, where the central figure is Siva instead of Dionysos, tragic and romantic elements are brought into focal unity with great artistic perfection. Human life mixes freely with the supra- or infra-human, representing life as a confection of both ingredients.

It is dialectics which enters into the creative technique of art in general and of tragedy and romance in particular. The world of art is, in the first place, a world apart. It has much to do with mental distraction, reverie or contemplation in which dialectical laws prevail. Conflict or agony (agon) as between the Self and the non-Self or other dichotomous aspects of the reality which is no other than the Absolute, is at the core of tragedy which gave birth to comedy and romance in turn. The principle of Dithyrambos associated with the dancing god Dionysos also known as "The One of Two Doors" is another secret known to the Greeks whose significance is to be sought through dialectics.

Similarly, the principle of *nemesis* in which divinities like Zeus and Hades take sides has to be understood in the light of dialectics. How Chance, Providence or Fate enter into tragedy or romance without violating laws of poetic justice is again a subject for intuition of the contemplative order to explain or resolve. The excesses of revenge or retribution on the one hand, and of the Bacchanalian orgiac elements on the other hand, which are to be found in all classical or romantic drama have to be fitted into a coherent scheme of infra-human, human, or supra-human life.

Whether in Kalidasa, Shakespeare, Milton, Dante, Goethe or Hugo a subtle dialectics is implied in their bold creations. To miss this essence would be to ignore the best flavour of art altogether and with it what is the most precious part of the wisdom heritage of humanity. The highest role of art, especially in romance or tragedy is to "assert eternal Providence, and justify the ways of God to men," as Milton put it.*

Such are some of the random items which indicate broadly the scope and purpose of the present essay.

Subject and Object of Principle of Mimesis: Both Plato and his great disciple Aristotle conceived of art generally as a form of imitation. With Plato it was a perfect World of the Intelligibles which was the original imitated. Aristotle thought that imitation referred to reality here and now as implied in existence itself without rising to the world of ideas. These two positions have first to be reconciled dialectically. Both the statements are true when understood in the spirit of dialectics. Whether we say "a mother's son" or, conversely, "the son's mother" we refer to one and the same central relationship. The central Verity implied in both the propositions is the same as when cause and effect, master and servant, and similar dialectical pairs are unitively understood.

Mimesis is a double-doored, double-faced or double-edged principle which works both-ways. The secret of the Dithyrambos to which we shall come presently pertains to the same dialectical order. When we read in *Hamlet*: "The play's the thing wherein I'll catch the conscience

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* line 25, *paradise Lost.*

of the king " * we will notice that an equal status is given to the objective and the subjective aspects. Art holds up a mirror to life and life can be a mirror to art likewise. The play here and the conscience revealed in the features of the king are to be looked upon as dialectical counterparts which are brought together and equated so as to reveal the absolute reality which is neither subjective nor objective.

Secret of Dithyramb in Tragedy and Romance : Aristotle wrote: "Tragedy as also comedy was at first mere improvization — the one (tragedy) originated with the leaders of the Dithyramb."‡ Dithyrambos was one of the names of Dionysos who is the Leaper, the Dancer and the Life-Giver. The Dithyramb is the song of the birth of Dionysos sung at the spring festival.

That the suggestion of this name referred to a double-birth of a twice-born spirit of springtime was well known to the Greeks. But speculation on the etymology of this word is still in progress even in modern times, as is evidenced by the following extract from *Ancient Art and Ritual* by Dr. Jane Allen Harrison. She writes: "By a false analogy they explained the word Dithyrambos as meaning 'He of the double door.' They were quite mistaken; Dithyrambos, modern philology tells us is the Divine Leaper, Dancer and Life-giver."†

To those who are familiar with the dialectical notion of the eternal present which is ever being born while ever dying, the double-door device attributed to the god Dionysos as the spirit of Spring or pure Becoming, will not be an enigma as it seems to be to this author. She seems to recognize tacitly the value of the original Greek etymology, however, when she continues in the same paragraph as follows: "But their false etymology is important to us, because it shows that they believed the Dithyrambos was the twice-born. Dionysos was born, they fabled once, of his mother, like all men; once of his father's thigh, like no man." This mythological explanation in reality is only a vulgarized version of the dialectical verity of pure duration which is known even in modern times to philosophers like Bergson, besides being known once in pre-Socratic times to Parmenides and Zeno.

In fact the mystery of Dionysos refers to the Absolute nature of the Essence or Substance of reality which is both a Wonder and a high Value. Those who are familiar with the *Tandava* (Leaper) or the *Nataraja* (Dancer) who is Siva, the Eastern counterpart of the same Dionysos, will have no difficulty in seeing the dialectical verity which this myth represents. Modern philosophically minded persons who can understand a philosophical statement such as "a Monad has no windows" must have no real difficulty with the two doors of becoming, one opening prospectively and the other opening retrospectively into the domain of eternal pure duration. As in the problems of the one and the many, a subtle dialectics enters herein which refers to a way of wisdom outmoded and gone into disuse. The double-phased secret of the Dithyramb as applied to Tragedy and to romances like *Hernani*, which are made almost

* Act II, ii, 633.

‡ *Poetics*

† p. 104.

of the same tragic stuff, thus becomes solved in the light of dialectics.

Unitive Treatment of Action and Actor : If the secret of romance and tragedy is to be extracted and full benefits derived from the lesson, we have to learn to view the actor and the action of the play or romance as brought under one unitive dialectical treatment. The action is not to be understood as separate from the actor, or even from the setting in which the actor is put. They can effectively set off one another or belong to subject and object at once. An immobile actor as the hero in *Prometheus Bound* is represented by Aeschylus, fulfils the requirements of both actor and action as they are to be understood unitively and together in the sense we mean here.

Prof. W. J. Oates, Professor of Classics at Princeton University utterly misses the significance of this immobility of Prometheus when he writes:

> "In the *Prometheus Bound* Aeschylus was faced with a difficult problem of dramaturgy since he had to build a play in which his central character could not move, in a very literal sense of the word. Consequently the poet found himself considerably limited in scope and was forced practically to eliminate from his play anything which we might call 'action.' Aeschylus solves the problem by introducing several characters who in one way or another set off the central figure." *

If we remember that tragedy rose out of the Mysteries of Eleusis where the action was the death of Dionysos and his rising therefrom, it is not hard to see how Prometheus as the central figure here, conforms to the same archetypal pattern of this type of action which is of the essence of tragedy itself.

Mobility and immobility are meant to be dialectically juxtaposed in this central figure of Prometheus who will be unbound in a later drama belonging to the same series as intended by the author. The implied action of stealing the fire of heaven for the benefit of mankind by a benignant and suffering servant of mankind in agony contains intense virtual or innate action which this modern critic fails to appreciate or misses.

The hero and his action here have to be understood against the drama's own background of myth and allegory which, as we have noted already in VALUES, conforms to an interplay of value factors which must be understood in the light of both ascending and descending dialectics. The wrath of Zeus on high and the degradation in which mankind lived without fire, are the dialectical value-counterparts within whose range the agony of Prometheus is depicted masterfully. No overt action, however ingeniously conceived, could ever be an effective substitute to this movement of the spirit in its intensity of tragic suffering which is a form of action in inaction. The apology of the critic for Aeschylus can thus be seen to be quite out of place. Similarly it might be asked what action there is in the tears shed by a banished Sita of Bhavabhuti or in the inner anguish of a Sakuntala in the central scene of Kalidasa's play. Tragedy could consist equally in an inner or outer event when art is

* p. 4, *Seven Famous Greek Plays*, Modern Library.

conceived according to correct dialectical requirements as it always is in the best instances. The actor's inner anguish could be offset by outer events and *vice-versa*, bringing action and actor into unitive interplay.

