Coherent Poetry

by H. SWABEY.

The Italian poet Torquato Tasso aroused the enmity of his ruler and was confined for seven years in an asylum. This happened in the days of the rack and bonfire, but Tasso had a couple of rooms and some degree of comfort. The American poet Ezra Pound criticised his ruler and has already been detained nearly ten years, on similar grounds, but without any such amenities as Tasso enjoyed. Astonishingly enough, Pound still composes poetry which even the American public cannot disregard. Recently he has made a lively translation of Sophocles's Women of Trachis. This, he claims, "presents the highest peak of Greek sensibility registered in any of the plays that have come down to us." This is high praise, for in his Antigone Sophocles distinguished between Law and laws, in the Philoctetes he rated force and fraud, and in Oedipus the Tyrant he brought the tyrant down to ruin and disgrace. Euripides, another tragedian, disgusted his contemporary, Plato, "because he praised tyrants."

Some translators are said to interpose a thicker barrier between the reader and the original than the Greek language. But Pound presents readable poetry that increases respect for both poets.

Moreover, Sophocles has a special religious ("binding back to reality") interest. This play is, says the translator, "nearest the original form of the God-Dance." A few lines show the wit of the poets:

"if he taught you to lie,
the lesson you learned is
not
a nice one.
And if you taught yourself to lie,
thinking some good would come of it,
you saw cross-eyed.
You come out with the truth, the whole
truth. Now.
It’s no compliment to call a free man a liar,
When a free man is called a liar it’s no pretty compli-
ment..."

Successive American governments have shown no conscience about the detention of Pound or shame for the modern form of rack applied to his person. He has survived these indignities, but no politician has risked votes by advocating his freedom.

The public, whether appreciative of poetry and economics or not, should note the vicious determination of America's unchanging rulers to expunge the individual. And, if fault there has been, this inability to exercise Christian forgiveness or to extend honourable mercy, for great services to poetry. Great sciences these days are evidently confined to damnable destruction and concentration of power which, incidentally, 'solves the unemployment problem.' The end of work, said Aristotle, is leisure and the end of war is peace. The tyrant, he added, must remove eminent citizens.

Pound, indubitably a greater poet than Tasso, picks out the phrase, *It all coheres*, as the key to the play. The phrase is worth more attention than better known Greek tags like, *Everythings flows*. A writer's work should cohere if he has anything to say, and a strange fate evidently overtakes poets if they say too much. Politicians are incoherent mostly because they do not follow principle and merely exercise conditional power. And only with clear insight and integrity can we form a coherent idea of what is really happening.

The publication of a version of the Yalta Conference suggests that Roosevelt was not exactly as he appeared anyhow. A politician partakes of unreality, but a poet partakes of reality; and Pound undeniably is a poet who has refused to limit himself to the byways where a smaller man could have been safe.

Centralised Government

From a correspondent in Western Australia we have received notes and press cuttings on the amalgamations of local government bodies in that State. The pattern is similar to that followed, and still being followed in the Eastern States.

The Local Government Minister, Mr. Fraser, said that the alterations of municipal borders, which the Government had already approved to operate this year, were only the first step towards closer amalgamation.

Both North Fremantle and East Fremantle Municipal Councils lodged ratepayers' protests against amalgamation with Fremantle City Council.

North Fremantle Council has been in existence since 1895 and it was felt that the district's interests would be served better as a separate municipality than as a ward of the Fremantle City Council.

In 1954 a referendum of the East Fremantle ratepayers resulted in an eight to one majority against amalgamation. However, the Government has taken advantage of the provisions of the Municipal Corporations Act 1906-1947 to over-rule the wishes of the ratepayers.

Ecclesiastical History

"Only I would that the virtue and sincerity of [ecclesiastical history] were in accord with its mass and quantity."
—Francis Bacon in *The Advancement of Learning.*
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A Fragment of Douglas

A Rector of the Church of England in Australia has
given us permission to publish the following letter he
received from Major C. H. Douglas in 1932:

"Your letter of May 12th., gave me much pleasure
to receive, and I can assure you that while, as you suggest,
my mail on the subject of Social Credit is considerable,
I am always glad to hear from anyone with a grasp of the
wider implications of its point of view.

