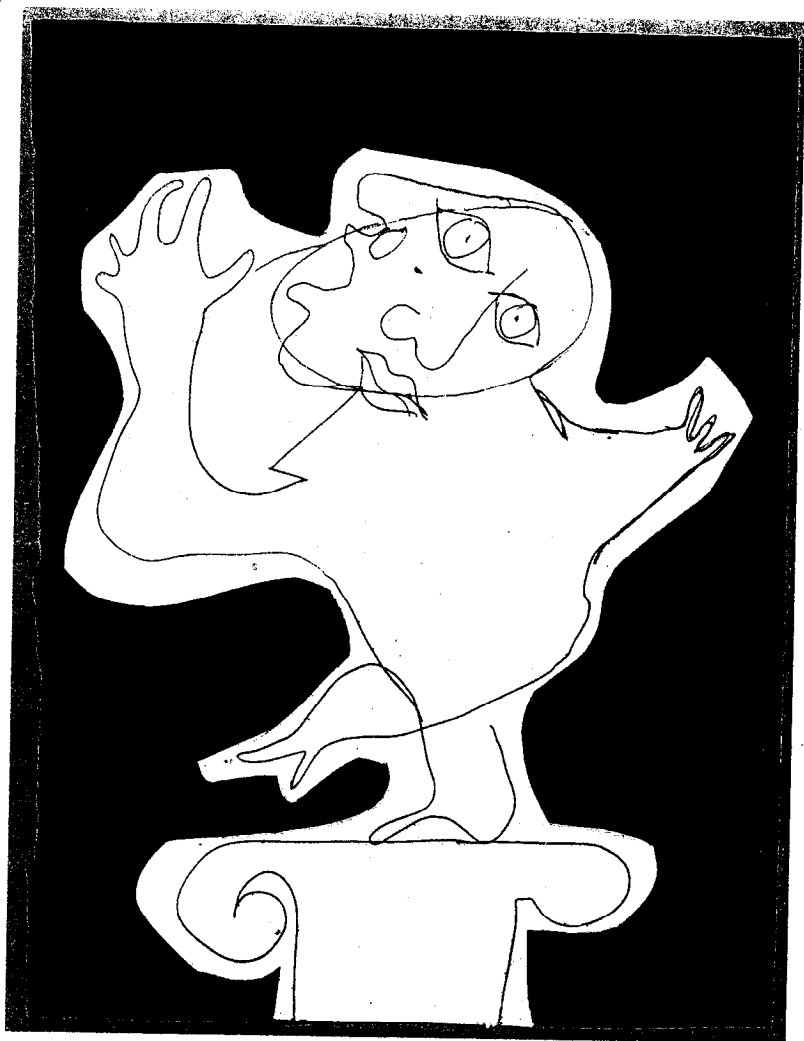


Stefan Themerson



SIX SHORT TEXTS

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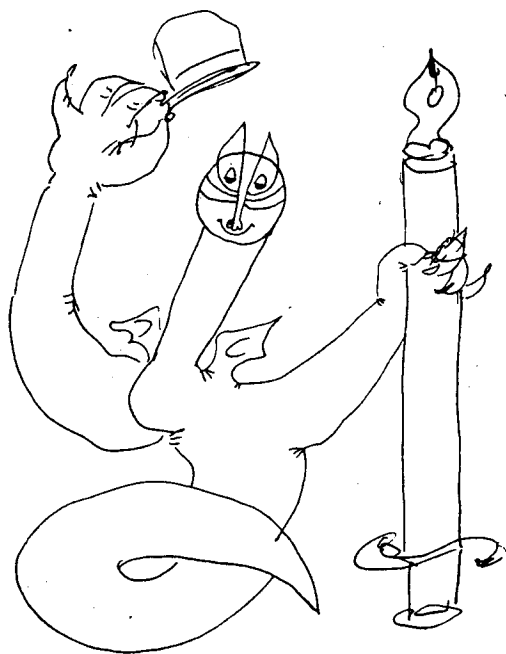
Fragments from Darkness
Critics and My Talking Dog

St. Francis & the Wolf of Gubbio

The Adventures of Peddy Bottom

SIX SHORT TEXTS

by Stefan Themerson



Obscure Publications
2004



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THE AIM OF AIMS

I

You asked me to read to you. This invitation, so nice and flattering, made me go to a park and sit on a bench and reflect, made me walk through the streets and reflect, made me lie on my couch and reflect, and the reflection, both melancholy and not sad, was like the hand of a watch, moving round and round and round, always forward, and always coming back to its point of departure. Hence melancholy, because questioning is the essence of progress.