Drama and Drumenon as Interchangable Terms: The distinction between pure and practical action is a dialectical subtlety which we have to grasp with clarity in regard to drama understood as consisting of overt action with a practical end and drama meant as an end in itself. The Greek terms Drama, denoting something done, and *Drumenon*, also meaning something done, but in the context of ritual, were both of the same origin.

The Greeks acted their tragedies round an altar as an offering to Dionysos who himself or his high priest was required to be present on such annual solemn festivals. It was almost obligatory for a respectable Athenian to attend this ritual. This circumstance throws light on the same problem of overt and innate action just mentioned. An Alcestis on the stage who is brought back from the hands of Death hardly does any overt act herself, but her innate action in a virtual or potential form is the centre of all active interest. Thus there are two actions; one that could be said to be what is natural to a Herakles or an Atlas or other titan, and the other that consists of silent tears, maybe of a suffering hero or heroine. Prometheus himself represented the middle of the scale in which action could move only vertically as he was rock-fixed between hypostatic and hierophantic value worlds. His opposition to Zeus is evident when he calls him "the new tyrant of heaven" * and his interest in the world here below of mortals is expressed through the chorus device in the lines addressed to him:

"Ay, fearing not Zeus, in self-will
Too much thou honorest mortals" †

Thus in a vertical scale of action reaching from the world of the Olympian gods to that of mere mortals, is the amplitude within which the agony of Prometheus moves. His action is neither all overt nor merely virtual, but real in a unitive or centrally neutral sense. Bacchus himself in the later and more mature work of Euripides, as represented by Dionysos, has no action as such. His excellence merely consists of eluding all effects of action brought against him by the power of Pentheus who represents in himself horizontol aspects of action. The vertical and horizontal aspects of dramatic action are very cleverly contrasted in *The Bacchae* of Euripides. The intended contrast may be seen from the examination of a few lines from the drama, when Dionysos finds fault with Pentheus in the following words:

"Come, perverse man, greedy for sights you should not see,
impatient for deeds you should not do." §

As against this horizontal aspect of life or action hinted at here we have Dionysos describing his own attitude to life when he says on coming out of the dark dungeon into which Pentheus threw him:

"I alone with effortless ease delivered myself." ¶

The Axes of Reference: In the structure of romance and

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* *ibid* p. 13 † *ibid.* p. 23.
§ p. 210, *Euripides Bacchae and Other Plays* (Penguin, 1954) ¶ *ibid.* p. 200.

tragedy a tragic hero or two romantic heroes, one a man and the other a woman, are to be placed at the very core of the composition. They may be exposed to conflicts as between outer and inner or higher or lower worlds. Horizontal action may develop round them, or the action may lie in the purer domain of feelings or passions which trace their course feebly or strongly in time or duration.

All dramatic structure can be examined with these axes of reference in the mind of the keen critic who would then discover the unitive and subtle dialectical pattern which underlies all the great masterpieces of creation of this kind whether called romantic, lyric, or tragic. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Hernani* or *Hamlet* may be examined in the light of these axes of reference. That Greek drama was conceived with the same frame of reference would be patent to the keen critic any time. Vertical worlds of value systems are piled one on the other in works like Goethe's *Faust* which imitates Dante's *Divine Comedy* from which Milton in his *Paradise Lost* might have also gained inspiration.

Serial worlds, mundane or celestial, vertically arranged, with interests of the here and now giving the centre of each such system its proper embellishment in the form of flesh and blood (which latter is the horizontal aspect as should belong to the vertical value at each given level), such is the structure of the great creations of master minds who in their bold flights of imagination seek to assert Providence and justify the ways of God to man.

The discussion of examples would take us beyond the legitimate limits of this essay. Only slight indications can be attempted here.

Let us take *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, so popular with the scholastic world. Oberon and Puck are space-minded spirits. They live in a spring or maypole world of colourful luxury of which Bottom brings up the extremely earthy tail end. When Oberon sings :

"We the globe can compass soon
Swifter than the wandering moon"

or when Puck says :

"I'll put a girdle round about the earth in forty minutes"

there is no mistaking the touch of Bacchus and that of the spring festival they represent. In other words, they belong to a horizontal axis of life values, as apart from more enduring values which have to be related to the vertical axis or pure scale of values within the core of the life of man.

When the horizontal has been thus distinguished, it would be easier to see what values belong to the more mystical or contemplative world which the youthful yet tragic god Dionysos represents in his own person. When re-read in the light of the above remarks *The Bacchae* of Euripides would yield much evidence that there are two distinct yet interpenetrating values systems which co-exist in harmony in all great dramatic creations.

The Three Unities Applied to the Core of Drama : Like the Self, the core of drama is to be determined and correctly fixed by means of three unities, namely, those of time, place and action. The ritualistic and idolatrous origin of drama which we have referred to already must be responsible for the insistence of the three unities so

(*Continued on page 307*)

"Stand Upright and Erect"

By JOHN SPIERS

ALL art worth the name deals with the Absolute. Artists are contemplators fascinated with the absolute vision which they see. They try to convey to us that vision. When they succeed we then experience ecstasy. Earth and heaven mingle in this new uniqueness gained as something permanent out of the mud, confusion and transitoriness of relativistic life.

THOUSANDS of sunflowers in the actual world flourished and perished but after Van Gogh painted them, every sunflower thereafter gained an absoluteness of an imperishable value. "Ah, sunflower, weary of time that countest the steps of the sun!" sang the astonishing William Blake also giving the immortal touch in his inimitable way. God may geometrize as Pythagoras held, but all the unitive philosophers have seen the Absolute Self as an artist with nature for the living canvas, nature as the same Self. Man is artist and the seer of his art and enjoyer and producer all in one from the never expended same self source which theologians call God.

The unitive element must be maintained. Robert Burns draws the similarities between the human condition and the crushed daisies and ploughed-up nest of a field mouse, where "the best laid schemes o' mice and men gang aft agley."

Gurus and Artists: It is fairly well established that Socrates prompted or advised the Greek dramatist Euripides and, in the early decades of this century the Guru Narayana stimulated and materially supported the famous poet Kumaran Asan of Malabar.

When either lacking opportunity or genius (few have been artists in their own rights like Plato and the Guru Narayana) the world's great sages have at least inspired three-quarters of the art that exists, often indirectly. Indeed the rapport between poet and philosopher tends to become fused in the philosopher–poet as we study the subject. They are not only music-makers" and "dreamers of dreams" as O'Shaughnessy wrote. They are myth-makers, ritualists, men frenzied with religion and magic, presenting the gods and all unitive principles, from the depths of prehistory as seen on the 200,000–year–old walls of caves in France and Spain, down to time of Homer and so "modern" or timeless, that they still have their disciples in Picasso and Moore, Matisse and Braque, etc.

Almost the whole art of China and, indirectly, the art of Japan, is inspired by the absolutism of Lao Tzu and other Tao teachers, distilling the Absolute in nature by an incredible restraint, a few brush-strokes of pregnant poetry, or a few wispy lines on the dull gold of antique silk. One need hardly mention the transformation of European life following that artistic revolution called the Renaissance. Shakespeare may have had "small Latin and less Greek," but he had what all the pundits never had, the intuitive vision of an absolutist who was able to short-circuit time and hitch his art on to the pagan principles of Greek philosophy. And

T. S. Eliot in our day restores the usage of the Greek Chorus in his drama, *The Rock*, as W. H. Auden too has done in *The Ascent of F6*.

