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Lawrence Sandek, editor

ON POETRY

WHEN I WAS ASKED to contribute an article on poetry to this journal, I assented readily; too readily, it seems because it soon appeared that I had nothing to say. I therefore resolved to generate an opinion as quickly as possible and accordingly, one evening when friends had come to visit, about midnight I turned the conversation aside from certain matters of importance to poetry.

We were four; there were present, besides myself, a Callow Youth, a Morose Enthusiast and a Platonist. I transcribe the dialogue as faithfully as memory serves...

"I should think that subject worked out", said the Youth listlessly. "Everyone sheds light on poetry."

"Light?" cried I. "It seems more to me, if I may continue your metaphor, that they all emit a continuous spectrum of nonsense. I've examined them all, from the rhapsodes whom Socrates questioned to the wandering sophists who lecture at St. John's, and there is not one word of sense to be found in any of them - not

one single word. At least I can't find it."

"Then what makes you think we can do any better in half-an-hour?" fretted the Youth.

"Perhaps because of the superiority of genuine dialectic to mere exposition," I replied loftily.

"Hah!" interjected the Platonist scornfully; "the plain fact is that you haven't the foggiest notion whether or not dialectic is really a superior method. In fact, I rather suspect that you think it is not. But it does make a wonderful excuse for you to avoid the architectonic rigors of composition."

"And another thing," persisted the Youth; "I have a dreadful feeling that you are going to play Socrates again. How can you do that if you are as ignorant as you say you are about poetry? And please don't tell me again about Socrates' "maentic art" or whatever that tiresome word was."

"Relax," said the Platonist. "We won't need to know much to spot the ridiculous things you'll say."

"I am the most humble of me," I was beginning to say to the Youth when the Platonist interrupted again and said, "You've got an awful lot to be humble about."

"I am the most humble of me," I repeated, successfully dissembling my vexation; "You must understand that I push myself forward to play Socrates strictly on logical grounds. Circumstances require that I should exploit your opinion about poetry rather than you mine. And if in the course of doing so, I appear to put myself in the position of judging what you say, it is only because hyper-modern logic permits me to characterize your statements as true or false, ("or meaningless," said the Platonist) but forbids me to do the same to my own, on pain of talking nonsense. But let's get on. Won't someone say something about poetry?"

"I can't understand why you're having any difficulty," replied the Youth. "What's wrong with Wordsworth's definition which says, I think, that "poetry is emotion recollected in tranquillity"? That seems to me to fit every case of genuine poetry."

"Well," I replied, "that seems very good. Tell me, does your definition fit Lucretius whom I have seen you reading so often lately?"

"As a matter of fact, no," returned the Youth. "Wordsworth certainly did not have anything like Lucretius in mind. But of course Lucretius is not really poetry at all. It's a scientific treatise which is merely written in verse like the works of Heraclitus, Parmenides and many others of the Ancients."

"Then would you care to restate your definition?" asked I.

"Not at all;" replied the Youth. "I merely exclude didactic poetry from the definition."

"What about "The Cocktail Party", which I believe you said you saw last week?" I continued.

"I exclude that, too. To be sure, it is written in verse form, but it is, notwithstanding, indistinguishable from any regulation play. I exclude all dramatic poetry. I exclude everything, whether it is in verse or not, whose chief purpose is to convey information, edification, amusement or instruction. Wordsworth's definition applies properly only to lyric poetry. Of course, the epic and the drama often have large infusions of the lyric, but they are not for that reason essentially lyrical. All these other things are merely prose in verse form. They are certainly tremendously important - but not as poetry."

"Then, is it proper to continue to refer to "epic poetry" and "dramatic poetry" as you do?" I inquired.

"There you are certainly right," said the Youth. "Strictly, only the lyric deserves the name of poetry. We should say, "the Epic", "the Drama" and so on. Wordsworth and I have only the lyric in mind when we speak of poetry."

"Wordsworth and you are certainly an important and formidable pair," I replied. "But you will have to admit that there are some other men, not unimportant, who think of the drama and the epic as poetry and that not because of the lyrical elements they contain."

"Yes, that is so," answered the Youth. "They make this mistake mainly because they fail to distinguish between what is really poetry and what is only prose in poetic form."

"I begin to understand what you mean," I said. "Unfortunately, however, it seems that instead of defining poetry you will define it away. You have already excluded the greatest part of what countless generations of men have loved and called "poetry". (By the way, let me say in passing that you would be surprised to learn how very young the lyric is, comparatively speaking). In return for this high-handedness, you have gained only the dubious advantage of fitting a small part of what men call poetry into your definition, which, if you will pardon me for saying so, appears somewhat arbitrary."

"Will you give me just one reason why I should not consider dramatic poetry and epic poetry as not really being poetry at all,

but essentially prose?" queried the Youth with some asperity.

"Certainly not," I replied. "I told you I don't know anything at all about it. And let me remind you that logically the burden of proof lies with you. You must give a reason why epic poetry and dramatic poetry are not to be considered poetry beyond the fact that doing so would inconvenience some definition or other which you have concocted. All I know is that if millions of men call the epic, the drama, and the lyric alike poetry, that is prima facie evidence that all these kinds share in a common nature which I take to be the object of our search."

"It certainly is very strange to hear you of all people appealing to popular opinion," sniffed the Youth. "Not an hour ago you were ridiculing the views of a certain party who thought that truth was to be established by taking a poll."

"Popular opinion is important evidence," I replied. "In scientific matters it is certainly not conclusive, but I didn't say in this case that it was. I said that it was evidence prima facie. Here it is the only evidence we have so far. Moreover, it is evidence which I shall persist in crediting until you show me anything to the contrary, except, of course, its inconvenience to your definition. But let us go on. It seems that you will at least make me understand the nature of lyric poetry and in doing so, you will perhaps diminish the pain you have caused me by rudely ripping into pieces the seamless web of poetry."

"I will do what I can," he replied. "But it's something like jazz - if you don't understand it already, I can't explain it. All the words of my definition are self-evident to an unprejudiced mind. Or so it seems to me."

"Well," said I, "we won't haggle over words like 'recollection' and 'tranquillity'. They seem clear enough. But that word 'emotion'..." "Aha," said the Youth with mournful satisfaction, "so we are to haggle after all. If you couldn't I believe you would die. You know you can't honestly pretend not to know what 'emotion' is. Everybody knows what he feels - it may be the only thing he does know with certainty."

"Am I to understand, then, that you are telling me that 'emotion is feeling'?" he replied, "but I did not do so. I meant only that all of us know by a direct intuition that we feel and what we feel and that these feelings are our emotions."

"When I hear that word intuition, I am prepared for any absurdity," I remarked to the company resignedly. Then addressing the Youth again I continued, "Let us recall what we are doing here. We are seeking a definition of poetry, are we not? Or at least we seek

to communicate to one another and to agree. But are not intuitions notoriously subjective? Then by your account poetry turns out to be something completely subjective and hence indefinable; a state of affairs which I can well believe to be so, but which is the exact opposite of what you set out to prove."

"Not so, not so," cried the Youth heatedly. "Our emotions are subjective, but they are also intersubjective, to use one of the uncouth terms of which you are so fond. They are subjective to you and subjective to me, but they are like enough so that I can communicate to you my subjective feelings. After all the objective is only the communicable subjective."