I wanted to grow a crystal, and bring it to you as a gift. I wanted to wrap it nicely in words, and give it to you tonight. Alas ... and it is not that I'm not capable of putting forms in symmetries of rhymes and rhythms ... but crystals grow from undisturbed tranquility, and this I couldn't find in myself.

Thus, I got up from my bench, I stopped in the middle of the pavement, I jumped out of my dream: What I shall bring you is a flaming torch, a loudhailer, an *Allons, Citoyens !* Fortunately ... and it is not that I'm not capable of putting rhymes and rhythms into a howling cry ... but, having lived through hairpin bends of History, and met and seen and heard some howling voices, both true and false (of which the former - more dangerous) — I called my sense of humour to stop me, just in time.

Thus, I have come to you tonight empty-handed, having no offerings of Aims to give, because no Aim is so exalted that it be worth a heartbeat more than Decency of Means. Because, when all is said and done, Decency of Means *is* the aim of aims.

II

Some naive lovers of semantics believe that if only our rulers, our saviours (of all sorts), could understand the meaning of their own pronouncements, they would amend their ways. What an illusion! They, the saviours, know the mechanism of Language much better than all the Semanticists, Linguistic philosophers, and Logical formalists put together. That's how they know how to use it to play upon the prejudices of the mob: you and me.

And, when a Poet, or a Novelist, becomes a Demagogue, the same applies to him. Because POETRY, as well as POLITICS, may be morally *vicious*, and intellectually *dishonest*. In such cases, both poetry and oratory — political, religious, philosophical — are like crime: The greater a crime is, the more impressive it is, but the less excusable.

Thus, when all is said and done, one finds that no poetic rhymes, no greatness, no philosophical systems, no reasons of state, no politic ends, and no utopian aims are more important than decency of means. Because, when all is said and done, decency of means *is* the aim of aims.

III

And here, straight from the lopped and barked wood of bare trunks, come some classical formalists, who dream their dream about the world of distinct nouns and predicates, governed by the yes-or-no law of the excluded middle, the world in which things (including you and me and him and her) are what they are, and are not what they are not. And they dream their dreams to their logical conclusions, in an airtight Festschrift, or on a broad canvas: religious, economic, political. And when we feel not at our ease in their dream, they say: "You must believe us, because our assumptions are good, and our logic is true, and if you don't see it working, it's because our dreams have never been tried."

Which is not as it is. All dreams have been tried. And all have worked — partly. And all have not worked — partly. And they worked not — whenever their sires and seers, and the successors of the sires and seers, believed that if their assumptions are good, and their logic is true, then the conclusions become aims, and all methods can be used to achieve them; that the end justifies the means.

In which, their faultless formal axiomatic logic omits two facts: ONE: that in this changing world, the way from premises to conclusions is temporal and stormy, and you can't force your yesterday upon your grandsons' tomorrow; TWO: that using wicked means for the sake of aims defeats the aims.

Now, let us not get ourselves sidetracked by academic questions: how to define what is not definable by definition:

how to define "wicked" and how to define "decent". As if we didn't know what we mean when we use these words, however differently we use them. As if the reality of the emotive force that is in us was less real than the confused reality of things to which these undefinabilities refer.

Thus, whatever your notions of the wicked and of the decent are, whatever is the practical use you make of them, even if your aims are good only for some chosen group caste class faith, race or nation, and to the detriment of all the rest of us, the wickedness of your means will destroy your aims, because, even for the wickedest logician, the aim of aims is some sort of decency of means.

IV

As you see, my Logic is not axiomatic. She doesn't march forward, goose-step by goose-step, from indubitable truths to indisputable consequences, from arbitrary principles to conclusions unchecked by results, uncontrolled by the output, deaf to the feedback of reality. It is empirical evidence, rather than theoretical prejudice, that has shaped her body, and guided her syllogisms.