All or Nothing: The monstrous humour of Rabelais, flooding and overwhelming in its imagery, finds its modern echo in James Joyce where all the absurdities, the pitiful and the erotic, in such entirely human humble things like copulation, eating and elimination are treated with titanism in a supreme assault which by sheer force deserves the name of absolute Comedy.

While a philosopher like Vyasa may masterfully summarize the wise man's attitude when he says he will regard "a clod of earth, a stone and a piece of gold as of equal value, who remains the same amid the pleasant and unpleasant," etc. (in the *Bhagavad Gita* xiv, 24), it needs a Rembrandt to paint the picture of the carcase of an ox hanging in a butcher's shop, or a Toulouse Lautrec to paint the prostitutes and pimps of the sordid Parisian world of bordellas and music-halls, to bring the equation home by audacious vision in a way usually denied to the pure philosopher. Despite censorship, Henry Miller's current popularity is also due to his same equalizing universality. It is a wholesale unashamed approach to human nature.

Relativists make out human love to be either a shameful rape or as angels holding hands. The fine distinction between the relative and the Absolute here is a puzzle to judges who never have the clue to distinguish between pornography and erotic art.

The Barbaric Yawp: Scholars may claim to know all the rules of grammer and there is hardly a writer worth his salt who would pass a civil service exam, or who has ever heard of or hearing cares for "significant form" and the trash the critics dish out. As an absolutist the artist has always the advantage over them all in his enthusiasm for the first principles they never attain. Critics will find Homer nodding; refer to Shakespeare's mixed metaphors; sneer at Whitman's style (which he himself called his barbaric yawp); decry the looseness and unconventional designs of modern poetry; tell audiences they have no right to enjoy Shaw's plays because they consist of long speeches like the hell scene in *Man and Superman* and because the actors don't bounce about; make fun of every painter who sweats blood to formulate his vision; will approve of the tarring and feathering of Epstein's Rima and side with the dirty minds of those who put fig-leaves and tin-skirts on the marbles of antiquity.

But little boys tear off the fig-leaves and people crowd to see the dramas and buy the books and still thrill over Whitman. The artist does not create for his own time. He paints, writes and sings for all men for ever. When decent lapse of time goes by the artists are accepted by bourgois orthodoxy. The relativists nod their approval. The final degradation of acceptance is the adoption of the banned as classical art to be school texts. Drunken Li-Po is honoured; ditto Baudelaire and Burns. The immoralities and madnesses if they are ever mentioned are generously *forgiven*, as if any artist ever apologized!

Philosophically, in their quiet but effective way, it is always forgotten that the saintly gurus have had much the same attitude as the artists. Christ consorts with Mary Magdalene and the Buddha with Ambapalli and Lao Tzu, according to Chuang Tzu, (contra Confucius) with the bandits of South China, and Socrates with the notorious homosexuals in their drinking bouts — and is even able to see everybody under the table! Similarly a close study of the lives of the wisdom teachers of India will show that they broke the rules of caste and mingled boldly without fear or favour with the pariahs of Hindu society. All or nothing is the keynote throughout.

Release from Work: In the usual pious sense religion when it prefers the sacred is lop-sided and therefore anti-absolutist. It takes not only great art but the poised dialectical philosophy behind it to rise above both the profane and the sacred. Such a position of absolute neutrality may be questioned as hardly attainable. Yet every work of universal art proves this to be possible over and over again.

As usual, Shakespeare said it plainly. In *Twelfth Night* (II, iii, 123) he wrote: "Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?" All artists must have this fiery Dionysian touch.

That is why Jesus broke the Sabbath and had a good dinner with his disciples. Mohammed behaved like an artist when he called for shears and cut his good coat so that he could rise from his couch without disturbing a sleeping cat. Despite modern puritanical interpretations, the Buddha's teaching must have appealed to artists, otherwise there would have been neither the impassioned beauty of the Ajanta frescoes nor the superb Amaravati marbles, both belonging to the same immortal category as the Sistine frescoes and the Parthenon frieze.

Oscar Wilde said "all art is quite useless." The artist is no more a "worker" than the philosopher is. Both are teachers, at play with wisdom, contemplators of verity. Plato recognized this, being an artist himself, and justified the place of religion (in the well-rounded wholesome pagan sense) for the very reason that it gave human beings a respite from labour and activity:

> "But the Gods, taking pity on mankind born to work, laid down the succession of recurring Feasts to restore them from their fatigue, and gave them the Muses, and Apollo their leader, and Dionysos, as companions in their Feasts, so that nourishing themselves in festive companionship with the Gods, they should again stand upright and erect." (*Laws*, 653 C-d)

Upright and erect! For this is the vertical attitude of liberation. It is from the horizontal wheel-bound position of human toil that philosophers and artists strive to deliver us. To be freed at least once in a while from a dreadful clock-measured life of buying and selling, and looking after the family, and serving the nation aud what not.

In the relativistic world to be lazy and not to work is a sin. In the absolutist world which is the true religious world, not to enjoy abandoned laziness and to work is a sin. That is why there were orgies. Siva must dance, and so must his worshippers. Krishna must play the flute while the worshipping Gopis sing and dance. Sunday for Jesus was a day of celebrations with feasting along with his followers. But to go from the doom of work to the gloom of most religion is totally wrong. Humanity's common sense must rescue people from this attitude of double negation.

It is noticeable in India (and no doubt in every country today) that despite government propaganda drives to fulfil five-year plans, there is a marked tendency for everybody to take every chance going for a holiday, religious or secular, from the awful boring grind of work, work, work! In a land of religious holidays galore, Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Jaina, Parsi, and so forth, plus Sundays and commemorative days, the masses of India grab all that comes along and try to renew themselves. Even Nehru, driving himself to extremes, has at last to go into the equivalent of a contemplative retreat. It is the result of outraging the human spirit whose nature is not active but contemplative. All life, both artists and gurus never tire of repeating, should be and can be, a playful holiday. If it is not that, it has no value whatsoever. Hence men like overworked boilers, must blow off steam or burst. That is why too there is no need to despair about politics of the fixed variety. Revolutions meet with revolutions; values are constantly revalued. Mankind will never be driven. Work is the mistake of wrongly educated people. It is through art and unitive philosophy and universalized religion based on wholesale values that man escapes from the crushing horizontal burden of necessity and "stands upright and erect."

Beyond Romance and Tragedy : Like Wordsworth the artist and his followers feel the urge to take a Triton's trumpet and blow it full blast for fun. In India the Triton's trumpet, the chank shell, is still actually blown, with an absolutist note that sends religious shivers below the crust of fixed-patterned life. Like the Bacchanals of old Greece, pilgrims don the saffron robe and defiantly blow the chank, abandoning their so-safe homes for weeks or months on end. But what escape has the imprisoned civilized man got? To weep over the doings of movie floozies, to throw his savings in a great splurge at the races, to vent his hatred of robot-toil through the volcanic outlet of politics . . .

The real triumph of the contemplative as artist is his transcendance of romance and tragedy. The Absolute is integral joy in whatever evil-looking form it may take. In a deplorable Hitler one can at least approve of his tragic wilful absoluteness in such glaring contrast to the good Chamberlain's deplorable weakness of will. Before Hitler was defeated (and we should ask him first about defeat!) it took a handful of other still more wilful men to end the occasion.

