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"GREAT IS TRUTH AND IT SHALL PREVAIL"

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SRI AUROBINDO ON "SAVITRI"

8*

As to the title of the three cantos about the Yoga of the King†, I intended the repetition of the word "Yoga" to bring out and emphasise the fact that this part of Aswapathy's spiritual development consisted of two Yogic movements, one a psycho-spiritual transformation and the other a greater spiritual transformation with an ascent to a supreme power. The omission which you suggest would destroy this significance and leave only something more abstract. In the second of these three cantos there is a pause between the two movements and a description of the secret knowledge to which the Yoga is led and of which the results are described in the last canto, but there is no description of the Yoga itself or of the steps by which this knowledge came. That is only indicated, not narrated; so, to bring in "The Yoga of the King" as the title of this canto would not be very apposite. Aswapathy's Yoga falls into three parts. First, he is achieving his own spiritual self-fulfilment as the individual and this is described as the Yoga of the King. Next, he makes the ascent as a typical representative of the race to win the possibility of discovery and possession of all the planes of consciousness and this is described in the Second Book: but this too is yet only an individual victory. Finally, he aspires no longer for himself but for all, for a universal realisation and new creation. That is described in the Book of the Divine Mother. (1946)

Yes,—“an accumulating grandiose effect is intended by the repetition of adjective-and-noun in four consecutive line-endings” in:

*Almost they saw who lived within her light
Her playmate in the sempiternal spheres
Descended from its unattainable realms
In her attractive advent's luminous wake,
The white-fire dragon bird of endless bliss
Drifting with burning wings above her days.‡*

The purpose is to create a large luminous trailing repetitive movement like the flight of the bird with its dragon tail of white fire. (1936)

All birds of that region are relatives.§ But this is the bird of eternal Ananda while the Hippogriff is the divinised Thought and the Bird of Fire is the Agni-bird, psychic and *tapas*. All that, however, is to mentalise too much and mentalising always takes most of the life out of spiritual things. That is why I say, the dragon bird can be seen but nothing said about it. (1936)

As to:

*One dealt with her who meets the burdened great—***

it is not Love who meets the burdened great and governs the fates of man. Nor is it Pain. Time also does not do these things—it only provides the field and the movement of events. If I had wanted to give a name, I would have done it, but he was purposely to be left nameless because he is indefinable. He may use Love or Pain or Time or any of these powers but is not any of them. You can call him the Master of the Evolution, if you like. (1936)

* The relevant passages on "Savitri" in the long letter published in our Special Number of August 15 must be taken as Section 7. These passages will be included when "Sri Aurobindo on Savitri" will be brought out in book-form next month to synchronise with the publication of Vol. II of "Savitri".

†Book 1. Canto 3: The Yoga of the King: The Yoga of the Soul's Release.

Canto 4: The Secret Knowledge.

Canto 5: The Yoga of the King: The Yoga of the Spirit's Freedom and Greatness.

‡Vol. I. p. 17.

§The question was: "In the mystical region, is the dragon bird any relation of your Bird of Fire with 'gold-white wings' or your Hippogriff with 'face lusted, pale-blue-lined?'"

**The context of the line (Vol. I. p. 17) is:

As to the plane spoken of by Virgil in the lines you quote—

*Largior hic campos aether et lumine vestit
Purpureo, solemque suum, sua sidera norunt,**

I don't know, but purple is a light of the Vital. It may have been one of the vital heavens he was thinking of. The ancients saw the vital heavens as the highest and most of the religions also have done the same. I have used the suggestion of Virgil to insert a needed line:

In griefless countries under purple suns.‡ (1936)

As to:

*Often a familiar visage studying...
His vision warned by the spirit's inward eye
Discovered suddenly Hell's trademark there—‡*

it is a reference to the beings met in the vital world, that seem like human beings but, if one looks closely, they are seen to be Hostiles; often assuming the appearance of a familiar face they try to tempt or attack by surprise, and betray the stamp of their origin—there is also a hint that on earth too they take up human bodies or possess them for their own purpose. (1936)

The lines—

*Bliss into black coma fallen, insensible,
Coiled back to itself and God's eternal joy
Through a false poignant figure of grief and pain
Still dolorously nailed upon a cross
Fixed in the soil of a dumb insentient world
Where birth was a pang and death an agony,
Lest all too soon should change again to bliss—***

have nothing to do with Christianity or Christ but only with the symbol of the cross used here to represent a seemingly eternal world-pain which appears falsely to replace the eternal bliss. It is not Christ but the world-soul which hangs here.

Your objection to the "finger" and the "clutch" in the lines—

*As if a childlike finger laid on a cheek
Reminding of the endless need in things
The heedless Mother of the universe,
An infant longing clutched the sombre Vast—§*

moves me only to change "reminding" to "reminded" in the second line. It is not intended that the two images "finger laid" and "clutch" should correspond exactly to each other; for the "void" and the "Mother of the universe" are not the same thing. The "void" is only a mask covering the Mother's cheek or face. What the "void" feels as a clutch is felt by the Mother only as a reminding finger laid on her cheek. It is one advantage of the expression "as if" that it leaves the field open for such variation. It is intended to suggest without saying it that behind the sombre void is the face of a mother. The two other "as if"s—

As if a soul long dead were moved to live

One dealt with her who meets the burdened great.

Assigner of the ordeal and the path.

Who chooses in this holocaust of the soul

Death, fall and sorrow as the spirit's goads,

The dubious godhead with his torch of pain

Lit up the chasm of the unfinished world

And called her to fill with her vast self the abyss...

The question was: "Who is 'One' here? Is it Love, the godhead mentioned before? If not, does this 'dubious godhead with his torch of pain' correspond to 'the image white and high of godlike Pain' spoken of a little earlier? Or is it Time whose 'snare' occurs in the last line of the preceding passage?"

* "Here an ampler ether spreads over the plains and clothes them in purple light, and they have a sun of their own and their own stars."

‡ Vol. I. p. 110.

‡ Vol. I. p. 196.

** Vol. I. p. 201.

§ Vol. I. p. 4.

Sri Aurobindo on "Savitri" —Continued from page 1

and

As if solicited in an alien world—

have the same motive and I do not find them jarring upon me. The second is at a sufficient distance from the first and it is not obtrusive enough to prejudice the third which more nearly follows. Your suggestion "as though" for the third does not appeal to me: it almost makes a suggestion of falsity and in any case it makes no real difference as the two expressions are too much kin to each other to repel the charge of reiteration. (1946)

* * *

Owing to a mistake in the punctuation which is now corrected, you have made what seems to me a strange confusion as regards the passage—

*As if solicited in an alien world
With timid and hazardous instinctive grace,
Orphaned and driven out to seek a home,
An errant marvel with no place to live,
Into a far-off nook of heaven there came
A slow miraculous gesture's dim appeal.**

You took the word "solicited" as a past participle passive and this error seems to have remained fixed in your mind so as to distort the whole building and sense of the passage. The word "solicited" is the past tense and the subject of this verb is "an errant marvel" delayed to the fourth line by the parenthesis "Orphaned . . ." This kind of inversion, though longer than usual, is common enough in poetical style and the object is to throw a strong emphasis and prominence upon the line, "An errant marvel with no place to live." That being explained, the rest about the gesture should be clear enough.

I see no sufficient reason to alter the passage; certainly, I could not alter the line beginning "Orphaned . . ."; it is indispensable to the total idea and its omission would leave an unfilled gap. If I may not expect a complete alertness from the reader,—but how without it can he grasp the subtleties of a mystical and symbolic poem?—he surely ought to be alert enough when he reads the second line to see that it is somebody who is soliciting with a timid grace and it can't be somebody who is being gracefully solicited; also the line "Orphaned . . ." ought to suggest to him at once that it is some orphan who is soliciting and not the other way round: the delusion of the past participle passive ought to be dissipated long before he reaches the subject of the verb in the fourth line. The obscurity throughout, if there is any, is in the mind of the hasty reader and not in the grammatical construction of the passage. (1946)

* * *

Miltonism? Surely not. The Miltonic has a statelier more spreading rhythm and a less direct more loftily arranged language. Miltonically I should have written not

*The gods above and Nature's soul below
Were the spectators of that mighty strife†*

but

*Only the Sons of Heaven and that executive She
Watched the arbitrament of the high dispute.*

(1936)

* * *

I take upon myself the right to coin new words. "Immensitudes" in

*...Driven by a pointing hand of light
Across his soul's unmapped immensitudes‡*

is not any more fantastic than "infinitudes" to pair "infinity" . . . Use "eternitudes"? Not likely! I would think of the French "éternuer" and sneeze. (1936)

* * *

"Flasque", in

*Knowledge was rebuilt from cells of inference
Into a fixed body flasque and perishable,***

is a French word meaning "slack," "loose," "flaccid", etc. I have more than once tried to thrust in a French word like this, for instance: "A harlot empress in a bouge"—somewhat after the manner of Eliot and Ezra Pound. (1946)

* * *

"Its passive flower of love and doom it gave"? Good heavens! how did Gandhi come in there? Passion-flower, sir—passion, not passive.§ (1936)

* * *

"To blend and blur shades owing to technical exigencies" might be all right for mental poetry—it won't do for what I am trying to create—in that, one word won't do for the other. Even in mental poetry I consider it an inferior method. "Gleam" and "glow" are two quite different things and the poet who uses them indifferently has constantly got his eye upon words rather than upon the object. (1937)

* * *

In the lines—

*A lonely splendour from the invisible goal
Almost was flung on the opaque Inane—††*

no word will do except "invisible." I don't think there are too many "I's"—in fact such multiplications of a vowel or consonant assonance or several

together as well as syllabic assonances in a single line or occasionally between line-endings (e.g. face-fate) are an accepted feature of the technique in *Savitri*. (1936)

* * *

In the two passages ending with the same word "alone"* I think there is sufficient space between them and neither ear nor mind need be offended. In

All-seeing, motionless, sovereign and alone,
the word "sole" would flatten the line too much and the word "aloof" would here have no atmosphere and it would not express the idea. It is not distance and aloofness that has to be stressed but unaccompanied solitude. (1946)

* * *

In

The incertitude of man's proud confident thought,†
"uncertainty" instead of "incertitude" would mean that the thought was confident but uncertain of itself, which would be a contradiction. "Incertitude" means that its truth is uncertain in spite of its proud confidence in itself. (1936)

* * *

The line is:

The calm immunity of spirit Space.
"Immunities" in the plural is much feebler and philosophically abstract—one begins to think of things like "quantities"—naturally it suggested itself to me as keeping up the plural sequence—

*The golden plateaus of immortal Fire,
The moon-flame oceans of unfallen Bliss—*

but it grated on the sense of spiritual objective reality and I had to reject it at once. The calm immunity was a thing I could at once feel. With immunities the mind has to ask: "Well, what are they?‡" (1937)

* * *

In the line—

*Draped in the leaves' vivid emerald monotone—***
the first foot is taken as a dactyl. A little gambol like that must be occasionally allowed in an otherwise correct metrical performance. (1936)

* * *

The best way to scan

Bliss into black coma fallen, insensible—§
will be to spell "fallen" "fall'n" as is occasionally done and treat "bliss into" as a dactyl. (1946)

* * *

The line—

This truth broke in in a triumph of fire—††
to which you object on account of forced rhythm in the phrase, "in a triumph," has not been so arranged through negligence. It was very deliberately done and deliberately maintained. If it were altered the whole effect of rhythmic meaning and suggestion which I intended would be lost and the alterations you suggest would make a good line perhaps but with an ordinary and inexpressive rhythm. Obviously this is not a "natural rhythm," but there is no objection to its being forced when it is a forcible and violent action that has to be suggested. The rhythm cannot be called artificial, for that would mean something not true and genuine or significant but only patched up and insincere: the rhythm here is a turn of art and not a manufacture. The scansion is iamb, reversed spondee, pyrrhic, trochee, iamb. By reversed spondee I mean a foot with the first syllable long and highly stressed and the second stressed but short or with a less heavy ictus. In the ordinary spondee the greater ictus is on the second syllable while there are equal spondees with two heavy stresses, e.g. "vast spaces" or in such a line as

He has seized life in his resistless hands.