Looking backward over her shoulder, from the results towards reasons, which were the results of previous reasons, she may never arrive at first principles, but, somewhere half-way along the chain of events, half-way between Man and the first nucleic acid molecules replicating themselves, she comes across a fact; not across a truth, but across a fact. The very simple fact. The fact that of all possible species of carnivora, those only survived, whose everhungry members did *not*

devour their own children before the children grew up and produced the next and next and next carnivorous generation.

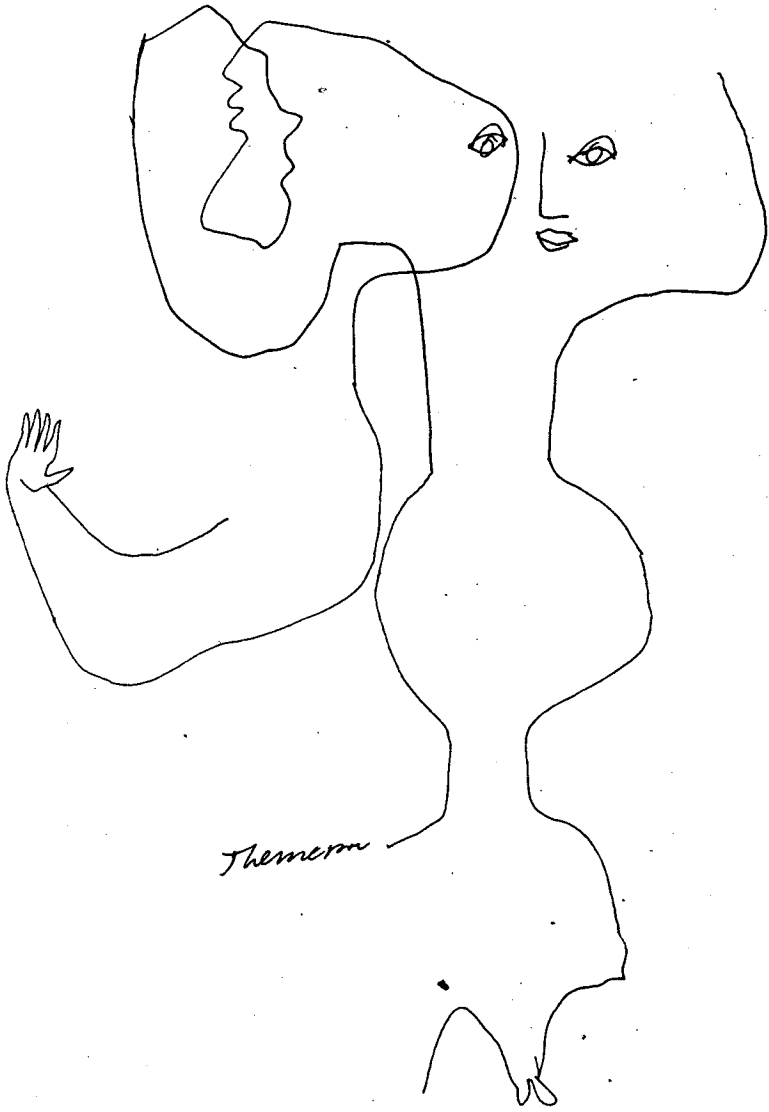
This illogical behaviour, which allowed the species to continue, you may call "a biological fact", or you may call it "altruism", or — why not? — love. If you call it "a biological fact", then it's physics. If you call it "love" then it's ethics. And, in the cruel world, in which the beast had to attack to feed not only himself but also his litter, this biological fact, this logical absurdity, this seed of ethics, — "love", must have preceded aggression (which, paradoxically, it caused) and decency must have preceded wickedness.

As time marches on, this logical absurdity of caring not only for himself makes the beast enlarge the field of decency from the litter to the pack, the tribe, race, class, nation, — the whole species? Anyway, such a sequence of events is what I would like to call "progress". And I would like to think that it is carried forward not by beliefs in fetishes, not by Great Illusions, not by aggression (WHICH, FROM BEING AGGRESSION FOR THE SAKE OF FOOD, DEGENERATED INTO AGGRESSION FOR THE SAKE OF IDEAS), but by its own evolutionary momentum, in spite of our cultural push-pulls, exercised by Grand Aims, noble or wicked.