"You may be amused to hear that in breakfasting with
the Archbishop of York [that was William Temple] some
months ago I had a great deal more difficulty in obtaining
assent to the moral implications, which you put so clearly
and which I think are unquestionably those which are
implicated in Christianity, than in regard to technical
matters. The idea of monetary thrift is so ingrained in
current religious ethics that there is no doubt that it
comes as a mental shock to people to hear it questioned.
'Take no thought for to-morrow' is, like so many other
sound economic principles which have been laid down,
regarded as a pure abstraction instead of a scientific pro-
position.

"To anyone who, like yourself, realises the tremendous
issues which are involved, over and above mere changes
in the financial system, it is clear that this battle will not
be won, if it is won, without splitting the world. If it is
not won, we shall, of course, retreat into the dark ages,
and it may take hundreds of years for a new civilisation
to arise, which will ultimately be confronted with the same
problem. But after a good deal of blood and tears, I believe
that this time the battle will be won."

Towards Leisure

In 1933 the famous Bata boot factory, in Czechoslovakia,
reported the invention of a machine which needed only to
be fed with leather and thread. Then, without human
agency, it proceeds to manufacture boots and shoes, which
need only the insertion of laces to be ready for wear. (The
machine was not being operated; not because it was inefficient
—but far from it—but because it was too efficient, and would,
if operated, throw too many people out of work.)

A lamp-making machine invented in 1933, would enable
the German Osram Company to supply the whole require-
ments of the German markets in a few weeks if the new
machine were allowed to operate continuously at full capacity.

From Week to Week

It is a commonplace that the standard of civilisation
is falling. The roots of this lie in the philosophy
of materialism, and in the policy of full employment.

Art and, more broadly, culture—and even bad art and
decaying culture—are manifestations of the spirit; but
where this either is not recognised, or is denied, the incarna-
tion of the idea is deformed. Thus most of contemporary
art ranges from the merely unattractive to the downright
repulsive.

Probably self-development of man—man's end in life—
is achieved through creative activity; and from this creative
activity culture arises and is developed. Doubtless culture
is in some way proportional to the number of spirits free
to engage in this creative activity, while the decline of
civilisation is related to full 'employment.' It is only the
highly exceptional man who can advance genuine culture as
well as spend himself in the mere gaining of a livelihood.

Thus, what is wrong with the world in many ways may
be summarised as a lack of leisure. There is much else
wrong besides, but in a sense this is a root trouble, which
in these coming days of automatic factories may perhaps
be recognised in a wide enough sphere to lead to its rectifi-
cation. Once again, damon est deus inversus; and we must
up-end the monster of work, and achieve the Leisure State.

What is usually referred to as a "high standard of living"
is, in reality, to a large extent only a complicated
standard. A great deal of it is "keeping up with the
Joneses," and another large part is the 'necessity' for labour-
saving devices to enable the family to go to work to pay
for them.

It would, no doubt, surprise most people to find how
much more satisfying their lives became if they simplified
their demands to the genuine essentials, and devoted them-
themselves then to some form of creative activity—art or craft.

And if this were done on an at all extensive scale, the
result would probably surprise everybody. To do this would
be to give practical expression to Social Credit as a way
of life; and if there were enough such Social Crediters,
we should have Social Credit.

"The idea [of automatic factories] is not so completely
new as the recent stories in the daily Press might lead one
to think.