In the first part of the line on which you comment the rhythm is appropriate to the violent breaking in of the truth while in the second half it expresses a high exultation and exaltation in the inrush. This is brought out by the two long and highly stressed vowels in the first syllable of "triumph" and in the word "fire" (which in the elocution of the line have to be given their full force), coming after the pyrrhic with two short syllables between

* Vol. I. p. 31:

There knowing herself by her own termless self,
Wisdom supernal, wordless, absolute
Sat unaccompanied in the eternal Calm,
All-seeing, motionless, sovereign and alone.

With a gap of 61 lines occurs the passage (p. 32):

The superconscious realms of motionless peace
Where judgment ceases and the word is mute
And the Unconceived lies pathless and alone.

The point raised was that, though "alone" was very fine in both cases, the occurrence of both in the context of a particular single whole of spiritual experience might slightly blunt for the reader the revelatory edge in the second case.

† Vol. I. p. 71.

‡ The line originally was:

The calm immensities of spirit Space.

Owing to the close occurrence of the word "immensities" in another line, "immunity" was here used. At present the original word has been restored in a new context (Vol. I. p. 44) and the line comes at the end instead of at the beginning of the sequence:

Still regions of imperishable Light,
All-seeing eagle-peaks of silent Power
And moon-flame oceans of swift fathomless Bliss
And calm immensities of spirit Space.

** Vol. I. p. 14.

§ Vol. I. p. 201.

†† Vol. I. p. 21.

* Vol. I. p. 5.
§ Vol. I. p. 8.

† Vol. I. p. 14.

‡ Vol. I. p. 73.
†† Vol. I. p. 6.

** Vol. I. p. 244.

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them. If one slurs over the slightly weighted short syllable in "triumph" where the concluding consonants exercise a certain check and delay in the voice, one could turn this half line into a very clumsy double anapaest, the first a glide and the second a stumble; this would be bad elocution and contrary to the natural movement of the words.

Certainly, Milton in the lines you quote—

And they bowed down to the Gods of their wives,

and

Burned after them to the bottomless pit—

had a rhythmical effect in mind; he was much too careful and conscientious a metrist and much too consummate a master of rhythm to do anything carelessly or without good reason. If he found his inspiration stumbling or becoming slipshod in its rhythmical effects, he would have corrected it.

(1946)

As to the exact identity in the first half of the two lines ending the passage—

*Even were caught as through a cunning veil
The smile of love that sanctions the long game,
The calm indulgence and maternal breasts
Of Wisdom suckling the child-laughter of Chance,
Silence the nurse of the Almighty's power,
The omniscient hush, womb of the immortal Word,
And of the Timeless the still brooding face,
And the creative eye of Eternity—**

it was certainly intentional, if by intention is meant not a manufacture by my personal mind but the spontaneous deliberateness of the inspiration which gave the lines to me and an acceptance in the receiving mind. The first halves of the two lines are metrically identical closely associating together the two things seen as of the same order, the still Timeless and the dynamic creative Eternity both of them together originating the manifest world: the latter halves of the lines diverge altogether, one into the slow massiveness of the "still brooding Face" with its strong close, the other into the combination of two high and emphatic syllables with an indeterminate run of short syllables between and after, allowing the line to drop away into some unuttered endlessness rather than cease. In this rhythmical significance I can see no weakness.

(1946)

I find nothing pompous or bombastic in the line—

Travestied with a fortuitous sovereignty—†

unless it is the resonance of the word "fortuitous" and the many closely packed "t"s that give you the impression. But "fortuitous" cannot be sacrificed as it exactly hits the meaning I want. Also I fail to see what is abstract and especially mental in it. Neither a travesty nor sovereignty are abstract things and the images here are all concrete, as they should be to express the inner vision's sense of concreteness of subtle things. The whole passage is, of course, about mental movements and mental powers, therefore about what the intellect sees as abstraction, but the inner vision does not feel them as that. To it mind has a substance and its energies and actions are very real and substantial things.... Naturally there is a certain sense of scorn in this passage, for what the Ignorance regards as its sovereignty and positive truth has been exposed by the "sceptic ray" as fortuitous and unreal.

(1948)

The cliché you object to—"he quoted Scripture and Law"—was put in there with fell purpose and was necessary for the effect I wanted to produce, the more direct its commonplace the better. However, I defer to your objection and have altered it to:

He armed untruth with Scripture and the Law.

I don't remember seeing a phrase like

Agreeing on the right to disagree‡

anywhere in a newspaper or in any book either; colloquial it is and perhaps for that reason only out of harmony in this passage. So I substitute:

Only they agreed to differ in Evil's paths. (1946)

I still consider the line—

The body and the life no more were all—

a very good one and it did perfectly express what I wanted to say. I don't see how I could have said it otherwise without diminishing or exaggerating the significance. As for "baldness," an occasionally bare and straightforward line without any trailing* of luminous robes is not an improper element. E.g.

This was the day when Satyavan must die,

which I would not remove from its position even if you were to give me the crown and income of the Kavi Samrat for doing it. If I have changed here, it is because the alteration all round it made the line no longer in harmony with its immediate environment.

It was not bareness for bareness's sake but bareness for expression's sake, which is a different matter... It was "juste" for expressing what I had to say then in a certain context. The context being entirely changed in its sense, bearing and atmosphere, it was no longer *juste* in that place.

* Vol. I, p. 39.
‡ Vol. I, 189.

† Vol. I, p. 260.
§ Vol. I, p. 190.

Its being an interloper in a new house does not show that it was an interloper in an old one. The colours and the spaces being heightened and widened, this tint which was appropriate and needed in the old design could not remain in the new one. These things are a question of design; a line has to be seen not only in its own separate value but with a view to its just place in the whole.*

(1937)

I have wholly failed to feel the poetic flatness of which you accuse the line,

All he had been and all that now he was.

No doubt, the diction is extremely simple, direct and unadorned but that can be said of numberless good lines in poetry and even of some great lines. If there is style, if there is a balanced rhythm (rhyme is not necessary) and a balanced language and significance (for these two elements combined always create a good style), and if the line or the passage in which it occurs has some elevation or profundity or other poetic quality in the idea which it expresses, then there cannot be any flatness nor can any such line or passage be set aside as prosaic.

(1946)

Your new objection to the line,

All he had been and all that now he was,

is somewhat self-contradictory. If a line has a rhythm and expressive turn which makes it poetic, then it must be good poetry; but I suppose what you mean is fine or elevated poetry. I would say that my line is good poetry and is further uplifted by rising towards its subsequent context which gives it its full poetic meaning and suggestion, the evolution of the inner being and the abrupt end or failure of all that had been done unless it could suddenly transcend itself and become something greater. I do not think that this line in its context is merely passable, but I admit that it is less elevated and intense than what precedes or what follows. I do not see how that can be avoided without truncating the thought significance of the whole account by the omission of something necessary to its evolution or else overpitching the expression where it needs to be direct or clear and bare in its lucidity. In any case the amended version—"All he had been and all towards which he grew"* cures any possibility of the line being merely passable as it raises both the idea and the expression through the vividness of image which makes us feel and not merely think the living evolution in Aswapathy's inner being.

As for the line,

All in her pointed to a nobler kind,†

I refuse entirely to admit that that is poor poetry. It is not only just the line that is needed to introduce what follows but it is very good poetry with the strength and pointed directness, not intellectualised like Pope's, but intuitive, which we often find in the Elizabethans, for instance in Marlowe supporting adequately and often more than adequately his "rightly lines". But the image must be understood, as it was intended, in its concrete sense and not as a vague rhetorical phrase substituted for a plainer wording,—it shows Savitri as the forerunner or first creator of a new race. All poets have lines which are bare and direct statements and meant to be that in order to carry their full force; but to what category their simplicity belongs or whether a line is only passable or more than that depends on various circumstances. Shakespeare's

To be or not to be, that is the question

introduces powerfully one of the most famous of all soliloquies and it comes in with a great dramatic force, but in itself it is a bare statement and some might say that it would not be otherwise written in prose and is only saved by the metrical rhythm. The same might be said of the well-known passage in Keats which I have already quoted:

Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty—that is all

Ye know on earth and all ye need to know.

The same might be said of Milton's famous line,

Fall'n Cherub! to be weak is miserable.

But obviously in all these lines there is not only a concentrated force, power or greatness of the thought, but also a concentration of intense poetic feeling which makes any criticism impossible. Then take Milton's lines,

Were it not better done, as others use,

To sport with Amaryllis in the shade

Or with the tangles of Neaera's hair?

*The passage originally stood:

A cosmic vision looked at things through light:

Atomic now the shapes that loomed so large.

Illusion lost her aggrandising lens:

The body and the life no more were all,

The mind itself was only an outer court,

His soul the tongue of an unmeasured fire.

The passage then became:

A cosmic vision looked at things through light:

Illusion lost her aggrandising lens,

Atomic were her shapes that loomed so large

And from her falling hand her measures fell:

In the enormous spaces of the Self

The living form seemed now a wandering shell;

Earth was one room in his million-mansioned house,

The mind a many-frescoed outer court,

His soul the tongue of an unmeasured fire.

At present some of the lines have changed places in the poem and the passage as it stands on page 75 of Vol. I is not quite the same.

* Vol. I, p. 278. The emendation was made because Sri Aurobindo felt that the new line said more fully and accurately what he should at that place.

† Vol. I, p. 15.

SRI AUROBINDO AND MAN'S SOCIO-POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

By C. C. DUTT

Continued from previous issue

Today man has passed beyond the stage of clans, and tribes, countries and duchies, and has arrived at the nation-state—"the living collective unit of humanity." There are empires, too, but they are not real units. Political exigencies, and dynamic ambitions brought them into existence. Some of them passed away after the first world war, some after the Second, some still linger. Austro-Hungary, that strange combination of the Teuton and the Magyar, split up under outside pressure, never to come back again. The Arab states will never merge into a Turkish empire again. There was no cement of unification in these empires—no soul, so to speak. It is different with the splitting up of the German Empire after the Second War. It was a pure act of tyranny perpetrated for purely selfish reasons by the victors of that war. The spirit of German patriotism, the spirit of the old *Tugendbund* was bound to resuscitate an undivided German State again just as in Greece and Italy the national spirit had survived through centuries of foreign rule and ultimately created the Greek State and the Italian State. Some examples of lesser nations are cited by Sri Aurobindo. "The nation in modern times is practically indestructible unless it dies from within. Poland, torn asunder and crushed under the heel of three powerful empires, ceased to exist; the Polish nation survived and was once more reconstituted. Alsace after forty years of the German yoke remained faithful to her French nationhood." Foreign rule has often rendered valuable aid to the process of nation making. "In Russia and England it was the domination of a foreign conquering race which rapidly became a ruling caste and was in the end assimilated and absorbed."

Generally speaking a distinct group-soul driven by an inner urge takes advantage of outer circumstance and constitutes for itself an organized body. The most remarkable instance of this is the evolution of India. We shall quote a few eloquent lines from Chapter V of *The Ideal of Human Unity*. "Nowhere else have the centrifugal forces been so strong, numerous, complex, obstinate. The mere time taken by the evolution has been prodigious, the disastrous vicissitudes through which it had to work itself out have been appalling. And yet through it all the inevitable tendency has worked constantly...with the...relentless obstinacy of Nature...and finally, after a struggle enduring through millenniums, has triumphed." The spirit of unification goes back to the earliest times and is typified in the conception of a Chakravarti Raja and the sacrifices, like Aswamedha, that he performed. Indian history is the recital of a long series of empires, national and foreign, each destroyed by centrifugal forces, and yet each bringing the centripetal tendency nearer to its triumph. The essential spirit was there and it prevailed at the end.