When my Logic looks backwards over her shoulder, she sees that the absence of wicked means is more important than the presence of Grand Aims.

And when she turns around and glances forward into the future, what she sees is the urgent need for the food of

common decencies, which will grow not from the aggressive nightmares of bygones, nor from the glorious blue-prints for the morrow, but from the common decencies of now.



MAN'S SUPERIORITY TO THE BEASTS

It was in the French film, "La Femme du Boulanger": a dialogue written by a poet Jean Giono, a dialogue between the parson and the teacher in a little village in Provence. The ambassador of Church reproached the ambassador of Science for having told the children that Jeanne D'Arc *believed* she heard the voices of Heaven. He ought to have said: She *did* hear them. But then the teacher reproached the parson for having told the children that God made *four* kingdoms of Nature: Mineral, Vegetable, Animal, and Human. The teacher knew but three Kingdoms: Mineral, Vegetable, and Animal.

My personal feelings are with the teacher and I believe the subject of this discussion ought to be not Man's superiority to the beasts, but Man's superiority to the *other* beasts. But even in this form one word seems to need better definition. The word: *superiority*.

I understand that nobody has in mind Man's superiority in *running*, for instance, in which we cannot compare with the hare; or superiority of sense of *orientation*, in which Man is beaten easily by the pigeon, or of sense of *organization*, in which the bees are so much superior to us; or the capacity for *regeneration*, which seems to be greater among the amphibians, salamanders, and lizards; or superiority in the *expression of emotion in love*, in which Man can't compare with the deer. Neither shall we use such words as *superiority of soul*, if we don't want to make the subject meaningless and nonsensical for every Logical Positivist. Unless we mean by the superiority of soul the observable *complexity of Man's emotional life* and *superiority of his intellectual powers*, which, in our time, is

not so big as to give us the definite answer concerning the intellectual power of animals. In this case we may deal with the subject, but we may deal with it in more than a couple of different ways.

We may *feel* it like St. Francis of Assis or like Fox-Hunting Man, we may *think* like Bergson or *believe* like theologians, we may *synthesize* our ideas, like poets or painters, and we may try to *know* to know the real truth — and here, real means observable, we may try it with the scientists who in their work refer not to the authority of their own prejudices or to those of the past ages, but to the authority of Nature.

But one thing we may say with all the certitude and without the help of scientific laboratories is that *even* if all the philosophers *think*, all the prophets *believe*, all the common people *feel*, all the painters *paint*, all the poets *sing*, all the scientists *prove*, that the Soul of the Ox and the Spirit of the Fly are superior to ours — we won't stop eating beefsteaks or using fly-swats. We will never worship the Cow, not because our soul, as we have defined it, is superior to that of cows, but because we with our bows, rifles, and sulfonamides are *stronger* than them. If we are all a race of high-spirited saints and the insects are but soul-less machines, it will be they who are "ultimate victors on the earth." "Perhaps" — as said Bertrand Russell — "from a cosmic point of view this is not to be regretted; but as a human being I cannot help heaving a sigh over my own species."

Certainly it will be very happy for us if it will be proved that we have in ourselves something noble and different from matter, and the other animals haven't. Education would be a lighter task and to write a book of Ethics would be as easy as writing, for instance, *Mein Kampf*. The only difference would

be there, where now end the Superman and begin other Aryan branches in a New Book, would end Man, and would begin Ape; that there, where in *Mein Kampf* end the other races and begin the lower of lowest — a Jew, there in a New Book would begin the sub-kingdom, unprotected by the Fellowship of Animals' Friends — of the unicellular Protozoa. There is a temptation here to conclude that the *superiority argument* absolves us from our imperialism over Nature. We very often reproach the dog for not being able to understand us literally. But we ourselves do not understand the language (if we dare call it so) of, for instance, the termites. What shall we do with our superiority argument if it would happen one day to be proved by the professors of Cambridge that the banging by the termites against the walls of their cities is nothing but worship of the Almighty?