"In the 1920's A. O. Smith & Co. of Milwaukee set up
fully automatic machinery for the manufacture of motor-car
frames. This is fed with strips of steel, which it passes
automatically from station to station, while it cuts, bends
and presses them, and punches rivet holes. Still auto-

matically the various parts are brought together, riveted and
finally brushed and cleaned and delivered ready for painting.
Each frame takes 76 minutes to travel through the machine,
but a frame is delivered every 10 seconds. The total staff
numbers 120, mostly supervisory and maintenance, so that
the transformation from steel strip to complete chassis costs
about 20 man-minutes per frame. Even if we paid the
whole staff at the rate of £2,000 a year, the labour cost per
chassis would be a little over six shillings!" (Dr. S. Lilley
in Discovery, April, 1955.)
Pensions and Production

Mr. Menzies, in the "Arthur E. Mills Memorial Oration," which he delivered to the Royal Australasian College of Physicians in Sydney, referred to the "problems" associated with the rise in the average expectation of life.

From the text of his address we take the following:

"In the present century the chemist, the engineer have wrought wonders in preventive medicine; antibiotic and related drugs have eliminated some diseases and drastically reduced the mortality of others,—literally, millions of lives have been saved which 60 years' ago would have been lost.

"The effect of all this is, even now, difficult to estimate. That it has been of benefit to mankind is beyond question. That it has added to the problems of politics I have no doubt; for, though politicians, having this in common with ordinary mortals, live longer (physically at any rate) than their predecessors of the 18th century, they find increasingly that the growth of numbers in the old age groups is proportionately so much greater than that of numbers in the earning and productive age groups that the relation between Government social services and the national product is achieving a new significance, bringing with it the most remarkable changes in our social, economic and financial structure."

"I was born in 1894. At that time in Australia the average complete expectation of life for a male child was approximately 50 to 51 years. But today the average is approximately 67 or 68 years. You will at once perceive the nature of the new social problem. As the average expectation of life rises, so do more and more in percentage of our people live to what we call the 'pensionable age' or the 'retiring age.' And under modern conditions a greater and greater percentage of those of pensionable age take the pension. Twenty years ago the percentage was 33; today it has risen to 40.

"As the amount and conditions of pensions become more liberal, so does the financial burden grow. This in its turn involves two things. One is that the taxation burden grows. The other is that the task of increasing production becomes more and more important, because it is only out of the community's production that any Government can pay financial benefits. It is trite politico economic learning that Governments are creatures, not creators, and that they can spend nothing which human beings have not earned and produced. If the value of production does not increase in at least the same proportion as the numbers of beneficiaries and the relative payments made to them, then taxation must be increased, with perhaps depressing effects upon production, or payments to beneficiaries must be reduced..."

Mr. Menzies failed to mention the enormous increase in production over the past thirty years, to go no further. We make good his deficiency by giving some of the facts.

The facts are simple—as facts usually are. Every time a new machine (the motor car for instance) or a new apparatus (such as wireless) is invented, new employment is of course given by its manufacture. But before long it is being mass-produced by clever machinery on such a scale that the employment it originally called forth is eventually reduced to no more than enough to give work to those turned out of other jobs by other automatic machinery. This latter process being cumulative, there are never enough...
outstanding inventions of consumer goods, giving new employment, to even distantly approach the continual stream of new labour-saving devices applied to existing productive machinery which is therefore constantly requiring less and less human labour.

Between 1924 and 1929, machinery increased output per worker by 11 per cent.

In 25 years it increased 50 per cent. in the U.S.A.

Between 1919 and 1927, in thirty-five American factories, the output per man-hour rose by 74 per cent.

As an example of what Science is achieving in one field only, there are 250,000 workers whose jobs could be done better and more cheaply by the photo-electric cell or 'electric eye.'

Christianity and the Law

We are indebted to The Advocate, Melbourne, February 17, 1955, for the report of a sermon delivered by Rev. Father Kevin O'Sullivan at St. Mary's Church, Geelong on February 8, 1955, from which we publish the following extracts:

“...one amazing fact in this amazing age is that never have there been so many who practise law, and so few who know what law is...”

“There was a time when our Judges were the champions and defenders of the natural rights of the ‘free and lawful man’ of English law. Today they deny that we have, against the State, any natural rights.