So far, then, we see that the nation is immortal. Empires are as yet impermanent units. A real unit bigger than the nation will possibly emerge in human affairs and the question we have to consider is whether the empire is not that destined unit. Obviously it cannot be that unless it develops into a psychological entity. A political unification may precede and lead to an inner unity. Two ideas have emerged out of the recent world-wide conflicts. They are, on the one hand, a federation of free nations and, on the other, the division of the earth into a few big empires or hegemonies. Whether these two can be combined and made the basis of a new and permanent order is an important point for our consideration.

Empires are primarily of two kinds—the homogeneous natural and the heterogeneous composite. All empires are composite to start with; that is to say, the component parts have some separative sense within the whole. But, in some, these parts develop a psychological sense of oneness and the whole becomes a homogeneous aggregate. Taking the example of Great Britain and Ireland, one finds that Scotland and Wales fairly easily developed a sense of unity with England and became the United Kingdom while the major portion of Ireland could not develop this sense and ultimately seceded and formed an independent State. Germany without Alsace, Schleswig-Holstein and Poland would have been an empire of the homogeneous kind, but with these three regions she belonged to the second kind. Japan would have been a national natural empire without

Korea and Formosa, but with these territories she was a looser heterogeneous State. Britain, encumbered by India, Burma, Ceylon, could never form a homogeneous empire, but shorn of these she could easily have developed a group soul, an inner sense of unity—in spite of the French colonists in Canada and the Dutch in South Africa.

A pure form of homogeneous imperial aggregate is hard to find. If an empire is to be changed from a political to a psychological unity, to a natural unity, the system embodied in the United States would be a very good guide for us; it is a system in which a greater unified whole is formed of many State units, each with a sufficient local freedom. Another kind of large aggregate has appeared in political thought which may seem, at first sight, to be a move in the right direction. It has taken the form of a Pan-Slavic, a Pan-Germanic or a Pan-Islamic empire. This species of grouping humanity on a racial or cultural or religious basis is not likely to materialise to an appreciable extent because of its inherent anomalies. These vast aggregations—Slavic or Germanic or Islamic—would always find in their dominions enclaves inhabited by groups heterogeneous to them. These groups would obviously have to be held under sway by political or military force. Consequently this method of forming units larger than the nation is not likely to facilitate human unification. The problem of transforming a political unity into a psychological unity still remains unsolved. Any solution, worth the name, must indicate how to weld into an empire smaller units, heterogeneous in race, language and culture. Until several more decades have passed we shall not be able to say if the Soviet method in Russia is going to be a success. Sri Aurobindo remarks in this connection, "One is not quite sure whether this is a permanent reality or a temporary apparent phenomenon." The old Chinese Empire, composed of five Kingdoms, was admirably organized, but it is not really a case in point, because the component parts were all Mongolian in race.

The Roman Empire, alone in history, tackled problems such as face us today, and with reasonable success. It lasted several centuries and would have lasted longer if certain mistakes could have been avoided. We have to see if it has any lessons for us in the work of organising large and enduring homogeneous empires. It is often said that barbarian invaders destroyed the Roman Empire. But these hordes could never have broken down its "magnificent solidarity" if the centre of its life had not decayed. We shall come back to this decay presently. Let us now briefly go over the character of this empire organized by the Romans.

The Roman extended his domain by military conquest, but once that conquest was assured, he gave the new territory peace and good government as soon as possible and then started deliberately and systematically to blot out the separative spirit of the conquered peoples by a gradual process of Romanisation. It was not done by any crude or brutal methods but by a peaceful pressure. Not only were the higher posts thrown open to the subject peoples, but we find in history that one Iberian and one Gaul actually assumed the Imperial power. Ultimately full Roman citizenship was bestowed on all subject races in Europe, Asia and Africa, without distinction. The result was that the whole empire became a single-Graeco-Roman unit politically as well as psychologically. Not only this, Rome carefully removed all tangible causes of disruption and developed a passive resistance to all disruptive tendencies. What, then, happened to break up such an empire? We have already hinted that the life at the centre decayed. Sri Aurobindo says, "the empire lived only at the centre and when that centre tended to become exhausted, there was no positive and abounding life throughout the body from which it could be replenished." It is a notorious fact that towards the end, in order to resist the barbarian invaders, Rome had to raise regiments from the frontier barbarians themselves. The barbarian that destroyed Rome was a living force, while Rome was a principle of death. She had to fall to pieces in order to make room for the vital and religious culture of the Middle Ages.

Continued on next page

Sri Aurobindo on "Savitri" —Continued from page 3

It might be said that the first line has nothing to distinguish it and is merely passable or only saved by the charm of what follows; but there is a beauty of rhythm and a *bhava* or feeling brought in by the rhythm which makes the line beautiful in itself and not merely passable. If there is not some saving grace like that, then the danger of laxity may become possible. I do not think there is much in *Savitri* which is of that kind. But I can perfectly understand your anxiety that all should be lifted to or towards at least the minimum overhead level or so near as to be touched by its influence or at the very least a good substitute for it. I do not know whether that is always possible in so long a poem as *Savitri* dealing with so many various heights and degrees and so much varying substance of thought and feeling and descriptive matter and narrative. But that has been my gene-

ral aim throughout and it is the reason why I have made so many successive drafts and continual alterations till I felt that I had got the thing intended by the higher inspiration in every line and passage. It is also why I keep myself open to every suggestion from a sympathetic and understanding quarter and weigh it well, rejecting only after due consideration and accepting when I see it to be well-founded. But for that the critic must be one who has seen and felt what is in the thing written, not like who has not seen anything and understood only the word surface and not even always that; he must be open to this kind of poetry, able to see the spiritual vision it conveys, capable too of feeling the overhead touch when it comes,—the fit reader.

(1947)

To be continued

SRI AUROBINDO AND MAN'S SOCIO-POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT —Continued from page 4

The latter-day empires like that of the British in India and Ceylon, of the French in Algeria and of Dutch in Indonesia were of a mixed Roman and Carthaginian type. The only reality in them was organised exploitation and when the subject peoples made up their minds not to submit to any further exploitation they began to crumble down. Britain has turned over a new leaf already. Holland after a great deal of hesitation has granted self-rule to Indonesia. The problems in the colonies are by no means local, affecting any particular nation, they pertain to the exploitation of one continent by another. The methods of Rome and Carthage are dead, never to be revived. It is ridiculous today to base an empire on racial superiority. The failure of Germany has amply demonstrated that. If a psychological unity of many peoples is to be achieved, it would have to be by other methods. It is no use ranting about a superior culture and trying to impose it on other people. The process of Europeanisation of "natives" has proved to be futile. "The earth is in travail now of one common, large and flexible civilisation for the whole human race." Only these empires are likely to endure which recognise the new law of interchange and adaptation and reshape themselves accordingly.

The new federal model has begun to evolve already. The question before us is: how is it possible to create a securely federated empire of a vast extent composed of many races and many cultures and how to weld it into a natural and psychological unit? The problem resolves itself into two factors—the form, and the reality which the form is to express. What is this reality which we intend to create in the form of a federal empire? Is it only an enlargement of the Nation-type or is it a new type of group life which must exceed and supercede the nation? The human mind, in the mass, does not readily accept a radical change of its ideal. If by some fiction the change is made to appear like an extension of the old ideal, it is more easily accepted. The French idea of empire is illustrative of this. The possessions of France are, by a fiction, conceived to be not dependencies but colonies of the mother country grouped together as France beyond the seas, "educated to centre their national sentiments around the glory and greatness of the common mother." A fiction like this has great power, especially for certain temperaments. But is it based upon a reasonable parallel, is it true that imperial unity will be only an enlarged national unity? Or is the fiction intended to prepare another realisable fact? There have been many composite nations known in history. Is our federal empire going to create another such composite nation?

Sri Aurobindo has considered in some detail, here, the fully evolved composite British nation and the still evolving composite British empire. The British nation has been formed out of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. As far as the first three are concerned, they have been welded into a psychological unit very successfully, while the major portion of Ireland has gone out of the United Kingdom and formed an independent republic. In the two islands of Britain and Ireland, there was always a geographical necessity of union. The conquest of Ireland and Wales and the union with Scotland were events of history which brought about a political union and satisfied the geographical necessity. This necessity is a relative thing; it can be counteracted by a strong feeling of disunion. Belgium and Holland, Sweden and Norway, Spain and Portugal are separate, though from the geographical point of view they should have been one. In fact, they have been, at different times, one temporarily. The feeling of disunion, again, can be got over. In the case of Ireland, the British rulers never attempted it. Instead of trying to bridge the gulf between the two peoples they rather emphasised it, in the strongest possible manner. The difference of race and religion was there, but over and above that, "the economic life and prosperity of Ireland were deliberately crushed in the interests of British trade." And this is a thing which cannot be done with impunity, for, as Sri Aurobindo says, if it does not destroy the oppressed organism, it provokes necessarily the bitterest revolt and ends in one of Nature's inexorable retaliations. Non-interference and peaceful pressure solved the difficulty in Wales and Scotland, but in Ireland an opposite course was pursued and brought about an opposite effect. While Wales and Scotland were fused into England, secession became inevitable in the case of Ireland. The result, says Sri Aurobindo, may necessitate an eventual remodelling of the British empire. Events have marched apace since, and the idea of a British Commonwealth of Nations has advanced so far that it has been found possible to include the Indian republic—entirely different from the other British units in race, language and culture—in its frame-work.

The British colonial empire is scattered all over the globe. The geographical necessity of union is entirely absent. Not so long ago, it was believed by many that the secession of Australia, Canada and South Africa was inevitable in the near future. The economic interests of Britain were disparate with those of her colonies. To safeguard their own interests, these colonies adopted Protection as against the Free Trade of the mother country. No doubt, the former enjoyed the powerful protection of the British navy, but, on the other hand, they had hardly any share in the shaping of imperial policy. The sentimental bond, too, was very loose, for, after all, the race origin varied considerably. A peaceful separation was predicted by many.

But what has actually happened is something quite different. Two great World Wars have led nations definitely towards the formation of large aggregates. Thirty years ago Sri Aurobindo said, "It is easy to see that

the fusion of the colonial empire units into a great federated Commonwealth... is practically inevitable." Today we are much nearer to that ideal. The racial difficulty is no longer formidable. The problem of both India and Egypt has been solved. Sri Aurobindo notices this in a footnote (page 68). In fact, a large part of the situation which this Chapter (VIII) discusses is no longer prevalent, as things have taken a different turn in the last three decades. The Commonwealth, the Soviet Union, the conception of the United States of Europe hold the field at present. There is a great deal in this chapter as to how Britain should shape her conduct towards the colonies. Britain has certainly moved in the direction pointed out by Sri Aurobindo, but world conditions seem so uncertain that no country in the world can pay much attention to constitutional matters. Every nation seems to be occupied in picking its friends in view of a possible third conflagration. In the meantime the U.N.O. is functioning as best it can.

The progress of the empire idea to the stage of a realised psychological truth is no more than a mere possibility. The folly of leaders, the passions of the masses, the vested interests of the classes will in all probability prevent its fruition. If so, what other way is there of unifying humanity? A free association of free nations may, of course, do it if the Himalayan obstacles on the way can be removed. Or the establishment by force of a single World-empire can do it also, if such a thing be feasible. In Chapter IX Sri Aurobindo considers the latter alternative and comes to the conclusion "that the conditions for the successful pursuit of world-empire are such that we need hardly take" it as within the range of practical possibility. But he adds that Nature being ever full of surprises we cannot lay down that it is utterly impossible. Very probably it will be tried again, but it is almost certain that it will fail. Even if by force or luck, or by both, a single empire is imposed on the earth, it is more than probable that it would come to an early end.