The horizontal view of tragedy always seems painful. An Abelard and Heloise stand upright and erect at the end of their relativistic horizontalized romance, while the vertical romance grows out of the tragic and transcends this dialectical pair, so that their love is immortalized. What looked at sideways seemed to be utterly tragic becomes a sublime victory and a triumph for the untouched singleness of Self of the two lovers.

Society can badger the artist till the cows come home. He doesn't care. He can take all the so-called tragic punishment meted out by a moron world of Grundys, Calibans and Philistines. He can even shoulder the tragedy of success. No artist can afford to look back. He cannot afford to be hypnotized in a special magic circle of success. Most people once in their lives at least are absolutist, but they try to "catch the joy as it flies" and remain trapped in mere domesticity and thus become the tragic slaves of social necessity. They seek peace and rest in the wrong place. Peace belongs to the supreme heights beyond all possibility of tragedy, but always through tragedy as equally through romance and comedy and all the aspects of life. The artist is Prometheus who will burst the steel bonds imposed by nature, even if in so doing he has to become a scallywag, a criminal, a no-gooder, and an "Enemy of the People" as Ibsen so finely showed. As Dr. Stockman discovers in that play, "the strongest man upon earth is he who stands most alone." That is the final Plotinian touch, which gives the Norwegian dramatist his place as an Absolutist.

And if the artist agonizes in his dedication to the absolutist values which consume him night and day, he is never to be pitied, never in need of relativistic sympathy. He "stands upright and erect" above all coddling relativistic emotions. Logically the man or woman who creates romance and tragedy has to stand above both, while at the same time knowing both to the intensest degree. It is in that wisdom or knowledge that he stands on an equal ground with his friend and companion, the man of wisdom or Guru whose approving nod gives him the only kind of support his character and personality can bear.

[END]

There are two tragedies in life. One is not to get your heart's desire. The other is to get it. — G. B. Shaw.

Better to reign in hell, than serve in heav'n. — Milton.

It is not good to forget over what gulfs the spirit
Of the beauty of humanity, the petal of a lost flower blown seaward by the night wind, floats to its quietness.

— Robinson Jeffers.

The Life of an honest man must be an apostasy and a perpetual desertion. The honest man must be a perpetual renegade, the life of an honest man must be a perpetual infidelity. For the man who wishes to remain faithful to truth must make himself continually unfaithful to all the continual, successive, indefatigable renascent errors. And the man who wishes to remain faithful to justice must make himself continually unfaithful to inexhaustibly triumphant injustices.

— Charles Peguy.

All things are artificial, for nature is the art of God.

— Sir Thomas Browne.

This world is a comedy to those that think, a tragedy to those that feel. — Horace Walpole.

Ancient and Modern

Eye Nature's walks, shoot folly as it flies,
And catch the manners living as they rise:
Laugh where we must, be candid where we can;
But vindicate the ways of God to man. — POPE.

The light of Greece opened my eyes . . . No warring conflicts between the nations of the earth can disturb this equilibrium . . . I refuse categorically to become anything less than the citizen of the world which I silently declared myself to be when I stood in Agamemnon's tomb. From that day forth my life was dedicated to the recovery of the divinity of man. Peace to all men, I say, and life more abundant.

— HENRY MILLER.

Mit der Dummheit kaempfen Goetter selbst vergebens. — With stupidity the gods themselves struggle in vain. — SCHILLER

WHAT IF?

what if a dawn of a doom of a dream
bites this universe in two,
peels forever out of his grave
and sprinkles nowhere with me and you?
Blow soon to never and never to twice
(blow life to isn't: blow death to was)
— all nothing's only our hugest home;
the most who die, the more we live. — E. E. CUMMINGS

Suave, mari magno turbantibus aequora ventis,
E terra magnum alterius spectare laborem.

— It is pleasant, when the sea is high and the winds are dashing the waves about, to watch from the land the struggles of another.

— LUCRETIUS.

How many people have actually read Homer? All the same, the whole world talks of him. In this way the Homeric legend is created. A legend in this sense provokes a valuable stimulus. Enthusiasm is what we need most, we and the younger generation. — PICASSO.

THE GREAT MUSE

The fish in the deeps and the deer that leaps, the snake, the hill and the bird,
Man and woman as well as heaven and hell are forms of Thyself and Thy word;
In multiple postures with infinite gestures Thou dancest in every heart;
And I as Thy Self, am Thyself in Myself — from Thee I am not apart.
From Thy sweet-form of sounds flows all that abounds, the play of Thy miming art!

NARAYANA GURU, *Nine-Gemmed Diadem of the Mother, 6*

The Dialectics of Romance and Tragedy — I

(continued from page 300)

rigidly in classical times. At the time of the romantic revolt this was somewhat relaxed and modified but not altogether abandoned. Greater latitude or liberality was allowed to the free-lance, knight-errant in the domain of art as was also the case with reformed religion in Europe.

In the rules of the *Tantra* of India we have the same insistence on time, place and ritualisti action to be focussed together to one point of an existence or spiritual presence. The Absolute was thus given a local habitation and a name, although it was an airy nothing. Drama was to be the meeting-point of the theoretical Absolute as well as the practical one. Like ritual when correctly applied to the Absolute, art was an end in itself. Its value was both mediate and immediate. Art was a bridge on which the human soul could pass backwards or forwards between the relative and absolute poles of the Mystery of the Unknown. When not contaminated by mere mercantilism or commercialism, all pure drama must still adhere to this high purpose of interpreting the ways of God to Man.

Even when there happen to be two heroes, or a hero and a heroine as in works that were not tragically conceived in the classical sense, but in the more liberalized version of the same, the interest has to be centralized, in both of them enclosed in brackets, unitively as it were, if drama is to fulfil this high role as it did in the hands of the great classical masters. Hugo's hero Hernani has Dona Sol the heroine as his dialectical counterpart, and the interest is round these two personalities taken together. They are to be looked upon as the obverse and the reverse of the same soul. When the midnight hour strikes in the last scene of the last act we find Don Ruy Gomez rising to truly tragic heights representing the Fate or Providence which really stands for the Absolute in the lives of men. The requirements of a tragedy which Aristotle referred to in his definition, could be seen to apply equally to this part of Hugo's great creation as to the case of the best examples of Greek tragedy proper.

The definition reads as follows:

> "Tragedy is an imitation of an action of high importace,n complete and of some amplitude; in language enhanced by distinct and varying beauties; acted, not narrated; by means of pity and fear effecting its purgation of these emotions."

In the case of *Hernani* the fear of the inexorable hand of Fate and the pity of two loving souls who drink poison from the hands of each other, to drop dead side by side at the very striking of their nuptial hour, effects the same purgation that touches the high water mark of romance and tragedy at once.

Essential Counterparts of a Tragic Situation : Tragedy which is of the essence of drama revolves round a hero of tragic stature. It depends on a subtle dialectical situation into which counterparts of absolute reality of the philosophical or contemplative order enter or interact.

It requires the prophet, philosopher or poet to discover the crux or essence of the situation involved in true tragedy. The madman and the lover can also be admitted into this company of raving, loud-voiced, exalted, excited or frenzied personalities who resemble mystics or philosophers and belong to the world of tragedy as characters therein.