"Bravo!" cried I to this last remark, "We must haggle over that one some time. Of course you are right in a sense, but I seriously question the fact that our emotions are in any sense intersubjective and communicable as you say."

"You can't be serious," exclaimed the Youth. "Everyone knows that feelings can be objectively identified with the stimulation of certain nerves like the vagus. I don't know too much about it, but I've read that when, for example, we receive bad news there is a complicated kind of electrical current which passes from the brain to the heart. It is this stimulation which we feel and give an appropriate name. Cut the vagus, no bad news."

"Also no poetry," I replied. "And now I begin to understand. Poetry is a kind of biology and the perfect poet is the physiologist."

"You are an unredeemed sophist," said the Youth, making unsuccessful efforts to control the twitching of his face which always occurred when he was angry. "I didn't say that at all."

"Well then," I said, "I suppose you meant that the perfect poet is the perfect psychologist?"

"The poet is, of course, the psychologist par excellence," said the Youth. "Shakespeare certainly understood human motivations infinitely better than any mere academician. But in addition to what he knows, a poet has a certain compelling power of projecting emotion by means of verbal symbols."

"And what is the nature of this power?" I asked.

"That is very hard to say," said he. "It defies analysis. Certainly I can tell you from my own experience that the words of a poem translated into other words or into another language in such a way as apparently to convey exactly the same information isn't poetry at all, and is seldom even passable prose."

"But does not the essence of the lyric reside precisely in this wonderful power which you now inform us is indefinable?" I asked. "We have all felt the strength of this power of verbal magic to evoke emotions, but it always remains, as you say, as mysterious as it is powerful. Now, tell me, what have you finally done with your definition which was that poetry is recollected emotion? Haven't you merely translated your ignorance from Greek into Latin? And could we not have expected this fate to overtake any such definition which in one or two short phrases seeks to equate a complex efflorescence of the human spirit like poetry with a few other words? All such definitions must come down simply to "X is X" and tell us nothing at all."

"I suppose you know more about poetry than Wordsworth?" prodded the Youth with elaborate sarcasm. "Can you really sit there and pretend that a definition of poetry which was good enough for a genius like Wordsworth means, as you put it, nothing at all?"

"Yes," I replied "that's exactly what I would say if Wordsworth had ever defined poetry in this way. But I should perhaps remind you that Wordsworth did not say that "poetry is emotion recollected in tranquillity". He said that poetry has its origin in emotion recollected in tranquillity, which is a vastly different matter. Furthermore, according to Wordsworth, the truth about poetry never..."

"Poetry is truth," broke in the Enthusiast with an insistent, but toneless voice. He had been silent up to this point, but now he repeated several times in the same voice, "Poetry is truth."

"What's that you say?" I cried, delighted with the profound simplicity of what I had just heard.

"Poetry is truth," repeated the Enthusiast. "It is very simple; Poetry is truth."

"There must be a little more to it than that," said I dubiously. "What about "Mary had a little lamb"? Is that truth? Or will you, too, define away everything which does not fit your oracle?"

"I am, of course, speaking only of Absolute Poetry," responded the Enthusiast with a slightly pitying smile.

"Absolute poetry?" I exclaimed. The enchanting simplicity of the Enthusiast's first remark began to be clouded over and I remember wondering idly if the Absolute would reveal itself in this connection any more clearly than it had to 75 generations of philosophers. "Will you tell us precisely what this Absolute Poetry may be?"

"I scarcely think you are ignorant of the distinction between ab-

solite music and program music," intoned the Enthusiast. "An entirely analogous distinction must be made here. Let's not quarrel over the exact words. It is clear that Absolute Poetry is not concerned with any particular utterance. It transcends each and every particular. It tells no story, but tends to become a universal which is felt rather than understood."

"What language does this Absolute Poetry utilize as a vehicle," I inquired. "Most human languages seem stuck in the particular."

"Oh, as to that," replied the Enthusiast, "Absolute poetry speaks a universal language which, although transcending particulars, is paradoxically thoroughly concrete. Absolute poetry realizes the concrete universal which all things imply."

"I begin to understand my own failure as a poet," I said ruefully. "It is clear that since I know nothing of a universal language all my efforts were doomed from the start."

"Yes," responded the Enthusiast, "most men can neither speak nor understand this universal tongue which is poetry. The gift is given to very few and even to these few it is a mystery. They cannot explain it or teach it. This is because the essence of poetry lies in a certain divine spontaneity. Only the divine..."

"Did anyone ever hear such goddam nonsense?" broke in the Platonist at this point, apparently unable to control himself further. 'Absolute poetry', 'divine spontaneity', 'universal languages', 'concrete universals' - let me tell you right now, the only thing concrete is your head!"

"Vituperation will get you nowhere," replied the Enthusiast judiciously. "It would do you more good to try to answer my arguments if you can."

"Your arguments deserve the same answer which Amasis sent the King," retorted the Platonist, rudely fitting the action to the word. Then speaking rapidly as though to forestall interruption, he continued, "Our big mistake tonight was to take you seriously in the first place. We ought to have found out first of all if you are entitled to an opinion. Take him for example." Here he pointed toward the Youth. "It's clear that he has very little experience of life. He knows nothing of the eternal recurrences, the joys and sorrows, the pleasures and the pains which are the perennial subjects of poetry. But he'll grow out of that; ten years from now, take my word for it, he will be able to say something about poetry worth listening to. But you never will. I've known you a long time and I know that you'll never laugh without being tickled or weep unless someone pinches you. Ten years or a thousand can't change that. My advice to you is to stick to de-

signing filter presses at which you seem to be pretty good." All the while he had been speaking he had been growing calmer and now he said, "If you like, I will tell you what poetry really is."

"Please do so," said the Enthusiast making a profound obeisance, "We hang on your every word."

The Youth and I seconding the Enthusiast's invitation, our Platonist continued, "O.K. then. I will make a speech and no one is to interrupt. Agree or disagree as you will, but keep quiet and try to learn something. Your great trouble," he addressed himself to the Youth, "is that you never try to see anything in perspective, I mean from an overview. One can feel something pressed against the eye, but cannot see it. One can and must feel poetry up close, immediately, but in order to understand poetry (or for that matter, anything at all) - that can only be done from the vantage point of a philosophy broad enough to contain poetry as a moment of itself. Up close, everything is indefinable and inexplicable. But in a larger view it is possible, with a little labor, to descry how each human activity, each art, each science abuts on its periphery on every other. If we stay within mathematics, number is an impenetrable mystery. If we go beyond mathematics, number can be defined without much difficulty. If we are simply poets and nothing else, we utter the nonsense which poets have uttered for two millenia on the nature of poetry. All that poets qua poets have said about poetry is mere eulogy and possesses the same significance as a contented belch after a satisfying meal. Poets, of course, are the only men who can write poetry, but only philosophers can understand what it is they have written. Fortunately, all philosophers have a tincture of poetry, and poets of philosophy. I may add, this last fact is the reason for the slight admixture of rationality in the talk of poets about poetry. And now that I have made it clear why I won't discuss the nature of poetry with any of you until you are entitled to an opinion, I will tell you what poetry is. Far from there being an absolute distinction between the epic, the drama and the lyric, as we have heard, I affirm that there is an essential likeness amongst them all. Furthermore, we must broaden the term poetry which we have used so narrowly tonight to include every creative act of the human spirit. Indeed, as you know, this was the original signification of the word. Plato has expressed all this with matchless beauty in the Symposium (205 B) ... ποιησις ἐστὶ τι πολὺ ἢ γὰρ τοι ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος εἰς τὸ ὄν ἰόντι ὅτι οὐκ αἰτία πάντα ἐστὶ ποιησις.....