The dream of world-domination is a very old dream. Alexander and Caesar dreamt of it; Napoleon dreamt of it and, a hundred years later, the Kaiser dreamt of it. Possibly the last named did not start fighting with a conscious intention of establishing his sway over the world. But it grew inside him under the pressure of circumstances. So great was the general efficiency of Germany, so ingeniously did she utilize the discoveries of Science, so powerful was her military and civil organisation, that the high ambition could not but enter her ruler's head. Yet there were so many things Germany lacked. Sri Aurobindo enumerates them. We shall be satisfied with a short *resumé*. "Germany had the strongest military, scientific and national organisation which any people has yet developed, but it lacked the gigantic driving impulse which could alone bring an attempt so colossal to fruition"—it lacked the impulse that drove Napoleonic France. It lacked a powerful diplomatic genius. It had overwhelming land-power but no corresponding sea-power. Its diplomacy was faulty, too, in so far as it failed to secure the aid or at least the neutrality of France and Russia. It could then have concentrated on England instead of defying all and sundry and running amok, to use a trite phrase. All these mistakes may be avoided and a new bid made for world domination by a new power. But, in these days of rapid communication, why should the world stand by and see a miscreant nation making preparations to disturb the peace of the earth? Sooner or later, there is bound to be a general combination against the culprit. It is no use relying on the discovery of a particularly murderous weapon. What one nation has discovered today, another will discover tomorrow. In fact, all civilised nations are engaged just now, in inventing monstrous engines of destruction. Till they are actually used no one will know of them, as was the case with America's atomic bomb. Conquest of the world by one power is, therefore, very unlikely, and even if there is such a conquest, it is sure to be short-lived.

(To be continued)

A Soul-touched Tranquillity

In the limpid silence of a moon-white space,
Sweet Mother, lulled in Thy lap of tender grace
I slept, drunken with a clear crystal dream
That blossomed like a lotus of bliss supreme.

With virgin lips I drank Thy smile nectar-sweet,
And kissed, Beloved Mother, Thy flower-like feet,
That tuned my lonely lyre with miraculous art
To symphonies unknown to the human heart.

From Thy eyes, serene like the depths of a silent well,
Descended a soothing hush, a mystic spell,
More cool and tender than the rays of the moon,
That brought to my weary heart an unwaning boon.

Composed, O Mother, like a lotus of immaculate grace,
In a soul-touched tranquillity I saw Thy Angel Face.

CHINU

NEED OF FREEDOM IN EDUCATION

By DR. M. HAFIZ SYED

The problem of education is everywhere exercising many minds and an attempt is being made to give it a deeper basis than has obtained till now. In this article, one of our readers presents his views.

We have attained our freedom from the shackles of foreign yoke and we feel that we have reached the end of our goal. But if we look at the condition of our society carefully and critically we find that freedom has not been fully and completely realised in the true sense of the word. Politically we are free, but socially, mentally and morally we are still under the dominance of traditional and dogmatic ways of education. Unless this is reformed our society and nation can never rise among the free nations of the world as a civilised and forward country.

Most unfortunately for over a thousand years we have been under foreign domination and therefore we have lost touch with our own spiritual and intellectual heritage. During the last 150 years we followed the Western system of education and organised all our institutions according to the ideals of education prevalent in Western countries. For a sound system of education, it is admitted on all hands, one must have a sound philosophy of life. The Western people, in whose footsteps we have been treading up till now, have all along been influenced by Christian theology and they have believed that man is born sinful. Much of their system of education has as its background the assumption that a child is sinful in his primordial nature, and it is education which will improve him and make him a better man.

We have been authoritatively taught in the light of this conviction, that we ourselves are miserable sinners and to lay the blame of our shortcomings on Nature. We have been taught, in other words, that we are born bad. It would be strange if this were so. It would be strange if men alone among living things, were born bad, seeing that every other animate creature is born good, in the sense that it has in itself all the potentialities of ultimate perfection—the perfection of its own type or kind. So universal is this rule, that in the absence of evidence to the contrary, I must assume that it applies to man also. To say that because grown up men and women behave badly, therefore man is born bad, is as though one were to blame nature for the impurity of a polluted river, forgetting that it had flowed pure, and would always flow pure from its fountain-head. If we would know what we are by nature we must get nearer to the fountain-head, we must study the child. If child study is to be effective, we must, for obvious reasons, give the child the maximum of freedom instead of the minimum, as now. For there is little or nothing to be gained by studying the child's ways and work, so long as these are ours rather than his, so long as we control, or try to control, his actions, his motives, his feelings, his thought. There are schools in Europe in which child study is seriously carried on at the present day. But in our country no such provision is made, nor is there any society or organisation which seriously takes up this work.

Some of the schools run on Montessori lines in England have clearly realised through their direct experience of child study that the child is born good in the widest and deepest sense of the word, and that his frequent failures to grow up good are due to his being subjected to some influence during the tenderer years of his life. That influence is the pressure of dogmatic education.

It must be clearly borne in mind that if education has so far failed to show man the way to his divine destiny, it must now help him to see it. If it has so far hindered his growth, it must now try to foster it. But if the nature of man is to be allowed to evolve itself, the child must be given freedom. It must be remembered that the business of growing must be done by the growing child and cannot be done for him by his parent or teacher. Experience has proved that freedom can safely be given to very young children, provided that there is plenty of suitable work for them to do; and it is also proved that, with the same proviso, freedom can safely be given to older children by a tactful and sympathetic teacher, who introduces it gradually and cautiously into his school. But to give freedom suddenly and in full measure to children who have been kept for years under strict control, is to court disaster.

The experiments of Dr. Maria Montessori in Rome, which are now arresting the attention of the whole educational world have proved that freedom can safely be given in fullest measure to children of the very tenderest years; and that where freedom is given under judicious and sympathetic guidance to young children, the consequent development of their nature carries with it, in due season, the out-growth of all these qualities which distinguish the older children of the school called "Utopia": patience, perseverance, resourcefulness, self-reliance, good fellowship and charm of manners—all interpenetrated by loving devotion to the teacher whose self-effacement is rewarded by an ascendancy over her pupils which the dogmatic teacher can never hope to acquire.

In any case, the experiment of giving freedom to the child must be made if education is not to remain eternally sterile. For in no other way can growth be stimulated and development aided. The child himself must digest the food that is provided for him. The child himself must exercise his limbs and organs and powers and faculties. The attempt of the dogmatists to do these things for him, on any plane of his being, must needs end in failure; the teacher on the other hand is or ought to be idealist. His function is to guide the current of life into the channel, or system of channels which leads towards true 'manhood'. But if he is to do this, he must have some knowledge of what true manhood is; he must know which tendencies are central in human nature and which derivative, which are dominant and which subordinate, which are permanent and which provisional, which are high and to be encouraged and which

are low and to be controlled and eradicated. If he is to acquire this necessary knowledge, he must study the child's opening nature under conditions which are favourable to its healthy harmonious development. The system of education which is not based on child study is a house built on the sands. But child study is, as we have seen, impracticable so long as education remains dogmatic, so long as the sayings and doings of the child are his teacher's rather than his own. It follows that if the teacher is to give effective guidance to the child, he must first set him free. The word "freedom" has a magic and inspiration of its own. But for most men, including even the poets and heroes, the struggle for freedom is nothing more than the attempt to throw off the yoke of a despot or a conquering people. But the real meaning of the word lies deeper than this. The struggle for freedom is in its essence a struggle against the deadening pressure of dogmatism, a struggle for the right to live one's own life, to grow along the line of one's own being.

Clamorous as we have been in demanding freedom for ourselves we have never thought of giving freedom to the child; and the result of this has been that generation after generation has grown up, and still grows up, hardened, narrowed and materialised by dogmatic pressure, dominated by false ideals, incapable of self-discipline, unworthy of freedom, and unfit to enjoy it. If this catastrophe is to be avoided, we must rear a generation of men who will prove themselves worthy of freedom; in other words, we must transfer the struggle against dogmatism to the arena of the nursery and the school.

Freedom can reconvert the worst into the best. It is between these alternatives that the teacher must make his choice. If we would reform education, we must first reform society, and if we would reform society, we must first reform education. If we would educate the child in an atmosphere of freedom, we must know what are the central tendencies of his nature, and if we would know what are the central tendencies of his nature, we must educate him in an atmosphere of freedom. We should always bear in mind in this connection that the teacher will of course have much to unlearn and much to learn. The teacher's principal duty would be to efface himself as much as possible, to realise that not he but the child, plays the leading part in the drama of school life.

To put unbounded faith in the child's nature, in spite of its early weaknesses, crudities, and other shortcomings, feeling sure that its higher tendencies, if allowed to unfold themselves in due season, will gradually master and control the lower. To give the child as much freedom as is compatible with the maintenance of the reality rather than the semblance of order. To relieve him from the deadening pressure of the discipline of drill, and to help him to subject himself to the discipline of self-control. To provide outlets for all his healthy activities, taking care that these shape their own channels, as far as may be possible, and are not merely directed into ready-made canals. To place at his disposal such materials as will provide him both with mental and spiritual food, and with opportunities for the exercise of his mental and spiritual faculties. To give him such guidance as his expanding nature may seem to need, taking care that the guidance given is the outcome of sympathetic study of his instinctive tendencies, and interferes as little as possible with his freedom of choice. To do nothing for him which he can reasonably be expected to do for himself. To abstain from that excessive fault-finding which the dogmatic spirit (always prone to mistake correctness for goodness) is apt to engender and which paralyses the child's initiative, and makes him morbidly self-conscious and self-distrustful. To help him to think more of overcoming difficulties, and doing things well, than of producing plausible and possibly deceptive results. To foster his natural sincerity, and keep far away from him whatever savours of make-believe self-deception, and fraud. To study and take thought for his individuality, so that he may realise and outgrow himself, and at last transcend his individuality, in his own particular way—the way which Nature seems to have marked out as best for him. To help him to develop all his expansive instincts, so that his growth may be as many-sided and therefore as healthy and harmonious as possible. To realise, and help him to realise (should this be necessary) that healthy and harmonious growth is its own reward, and so relieve him from the false and demoralising stimulus of external rewards and punishments. To discourage competition between child and child, with the vanity and selfishness which this necessarily tends to breed. To foster the child's communal instinct, his spirit of comradeship, his latent capacity for sympathy and love.

I could easily make this list longer, but I think I have made it long enough. Perhaps I have made it too long, for after all it is an IDEA that I am setting before the teacher, not a theory, still less a fully elaborated system. If the idea commends itself to him in any respect or degree, he must interpret it (both in theory and practice) in his own individual way. I should be false to my own first principles if I tried to do for him what, if it is to have any lasting value, he must do for himself.

To improve the breed of men by skilful "growing" would, I think, go a long way towards solving many weighty problems. Indeed, I sometimes think that all the master problems of life will have to be solved in the nursery and the schoolroom; that if we wait for their solution till the child has grown to manhood and hardened into what we call maturity, we shall have waited too long. At any rate, an initial solution will have to be given in the nursery and the school-room, which will make possible a later and fuller solution in the world of adult human life.