The tragic hero is the Siva or the Dionysos principle which represents human life as understood in toto. The counterparts of such an absolutist character have a polarity, dichotomy or ambivalence as between the two reciprocal aspects of the Absolute itself, one of which could be labelled negative and the other positive.

These counterparts present varying degrees of unity or conflict. Vertically viewed they merge into one another without overtly tragic circumstances developing round them. When viewed horizontally or slanting in any other intermediate angle, tragic situations develop according to the degree of deviation from the vertical axis.

The tragic situation between an Othello and a Desdemona involves the murder of the latter through a jealousy which attains to an absolute status and takes possession of the whole person of the hero in that play. *Alcestis* presents quite another picture. Instead of a wife suspected of infidelity there is here a wife willing to die to save the life of a husband. She is brought back to life by the intervention of a Herakles who is both a titan and a god at once. He represents Dionysos in a milder form. When two lovers commit double suicide because a third factor called Fate intervenes to separate them cruelly in this life, to promise unity in the life herafter, as in the case of Hugo's *Hernani*, to which we have already alluded, the split or tragic situation consists of the horizontal aspects of life values only. The bridal bed on which they did not lie implies only a here and now value which was frustrated in this tragic romance of dual negation. In *Alcestis* however, double assertion is the secret. Her spirit was tuned and dedicated to a higher value grounded in the pure or vertical Absolute. The horizontal expression here is almost *nil* as dramatic action in the Shakespearean sense. Her touching adieu to her own children and her ceremonial preparation of herself are the only expressions depicted. Even these may still be said to lie in the ritualistic, symbolic, perceptual or purely vertical axis of dramatic movement. In *The Bacchae* of Euripides the vertical movement is perfectly represented in the role of Dionysos who may be said to act and not to act at one and the same time throughout the play.

Tragedy as Dramatization of the Mysteries of Eleusis : The Mysteries of Eleusis (as we have pointed out in previous issues of VALUES) touched the culminating point indicated by the saying of Plotinus concerning "the flight of the alone to the Alone." It is as if the dewdrop slipped into the shining sea, to put the same secret in its more Eastern context. The Phoenix which gets burnt to rise again alive from the same fire indicates the same secret as enshrined in the myth or allegory of the Near East. A careful critical scrutiny of the structure of the scheme of values involved in great dramatic compositions and the role played by the various characters, and more especially the Greek choruses which are brought into the play for supplying the philosophy of the author himself as the play unravels to make the drama significant and meaningful in the wisdom context, would reveal beyond doubt that the drama in its best instances shares and teaches the high hope of eternal life that distinguishes mankind.

No drama could afford to miss this aspect. A drama would be inferior to the extent that it glosses over this timeless and climeless reality. Even in a drama like Hugo's *Hernani*, the double tragedy of the death of the two lovers is not without this idea of resurrection, at least suggested before they die. Dona Sol still pale and dying while her lover who is also in the throes of death watches on in pity and sympathy, says the following hopeful words:

Vers des clartes nouvelles
Nous allons tout a l'heure ensemble ovrir nos ailes ;
Partons d'un vol egal vers un monde meilleur
"Toward new clarities
We shall be going soon together to open our wings ;
Let us depart in equal flight towards a better world."
(Act V.)

The transfiguration, passion or ascension of Christ, strangely conforms to the dialectics understood and implicit in the best examples of Greek tragedy. In fact this was the most precious part of the wisdom of the ancients which left its imprint equally on pagan or Christian, Jewish or Gentile literature of the Mediterranean civilization. When compared with the absolutist doctrines and artistic creations built round the figure of Siva, the counterpart of Dionysos, who may be said to belong to South India, the student is bound to see striking resemblances which establish a common bond between the innermost wisdom teachings of both these cultural growths.

The nature of the common dialectical secret involved could best be brought out here, without getting lost ouselves in subtle theorizations, by merely quoting the following words put into the mouth of a prophet, as he is referred to in *The Bacchae* whose author Euripides lived about 480-406 before Christ. Teiresias the prophet addresses the following to his maternal grandson Pentheus who objected to Dionysos and the doings of the Bacchae. The wise man justifies the Bacchae in the following word:

"There are two powers, young man, which are supreme in human affairs: first, the goddess Demeter; she is the Earth — call her by what name you will ; and she supplies mankind with solid food. Second, Dionysos the son of Semele ; the blessing he provides is the counterpart to the blessing of bread ; he discovered and bestowed on men the service of drink, the juice that streams from the vine-clusters ; men have but to take their fill of wine, and the sufferings of an unhappy race are banished, each day's troubles are forgotten in sleep — indeed this is our only cure for the weariness of life. *Dionysos, himself a god, is poured out in offering to the gods ; so that through him mankind receives blessing.*" *

If we take care here that the wine and the offering of it is to be understood as a symbolic rite rather than as a real act in its modern sense, it would not be difficult to see how this resembles the rite of the Euchrrist of Christianity which was formulated in the same region several

* *ibid*, p. 190.

centuries later. The grace of God in material form is not unknown in the context of *Tantric* ritual in India, either. The last sentence (italicized) which refers to the god himself as an offering to the gods, is fully dialectical in its import, to leave which unnoticed would be to miss the whole point of this essay, which we shall conclude here for the present, leaving questions such as nemesis, providence, purgation, and poetic or divine justice for future treatment.

[END]

PLATO ON DIALECTICS

THAT ardour which impels you to philosophical argument is both beautiful and divine; but pull yourself together and, while you are yet young, exercise yourself more and more in Dialectics, a science which to the vulgar appears useless and which they call loquacity; for if you do not, truth will elude your pursuit. —PLATO *Parmenides*, St. iii, 135.

I am sure that all men who have a grain of intelligence will admit that Dialectics, the science which has to do with being and reality, and sameness and unchangableness, is by far the truest of all.

— PLATO *Philebus*, 57.

Not only do I pursue myself, with all a lover's assiduity, these methods of decomposing and combining, but if ever I find anyone else whom I judge capable of apprehending the one and the many as they are in nature, that man "I follow behind, as though in the track of a god." And to all who are possessed of this power I have been in the habit of giving, whether rightly or wrongly, heaven knows, the name of dialecticians. — PLATO *Phaedrus*, 266.

Dialectics is an intellectual process, but is paralleled in the visible world by the progress of sight from shadows to real creatures, and then to the stars, and finally to the sun itself. So when one tries to reach ultimate realities by the exercise of pure reason, without any aid from the senses, and refuses to give up until the mind has grasped what the Good is, one is at the end of an intellectual progress parallel to the visual progress we have described. — PLATO *Republic*, VIII, 532.

The ability to give an account of the essential nature of each particular thing is Dialectics. — PLATO *ibid*, 534.

Dialectics is the coping-stone of all the ways of learning.

— PLATO *ibid*, 535.

Dialectics is the ability to take the comprehensive view of the relationship of the disconnected subjects that have been studied, with each other, and with reality. — PLATO *ibid*, 537.

The Columbia Controversy

By Roy Jacobsen

Our seventh instalment of "one of the most unusual cases" in American judicial history presents the claim and response as the court heard it. "Curiouser and curiouser" many will mutter, as Dean Chamberlain, the man on the spot, chooses this moment to resign.

On Friday, December 13, 1957, I appeared in the Superior Court in Morristown, opposite Mr. Egan, who was representing Columbia. Judge Frederick W. Hall heard my request for transferring the case to his court, and then heard Mr. Egan's statement that he was opposing the motion and seeking summary judgment and dismissal of my counterclaim.

Judge Hall wanted time to study the case, and set January 10th, 1958 as the date for the next appearance in court.