We can translate this as, "Poetry is something very great; you may think of it as the cause of every passage from non-being into being"! Every act which brings something into true being is poetry for Plato. Of course this is an intolerable paradox to those persons who divide the creations of human spirit into the arts and

the sciences, seeing the prototype of the one in physics and of the other in music, say, or painting. One can only wish that they had concerned themselves more deeply with the sciences. Then, perhaps, they would have recognized the essential aesthetic, yes, and even moral components of mathematics and physics."

"The poetry which has been our subject tonight is only a small and, I fear, comparatively unimportant subspecies of the generic creativity in men. It has gained for itself an importance which intrinsically it does not possess because of the adventitious fact that it is one of the few kinds of poiesis which most men can feel a little of, but it is weak and impoverished compared to the subtleties which mathematics, for example, can express. I do not deny that verbal poets are very often clever enough fellows and there is doubtless virtuosity in the art of describing reality at two removes. But the verbalist, be he never so αυμαστός, is yet after all a θαυματοπίων, a mere word-magus. Poets, jugglers, puppeteers, sophists, illusionists all!"

At this point the Youth, apparently unable to obey any longer the Platonist's injunction to be silent, burst out, "It is you who will be a Sophist if you try to convince anyone that the marvellous imagery and the rich style of Baudelaire and Verlaine, for example, are nothing but illusion! Even the mention of their names brings tears to my eyes!"

"Opium, drink, paralysis!" exclaimed the Platonist contemptuously. "The Greeks had no need to cultivate unwholesomeness and they would have given those chlorotic fellows short shrift!"

"More likely the Greeks could not even have understood them!" bellowed the Youth. "It is well known that the Greeks had no personal sentiments at all in their art and without that art is cold, dead!"

"You are right for once," snorted the Platonist. "They had no sentiment, or better, sentimentality in their art. They didn't want it or need it. After all, it's a disease. Robust spirits like the ancients have no need of the spiritual masturbation which is the whole stock-in-trade of modern poetry. There is only one thing in all history which bears comparison with an American poet of the present day and that is a mediaeval flagellant. Shall I tell you why you and all your kindred value your subjective sentiments so highly? It is just this - after the toilet, they're the last refuge of your individuality. For all your vaunted individualism you are only a faceless mask, and you know it! You exploit your sickly sentiments and try to blow them up into something cosmic in order to forget the mournful fact that you are dead! Nothing personal, of course," said the Platonist as he stopped for breath. After a moment he continued again. "I do not

deny that verbal poetry has a certain fascination for me, too, even though it is only of this world, an image of an image of the real. It can do no harm and may even be a small good if we never forget that its significance is about the same as that of a game of chess. Just this week, stirred by the coming of spring, I translated a few poems of Andrei Seraphimovitch Navozsky into English, I believe for the first time. If you like, I will repeat them for you and show you how whatever effect they may have is gotten by the poet, and what are the great ideas which they but dimly shadow forth."

We all readily assented to this proposal and the Platonist recited four short poems, only two of which I am now able to reproduce.

I

"When the winds of Spring come fresh again

From out the Western cavern

And the hunch-backed plowman comes back to his plow

From out the village tavern,

I will wander again as I used long ago

Down through the Pleasant Meadow

And find the thorn-tree next to the brook

And sit within its shadow,

And watch the little silver fish

An hour or two together

And think how the Winter's painful thoughts

Are become a gentle pleasure;

I shall think of the plow and the sun and the rain

And the corn of good September

And faces I loved in other Springs

And cannot quite remember."

II

"The shining rocks pointed straight
Into the zenith past the Ram
The headlands fronted a golden sea
The sea-aisles girded a golden land,

The Ocean flowed along the light
The day was a flame, an Attic noon
Brighter than the Horns of Asia

Or the pumice valleys of the Moon;

The long slow lights of evening failed
And faded on the dying sense

The clangor of the laboring Spheres

Rolled up Earth's starlit eminence ...

Night walker, watcher of the stars,

Brooder on the summer sea,

What had I to do with you?

What have you to do with me?"

"First of all," commented our friend, "you will notice that old-fashioned rhyme is used. But I think that the rhyme here is not at all obtrusive as it is in so much poetry of our language, which, unlike the Romance languages, is very deficient in rhyming words. This paucity of rhyme has made much of our poetry merely a game of bout-rimé. It might even be said that rhyme is not natural to English. But I think that this thesis could not be maintained. Indeed it seems sometimes almost as though the tremendous superiority of English poetry to that of many other cultivated nations is due in part to the necessity imposed on English poets

of overcoming this very handicap. Modern poetry, as you know, has almost completely renounced rhyme. One, of course, cannot wonder at this renunciation when one hears the forced rhymes of the English sonnet, for example, the rhyming requirements of which, I think, completely surpass our rhyming resources. Nevertheless, modern poetry has, I believe, gone too far. Rhyme is one of the most powerful poetic inventions, perhaps the most powerful. And that is because, like variations on a theme in music, recurrence to something which has gone before, but not in exactly the same way, holds a mirror up to life itself; and life would not exist, or at least would be meaningless without these perpetual returns. You will notice that in the translation I am satisfied with certain rhymes which are not perfect like meadow-shadow, forgotten-pleasure, Ram-land. Then near-rhymes would probably horrify a purist, but they seem good to me and even desirable for several reasons; first, they immensely broaden the rhyming possibilities of English; second, they are pleasant to my ear; and third, since the recurrences of life of which I have spoken sometime require much effort to perceive, these near-rhymes seem to me to be natural to life and poetry. Shelley, in particular, has made use of such near-rhymes, which, sometimes coming far apart as he uses them, seem like a distant echo of an almost forgotten part, so that some of them have all the flavor of a *déjà-vu*.

"Rhyme is particularly appropriate to these poems which I have just recited to you, because they are both "remembrance of things past". In the first we may imagine the poet as planning to recapture at some future date the experiences of long ago. He plans to recall pain gratefully, because pain long past is a gentle pleasure. But certain things he will not be able to remember and they, perhaps for that reason, will be the most bitter-sweet of all. The last two lines which incorporate this idea tear at my heart."

"In the second poem the poet apparently looks back on a day spent long ago at the sea. The young man, as I picture him, is tremendously alive to the brilliance of one of these perfect days we see only a few times in our lives. At the end, however, we may picture an older man, immersed in certain trivia of importance, having long since said farewell to his poetic imaginings, and wondering what connection there could possibly be between him and the young man who once brooded on the summer sea in the halcyon days of long ago. I wish I could reproduce the consummate artistry with which Navozsky does all this. I have never before had such a feeling of sheer light and brilliance as I got from the first two stanzas. In the third the transition to the day of forgetting is made by having the "long slow lights of evening" supervene on the brightness of the noon.

"Many, many more things could be said about these poems, but it is

very late and we must stop. The important thing is that you see that the larger view of the philosopher can render a rational account of poetry."

"But not nearly to the same degree as he can of the objects of natural science," said the Youth, after a pause. "Does not this indicate that in poetry there is much which eludes us and which will elude us forever?"