One might say that all this talk of the superiority of our soul (whatever it might be) is necessary for the practical purpose of Education. But that's hypocrisy. I might imagine that some degree of hypocrisy may be not only necessary but even fruitful if it successfully serves the bad teacher to appear before the class as a good example to imitate. But it isn't easy to believe in any honest education constrained to call for arguments that are only metaphysical hypocrisy. One of the consequences of such an education is arrogance and pride that is inculcated by the generations of teachers into generations of school children, and thus made an inherited characteristic of our time in Europe. I mentioned, at the beginning of this perhaps too long speech, the parson and the teacher from the French film. It's in the parson, believing himself to be in God's Image, who stated with all his authority that the kingdom of Man is separate from that of Animals, that I find all the haughtiness, arrogance, and pride,

and in the teacher, that I find modesty, discretion, temperance and, I'm tempted to say, Christian humility.

I'm sure that our teacher doesn't like cruelty to animals any more than the parish priest, although he doesn't refer to any authority. It is independent of religions and metaphysical speculations that none of us like cruelty to animals. But, I suspect, it's not as much for their sake as for ours. We don't like blood on our hands. But since we must have it incessantly, we are used to saying: "Well, if it is necessary". If it is necessary for our sake, not for that of animals. One might go further and say that if we don't like to make ourselves bloodthirsty heroes, this very fact is due to the centuries of religious education. But if I say "we" I do not mean "men". I mean *some* men. Because some others, who have Two Thousands Years of Christianity behind them, *do* like cruelty to beasts, still more if those beasts belong to the order, Primates.

CASTOR & POLLUX

And so they went to the house of Bogalawd.

"I wish you were dead," said Bogalawd.

Pollux turned to Castor and asked:

"Ought we not to cut his head off?"

Castor directed a penetrating, searching look at Bogalawd's head for the purpose of examining it thoroughly and forming a judgment concerning it.

"Not worth it," he said. "Such a poor head. No more than two poor eyes, and one poor nose, and one poor mouth!"

"I wish you were dead," repeated Bogalawd.

"Why?" asked Pollux.

"You don't know what life is like. I mean here, in my house, all around; and below, in the basement."

"Many people?" asked Castor.

"Oh," answered Bogalawd, "many too many. They live as in hell."

"Cannot one help them?" asked Pollux.

"No," said Bogalawd. "Impossible. They are unhappy."

"Well?" asked Castor.

"Every single method applied in order to ease them will itself add to their unhappiness."

"tsapity," said Pollux.

Castor sighed and said:

"May we not stay here, in the hall, until the morning twilight, when the sky will be illuminated by the reflection of the rays of the rising sun on the clouds of dust, &c., suspended in the atmosphere, before it will rise above the

horizon. May we not wait here until the dawn is clear bright yellow, or for even a shorter time, until it is gold, or only until it is orange, or at least until it is a deep red. Could you not bring us a bed here?"

"I certainly could," said Bogalawd, "but there are not many beds down there. So they'll be even more unhappy if I take one away."

"Well," said Castor, "and could you not bring us a glass of water, for we are craving for something to drink."

"I certainly could," said Bogalawd, "but there are many there who experience thirst, who have a need of liquid in their systems; so if I take some water from them it will add to their unhappiness."

"Well," said Castor, "there is nothing for us to do here but to say good-bye and go straight away."