Mr. Egan submitted a number of papers to the Court, including a Memorandum of Law in which he argued on legal technicalities and cited legal authorities to support his opposion to me. He also submitted affidavits by Miss Levers and Dean Chamberlain. Miss Levers' affidavit dealt with the financial aspect of the case, stating the dates and amounts of loans, the amounts of repayment, the amounts not repaid, etc. Following are the four paragraphs in her affidavit which were not quite so matter-of-fact:

3. That the defendants are indebted to the University not only clearly appears from the notes and the University's records [*photostat copies of the two promissory notes were attached as Exhibits A and B*], but is confirmed by the letter from the father and mother of defendant Roy G. Jacobsen, dated December 1, 1956, a photostat copy of which is hereto annexed and marked and Exhibit C. [*This letter was published in* Values *February, 1958.*]

6. It is significant that, between February 18, 1952 and September 29, 1952, the defendant paid in full a loan of $323.00, evidenced by a promissory note dated February 2, 1952, which is not in suit herein.

7. I submit that it is also fair to point out that it wasn't until in or about May, 1956, almost two years after the defendant had left the University, during which time he had made payments on account of both principal and interest on the said loans, that he suddenly decided he would make no further payments.

8. Although the total unpaid indebtedness on the said notes is $1,049.30, with interest, I am informed that counsel for the University, in order to bring the action in this Court, brought a suit for only $1,000. The said sum of $1,000 and interest is justly due and owing, there are no defenses, set-offs or counterclaims with respect thereto and the plaintiff is entitled to judgment therefor.

Miss Levers spoke as though it was not in my favor to have become certain within two years that Columbia's type of education was false. On the contrary, I was very fortunate; few people realize it even in a lifetime.

Dean Chamberlain's affidavit is here presented in full:

AFFIDAVIT

Lawrence H. Chamberlain, being duly sworn, says:

1. I am Dean of Columbia College, one of the component institutions of Columbia University, plaintiff herein, and make this affidavit in support of plaintiff's motion for an order striking the purported answer and counterclaim of defendant Roy G. Jacobsen as specious, sham, and frivolous and granting summary judgment for the relief demanded in the complaint.

I have been affiliated with Columbia University, holding various academic ranks, for a period of 16 years and have been Dean of the College for 7 years. I am familiar with the facts and circumstances surrounding said defendant's attendance at Columbia College.

2. As appears from the affidavit of Elizabeth D. Levers, Bursar of the University, sworn to December 3rd, 1957, there is due and owing to the University from the defendant the sum of $1,000 with interest.

3. I respectfully submit that the conglomeration of claims and assertions submitted by said defendant as an alleged answer and defense to this undisputed claim of the University is entirely without merit.

The matters as to which this defendant asserts a grievance are subjective, esoteric and ethereal.

He asserts: "I have really only one charge against Columbia: that it does not teach Wisdom as it claims to do." Wisdom is not a subject which can be taught and Columbia has never claimed to teach the unteachable. All that any college can do through its teachers, libraries, laboratories and other facilities is to endeavor to teach a student the known facts, acquaint him with the nature of those matters which are unknown and thereby assist him in developing mentally, morally and physically. Wisdom is a hoped for end product of education, experience and ability which many seek and many fail to attain. The defendant's own statement of his only real grievance demonstrates its absurdity.

His assertions that our Philosophy Department does not teach philosophy and that our Psychology Department does not teach psychology are ample indication of the frivolity of the reminder of his claims.

He further asserts that Columbia "does not have any course or program of education for teaching Wisdom," and that the "University does teach knowledge and skill in various fields, but cannot distinguish between Knowledge and Wisdom, which is itself a mark of confusion."

What these assertions have to do with the non-payment of a concededly due indebtedness I am at a loss to understand.

4. In essence, defendant seeks to evade liability for sums which are justly due for his tuition for the years he spent at the College by asserting that in 1956, two years after he had left the College, he suddenly discovered that he was unhappy over its educational programs.

Indeed, this is the first time in my long experience that I have heard of a student, because of alleged dissatisfaction with the educational programs which he voluntarily followed, seek to use this alleged dissatisfaction as an escape for paying his just indebtedness.

Now that defendant has found a school - The Gurukula, in Long Valley, N. J. - which he claims has taught him Wisdom, according to his own subjective standards and desires, he is to be congratulated; but he must also pay his debts.

5. The facts with respect to defendant's attendance at Columbia College are significant. His first application for admission was dated January 1, 1949. He was accepted for admission to Columbia but declined to enter because he had been granted a substantial scholarship at Dartmouth College. He attended Dartmouth College for two semesters and attained good grades and then went to work for a year.

On July 27, 1951, he reapplied to Columbia stating that he had found the social and intellectual life at Dartmouth unsatisfactory; that he was no longer interested mainly in social work and sociology but that his interest had expanded to include all subjects - "but specializing in the most basic one of all, physics." He was accepted with advanced standing as a sophomore, and attended for three years. His grades, generally speaking, grew progressively worse until his final semester, when he received an "incomplete" in English and failed his four other subjects - two courses in fine arts and courses in music and religion. He did not graduate and was not authorized to continue at Columbia because of his poor scholastic standing.

I respectfully ask that Columbia's application be granted.

LAWRENCE H. CHAMBERLAIN

Sworn to before me
December 3, 1957
Lester E. Rothstein, Notary Public, State of N. Y.

About two weeks later I submitted the following reply to the Court:

ANSWER TO PLAINTIFF'S MOTION
FOR STRIKING COUNTERCLAIM

To Hon. Frederick W. Hall:

1. Because Columbia University is seeking summary judgment on the grounds that there is no genuine issue as to any material fact in my defense, and that my counterclaim is "specious, sham, and frivolous," I am submitting some of my evidence to the Court now. Conclusive evidence would consist in having reached a final, complete, and sincere agreement by both parties as to what is true and just in this case; until such time, the evidence consists in stating the truth and substantiating it with material facts.

2. Columbia University, through an affidavit by Dean Chamberlain, has finally admitted that it does not teach Wisdom. The Dean says, "Wisdom is not a subject that can be taught and Columbia has never claimed to teach the unteachable." It remains only to determine whether the University *did* ever claim or imply that it teaches Wisdom. This can be determined by anyone who can read Columbia's catalogues, inscriptions,

and speeches.

3. However, Dean Chamberlain, in the very same affidavit, has implied that Columbia does teach Wisdom after all. He says the University endeavors to acquaint the student "with the nature of those matters which are unknown and thereby assist him in developing mentally, morally, and physically. Wisdom is a hoped for end product of education, experience and ability which many seek and many fail to attain." By this statement the Dean would like to have people think that there *is* a connection between Wisdom and Columbia's education; indeed, he actually claims that Columbia can help the student to develop "morally."

4. Columbia evades all responsibility of claiming to teach Wisdom when she is challenged seriously, but makes extravagant assertions and dedications when it is a matter of impressing the public or attracting new students. Columbia has escaped with gross falsehoods because no one has been willing to challenge the University and see the dispute through to the very end; also because the administrators can easily ignore challenges which do not compel them to account for themselves.