SRI AUROBINDO, THE LEADER OF THE EVOLUTION

PART II OF "THE WORLD CRISIS AND INDIA"

By "Synergist"

SECTION III : THE NEW WORLD-VIEW

(a) THE SPIRITUAL METAPHYSIC

(ii) KNOWLEDGE OF THE DIVINE REALITY

SUPRAMENTAL INTEGRALITY AND MENTAL SEPARATIVENESS

As the consciousness ascends from the mental level its range of awareness gradually increases—it becomes wider and more luminous on the intermediate spiritual levels of the Higher Mind, the Illumined Mind and the Intuitive Mind, attaining a global and all-seeing total vision on that of the Overmind; when it finally reaches the gnostic summit of the Supermind it possesses perfect unity, integrality, and absolute Truth-consciousness. A greater knowledge is attained of forces beyond the ken of the rational and scientific mind—spiritual forces, subtle mind-forces, life-forces, and material forces,—of the working of universal processes, of individual existents and their structures, of the intrinsic as well as dynamic-functional relations of these existents to other existents and to the organic whole and the relation of such wholes to other wholes and to the cosmic totality, of ontological relationships at the summit of Being, and of causal sequences, as well as of values, ends and purposes.

As the very basis of cognition changes and knowledge-apprehension becomes more immediate and direct leading to a state of knowledge by identity, the dissonances, conflicts and oppositions of the ordinary mental-vital-physical human life are seen to be resolved; the seed-truth behind each discordant element is clearly perceived, its right place in the universal configuration correctly known, and the archetypal realities, the "real-ideas", behind the earth actualities are directly apprehended; for example, the right value and significance of the idea-forces behind various philosophical and religious systems and rival social and political ideologies, behind the conflicting aims and ideas followed by men, and the true relation between these idea-forces are fully understood.

It then becomes apparent that these conflicting elements are but parts of a vast cosmic harmony, each attempting to reveal its inner truth amidst terrestrial conditions, its transcendent value in the universe of Time, where a certain problem of Being is worked out to its logical conclusion. The mode of this working is an evolutionary process which proceeds from Inconscience to the heights of the Spirit, with a simultaneous movement of the Spirit descending into the Inconscience and creating in an unbroken ascending series different orders of organised existence; the problem worked out is the appearance and growth of consciousness in a world of inconscient Matter—the emergence of the Divine Consciousness from its involution in Matter degree by degree till it recovers its highest spiritual and Supramental status and manifests its powers in earth existence. The cosmic manifestation thus becomes a movement of the Divine within His own Self, worked out through a deliberate self-limitation, a self-absorption into a particular mode of being, a plunge into His own abysses in a trance of self-involution.

The conflict that is at present seen on the transitional human mental level between opposing ideas and forces is found to be on the Supramental level a mutually enriching exchange and interplay of divers elements, a vast and integral divine harmony holding them in their right place in the totality. In terrestrial existence each element has to yield its particular truth-content, reveal its truth-value and contribute to the general whole without annulling the value of other elements; but such a harmony has not yet been realised in the world as man's consciousness has not yet reached the Supramental level; it is limited in its range because it is imprisoned in his ego-personality that he calls "I"; it has no conception either of its universality and its cosmic bond or of its transcendent status and its divine source. This limitation of his consciousness prevents man, as we have seen, from creating a synthesis of knowledge, and devising successful systems of social and political relationships which can ensure a lasting human unity. Only poised in a wider and higher gnostic consciousness can he correlate and fuse into a harmonious whole the various opposing ideas, ideals and forces and create a more illumined and happier life.

In the world at present we see that a single idea is generally put forward by an individual, a party, or a nation, as the fundamental truth of life or the whole truth and the only valid explanation of things: witness the dogmatic assertions made by Materialism in all its different guises, by Vitalism, Mentalism and Idealism, by the various religious creeds and esoteric cults, by different systems of philosophy, psychology, and social and political philosophy; or witness the exaltation of ideals like the pursuit of Beauty, Utility, Pleasure and Happiness, or the Moral Good, or again, Equality and Liberty, Collectivism and Individualism. No doubt all these idea-forces contain a powerful truth in them, but in their self-expression in human life they get distorted, because each idea-force tries to affirm itself at the expense of the others, to seek its separate fulfilment to the exclusion of that of the others, with the result that an exaggerated emphasis or twist perverts it and the truth it is really trying to express.

The failure of an idea-force to realise itself because of an exaggerated application, is seen very clearly today when we examine the ideal of Equality with its Collectivistic leanings. When this ideal tries to realise itself, it is found to deny the truth of the other great ideal, Liberty and Freedom—freedom of thought and worship, freedom for men to pursue higher ideals and seek intellectual, aesthetic, ethical and spiritual fulfilment. The term Collectivity becomes a mere abstraction if the living, thinking, feeling individual beings who constitute it are ignored or sacrificed. The freedom of the individual is of the utmost importance because he is the spearhead of the evolutionary march of humanity, and without his growth and development the Collectivity must eventually stagnate; it is only through his evolution that it can advance. Equality also introduces uniformity and ignores the play of differentiations, and fails to recognise hierarchical levels.

This does not imply that the ideal of Equality is false; such an admission would give an exaggerated importance to the ideal of Liberty which may lead to an extreme form of Individualism and ego-centrism. The ideal of Equality undoubtedly expresses a great ontological and cosmic truth which has to be pragmatically translated in human life; a fundamental Equality has to be established, but an equality which allows the free play of variations, admits a hierarchy of Being and, as a necessary consequence, levels and grades of functions. The ontological truth behind the Divine's spiritual status of the One and the Many is translated in the social and political life of men as the manifestation of diversity on a ground of unity. This means that unity need not give rise to absolute uniformity, with all differentiations and variations steam-rolled into flatness. Such a one-sided solution can come only from the spiritually unenlightened rational mind, ignorant of the complexity of life and the truth behind the cosmic process. It is not possible to ensure the harmonious realisation of such apparently opposing ideals on the human level unless man learns to live and act from a higher consciousness; it is not possible to control and govern life by the mental idea, however great it may be, or by rationalistic norms; only a higher spiritual and Supramental dynamis can effectively do it.

The metaphysical source of the separative tendencies of idea-forces was discussed in the essays: *Self-realisation and the Supermind** and *The Overmind Level.*** Whilst in the Supermind, with its integral and unitarian consciousness there is a concerted and harmonious play of the One and the Many, of Unity and Diversity, on the Overmind level, with its global but not integral consciousness, the emphasis is on the multiplicity, the unity remaining in the background and supporting it. The Overmind stresses the multiplicity, and gives each Idea, each Force, each Power, a separate direction and makes it extend itself to its utmost limit for its realisation and self-expression. Though it sets into action a play of differentiations and divergent possibilities it has the unity of the Supermind behind supporting it and compelling the apparently contradictory elements to fall into a cosmic whole and contribute to its total movement. The separative tendency of the Overmind gets more pronounced as the lower levels of Being are reached, becoming extremely sharp and acute on the Mind level. This separative factor is the originating cause of the existence in the world of so many different philosophies, religions, creeds and ideologies. The various idea-forces having been estranged from their source in the Supermind, become oblivious of their true inter-relatedness and oppose one another as if they were irreconcilable contraries. The aspects of existence as projected by the Overmind are innumerable, says Sri Aurobindo; consequently the idea-forces behind them give rise to so many systems of thought, worship, and social and political organisation.

It has been found necessary to state this aspect of the problem of Higher Knowledge in detail because the Supermind is very often confused, even by those who have a knowledge of spiritual metaphysics, with *Self-realisation*, or looked upon as a power of knowledge superior to the mind yet lower than the highest, a power which can only be possessed—according to them—by the realisation of the Impersonal Self, silent, static and aloof. If they are right, it would imply that the Supramental Truth-consciousness, the Divine Consciousness in all Its integrality and totality, God-consciousness in all Its Omniscience and Omnipotence, is inferior to a single aspect of the Divine,—that which equally bases and supports all that exists, the Essence and Ground of all existence. Thus we are driven to the absurd and unphilosophical conclusion that the partial is greater than the integral and total; it ignores the obvious fact that the partial is included in the total—Self-realisation is included in the realisation of the Integral Divine Reality. There is no need to examine the problem

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BOOKS in the BALANCE

SELF-PORTRAIT OF A POET*

WORLD WITHIN WORLD by STEPHEN SPENDER (Hamish Hamilton)

At the age of 40 Spender produces his autobiography. Unfortunately the book is too symptomatic of the group of young intellectuals who were inadvertently swept into the stream of communism in the 30's,—ironically enough in order to counteract the fascist threat of obliterating individual liberty. It is therefore in the nature of a confession—in the Freudian sense, that is, of exposing one's rooted inhibitions. Partly he seeks to justify his own actions as a child of the age, and partly to analyse certain relations and situations (mostly unpleasant) in which he was involved, whilst attempting to translate his ideals into practical realities against an antipathic or even antagonistic world.

There were several inconsistencies in his own make-up, which contributed to his ultimate frustration,—out of which mood his autobiography or "confession" appears to have arisen. By upbringing he belonged to those rising middle-class strata of society, which in aiming to give their sons and daughters the cream of English education contributed largely to the professional, academic and public life of the country. His own family belonged to a more liberal and broad-minded section of this class, in that they did not mind (and rather welcomed) the admixture of foreign blood (Spender himself being partly of Danish and partly of German-Jewish stock). This gave him the foundation for a more international outlook and range of sympathies, as opposed to the usual narrow insularity of the more conservative type of English. It also set him the problem of having to reconcile the diverse tendencies and sensibilities with which he was thus endowed. Furthermore there was a puritanical strain (from non-conformist forbears), which, though it contributed towards an individualistic outlook, also brought with it its own brand of narrow exclusiveness and moral snobbery. It was this latter which kept him aloof from those things which were considered improper to a well-bred sensibility. It no doubt helped to accentuate a conflict in him in that he was guardedly shut off from direct contact with the common people,—the working classes,—whose struggle was to loom so largely in the ideology of his contemporaries. This conflict became more apparent as he grew older and started on his own independent career.

In 1930 he left Oxford University and decided to devote himself entirely to poetry, which he deeply felt was his true *métier*. At the same time he found himself in a world where the champions of the underdog and the downtrodden peoples of the earth were beginning to make themselves heard. These were mostly intellectuals, like himself, who talked and wrote of ideals and theories without knowing anything of the actual working-class life and character to which they pertained. Naturally these attracted the sympathies of the young Spender, and his writings tended to take up the "cause", or at least become influenced by it. Ironically enough these young intellectuals who talked and wrote so volubly of communism were completely cut off from the reality of the situation, even more so by virtue of their Public School heritage and upbringing. They could not indeed meet the working-classes on their own level without becoming an object of derision to the latter. It was inevitable that sooner or later a crisis would be reached, for the very movement obliged them either to sink themselves entirely in it and obliterate their individuality as well as heritage, or to extricate themselves by the now familiar method of denouncing the whole movement. The real dissent of the intellectuals may be said to have begun with the publication of André Gide's *Retour de l'U.R.S.S.* in 1937. This was in the middle of the Spanish Civil War, in which the intellectuals had got themselves implicated. But they were already for the most part heartily sick of the whole affair, and welcomed a lead to get themselves out of it. In fact Spender's account shows clearly enough the utter futility of a writer or artist throwing himself into a movement or letting himself be drawn into it, unless he is a born man of action. The picture of "los intelectuales" meeting for discussion in the midst of the already half-bombed city of Madrid typifies their ineptitude where

action was most required. No wonder the trained military tactics of France prevailed against the unorganised and ineffectual effort of the masses. A year or so later Arthur Koestler, Ignazio Silone, André Gide, Louis Fischer, Richard Wright and Spender brought out their final condemnation of communism in a joint Symposium *The God That Failed*. But the Second World War was already upon Europe, and it was this which finally scattered the disintegrating group of intellectuals into their individual components.

This flirtation with communism, however, is but one side of Spender's life, although the intricacies and involvements of this part (particularly the fiasco in Spain) occupies a large portion of his book. It is necessary therefore to disentangle something of his literary achievement and undoubted poetic ability if we are to see him in a truer light. For he is one of the few upholders of the poetic tradition in England, bearing the torch of poetry forward against a world where poetic values are collapsing on all sides. It is noteworthy that the best pieces of the book are those which describe his *tête-à-tête* and table-talks with the various literary personalities of the '30's. Particularly pleasant are those gatherings of poets and writers who used to meet frequently at Virginia Woolf's house in London.