"You are right," replied the Platonist. "Very much will elude us forever. But that is because poetry, as I have told you, deals with the world of change, and that which eludes us is the irrationality of the world of which, necessarily, no account can be given. That which is forever inexplicable in poetry is not reality or truth, but the very opposite, non-being, nothingness. Poetry, it must be admitted, in a small degree turns our eyes upwards to the world of light, but for the most part it remains stuck in the counterfeit world of sense which is, in itself, nothingness."

There was a pause for a moment and I exclaimed, "What wonderful poetry Plato has made about non-being, nothingness! It's a topic which could inspire any poet, even me. It's very late, but before you go, may I read you a few lines which I have just scribbled on this marvelous theme? They're called simply, "On Nothing".

"Here's a song about Nothing

For Nothing's on my mind

And for this very purpose

Was poetry designed.

All this world's truths and treasures

To me are Nothing worth

And a paean praising Nothing

Praises all good things on earth.

My spirit fills with Nothing

And I by hymning Naught

Am master of a rapture

Which Shakespeare never caught.

So Nothing's in this poem
 As Plato has explained
 You'd just as well not hear it
 For Nothing's to be gained.
 But even if you've heard it,
 You've done so at no cost,
 For though you have gained Nothing
 Yet Nothing have you lost."

-John Wilkinson

WHAT THE PEDESTRIAN HEARD

IT IS SAID by Seniors who have learned to think in terms of three cylinder logic and other metalanguages, that Mr. Wilkinson, finding the American object language inadequate for his mu-to-the-infinity-like mental balloon journeys, makes new and wonderful words from the bits and tatters of old, useless English expressions in order to carry on his unappreciated search into the Yonder above/below the laboratory procedures. Friday night this originality in word making, combined with a certain natural poetry in delivery, made some of us wonder just what comment he was trying to make on his lecture following when, at the beginning, he qualified the title, Physics in Relation to Metaphysics, with a curious word variously heard as "achromatic", "anti-romantic", "axiomatic", "Adleratic", "Adriatic" and "acrobatic".

Now when a poet uses loaded words, those words are fair game for any amount of speculation and inflation. It is perfectly sporting to make things out of a poem that the poet never planned, or even

imagined, when he wrote it. In the Wilkinson lecture there was ample evidence of a decidedly artful and poetic approach to his subject. One might almost say it became lyrical at times. We were quite justified in taking hold of his self-criticizing word and reading as many meanings into it as we did, in fact, we were even quite justified in choosing to hear the word as sounded in the many different ways we did, all the way from "achromatic" to "acrobatic".

Certainly the lecture was achromatic. Of course this does not mean it was colorless. Fireworks come in all colors, and this work of fire possessed all the colors of the spectrum so lacking in many of our lectures last year. But "achromatic" really means "transmitting light without color; giving images almost free from extraneous colors", and as the evening went on it became more and more evident that Wilkinson was, with some difficulty, trying to keep other colors out of the image he was building for us of the structure of metaphysics as a purely ontological and epistemological mansion, without any such things as distinctions between true and false, good and evil, or right and wrong. It was the chosen job of most of his questioners to show that the bare structure he had erected, spare and abstract as it was meant to be, actually implied--had built into it--all sorts of prejudices concerning good and evil, truth and falsity, in spite of the lecturer's attempt to exclude them. For instance, one argument: If the levels of language correspond to certain levels of being, and the lowest level of language is the object language, located just above the lowest strata of being, the objects themselves, then as we work up through the levels of being and the corresponding metalanguages at last we attain in a certain level - let us call it the level - at which all distinctions dissolve except for that one between being and non-being. When both lecturer and interlocutors had agreed up to this point it became the preoccupation of the interlocutors to suggest that either it was necessary that "being" have some equivalence to "good", "true", or "right"; and "non-being" to "evil", "false", or "wrong"; or else that one should feel some suggestion of this equivalence of "being" to "true", "non-being" to "false", and so forth. By various arguments Wilkinson defended his position that statements of "truth", "badness" and the like were meaningless in his system. He accused these values of creeping in at the top of his structure after he had gone to the trouble of building up a metaphysics from what is definitely known about the properties of language as the tool of the science of being, or as ontology itself. As a matter of fact, the argument for the necessity of this equivalence was very weakly put forth by the questioners, but their argument based on "aesthetic" principles seemed stronger - for instance, as we see metalanguages piling themselves on top of one another, each one unifying more and more of the less general meta- and object languages beneath it, there is no convincing reason why we should not associate "goodness" with this "upness", or "truth" with "height". Perhaps this is

sloppy thinking, but it is often done by some very respectable Program authors (witness Mr. McRaney's view of Rabelais; Collegian, Oct-Nov. 1950). It is unfortunate that Mr. Wilkinson's questioners chose to try to build a flimsy and porous structure parasitic to his already beautiful system when their fair argument collapsed - the one which tried to find "good" and "truth" in an ontology. Actually their original search for these values by rational methods suffered from nothing more than lack of imagination. Many philosophies - for instance those of Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, Thomas of Erfurt, even our own Scott Buchanan - have viewed the universe-as-it-is as a dialectic between the two sets of terms in a table of antitheses. If we accept one such table of antitheses, Buchanan's suppose, for the moment, we will find:




Being	Non-being	
One	Many	
Good	Evil	
True	False	
Same	Other,	implying that -

Being : Non-being :: One : Many :: Good : Evil :: True : False :: Same : Other.

In this sort of system, as soon as Mr. Wilkinson were to reach such a sophisticated metalanguage as would embrace all possible metalanguages and, ultimately of course, object languages, he would be on the level of distinguishing only between being and non-being - nothing more. By means of analogies drawn from the table of antitheses, statements concerning goodness, trueness, etc., would automatically fit themselves in as parts of that high level metalanguage. This, of course, can only be offered as a suggestion for future discussion. "A suggestion" because there may be perfectly good reasons Mr. Wilkinson could give us as to why his system does not recognize such all-inclusive tables of antitheses; "future discussion" because the argument is only pointed to here, obviously there would be much fitting and polishing to be done, preferably around a big table.

So much for the achromatic aspect. The lecture was "anti-romantic" as well. "Romantic" is defined as being, "of a fabulous or fictitious character, having no foundation in fact" (O.E.D.) Just as the colorful presentation made us wonder if the lecture was really going to be achromatic, so too, did we wonder if "romantic", rather than "anti-romantic" was not meant when we heard it said that the whole structure of language was not based on object languages, but upon metalanguages. Object languages seemed to us to correspond to the word "facts", signifying reality, in the O.E.D. definition. Surely, thought we, if language in general originates from an artificial meta-language we are dealing with something "fabulous and fictitious". But upon further thought it became

clear that object languages do not lie close to reality (let us assume the O.E.D. meant "reality" when it chose the word "facts"). There is an ancient argument among philosophers as to whether the impositions or intentions determine the origin of language. One School says that the First Imposition, the object, comes first; a sign, the Second Imposition is then invented to represent this object. The other school says that a general idea, the Second Intention, comes first; this is particularized into the First intention, which is eventually expressed as the object itself. Let a diagram explain: * (numbers refer to logical priority)

IMPOSITIONISTS	INTENTIONISTS	WILKINSON
2. "Bear" (2nd imposition, symbol) 1.  (1st imposition, object)	1. Bearness (2nd intention, general idea) 2. Bear (1st intention, partic. idea) 3.  (object)	1. "Bearness" (meta-word) 2. "Bear" (object word) 3.  (object)

Wilkinson, in starting with metalanguages and working in the direction of the objects makes his system appear startlingly like that of the Intentionists. When he used this system of language as the basis of his ontology it became permissible to do away with the quotation marks around the meta-word and object word, since these words then traced the bestowal of reality from the level of meta-language all the way to the object level. It was clear we had only mislabeled his meta-linguistic starting point when we condemned it as "fabulous and fictitious". The meta-language was the vehicle of being upon which object language and object depended. There is nothing foundationless or romantic in such a set up. The lecture was truly anti-romantic.