“There was a time when Christianity was part of the Common law of England. In every century Lord Chancellors, up to Lord Eldon in 1819, had expressly declared that ‘Christianity is part and parcel of the Common Law of England.’ In 1917 the House of Lords declared that Christianity was no longer part of the law of England. This, probably the most fundamental and far reaching change ever made in English law, was made, not by Parliament—no Parliament would have dared—but by four Judges of the House of Lords.

“There was a time when Judges of the superior courts (such as Coke in Bonham's Case) did not hesitate to strike down a statute that was against the divine or natural law. 'The Law of Nature' wrote Blackstone (1 Com. 27.40) 'being coeval with mankind, and dictated by God Himself, is of course superior in obligation to any other. It is binding over all the globe in all countries and at all times; no human laws are of any validity if contrary to this; and such of them as are valid derive all their force, and all their authority mediatly or immediately from this original.' Today Blackstone's statement is called 'stark nonsense.' Commenting on the new order (but not commending it) Sir William Holdsworth, Professor of Law at the University of Oxford wrote: 'The Judges are obliged to admit that (the Statutes) however morally unjust must be obeyed.' (Vol. IV, 186).

Our modern jurists have accepted Hobbes's dictum. 'Governments make the things they command just, and the things they forbid unjust, by forbidding them... The law may be iniquitous, but it cannot be unjust.' (Vol. VI, 25).

“In the passage quoted Holdsworth proceeds to define the new role of our Judges—the one-time defenders of our liberties: 'There was no need, therefore, for the Courts to be anything but useful servants of the Crown.' The tragedy is that our Judges have accepted their new role. 'We sit here' said Willes, J. (6 C.P. 382) 'as servants of the Queen and the Legislature.'

‘...under our modern theory of law—rather I should say in the modern absence of any theory of law, for there is only one possible theory of law that recognises and protects the natural rights and liberties of the subject—we are being robbed of a glorious heritage, the noblest system of law the mind of man has evolved, the Common Law of England...”

“Commenting on the decision in Bowman's Case (where the House of Lords declared that Christianity was no longer part of the law of England), Holdsworth wrote: 'It is not unlikely that Caesar, now that he has deliberately abandoned the task of securing for God the things that are God’s, will find considerably greater difficulty in securing for himself the things that are Caesar’s.' He spoke truly. The challenge to authority in all its forms is one of today's great problems. The authority of the law has been undermined by the very ones we trusted to uphold it—the Judges of the superior courts. Authority is undermined because the only source of all authority is denied—'The fool has said in his heart there is no God.'

“The decisive contest of our day, lies not so much in politics or economics, as in jurisprudence—in our concept of the scope, function and authority of human law. Professor R. W. Chambers states the issue: 'Upon that difference—whether or no we place the Divine Law in the last resort above the law of the State—depends the whole future of the world.'

“The difference is fundamental and it is insistent. It is the difference between Christianity and Communism. It is the difference between the rule of law and naked tyranny. It is the difference in the very concepts of man. Is man a being, created by a loving God, redeemed by the Blood of Christ, destined to eternal glory? Or is he the accidental spawn of an accidental monkey, destined to disintegrate into the accidental drift from which he accidentally evolved? Which will prevail—the truth about man or the lie? Truly upon that difference depends the whole future of the world...

“The framers of the Common Law saw man as a rational being, possessed of an immortal soul, created by God after His own image, destined by God for eternal happiness, endow by God with a nature which would be frustrated if man did not live in society and under authority. They saw therefore that the State was ordained by God. It must therefore have from God all, and only, the authority which is necessary to perform its proper function—to promote the common good. In seeing all this they had one enormous advantage—they were seeing objective truth. They knew what man was, and what the State was in God’s plan. And because they knew that, they knew what law was, and what it always must be. Law is that rational ordinance, for the common good, promulgated by the person or body who has the care of the community. It is that order which is necessary or convenient to the nature and purpose, both of man and the State. If a law is against the divine law—the divine will—it cannot possibly be good either for man or the State...”

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