It is important that Spender himself places the utmost value on the integrity of the inner life, (what matter if walls fall so long as the inner centre remains intact?) as well as on the freedom of poetic expression. His book *The Still Centre* amply confirms the attempt in poetry to find the real harmony of the conflict he felt in his life. Unfortunately, however, he did not wholly succeed in reconciling what he recognised to be the two sides of his nature,—the dark side for ever reaching down to the pain and fears of the world, and the other the lucid side aspiring upwards to light of Day. In his idealism he thought that "the world, my life, binds the dark and the light" and must therefore be the reconciling agent. But events have only proved the contrary. For it was a distracted war-torn world into which he threw himself for reconciliation. He realised the real strength of the individual creative spirit—the inner centre of calm and equilibrium,—but he did not have the sufficient conviction to actually grasp it. Instead he saw that it only tends to shut off the artist within his own loneliness whenever there is no response in the world to his expression. This of course touches on the whole dilemma of the modern creative artist, who today is more like a strange voice crying in the wilderness. In seeking to embrace the world through an expansive poetic expression,—which is but the natural aim,—the poet feels himself cramped and hemmed in by the cold-shouldering attitude of the world towards poetic and creative art in general. (It took a war to revive an interest in the Arts, but immediately the war ended the collective interest collapsed). The poet is thus reduced—as is Spender—to writing only of a private world ("world within world") where he merely becomes entangled in his own "complexes" and inhibitions, all of which have inevitably arisen out a frustration of the creative spirit. It reflects rather disturbingly the grave malady of the age wherein all higher values are fast becoming either distorted, or deliberately inverted in order to serve some ulterior and ego-motivated end. One is bound to agree with Spender when he concludes that the thinkers and creative artists of today are now reduced to an utter ineffectiveness against the rising power of the individual-crushing forces that abound in the world. Here we might add that it would indeed be a desolate and hopeless outlook if Sri Aurobindo's divine revelation of hope had not come to lighten up our darkness. It but remains for man to open to the revealed Truth, and free himself of his egoistic obsession sufficiently to realise the Divine goal and Reality.

It is indeed unfortunate that this soul-saving aspect has not entered

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SUPRAMENTAL INTEGRALITY AND MENTAL SEPARATIVENESS—Continued from previous page.

in greater detail as it has already been discussed in the essay: *Self-realisation and the Supermind*; but it may be mentioned here that even in all the three poises of the Static Self, of inclusion, indwelling, and identity—the Self seeing all that exists in itself, by inclusion, the Self seeing itself in all existence, by indwelling, and the Self regarding itself as all existence, by identification,—the truth behind the world-process is not revealed, nor the meaning of existence and the destiny of man in the universe, nor the archetypal seed-truths behind various metaphysical, ethical, religious, and socio-political systems, behind ideals like Equality and Liberty, Collectivism and Individualism, and the mode of their harmonious correlation and unification into a divine harmony in a transformed life on earth; nor can this realisation reveal the Integral Divine Reality, or rather, the Divine Being in His many-aspected, multi-poised, integral status. *Self-realisation* gives no knowledge of the mode of transforming and divinising human life, because it does not take the seeker to the fount of Creative Force and Supreme Knowledge—the Supermind.

The Ultimate Reality,—who is the Transcendent, the Universal and the Individual, the Personal God and the Impersonal Absolute, the Static and Immutable Self and the Dynamic Shakti, who is the Ishwara and Father in Heaven as well as the Sunyam and the Clear Light of the Void, and much more than all these aspects through which He reveals Himself to man in spiritual experience,—can only be apprehended in all His totality if a union is made with Him through His Truth-consciousness, the Supermind. It is only then one can truly possess a vision of the whole and attain to the Higher Knowledge. By knowing *That*, the undifferentiated Ground of all existence, the essential Brahman, we do not know everything, for the riddle of the Universe remains unsolved; to know everything, liberation from ego through a horizontal widening of consciousness, or a movement of withdrawal from the cosmic manifestation is not sufficient; a vertical ascension to the summit light of the Spirit and a union with the Divine Intelligence is an absolute necessity—the ultimate knowledge of God, man and the universe is in the Supermind.

BOOKS in the BALANCE—Continued from previous page.

into Spender's accounting, for it is the true integrating factor he has been seeking. His chief weakness perhaps is that he has a strong sympathetic feeling, and to a certain extent insight but he does not possess the counterbalancing detachment necessary to raise himself above the present predicament of the world. It is precisely because of this lack of detachment that he could not avoid being drawn into unsavoury relationships and soul-stunting movement. It is impossible, as Somerset Maugham observed, for a writer or artist to get the correct angle or perspective on things unless he is able to keep himself detached from the current stream. In this way he can train his insight to act without disturbing his balance, and equal view of things. Perhaps this is more difficult for the poet to achieve than the pure prose-writer, since the former depends more on his subtle feelings and finely-attuned emotions than the latter; but nevertheless the discipline of detachment is equally necessary. The poets of the '30's in their quest for a freedom and emancipation from the supposed effete forms of the past certainly neglected this necessity of discipline, and the consequence was a drastic slipping away of all higher values, together with the loss of faith and of higher ideals. This could only lead, as it has done, to the frustration and nihilism of the present world-outlook. The one hope left is that the uprising generation of the '50's will recover and reintegrate in their life what has been lost and discarded by the between-wars generation of poets and artists.

As a document of frustration Spender's analysis has its interesting points, but as the autobiography of a Poet it is a literary disappointment. (And of course this effort of autobiography itself would have been unnecessary had he been able to make his poetry his Life). It is not that he cannot write prose, as he sometimes leads one to imagine. There are a number of good terse descriptive pieces and observations scattered through the book, some of which would have gone to make excellent essays had he sought to develop this aspect of his writing. The whole

book hands together too loosely and disjointedly to make a composite compact unity. And all too often the skeleton of his past pokes disconcertingly through the canvas, breaking into what could otherwise have been a fair objective account of the literary personalities and tendencies of the period. It all seems to be like a desperate effort to piece together the already shattered fragments of what he and his world once had been, before they are irretrievably swept away in the all-absorbing stream of Time. (One wonders whether this latter course would not after all have been the better.) Furthermore he follows too closely that all-too prevalent tendency of the moderns to resurrect and expose indiscriminately all experiences of the past, particularly the distasteful and infantile ones. This in fact is regarded to be the sign of the uninhibited (and hence liberated) individual! It is not clearly realised that unless one is in a position to become completely detached from these experiences (and thus see their true nature), they merely fall into the category of so many exhibition pieces which cling to one's nature and even become more identified with and embedded in the personality. There is no other way than that of complete detachment, in the spiritual sense of the term, whereby one can clearly analyse one's past experiences, separating truth from error so that the latter falls away naturally. In this process suppression of distasteful experiences does not enter at all, since all things are faced fairly and squarely with the knowledge that errors are but stepping-stones to truth and right thinking,—and eventually right doing.

One cannot but hope that having eased his conscience in unburdening himself of these mixed experiences in which he had become involved, Spender will now be free to devote his energies to nobler creative work. Is his new verse play *To the Island* a presage to the long-awaited revival of a vigorous poetic drama? Let us indeed hope it is.

NATHANIEL PEARSON

A GREAT CONTROVERSIAL CHARACTER

D. H. LAWRENCE AND HUMAN EXISTENCE by FATHER WILLIAM

WITH A FOREWORD by T. S. ELIOT

Published by Rockliff Publishing Corporation Ltd., Salisbury Square, London, Price 12s. 6d.,
with a Self-Portrait Frontispiece

Few writers in recent years have been such an enigma as D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930). As a poet, novelist and critic he stands high, yet his works have been misunderstood and misinterpreted by those who call themselves critics. Dallas Kenmare's *Fire-Bird: A Study of D. H. Lawrence* gives a clue to his personality and to the many inconsistencies and contradictions which critics meet in their discussions on him. Father William Tiverton's *D. H. Lawrence And Human Existence* shows the man and writer in a religious light, with a vital message to Christians.

These two critics, it is hoped, will help the critics of Lawrence to understand him better and not treat him patronisingly as they have done. For Lawrence was primarily a man in advance of his age, "possessed of great talent" and by no stretch of imagination can he be called sex-obsessed though he popularised Freud. As Aldous Huxley says in his Introduction to *The Letters of Lawrence* (a Heinemann publication): "To be with Lawrence was a kind of adventure, a voyage of discovery into newness and otherness"; and he rightly thinks that his writings cannot be explained "in terms of Freudian hypothesis." Like Blake, Lawrence was absorbed in the mysterious, and sex and love led him to the realm of mystery in contact with the Beautiful and the Infinite. He was always wanting to feel the "inrushes" of love or to die in its absence. He saw Love as a "great force" and he felt an "ache" when he was not in love. To those who were strangers to love Lawrence appeared silly, childish, as one who wanted to "slobber" about with women and to take their arms and feel happy. But Lawrence saw something profound in love and we understand what he means when he refers to love in *Fantasia*:

No man ever had a wife unless he served a great predominant purpose. Otherwise, he has a lover, a mistress. No matter how much she may be married to him, unless his days have a living purpose, constructive or destructive, but a purpose behind her and all she stands for; unless his days have this purpose, and his soul is really committed to his purpose, she will not be a wife, she will be only a mistress and he will be her lover.

Here we see him belonging to the school known as existentialists who believe that communion is possible, and he sees in sex a something within a larger whole... He once told Catherine Carswell: "You were never made to 'meet and mingle', but to remain intact, essentially, whatever your experience may be." It is this intactness that has made him a lonely figure, remote, "essentially separate" from the common run of men and his learned contemporaries. His novels, poems, letters and essays, brought

out last year by the Pelican Books, will enable the layman to judge him aright.

The timely publications of Lawrence's life after his death by sympathetic biographer-critics like Thurber, Potter and Gregory have done much to remove the odium that friendly critics of Lawrence have brought to his works. Revivals of Lawrence have enabled readers to judge him anew and, thanks to Father Tiverton, we have a full-length study of Lawrence the man and writer from the Christian standpoint and he makes ample amends for the rash criticisms made by acknowledged critics. The foreword by T. S. Eliot is a fitting tribute to the critical acumen of Father Tiverton.

"Poet or Priest?" is the opening chapter of the book *D. H. Lawrence And Human Existence*. Here we see Lawrence as a self-critic who not only saw the faults of others (e.g. Hardy and Bennett) but also his own and he could laugh his faults away in his works. To Lawrence the novel was akin to philosophy and comes "unwatched out of one's pen" when there is "pure passionate experience." The second chapter "Death of a Son" shows Lawrence the son die to live as a man and to question life's problems seriously. Sex awakens him to the mystery of life and to the personal man as opposed to the outward man of pose or civilisation. Chapter three "My England, My England" brings out Lawrence's love for his country, as illustrated by quotations from his works, and expresses the pang that he felt when he left England even temporarily. The fourth chapter "The Death of the Gods" makes us see Lawrence's conflict with God whom he gradually understood and appreciated and thereby enriched his life and his works. He saw in marriage an indissolubility and symbol of creation, and he hated to see pornographic literature or books that promoted contraception. His books, unlike those of some of his contemporaries, are free of sex perversions and are delightful to read. In the fifth chapter "Resurrection" we have a glimpse into Lawrence's belief and his hope in the Risen Christ of the Catholics as opposed to the Crucified Christ of the Protestants. The final chapter "Retrospect" sums up the man and writer Lawrence; as a Christian with a belief in Prayer, Fasting and Heaven; as an existentialist who has affinity with Marcel, Buber and Jaspers. *D. H. Lawrence And Human Existence* is a pioneering effort in the right direction; or as T. S. Eliot hails it—"a serious piece of criticism of Lawrence, of a kind for which the time is now due." There is justice done to the writings "of a great controversial literary character and mystic."