5. A man who is entrusted with the education of young men ought not to be dishonest at any time. Yet here are three examples of dishonesty in Dean Chamberlain's affidavit, in addition to the deceptiveness exposed in Paragraphs 2, 3, and 4.

a. The Dean says he is familiar with the facts and circumstances surrounding my attendance at Columbia College. Yet he also says that two years after I had left the College, I "suddenly" discovered I was unhappy over its educational programs. This is an outright lie, and is intended to support his blind idea that I have gone to all this trouble in order to evade a debt. The truth is that Dean Chamberlain knows very well that my disappointment was not a "sudden" one, and that I am still willing to pay if Columbia can show that her claims are valid. Dean Chamberlain has in his possession my letter dated April 6, 1954, which is evidence that I was disappointed while still a student at Columbia. Exhibit A herein explains the situation in detail. "*Exhibit A*" *is the full story of the controversy up to the time of court action, as presented in* VALUES, *January through April, 1958.*]

b. Dean Chamberlain says my counterclaim is "specious, sham, and frivolous." If there is anything specious, sham, and frivolous, it is the statements made by Columbia. In the Dean's affidavit there are mocking insults which are unbecoming to an educator — he calls my counterclaim a "conglomeration" of charges, and he "congratulates" me for now having found a school that teaches Wisdom; which, incidentally, is also an admission by the Dean that Wisdom *can* be taught, regardless of what was secretly intended by the remark. Dean Chamberlain knows very well that my counterclaim is not "specious, sham and frivolous," and yet he has sworn under oath that they are. Most likely he subscribed to these labels because his lawyer advised him that those are the only grounds upon which the counterclaim might be stricken; however, the Dean is an adult and cannot justly blame anyone else for his own choice of being dishonest.

c. In Paragraph 5 of his affidavit, the Dean attempts to give "significant" facts about my attendance at Columbia. After conceding that I had a substantial scholarship and good grades at Dartmouth, he tries to discredit me by stating that my grades at Columbia became progressively worse. In the first place, my own background has nothing to do with the issue of whether Columbia has misrepresented its education; my charges could have been filed by any student or alumnus of the University. In the second place, the Dean's dishonesty lies in the fact that, once having brought up the question of my grades at Columbia, he did not disclose the circumstances under which those grades were given. Exhibit A gives an account of those circumstances which Dean Chamberlain knew of but withheld from his affidavit. Exhibit A also verifies my charge that the Dean is an evasive administrator who has not yet been properly educated himself. Parents are probably not aware that when they send their sons to Columbia College they are putting their trust in an administration which preaches morality and teaches dishonesty. Will Columbia assert that *dishonesty* is not a subject which can be taught? The fact remains that the administrators *do* teach dishonesty and hypocrisy; one way is by the bad examples they set for the students.

6. If Dean Chamberlain were to defend his statement that Wisdom is "unteachable," he would have to maintain also that it is impossible for parents to teach their children to be honest and sensible; that it is impossible for churches to teach their members to value peace and simplicity more than the quest for excess wealth and luxury; and that it is impossible for any university to lay the foundations for impartiality in a future judge. Dean Chamberlain may be authorized to admit that Columbia cannot teach Wisdom; but he has no right to answer for other institutions or individuals.

7. Even aside from the question of whether Columbia explicitly claims to teach Wisdom or not; the fact remains that it does not teach it. And the fact also remains that as long as Columbia University exists as an institution of higher education, it *ought* to teach Wisdom. Whether they enter upon education, government, science, or any other field, men trained in the Science of Honesty would *really* be able to use their power for peace, and would be able to expose, for all men to see, the falsehood and the foolishness of any men in any country who pretend to be working for peace and happiness but are actually leading people into the very opposite. From my own personal experience I know that the presence of conflicting ideas and influences at Columbia helped only to destroy what peace I had.

8. Dean Chamberlain says I am frivolous for charging that the University does not teach philosophy and psychology. Though I am prepared to substantiate these charges fully at the time of the trial, I will say enough now to show that the charges are not frivolous.

a. "Philosophy" means the love of Wisdom. If Columbia does not teach Wisdom, then certainly she cannot instill in her students a love for Wisdom. The so-called Philosophy Department at Columbia offers only a history of philosophy plus "discussions" of problems, problems, and more problems. Columbia's education at present does not lead to sound solutions. It certainly does not lead to Wisdom.

b. "Psychology" is the science of human nature — an undertanding of the absolute and relative factors in all beings. The so-called Psychology Department of Columbia teaches only factual information plus "theories" about the human mind and body. It does not offer a true understanding.

9. I do not dispute the fact that not all students attain Wisdom. Just as in the case of mathematics or physical education, the student must be willing and able to develop himself, under proper guidance. Not all students of mathematics become mathematicians, and not all mathematicians become Einsteins. Likewise, not all students become Wisdom-seekers, not all Wisdom seekers attain Wisdom, and not all wise men become grand sages like Socrates. Columbia does have the facilities for developing mathematical ability, physical health, etc., but where are the facilities and the teachers for those who seek Wisdom, Truth, and Character? Columbia University does not even offer the opportunity for spiritual development. The student is left completely on his own and it is up to him to retain his character, if he can, while being bombarded from all sides by competitive forces that induce him to use any means to achieve his own ends, including cheating; far from understanding the nature of Truth, he lives in fear of being tricked if does not trick others.

10. Due to her lack of wisdom, Columbia has already compromised her position before the Court.

a. She has waived her claim to $49.30 of the alleged tuition debt, plus about $75 in alleged interest. This has not been done out of generosity. Furthermore, it is clear that justice in this case cannot be established by bargaining or compromising; if Columbia is not entitled to the full amount, she is not entitled to any amount at all.

b. Columbia has claimed to agree to a transfer of the case to the Superior Court [*in a letter from Mr. Egan to Judge Hall, dated December 20, 1957*], which is, in spite of what Mr. Egan says, not really an agreement to have the case settled in that court rather than the Morris County District Court, but an attempt at strategy by Columbia, desiring not to be defeated in her efforts of opposing my request for transfer. Columbia, when she saw the likelihood of the case being transferred, wished to capitalize on it and gain the Court's favor by pretending to be agreeable. Mr. Egan declares, "I feel that a more satisfactory determination of the issues could be made in the Superior Court." By saying this he has contradicted his reasons for choosing first the District Court, and he has also conceded that there is validity to my counterclaim; if there were no validity, there would have been no need for Columbia to have him agree to a transfer.

11. a. Mr. Egan is evidence that Columbia does not teach an understanding of Justice. Mr. Egan, being a graduate of Columbia's Law School, and being the legal spokesman for the University, would naturally be expected to speak for the public good if it were true that Columbia is dedicated to it. But all that Mr. Egan says is that Columbia demands summary payment of a disputed debt; and there is much that shows Columbia has tried to keep the public from knowing about the issues. The function of a lawyer ought to be that of defending Justice, but it is clear that no lover of Wisdom and Justice would take Columbia's side in this case. Columbia has had to engage lawyers who, if they have at all been taught to distinguish between right and wrong, can neverthe-

less be paid to defend obvious injustice.

b. In the District Court Clerk's Office, on the day we happened to meet there, Mr. Egan questioned me on various points and became a little angry when he discovered I was not being represented by a lawyer. He finished by saying he would take advantage of every legal technicality available to him. But in Court, when speaking in front of everyone, Mr. Egan began by announcing that the defendants were unrepresented by attorney but that he had no desire to take advantage of them on that account. Then in his Memorandum of Law Mr. Egan tried to take advantage of me anyway, on the technicality that my motion for transfer was not filed properly [*I brought a required affidavit with me to court instead af submitting it by mail beforehand*], and he specifically asked that Columbia University be awarded summary judgment because of this technicality alone. In view of all this, can Mr Egan be trusted to conduct himself ethically throughout the remainder of the trial?

c. I wish to point out further that on the same day in the Clerk's Office Mr. Egan said to me, laughingly, that my Answer and Counterclaim would make "good bed-time reading," before he had read a page of it. He knew the case involved a serious question, yet he made a joke of it; and now, as is to be expected, he charges me with being "obviously and patently sham and frivolous," in his Memorandum of Law. A just lawyer does not accuse someone else of the frivolity of which he is himself guilty.

d. No doubt there are graduates of the Columbia Law School who do have an inherent sense of Justice; but had Columbia been cultivating that quality she would have been able to recognize a just lawyer, and she would have chosen *only* a just lawyer to defend her.