This act of honoring meta-language as the fountain of being was the cause of the lecture being labeled "axiomatic". A very apt and generally accepted definition of "axiomatic" might be "that sort of principle which, though not necessarily a truth, is universally received". Our bias toward Platonism makes us welcome any lecturer who agrees with us that the ideas bestow being upon

* Further discussion of this argument may be found in the dialogue between Philo and Cleanthes in Parts III, IV of Hume's Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion. Cleanthes, an Intentionist, holds that, "the origin of all things is from a divine purpose and intention", while Philo tends to the Impositionist position with his: "...a mental world or universe of ideas requires a cause as much as does a material world or universe of objects." Other discussions available: Symbolic Distance, S. Buchanan, 1932, p. 10; A Greek Grammar, J. Keiffer, 1941, pp. 43, 44; Senior Thesis (as yet untitled), P. Grimes, 1952.

the objects of the senses. Mr. Wilkinson's ontologically conceived meta-languages performed just this existence giving function. It made most seniors squirm a little as they remembered how earlier in the year it was unlikely that the lecturer would have seriously considered such an "unrealistic" scheme, but here he was, up on that old stage, sugaring us with our own favorite prejudice. We universally received Mr. Wilkinson's principle, even though it might not necessarily be True, and therefore we took the lecture, quite rightly to be axiomatic.

When Mortimer Adler lectures to us, we are usually shocked by the way he bites into our favorite Platonic predilections - he can be, we will all admit, a great charmer. Friday night we felt the same way about Wilkinson. We were charmed out of our usual ways about thinking for a while, and in this way the lecture was Adlerian, although, upon further thought, as we have seen, it turned out that we were only led to view our same old Platonic thoughts from a different, yet pleasant, standpoint.

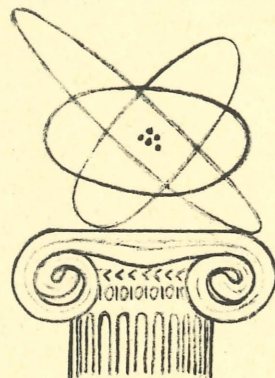
"Adriatic?" Why surely the tone of the lecture was midway between the skepticism of Greece and the down-to-earth flavor of Rome. What other man can make a statement about our own St. John's politics so poetic yet shockingly literal as, "... Klein told me you'd all fall asleep: of course he'll deny this!"

"Acrobatic?" Mentally, physically, it was a circus all the way. The most remarkable feat of gymnastics however was Wilkinson's divestment of his thought from twentieth century terminology, and the corresponding acrobatic of speaking his piece as much as possible in the language of the Scholastics.

Now what did he say his lecture was going to be? -- achromatic? anti-romantic? axiomatic? Adleratic? Adriatic? acrobatic?

Why, of course!

TOM HEINEMAN



THE MEASUREMENT OF MASS

THE LECTURE BEGAN, as nearly as I understand it, with some comments about the importance of measurement in science. That is, its importance was alleged, not, as far as I know explained. However, that it is essential scarcely requires any proof more than that in order to speculate on the causes of things, one must have the things about which to speculate.

Mass was introduced as exceedingly difficult to define, and indefinable in any usual way.

The first attempts made to conceptualize it were centered about its weight. Galileo's experiments clarified to a large extent the notion that mass, or what came to be known as mass, was a kind of universal thing, not contingent upon condition or size. That is, that large and small bodies irrespective of shape and composition behaved in the same way in their rates of descent indicates either that every substantial thing is the same as every other substantial thing which, prima facie, looks improbable, or that they are of, or have in them the same thing. The importance of this lay in distinguishing mass from weight which apparently does vary, from substance to substance and from quantity to quantity and had therefore been considered as a property of matter, varying with and as the matter. Galileo's refutation of the Aristotelian notion that objects fell speedily or not according to their weight divorced tendency to fall from the energy required to prevent it. What it is that has this property of uniform acceleration became mass; still, the description of its behavior was just that, not a description of the thing itself.

Kepler's discovery that the planets move about the sun in ellipses having the sun as a focus, and at a speed such that equal areas are swept out in equal times yielded the mathematical statement that the cube of the mean distance of a planet from the sun is equal to its period squared. Kepler's explanation of this with Gilbert's theories about the magnet was the first that planets had been considered as possessing mass and being moved in a causal way.

That this might have been done at any time after the general acceptance of Copernican astronomy is clear, however it seems that it was not. Once given the character of earthly bodies, the planets became ideal objects for the study of the laws of motion, as they appeared to move regularly and freely through space.

Newton, inheriting Kepler's laws as well as Galileo's near statements of three laws of motion, introduced the motion force as a

function of mass times acceleration or as being proportional inversely to some constant times the mass to the square of the distance. Applied to predicting the courses of celestial bodies this was restated in the form: force is equal to some constant times the product of the two masses divided by the square of their distance from each other. The Keplerian formula was insignificantly altered by this new theory to read the planet's mean distances cubed are equal to the mass of one times the mass of the other divided by the square of their distances times the square of their periods. Thus Newton predicted the planets would make a slight departure from their ellipses when passing conjunctively.

The verification of this telescopically both substantiated Newton's law as a precise statement of the interaction of mass and brought weight and mass back together as manifestations of the same thing, to wit: Mass. Furthermore, the mass of the earth could then be measured in the following way: some small object might be weighed, since it was known that its force was proportional as a constant times the product of their masses to the square of their distances apart i.e. $F = G \frac{m_1 m_2}{R^2}$, the equation could be solved for the mass of the earth, provided the mass of the small object be taken as negligible. Knowing the mass of the earth, the masses of the moon, sun, and other planets follow.

Things remained in this comfortable status until light became precisely measured whereupon the Michelson-Morely experiments revealed the disconcerting fact that irrespective of velocity toward or away from the source of light it always has the same velocity with respect to the observer e.g. (Mr. Page's) the earth's linear velocity is twenty miles per second, light's velocity one hundred and eighty-six thousand miles per second. We are entitled to expect, therefore, that, as the earth moves away from a star, the velocity of the light we receive from it will be diminished by the rate at which we are separating. This was observed not to be the case.