WILLIAM HOOKENS

LOTUS-FLAME

PART IV: THE SELF-KNOWLEDGE

By ROMEN

Continued from the issue of August 15

Marching to the august peak of the vast,
 His life was an alternate climb and descent
 Between his heavenhood and nature's abyss,
 Till passed were all the shadow-gates of the dust,
 Till crossed were all the seas of birth and time,
 Till with his topless self he was alone.
 Then he faced an unfallen faultless ascent.
 Descended from his own Being's ancient peak,
 He had forced his passage in the womb of clay;
 Donning the sepulchral robe of ignorance,
 Banishing from himself his own summit-gold,
 He had lost himself in the darkneses unknown
 Like a sleeping sky-seed sown within the soil.
 Then started the ascent of his faltering earth
 Into waking-dawn from the prenatal night.
 Almost his child-clay-face became divine,
 For a moment was beheld God's countenance,
 By a sudden and miraculous touch unveiled.
 Then came a gradual engulfing shroud,
 Upon the still waves of his hour's youth-sea.
 Veiled was the silent radiance of the crest,
 And the unknown toiled from behind, unseen.
 Lost was he seemingly to the glorious light.
 A screen was lowered over his earthly mould.
 But a wide hush embraced his heaven-flame
 To flood him with a beam bright, unforeseen
 And wakened an ideal-gleam in his heart;
 A secret godhead in his breast arose.
 In the arena of humanity dim,
 Men felt the ray that inly burned in their soul;
 They glimpsed a topless tranquil mind above
 The grey flood of the Liliputian mass.
 But the dust aided by insurgent powers
 Essayed to waylay his Flame's splendid form
 And throttle the magnificence of his soul.
 But on him a hidden effulgence of blue-gold
 Bestowed a white talisman of love divine,
 An armour-light of a celestial strength.
 And here he winged beyond the orbit of night
 Into a realm of perpetual sun-gleam.
 This was his high sanctuary of the Blue
 Where he was troubled no more by rise and fall,
 By human tears and strife, and drought and pain,
 Absolved from griefs of a dying dust life.
 The white Domains of higher realities
 Unmasked their grandeurs to his stirless mind.
 Immense oceans of luminous unvalled thoughts
 And bright streams of a shining rapture-surge
 Flowed into his cave-soul, silver and gold
 Cataracts of delight poured into his cup.
 Floods of a giant ecstasy welled within,
 Torrents of nectar-calm his spirit bathed.
 From high above came lightning-fountains of might
 Possessing the evergrowing chalice of his mind.
 The unknown mysteries to him truth became.
 Denied by groping life-sense and little sights,
 A crystal-rubied lore, unvalled and wide
 Brimmed more and more the spaces of his heart.
 All his members were cast in the heavenly forge
 And on the huge anvil of the Infinite
 Hammered with glowing hush and equipoise
 By an unseen might and will of paradise
 To reshape his might-dust into wide noon-gold.
 His manhood was an antediluvian tale
 Which now he must forget and wipe away.
 His human birth was a mere means to compel
 The sky to descend upon the abysmal soil.
 And that act of the drama was now complete;
 Passed was the brief hour of oblivion.
 For in him was the seed of omnipotence,
 Ascent was now his spirit's echoless path,
 Light and wideness his guide to his great climb,
 Stillness and calm his soul's secrecy vast;
 To attain the unattained his mission and goal.
 His life now must follow the highway of the sun,
 Not the hazy bye-lanes on the mire's dark home.
 A dweller of the bright metropolis of the sky,
 He must renounce the sombre caves of earth.
 Not be a troglodyte in the dust's gloam,

But an archangel in the white heaven-room.
 Infinity was the vast field of his play,
 His playmates were the cosmic heights and breadths.
 Living on an unhorizoned continent,
 His fate was led not by a gambling chance
 Or usurped by the negation of the void
 But crowned by a deity within his breast
 Leading his pace with its viewless wand of light.
 A giant radiance unnameable, free
 Watched his path to the discovery of his soul.
 A secret will immortal and alone
 Remained behind him like a towering might,
 Moulding his mind to a god's mighty shape,
 Casting his earthhood to the All-beautiful form—
 A kingship ruling over all mutable shapes,
 One who is rapt in his own vastness-sleep,
 One who is the deep soul of motion and might;
 For in him was the kernel of a Mind
 Which sees all and supports all shining worlds
 Of thought and vision and consciousness divine.
 Not a human soul attaining the summit supreme
 Of deathless Being and calm Truth and Delight,
 But a god-ray returning to its parent sun
 Like a vast boomerang of light speeding back
 From its aim of nescience with human load
 Into the fathomless arms of an ocean-depth
 Of effulgence that had shot it into the gloom.
 Not a goal half-attained was ever his aim
 But a completeness clay has never seen,
 A blaze that would cover the two opposite ends
 Of conscious trance and self-lost oblivion
 With its birthless unimaginable flame.
 A priest he would be and a summoner august
 To a radiance that would span the blinded mire
 With the boundless spaces of the Invisible
 Inaugurating the Gold's advent on earth.
 But such a close needs a toil undreamable,
 Labour colossal and work beyond the ken
 Of fragile humanity and the world's reach.
 Vast must he be and limitless and above
 All change and time, a child of the Infinite;
 Purged of all ignorance of fate and birth;
 Freed from the myriad bonds of the pale stars,
 A free, immaculate godhead illimitable.
 His sight must traverse all the ethéric space;
 His brain be unpeopled of the thralls of night,
 His mind must reach the perihelion
 Of the highest climb and widest flight of thought.
 An incommensurable vastness must he be
 To breast the grandeur of the Gnostic Flame,
 A deep spirit unthinkable like a star;
 A sempiternal life grandiose and true,
 A mind unequalled by earth's horizoned skies
 And a timeless body that will know no death
 Can be the sacred seat of the Ultimate Blaze.
 No vestige of insentience there must be,
 No speck of dust and its fallen satellites
 Lurk in a self that calls down the super-sun.
 Earth's topmost ideal is too far below
 To reach Its diamond throne; the vaster worlds
 Of sight and being are inapt totally
 To urge Its descent from Its summit-Mind
 Into a ground that denies all light and bliss.
 Only the sapphire-gold seas can appeal
 The majesty of Its puissance unknowable
 And silence supernal and poise infinite,
 The unmanifest Being of all the beings,
 To descend into its heart of azure expanse;
 Then below into the worlds multitudinous,
 Changing their substance and their soul into flames,
 Changing all that it touched with Its light and fire,
 Silencing insurgent might with its footfalls,
 Stilling yearning souls with its blazing downpour
 Into the endless abyss of somnolence.
 Even the high cobalt vastnesses had not
 The potency and the kinetic might,
 The thunder and the Gold's imperial light
 To change the very stuff of insentient earth,
 For it wore not the diadem supreme

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MARXISM AND RELIGION

BY M. G. WOOD

If we agree with Socrates that the unexamined life is not worth living, we shall also agree with Karl Marx that the first and most important critical inquiry is the inquiry into the truth or falsehood of religion. Marx easily satisfied himself that nature alone is real and that consequently all thoughts of the supernatural must be wishful fantasy. Man casts the enlarged shadow of himself on the universe and makes God in his own image, or perhaps one should say, in the image of himself not as he is but as he would like to be. Why does man thus project himself on the universe? Because from time to time he finds himself at the end of his tether and in need of a help more powerful than his own. Man is frustrated in two ways, first by natural forces, by earthquake and tempest, by famine and drought, and by sickness and death, and second by social injustice arising out of economic conditions which men do not understand and cannot control. "The omnipotence of God is nothing but the fantastic reflection of the impotence of people before nature and the economic social relations created by themselves."

In a recent essay on religion Professor George Thomson has presented the Marxist view in an attractive and disarming manner. As in private duty bound he commends Lenin's booklet on religion but he does not echo Lenin's contempt for religion. Nor does he share Lenin's loathing for Christian socialists since he hopes to persuade them to become fellow-travellers. He hastens to clear Marx from any charge of lack of sympathy with popular feelings in his description of religion as "the opium of the people."

"His meaning has been wilfully misrepresented by quoting the phrase out of its context, which is as follows: Religious misery is, on the one hand, the expression of actual misery, and on the other, a protest against actual misery. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the kindliness of a heartless world, the spirit of unspiritual conditions. It is the peoples' opium."

Marxists' Four Assumptions

On closer analysis the Marxist

view of religion will be found to involve four assumptions, all of which are false. It assumes, first, that fear or frustration is the only root of religion; second, that frustration by nature and frustration by an unjust social order are the only serious forms of frustration; third, that natural science is the only real cure for frustration by nature and the Marxist social revolution the only and complete cure for social injustice and economic exploitation; and fourth that religion, the people's opium, is a debilitating illusory form of consolation for the dispossessed and not a real help in time of trouble.

With regard to the first assumption it may suffice to quote a sentence from Malinowski. "The maxim that fear first made the gods in the universe is certainly not true in the light of anthropology." Marx who was Feuerbach's disciple might have learned better from his master. Feuerbach at least had the sense to associate feelings of thankfulness and joy in life with fear and anxiety, even in primitive religion. There are, of course, many religions of fear, but Renan's contention is sound, that "if religion had been originally born of the calculation of fear, man would not be religious at his supreme moments." Fear and frustration are not the only source of religious experience and conviction.

Secondly, frustration is not confined to frustration by external nature or by economic injustice in the social order. Men's worst conflicts and failures are inward and personal. The very fervour with which some men throw themselves into social agitation often springs from inner unrest, from the fact that they are not integrated personalities. When the Marxists can get round to it, they will no doubt recognise that Freud has uncovered a problem here which is overlooked in their philosophy. They may also then persuade themselves that

Freud's psychology provides adequate remedies. Others will doubt whether any remedy is possible save through the recovery of religious conviction. What is certain is that the pathetic faith of the Marxist in the possibility of eliminating all serious frustration, whether caused by nature or by society through the advance of science and the Communist revolution is doomed to disappointment.

Thirdly, their remedies for frustration are not adequate even to deal with such forms of frustration as the Marxists envisage. It is mockery to pretend that natural science will ever end the frustration of death or even disease. It is not probable that if science should enable us to get back to Methuselah it would make human life happier and better thereby. And as to the Communist social revolution, so far from being a complete cure for economic exploitation and social injustice, it generates several fresh forms of oppression for each one that it eliminates. Economic exploitation is a kind of Hydra with nine heads. Marxists are under the illusion that it has only one, and they fail to observe that the removal or the attempt to remove that one only produces two more. The main obstacle to moral and economic recovery at the present time is precisely the Marxist philosophy, and the most serious source of frustration is neither nature nor the social order, but the blind uncritical faith of fanatics in the Marxists' social revolution.

"People's Opium"—A Contradiction

The fourth assumption of the Marxists that religion is the people's opium and is merely a debilitating form of consolation for the socially distressed is refuted by Professor George Thomson himself. He says of early Christianity that "it was not, even in those early days, a revolutionary movement. That in the circumstances was impossible.

But it was progressive." Professor Thomson perceives and tacitly corrects the self-contradiction of Marx who describes religion both as a protest against actual misery and also as the people's opium. A protest, even an ineffectual protest, is not opium. And Professor Thomson in his discussion both of the Reformation and of the English Revolution sees that the religious protest was not ineffectual. Thus he says of Bunyan, "He had laid up his hopes in heaven. Even so, he has not surrendered to the oppressor—he had preserved the independence of his spirit—and his *Pilgrim's Progress* remained an inspiration to generations of English workers and peasants whose revolutionary vigour was to burst out afresh after the Industrial Revolution had precipitated a new economic and social upheaval."