12. I have studied the catalogs and educational programs of other colleges and universities besides Columbia, but nowhere have I found so much irrationality and boastfulness as there is in Columbia's administration. To an unsuspecting student entering the College, however, the administration seems to be very "advanced" and "progressive."

13. Exhibits A through M are now submitted as further evidence. Most of these Exhibits are direct evidence that my charges are valid. However, some of the exhibits are not direct evidence, but are of a substantiating nature. They serve to indicate the widespread concern about the failure of the present educational system. Until now no one has seriously attempted to reveal the cause and offer the remedy.

Respectfully submitted,
ROY JACOBSEN

The exhibits consisted of typewritten copies of the correspondence, photostat copies of several pages from Columbia's catalogs in which the University's claims appeared, and also copies of various speeches and newspaper clippings in which both the general tone and many particular statements showed the University's claims to be false. [*Excerpts from some of the speeches have appeared in recent issues of VALUES.*]

Among the newspaper clippings were several articles from *Spectator* in which Dean Chamberlain admitted that Columbia's education was inadequate. He urged Citizenship Training as the solution, and in one article, he stated the aims of the forthcoming Citizenship Training Program of Columbia College. In another *Spectator* article Dean of Students Nicholas McKnight, rejecting a request that women be allowed to visit Columbia students in the dormitories, was quoted as follows: "A major consideration in prohibiting women in the dorms is the large number of dorm residents under psychiatric care and many more who need such attention." Other *Spectator* articles attested to the widespread existence of cheating on examinations at Columbia, and student regrets that "honor is not sufficiently stressed in our College life."

Several clippings were from New York newspapers. One of these was about a Columbia graduate, 30 years old, who had been the winner of a graduation prize at the University for "most outstanding traits of character and mind," and who, a few years later, in 1957, was permanently barred from the securities business in New York State for having defrauded his investors; criminal charges were pending.

In addition I submitted a news article entitled *Educator Attacks Universities as Aiding Mental Instability* (the educator being Dr. William S. Carlson, President of the State University of New York), another article with the heading *Grad Schools Failing Nation, Barzun Warns* (the reference being to Jacques Barzun, Dean of the Graduate Faculties at Columbia), and one with the caption *Kirk Urges West to Study Asians*, in which the President of Columbia University admitted that Americans, because of their "national arrogance and myopia," have brushed aside as unimportant "the spiritual and intellectual achievements" of Asians who were coping with problems of man's realationships to his fellow men "when our own forbears were primitive and even brutish," and that in this respect, also, American education was lacking.

There was no shortage of evidence, nor of conclusions that could be drawn from it.

At this point I wish to mention that a wave of public interest followed the controversy from the day it came up in court. Dave Harris of the *Morristown Daily Record*, and William J. McFadden, Jr., of the *Newark Evening News*, approached me as I stepped out of the courtroom and spent about two hours with me, inquiring about the case, during which time Mr. Egan joined us and gave the reporters some statements from Dean Chamberlain's affidavit. These reporters took their work seriously and their front-page articles the next day presented the facts well. The story was picked up by other newspapers, radio and TV. Some editorial writers and columnists pointed to the case as additional evidence that all is not well with modern education.

In the midst of all this I paid a visit to the editors of the *Columbia Daily Spectator*, in an effort to remove some of the misunderstandings which existed between us. Even while the New York newspapers were publicizing the case, the Columbia newspaper remained completely silent about it. For an hour or two the editor-in-chief, Bernard Nussbaum and some of his staff members questioned me on all points, especially my motives. We parted on friendly terms. On December 18th the following article appeared in *Spectator:*

WISDOM BECOMES A COURT ISSUE

'Alumnus' Says College Made False Claims

"Wisdom is not a subject than can be taught and Columbia has never claimed to teach the unteachable," asserts Lawrence H. Chamberlain, Dean of Columbia College.

A former student, Roy Jacobsen, disputes the Dean and is so firm in his belief that not only does Columbia University fail to teach Wisdom, but has practised "affirmative deception" in leading him to believe they can teach it, that he is today embroiled in a legal tangle with his former Alma Mater.

Jacobsen, having flunked out of the College in his senior year, 1954, is now being used by Columbia for $1000 which he allegedly borrowed for tuition. He, in turn, is countersuing Columbia for $7,016, which includes cancellation of his debt, $6000 damages, and the remainder legal fees.

Among the 50 charges which Jacobsen has brought against Columbia is that the University "falsely claims or implies that it teaches Wisdom."

An articulate blonde, wavy-haired 26-year old looking as if he had just stepped off the campus, Roy Gordon Jacobsen came to Columbia College in 1951 as a sophomore transfer student from Dartmouth, where he had gone on a full tuition scholarship after graduating from Brooklyn Technical High School.

Having been "dissatisfied with the calibre of students" at Dartmouth, he soon became dissatisfied with the calibre of learning at Columbia.

An editor of the Review, and a member of the debating and track teams, Jacobsen majored in English, fine arts and the humanities. However, he became "fed up, disillusioned" with the school, and allowed his academic grades to slip so low that in his last year, according to records, he failed four of his five subjects and received an "incomplete" in his fifth.

Dropped from Columbia, he discontinued payments on his tuition debt. Columbia sued for $1,000—the maximum allowable in the Morris County, N. J. District Court—of the $1,049.30 in notes outstanding against him. Not having found a lawyer who would "do the case justice," Jacobsen is handling his defense personally.

"I do not wish to set a legal precedent by which other students and alumni can obtain money from Columbia and other universities," he states about his countersuit. "I have willingly taken upon myself the task of improving the educational system if I can," he concluded.

Jacobsen equates Wisdom with rationalism and honesty.

He claims to have found what he sought in vain at Columbia at The Gurukula (Indian for "Home of the Philosopher,") where he and two other students obtain Wisdom through the Socratic method under the tuition-free tutelage of Harry S. Jakobsen (no relation to Roy), a tool designer, in Long Valley, N. J.

A jury may soon have to decide what constitutes Wisdom and whether or not Columbia failed to teach it. Whatever the outcome the American judicial system will have seen one of the most unusual cases in its history.

—Harold Stahl

With the issue of December 23, *Time* magazine, in its article, *The Light That Failed*, gave world-wide publicity to this statement: "Speaking for the college, Dean Lawrence Chamberlain said that wisdom is only a 'hoped for end product of education,' and that neither Columbia nor any other institution could teach it."

In January Dean Chamberlain resigned from his post as Dean of Columbia College, leaving unfinished the controversy which he had initiated, as well as the Citizenship Training program which he was introducing. The announcement was made public in *Spectator*, February 6, 1958, which quoted the Dean as saying, "The only reason for asking to be relieved is that I want to go back and do the thing I would like to do most—teach public law and government."

[To Be Continued]

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