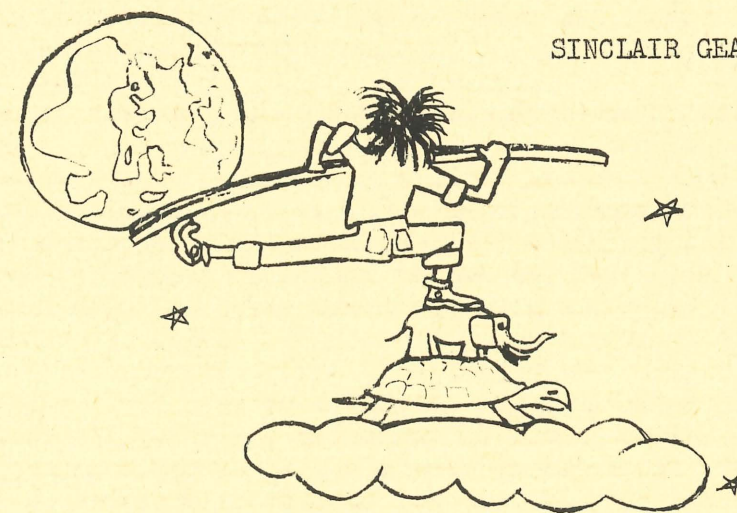
The first explanation of this was the Laurentz-Fitzgerald hypothesis that things shrink in the direction of their motion upon which Einstein added the notion that time too is subject to the same vagaries. This had an insignificant effect on operating with Newtonian formulae, but it did introduce the logical complexity that, in making the measurements radii and force were neither simultaneous nor measured by constant magnitudes. This invalidates the purely mathematical value of Newtonian equations. In order to preserve the mathematical intelligibility of motion a new notion of space was introduced. This was, that it was affected by mass in such a way that where there were greater concentrations of mass the space was curved more acutely, further, it was assured that all bodies moved along geodesic lines, analogically equivalent to Euclid's straight ones. This hypothesis does preserve most of the appearances, including all celestial motion in our galaxy, however,

certain other hypothetical phenomena are not properly accounted for.

These phenomena grow out of interpretations of other phenomena which themselves rest on several rather fragile assumptions. According to the Relativity theory of a space time continuum, acknowledgedly continuous only for convenience's sake, there is a certain spatial curvature which must obtain in order to be consistent with the phenomena. This curvature is then predicted, since it is a function of mass, the mass is also predicted, however observations actually made indicate insufficient mass to cause the required curvature. This is Mr. Page's reason for undertaking the calculation of the mass of galaxies.

The method whereby he measures the mass of the galaxies is a fairly simple one. They are observed to revolve, that is, the stars in them move at a calculable speed, which, if known, together with the size of the galaxy and an assumption that the mass of a galaxy acts as if from at its center, let us determine its mass.

Now then, much has been said in the mathematical way about mass' being equal to this or proportional to that, so much so that Mr. Page, or you or I can find the earth's mass to be 6,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 tons. But this means to me that the earth weighs that much, for I do not believe that mass comes in tons, nor moreover, not to impugn the thaumatically daedal theory of relativity, do I conceive of a thing as being the effect it has on space time. In fact, I rather suspect that pinching pieces from my Baros I had as good a notion of what I was measuring as I do now, to wit: none. For it seems something less than an irrefragable proposition that weight is mass or that mass is at all.



SINCLAIR GEARING

INFORMATION AND REFORMATION

MR. STRAUSS GAVE a lecture not long ago on Plato's Euthyphro, a dialogue which, although relatively unimportant and insignificant, is still Plato. The lecture was thoroughly satisfying as regards understanding of the subject-matter on various levels; it was masterful in its development and in the successive blendings of levels. It became obvious that, if a man is intelligent and interested enough, there is no apparent limit to the speculations possible from even something so seemingly simple as the Euthyphro.

Nevertheless, I was dissatisfied with the evening. This feeling stems from a necessary question--of what value to the individual is the product of such speculation? Such a question, though it need not interfere significantly in enjoying a lecture, must be considered in judging it. Mr. Strauss' lecture became for me the epitome of brilliant but unimportant speculations.

There arose from the lecture a rather violent contradiction. Mr. Strauss made, early in his lecture, two interesting sets of distinctions: (1) that between the logos of a dialogue and the ergon, the former dealing with what is said, the latter with what the characters do and how what is said is said; (2) that between the two primary problems arising from the Euthyphro, namely the question "What is piety?", dealing with the philosophic question, and question "What is Socrates' piety?", dealing with what may be termed "gossip". Except when Mr. Strauss left the dialogue itself (e.g. "Thinking itself is a gratifying activity", and "The result from piety would be completely satisfactory"; the brief mention about overcoming tragic necessity; the beautiful discussion on how one should approach the dialogues), he dwelt on persuing the latter question in each of the above sets of distinctions. At St. John's we are almost wholly concerned with the content of the subjects which we study. Without at least a partial historical understanding of, for example, a Platonic dialogue, the numerous subtleties of many passages and many actions on the part of the participants are too difficult to be perceived. It is, in fact, a principle of this college that all the minor subtleties are not really important for any 'worthwhile' understanding of a dialogue. A very good lecture could have been built on the logos of the dialogue and the philosophic question of piety, the other two questions being reserved for those who desire to be 'Platonists', thus enabling them to understand those things which will eventually distinguish them from the uninitiated (although not necessarily on that account more pleasing to them). A lecture based on the considerations that Mr. Strauss avoided would not only have informed us about the technique of the esoteric value hidden in Platonic dialogues, but also would have brought about the realization that such a lecture is

necessary and important. The product of a brilliant lecture on philosophy is reformation, but the product of an equally brilliant lecture on "gossip" is information.

When I first began writing about the lecture, I had decided to base my paper on the explanations of an attitude which was closely akin to the "I don't care" variety. But I quickly discovered that I did care. I suppose that the seemingly infinite speculations arising from knowing about Socrates, or concerning the lack of a certain word in a dialogue, etc., are not too important beside the knowledge that it is very probable that the whole earth faces destruction as a result of the speculations arising from the internal properties of the atom.

EDWARD BAUER

THE ONE THAT DIDN'T GET AWAY

(THE FOLLOWING IS a sort of review of "A Place in the Sun", composed of some remarks received in two letters and answers to them.)

"Last night I saw the picture you recommended - "A Place in the Sun". There was the making of tragedy there and one that was particularly American. Where else could it happen? "I am going to make you the head of a department, George." Little education, a boyhood struggle, son of a mother with a rich uncle, hitchhiking across the country with a calling card in his pocket. The man who directed the picture took pains to make all this evident to us -- at times rather bluntly. But George, when you get right down to it, was in many ways a big boy with a propensity to fall quickly and patly in "love", tell the truth one minute, and the opposite the next. Still, as Clift portrayed him he did have some manly failings, and it was one of these that was finally his undoing. Here is where the tragedy could have really unfolded. We get a good picture of George in the plant, among the financially well-to-do, soaked with a change of life, keeping company with a rich and pretty girl, swept along in the common notion of a "respectable" life. But if we saw a little less of Elizabeth Taylor and a little less of the romantic tragedy (which in one sense was more of a revelation than a tragedy, if you could use the word tragedy at all) particularly after the drowning on the lake, we would have gotten a better understanding of George Eastman's fall "from high to low estate" in the full sense of the word. However Elizabeth Taylor, beautiful and lively as she appeared on the screen was always there cushioning the blow. "I'll love you the rest of my life", says she as he is about to go to the "chair". It was not even said with the emotion we would expect from a girl who has had time

to sober up to the fact that her husband almost-to-be has a second and more realistic side which is diametrically opposed to George, the up-and-coming bathing suit tycoon. And our friend Elizabeth Taylor is no six year old while all this is going on. As much as the pulsing music and close-up shots pushed us, it was a little hard to believe that this was a love to go on into eternity.