Death—The Leveller

From the standpoint of Stalinists, Professor George Thomson's essay must be condemned as deviationist. He sees too clearly the positive contribution of the Christian religion in some of its forms and expressions to social progress. But he still shares the Marxist failure to understand either religion or human nature or science or the present crisis in human history. To confine attention to one point we may note that if religion is concerned largely with frustration by nature, this is its real offence in the eyes of the Marxist. For frustration by nature affects rich and poor alike. Death is the great leveller. Religion perpetually reminds men of their common needs and of their one source of hope and consolation. The Marxist quarrels with Christianity, not because it is, as he wildly asserts, always on the wrong side in the class-struggle, but because in so far as it deals with frustration by nature, it is in a sense above the battle, and because it refuses to deny our common humanity in the interests of intensifying the class-struggle. Christianity is not opposed to social revolution, but it is irrevocably opposed to the reactionary Marxist theory of class-consciousness and practice of class-war.—(BBP & NNF).

LOTUS-FLAME —Continued from page

Or held not the sceptre of the Absolute.
A world bereft of all effulgence and eye,
Banished from all rapture and beatitude,
A domain to which the crescent lunar spark
Of mind was the sole guide and lord and chief;
To which even the realms of lightning-seas
Of the intuition's wonder-swift pinions
Or the wide-blue portals of the Overmind
Were an imperishable distance too remote
To be reached or dreamt became the miracle mould
Or altar-throne of the summit august—

Or a living icon of the perennial vast
By the alchemy of the supernal sun.
Only the great incognito of the heights,
Donning the grey robe of transitory shape
And a mask of earthly mind, could lift the yoke
Of nocturnal drowse and giant bonds of fate,
Could become, surpassing his earthhood's nescience,
A colossal god-being, a topless sky-soul
And, merging himself with the heights and widenesses
Of eternal bliss and calm and loneliness,
Call down the inscrutable Power and mystiered Flame.

MYSTICISM AND SCIENCE —Continued from page 12

The Einsteinian Method

I am sorry to see my critic going scientifically astray everywhere. He makes no better show when he turns to my treatment of Einstein's method of reaching fundamental theory by an intuitive leap, a mathematical divination, a "free creation" of reality-revealing concepts, instead of by a purely inductive reasoning method. He falls foul of my interpretation of the ultimate philosophical significance of the Einsteinian method—an interpretation in accord with Einstein's own avowed pantheism which holds our mind and the world to be secretly one single conscious Being and his belief in a hidden pre-established harmony between the searching human mind and the all-knowing World-Intelligence. But Mr. Jagjit Singh ignores all my logic and shoots off at a tangent by starting to talk of Einstein's new "unified field theory" claiming to synthesise the gravitational and electromagnetic phenomena under one comprehensive concept. What has this theory to do with the point under discussion?

We are told: "I have not studied it yet; but similar attempts have been made before though unsuccessfully by Weyl, Eddington and others. It is quite unlikely that the new 'unified field theory', even if verified by observation, will lend any greater support to the mystical view of the universe than the earlier special and general theories have done." Well, whether it will support my thesis or not will depend on whether I am right or my critic. But it is surely arrived at by the same method of mathematical divination as the general theory or even the special. And what we are arguing about is: Does this divination serve as an index to the existence of a "World-Intelligence that seems all-formative?" Mr. Jagjit Singh does not even realise the issue at stake. I am led to wonder why throughout his review of my paper he has forgotten the elementary etiquette of adverse criticism, as summed up by Themistocles: "Strike, but hear!"

Concluded

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MYSTICISM AND SCIENCE—(2)

By K. D. SETHNA

Mr. Jagjit Singh cannot perhaps be blamed very much for misconceiving the nature of mysticism. We are not out yet of the grossly materialistic period of modern science and one of the characteristics of this period is to dismiss all mystical experience and testimony without even caring to study them with the open inquiring mind and the scruple about detail of fact which we should expect of the genuine scientific researcher. But it is curious that a reviewer who more or less disdains mysticism on the ground that he is a scientific thinker should make statements about physics that are, on the face of them, inadequate. The slightest attention to the body of thought I have tried to build up in my *Mysticism and Einstein's Relativity Physics* would have saved him from these superficialities.

The Meaning of Four-Dimensionality

He writes: "To say that the world is a four-dimensional continuum is only a rather pedantic way of saying that to specify world events we need a set of four independent numbers, three to indicate the place where it occurs and one to give the time of its occurrence." If this were all, then there would be no need to ask what Minkowski meant when he systematised Einstein's revolutionary discovery of the relativity of motion, space and time by positing a four-dimensional continuum. Strictly speaking, the idea of this continuum was necessitated by the insufficiency of a mere set of four independent numbers in describing the world of physics. To call a specification of world events by such a set a description of four-dimensionality is itself a piece of pedantry. As long as the time-term played a role different from that of the space-terms, the four numbers fell apart into one dimension of time and three of space: a close-knit systematic block of four dimensions, analogous to the block of three that we call space, can come about only if both time and space vary with motion and act as inseparable variables ending in an essential indistinguishableness of character such as belongs to the three spatial dimensions. The significance of Einstein's relativity theory is that the world which to our common experience is a combination of three spatial dimensions and one temporal must be considered for scientific purposes a single block in which space and time, losing their difference, function as one single entity.

The question I posed after clarifying this point was: Does the single block of homogeneous and isotropic space-time figure in our common experience? My answer was: No, it does not and all that we effectively have is a concept of it. Then I proceeded to show that our concept of it is no convenient device for calculation but the formula for a reality transcending the common experience with which science actually deals and from which it leaps into theoretical constructs. It is the formula for such a reality that I brought into relation with the mystic's experience of a *Totum Simul* (All At Once) and a *Nunc Stans* (Ever-standing Now).

Physical Theory and the Mystical View

Einstein himself misses the ultimate philosophical bearing of the formula à la Minkowski which he incorporated in his special theory and later elaborated in his general theory. But when he went through my paper he did not criticise my treatment of the scientific concept of space-time, but only expressed a difficulty in understanding how mysticism can be brought together with the theory of relativity when there is no place in that theory, as also in any other physical theory, for psychological concepts.

My explanation to Einstein ran: "The Supreme Reality that is the object of mysticism is an infinite and eternal Existence, Consciousness, Bliss and what we may call Power of Truth which brings forth the oneness and the manyness implicit in the Supreme Reality and formulates, inter-relates, organises, cosmicises. As this Reality is not only the originator, supporter and indwelling principle of a cosmos but also its material and its sole material (though, of course, not exhausted in its being by any cosmic self-formulation), what science studies as the physical universe is this Reality itself in one poise or status of its manifestation. Quantity, number, mathematical structure—the objects of physical science—are characteristics of the Supreme Reality as much as psychological factors may be. They express the Existence-aspect of that Reality as cosmicised by what I have called Power of Truth. And we, when considering the mathematical structure of the universe, are still in touch with the object of mysticism, though not by means of the specific mystical experience which would directly perceive in the stuff and dynamism of the physical universe the living presence of the Supreme Reality. It is, therefore, quite legitimate to ask whether a particular mathematical formula implies a structure which bears out in scientific terms the nature of this Reality as known to mystical insight. The fact that this formula, by being confined to purely physical terms, has no place in it for psychological concepts makes no odds, so far as a philosophical research is concerned."

I should request Mr. Jagjit Singh also to ponder this point as answer to his jibe that to relate the mystical view of reality to "recondite equations and numbers, e.g. tensor equations or Dirac's p and q numbers" is "merely

a rehash of Euler's argument in the story with which Hogben begins his fascinating book *Mathematics for the Million*." Hogben relates that when Diderot, the Encyclopaedist and materialist, was confronted with Euler, the mathematician, the latter confounded him with a mathematical proof of the existence of God. Euler simply said: " $\frac{a^n + b^n}{n} = x$, therefore God exists, now answer!" Well, Euler's may be too much of a mathematical mystagogism, but the principle is not unsound. As I have said in my paper itself, a mathematical concept of basic physical fact suggests the nature of that fact by the manner in which the terms of the concept are combined. It may favour materialism or lean towards a mystical world-view: all depends on the implications of the mathematical structure it regards as final. We commit, therefore, no "howler" in inquiring whether relativity theory sheds on basic physical fact a light in the direction of mysticism.

Physics, Idealism and Materialism

Instead of appraising this position and trying to understand the implications I draw out from Einstein's concepts, Mr. Jagjit Singh plunges into a discourse of his own on particular items of physics and follows up his misconception of four-dimensionality with remarks on Einstein's concept of energy. But, strangely enough, he has nothing apposite to say on energy proper. He merely digresses to the problem whether modern physics has refuted not only naive mechanical materialism but also the dialectical materialist's view of the universe. And the digression seems to me pretty messy. Contrary to a long proof by me to the opposite, a proof supported by quotations from authorities, he imagines that when Einstein proved the relativity of so-called "objective" qualities like mass, size, motion, he proved them to be subjective in a special sense bearing directly on the issue between materialism and idealism and that only the "interval" of the four-dimensional continuum is left untainted by idealism. Mr. Jagjit Singh further imagines that when Heisenberg established his Principle of Indeterminacy he showed even the Einsteinian interval to be dependent on the observer and to be only a "thought" and therefore to be strengthening the idealist position and refuting completely the materialist unless we scrap mechanical materialism and resort to the dialectical variety whose progenitor is Marx. I do not pretend to choose between what I consider the pot of mechanical materialism and the kettle of the dialectical variety, but I must declare that here is capital confusion on the part of Mr. Jagjit Singh.

There is no specific idealism involved, no specific refutation of the old materialism, in either Einstein's Principle of Relativity as applied to quantities formerly held to be absolute or in Heisenberg's Principle of Indeterminacy. No resort to a new kind of materialism is required. For, what we have is nothing more than a particular brand of pointer-reading. A measuring instrument is made to interact with phenomena and in the one case it is found that different motions of the instrument relative to the phenomena yield different surprising readings and in the other case it is found that the instrument interferes substantially with the phenomena and so does not yield a reading of what they may be without the interference. All that the observer does is to read off the quantitative indications given by the pointer of the instrument. The observer's mind or consciousness does not determine the pointer-reading in any way that is inapplicable to any measuring experiment conducted in days prior to Einstein and Heisenberg. The observer receives a visual stimulus from the pointer-reading, his optic nerves react, a nerve-message runs to the back part of the brain, the grey matter there responds and we have the conscious perception. Whatever be the magic or mystery of perception, the whole observing process is the very same as occurred when Newton or even Archimedes stood before a measuring instrument. Neither relativity theory nor quantum theory, by using the term "observer", makes out a special case for idealism that could not have been valid in the days of classical or any other physics. In this context, the whole picture painted by Mr. Jagjit Singh of physics being rescued from turning idealist by a materialism which, unlike the mechanical kind of d'Holbach and Diderot, does not separate the object from the subject and regard it contemplatively but, like the dialectical kind of Marx and Engels, views it as "a subject-object relation arising out of man's living or his practice on the object around him"—this whole picture is utterly illogical and spurious.

Perhaps the writer is anxious to prevent any handle being afforded to the Positivists against whom Lenin railed in his *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. But Positivism—or, rather, Logical Positivism since that is the form now current—does not rest on an idealist attitude *vis-à-vis* the observer's act of reading the indications about phenomena yielded by the pointer of a measuring instrument. It does make argumentative use of the instrument's interference with microscopic phenomena, but that raises an issue that has little connection with what Mr. Jagjit Singh is talking and, besides, the issue is not one of those by which Logical Positivists fundamentally lay store: their main armoury consists of a peculiar analysis of language and of a refurbished Humean empiricism.

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