Shelley Winters handled her part well, particularly the unaffected, but rehearsed ease with which she delivered her lines. Some of the scene transitions were good. Elizabeth Taylor is, as they say, easy on the eyes, and Mr. Clift did his part in a controlled, understated and convincing manner, particularly the scene when he first pays an evening visit to the uncle's house and the throbbing scene on the lake."

(Answer)

I have thought a good deal about this film that you saw and I would like to comment on what you wrote.

You alarm me at the apparently casual way you throw around powerful terms so powerfully. Here at school we spend a lot of time defining the terms we use, altering the initial definitions when valid objections are raised to them, and seeing if the definitions we arrive at fit the cases that gave rise to our speculations. Usually they don't so that either through laxity on our part or through a realization of the futility of the endeavor we make a compromise for the sake of some kind of progress and content ourselves with a non-verbal agreement. In this condition, when we use a loaded term we hope that it strikes the same chord in the listener that it strikes in us. This faith in the common understanding remains until the discussion makes it obvious that we do not understand the same thing at all. When this happens, the previously mentioned process starts all over again.

I am not particularly interested in seeking definitions to test the validity of the drama you spoke of, so I will just explore and see what happens.

Where was the conflict? Certainly not in George. Despite his constant attempt to be genuine, there could be no question about what he considered valuable: wealth, comfort, Angela. This was to him the ultimate achievement, and consequently, getting it was the only thing that was of importance. In this sense George is a constant and does not undergo any change. This is seen most clearly in his love for Angela, for despite what you think about the permanence of their love being an illusion, the important thing is that George thought it was permanent and never doubted it for an instant. For Angela the attitude may be slightly different, since her need was not quite as desperate as George's, but not substantially.

Looking at Angela is much more difficult, since indeed, as you point out, she was much more impressive, and hence much less accessible to understanding. But what was she and what did she do? Being nurtured in an atmosphere of cultivated and vivacious poise, she was essentially and completely herself, constantly revolving, completely demanding and terribly impressed with just living. Her background was one of orthodox luxury, which she had learned to accept with matter of fact certainty. One could see in her immediately that she had beauty, and an awareness of that beauty, a manufactured dignity, and the stature of position. She possessed a false hospitality, an underlying confidence that enabled her to react correctly in all situations, and feelings she could summon at will. Apart from all of this, however, I think she was bored and was just becoming aware of the fact that her primary problem in life was how not to lead a doled-out existence, filled with attention, delicate food, leisurely sloth, continental tours and, finally a convenient marriage with a husband with whom and not for whom she would bear several golden children, all with musical accompaniment. Her attention at this point in her life was probably taken up with finding something new and relieving. She was still happy, because she was still young, but at the same time she was a little ripe and along came George.

The attraction between the two was immediate and devastatingly powerful. Their problem was not how to make their love meaningful, but simply how to fulfill this ferocious compulsion that they both felt.

With this condition prevailing, all George could think of the "mistake" that he had made with the girl from the factory was that it was unfortunate and serious. Being an essentially weak person, and therefore one prone to confusion and indecision, he could only retreat to that which he had found permanent and consoling all his life, and which formed the major portion of his charm, passivity.

The one thing that strikes me as the most plainly evident in the entire film is that George never asserts, never in fact really does anything. Everything happens to him, and all he can do is to blunder, hunch his shoulders forward and suffer. He almost seems incapable of anything else. Even on the lake when he says he will stick by the girl from the factory, he does not decide, but accepts it as an alternative to killing her, and still we are not sure his acceptance is that complete. Then we have the drowning, the understanding of which seems to me now completely inept. All he can think of is Angela, and finally makes a futile attempt at escape. When finally apprehended by the police, he cannot even be coherent. At times he can't quite believe that this is happening to him. At other times he has a stark awareness that it is happening, and simultaneously realizes that he cannot face it.

The effects of all that has gone before now congeal with a rapidity

that is both frightening and inevitable. George, pitiful, defeated, hanging on to the hope of freedom which would give him new life, is convicted and sentenced to death. Angela is completely stunned, and gradually begins to acquire a distant wisdom that one often sees in the eyes of the sick.

The last thing that George can do, as a futile attempt to make his death bearable is to find himself guilty of something, not realizing that to feel guilt one must be capable of sin, and George did not even have the consolation of that. There is a tender scene in the death house where Angela, trying to be cautious, swears eternal love, after which George goes off to his death thinking only of Angela, and desperately clutching a complete misunderstanding of everything that has happened to him.

(Part of another letter)

"Your description of Angela stands as it is, but your thoughts of George I'll contest. As you say things keep happening to him; he frequently blunders; he lurches forward and suffers. Could all this be traceable to the fact that George might be still inwardly a boy--externally mannish, but internally a boy? I don't mean to imply by this that being a boy inwardly is bad, all of us retain boyish habits, boyish attitudes, some of which go by the way each day while others germinate and with some stimulation grow into the fruition of manhood. But George--George, the external man and internal boy--is placed in a situation where the boyish attitudes and qualities are stunted, can not grow or expand. He is being trained. It is not the type of training that encourages growth of any kind. It's the good, old, up-and-coming standardized training they feed to classes on the sales of toilet cream (or bathing suits), and it is this type of thing that George is getting up to the eyes by the tycoon son of an Eastman who purports to be out for the boy's good. No outlets, nothing but efficiency reports, one room in a strange city, lavish parties, minor salary, rich relatives, making the grade, nothing to go back to but a Salvation Army atmosphere. Consequently when George gets interested in girls, his interest embodies all lack of other means of expression, all the frustration, and becomes neither normal nor reasonable really. It ranges from promiscuity to thoughts of murder (which to me now seem to be only a wad of dislike and antagonistic emotion again regardless of what the pounding musical accompaniment would have us believe) to an undying interest in a girl whose background and interests and means are so different from his that you can't help wondering just how the relationship reaches the stage that it does. Girls like little Angela (don't underestimate her) want someone who is a good motor boat partner, swimmer, can speak a little French, wear their color of tweed, smoke this kind of pipe, amuse them. And this is where it doesn't add up. When he is convicted and his other side emerges to the view of Angela, it would not be like Angela (but Hollywood and Elizabeth Taylor would have us believe

it would be like Angela) to visit the cell. Angela, the real Angela would probably take a trip to Sun Valley, after doing everything she could to help, (cards, magazines while you are waiting, George!) until everything blew over and she could get back in time for the ice skating season. Their love affair was no tragedy. It was not even a love affair. Love comes from mutual understanding, and understanding between Angela and George, disregarding the fact that George was holding quite a bit back, would have been if not unlikely, at least difficult.

Whatever tragedy there was started as soon as George walked into that bathing suit factory, and presented the scribbled-on-card to the watchman. He was like someone holding out a ticket to a vender for a ride on the loop-o-plane, the same look of curiosity and awe before something he knew nothing of. The George that Clift portrayed should have been on a campus somewhere or a rowing team, and not tossing boxes with photos of supine bathing beauties all over the wrapping paper."

(Answer)

Why didn't you go on? Despite a few contradictions and a rather unfair interpretation of something that was not in the film (the fictional Angela you conjured up) you may have had something when you inferred that the tragic action was the social action of George, and the tragic condition was his social position. This involves a completely different understanding of the word, tragedy, but at this point I suspect that anything is legitimate.

If it was tragic in this economical sense, then it is certainly American. The trouble is that if we are willing to call the conflict of situations tragic, then anything that is sad i.e. does not finish the cycle of boy finds girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl, is tragic. Under this understanding "A Place in the Sun" is a perfect example of the unhappy ending with sophistication, and nothing more. What do you think???

(Fragment from another letter.)

"All I can think of when I read your remarks is of a piece of music by Scarlatti, intricate, perhaps well conceived, but just a little too fluid to be entirely intelligible. Can you put what you are saying about the film as a whole into unadorned verbiage? I appreciate what you were saying about definition, but try even if you don't want to, to define or give some hint of your criteria, and then comment a little more broadly."

(Answer)

You are right. I think I was dogging the question about the central issue, but I am still a little hesitant, so I will try to be economical.

I tried to outline in what I wrote you the nature of the two prin-

principal characters, the nature of the conflict (which was not a conflict between them) and the nature of its resolution. Perhaps the thesis that was imminent in this analysis of parts is that as a drama, the film was a good try, I think you had the same feeling when you said, "There was the making of tragedy there."

If I must take a stand, I say that the film was not tragic, or perhaps even better, that George was not a tragic hero. I say this because I do not think he had or even aspired to any sort of real greatness. He did have great things happen to him, but because of his own unnecessary inability to face them, deal with them, and incorporate them into his life, they produced nothing but his meaningless destruction.

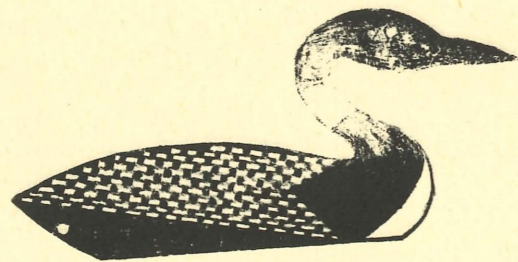
Situations are not the essence of tragedy; they only make tragedy possible. The tragic action as I understand it takes place within the person, and as I perceived no positive, creative response on the part of George, which would have manifested itself in action of some kind (since the medium of drama is the medium of action) I can not say, as much as I would want to, that he was a tragic hero.

You may ask what meaning the film had at all, since most people who saw it, were impressed, and glibly pronounced it "good" (as I did myself). Isn't it sufficient however to say that we thought it was good, simply because it was so impressive?

One could if one felt the compulsion concoct some kind of social message out of the character of George, and take him as the prototype of the modern or American man. This would certainly be an interesting and no doubt fruitful endeavor, but one which would be a little too ambitious for me right now.

(This last reply did not provoke another return.)

ROBERT G. HAZO



STATISTICS, ETC

ON MAY 17, 1952 at 8:10 PM Mr. Peter Wolff, one of Mortimer Adler's collaborators, undertook to speak on statistics, a subject Mr. Klein has long wanted to make clear to St. John's students. The lecture lasted one hour and eleven minutes; there were only eight casualties. The following was made abundantly clear:

	Repeated
That statistics deals with particulars, not universals.	6 times
That statistics deals with probability, not certainty.	10 times
That statistics does not deal with probability.	6 times
That statistics is not opposed to truth.	5 times
That probability is relative to the observer.	3 times
That masses of evidence make propositions more probable.	3 times
That one contradictory fact can destroy the truth of a statistical proposition.	6 times
That only the addition of a metaphysical assumption to statistics allows a statement to be posited.	8 times

No. repeated statements made: 8 No. repetitions: 47

Average No. repetitions: 5.675; Mean No. repetitions: 6.5; Mode of repetitions: 6

	Repeated
The following examples were also used:	
The falling body example	9 times
The red streetcar example	6 times
The swan example	10 times
The Maryland students example	9 times
Mention of the last chapter of Aristotle's <i>Posterior Analytics</i>	1 time
The A's and B's example	28 times

No. examples used: 6 No. repetitions: 63

Average No repetitions: 10.5; Mean No. repetitions: 14.5; Mode of repetition: 9

$$\frac{\text{No. examples}}{\text{No. statements}} = \frac{63}{8}, \text{ a documentation factor of } 7.875$$

$$\frac{\text{No. examples}}{\text{time}} = \frac{63}{71}, \text{ slightly less than one example per minute}$$

$$\frac{\text{time}}{\text{No. statements}} = \frac{71}{8}, \text{ one statement every } 8.875 \text{ minutes}$$

$$\frac{\text{time}}{\text{casualties}} = \frac{71}{8}, \text{ one casualty every } 8.875 \text{ minutes.}$$

As the probability of a meaningful question period seemed unsupported by statistics taken of the number of people walking toward Woodward Hall, and since no one could think of any reason metaphysical or whimsical why he should attend, all of my friends went home at 9:21 PM, May 17, 1952.

APOLOGIA PRO...

Who was Peter Wolff?

We filed out after his lecture, bored to the state of senselessness, but not entirely unenlightened. For a full day afterwards Mr. Wolff seemed to have disappeared. A few, on Sunday morning, saw him again for an hour: this time the curious were neither bored not unenlightened. Perhaps this has something to do with what he had to say.

Sunday morning's oral examination for the Master's degree started in where the Friday lecture left off. "It is impossible to make an induction without making some comment on the metaphysical question of reality." His Master's thesis was built around the positions of Carnap and Reichenbach but the essence of the paper was the application of St. John's language tutorial questions to this statement. "Where do you put reality?" "What part is played by chance? by accident? by number?" "What is the difference between a posit and a wager?" In the language of St. John's, (and perhaps in the language of the liberal arts), Mr. Wolff could be said to have given statistical induction a grammatical explanation. In this line Mr. Wolff was successful.

Was Friday's lecture likewise a grammatical inquiry? Yes. Why was it taken so poorly by us? Only a closer look at Mr. Wolff can answer that.

Mr. Wolff has a unique distinction - not too uncommon as a matter of fact. Through a peculiarity of rhetoric he molds his style to fit the person he is talking to. When speaking with Mr. Wilkinson it pops and jiggles, when speaking with Mr. Wilson it ponders and measures; confused by the sea of innocent faces Friday night it became as sterile as we appeared to him. This is not good. It is simply poor rhetoric. But, to hope for improvement is the best we can do. The capable rhetorician realizes the importance of his own thoughts and humbly leads others into contact with them.

However, our rhetoric was no better. Good rhetoric in the listener is an active search for all the things a speaker may be saying. Sometimes it is not possible to see all the things a poet says. Sometimes it is possible to see much more than what a merely wise man actually says. It was up to us to cut through Mr. Wolff's overexemplification and realize the importance of the grammar of statistics he was setting up for us. Statistics is a much abused science. The name itself is strange to us, but we should all see by now its close relation to pet words like "induction", "chance", "probable", "meaningless", "accident", and "hypothesis". It is not likely that the lecture or the Master's thesis would have come from any one other than an ex-St. John's student. Some lecturers in the past, being unfamiliar with the terrain, have said

things poorly. Some of them, of course, have not had anything to say. But for those who are unable to communicate, through ignorance of the St. John's student or the rhetorical art, we must act to dig for their logic.

Peter Wolff was a grammarian, a skillful one maybe, even a bold one. He was a poor rhetorician. Some day he may be a good one. In the meantime those who are already rhetoricians must exercise their art in order to liberate Mr. Wolff's ideas.

-TOM HEINEMAN