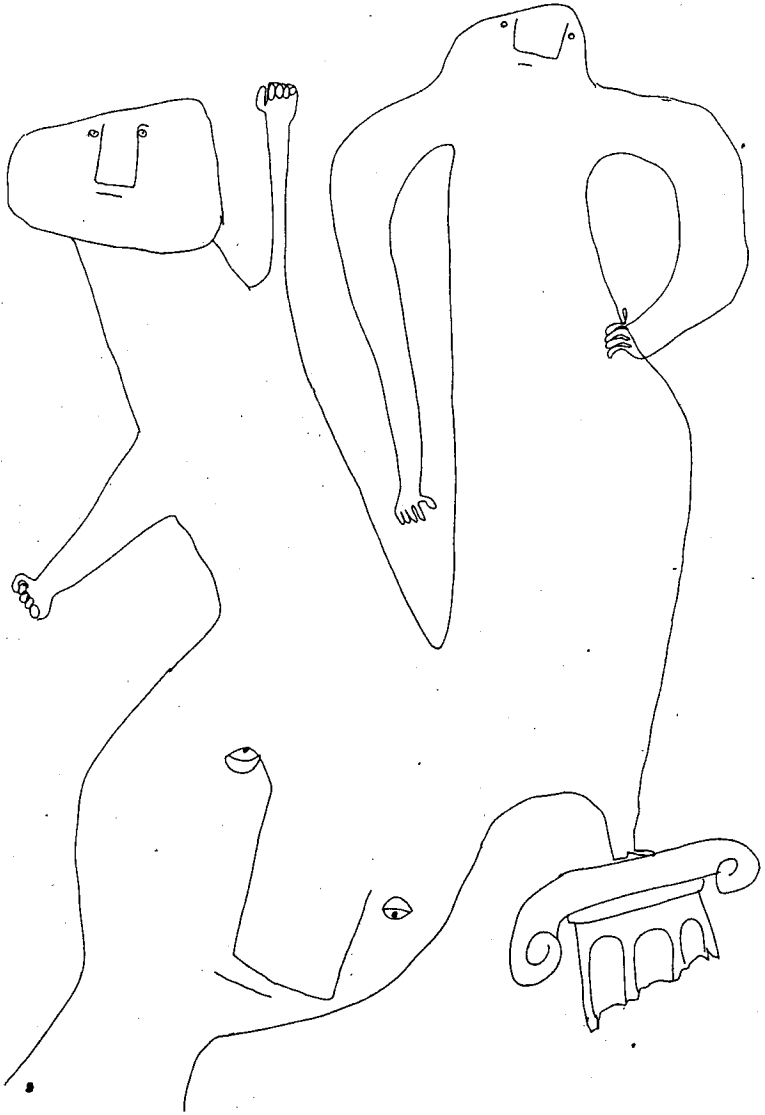
"You certainly can say good-bye and go straight away," said Bogalawd, "but the floor between the door and that part upon which you are now standing is rotten, and it screams when one puts one's foot upon it. And, below, there live women who have headaches, cerebrotonic men who write poetry, and nervous children who fear screech-owls. And the screeching produced by the rotten timber when you are going from here to the door will add to their unhappiness."

"Then what can we do?" said Castor.

"Nothing!" said Bogalawd. "I said I wished you were dead."

"But if we die here, where we stand," said Pollux, "and what we are built of remains here, it will decompose and then there will be a smell which will add to their unhappiness."

"Oh, no!" said Bogalawd. "They like the smell of dead bodies decomposed by *natural* processes through exposure to air, moisture &c. The natural full-smelling decomposition of



HE WAS 47 OR 48

He was 47 or 48 and cried several times a day. His wife took him once to a psychologist but it didn't help him. It sufficed to utter a word about the hunger in China, about a train derailed in Australia, or about a cat drowned in a waste pit in Bayswater; it sufficed to lend him a historical book containing an account of somebody's suffering 2000 years ago, or a fantastic novel containing some account of somebody's suffering 2000 years ahead, — to make his lips tremble nervously, to make his mouth gulp air rapidly, and to make his eyes secrete an abundance of big full-sized tears.

Except for that he was a perfectly normal homo. His friends got used to his paroxysms of crying, or, at least, they pretended to, as it has been rather tiring, after all. But they did like him and there was always a touch of cordiality in their voice when they said: "What a sensitive fellow George is ..." — even if they meant by 'sensitive' that there was something wrong in his grey cells. "What a sensitive fellow George is" they used to whisper, "if you cut your finger in his presence he'll be ready to die of grief".

But it wasn't true. It happened that I cut my finger in his presence. And to my astonishment he didn't cry at all. He took me into the bathroom, washed my hand under the tap, found a piece of elastoplast and made me a perfect dressing. And he looked very happy all this time, making jokes, his face radiant with joy.

I remembered that I saw already the same expression of joy once, when he threw a threepenny piece into the box of a man without legs and who, with his right hand, drew pictures

on the pavement outside the National Gallery, and his wife told me that he didn't cry at all and was almost happy (she said 'almost' because she didn't dare to say just plain 'happy') when he had to go with a cup of tea to their neighbours, a widow, and announce to her that her child had been killed by a car near the corner of Notting Hill Gate and Church Street. But, nevertheless, when his eye caught in the evening paper a note prophesying that in the next year there will be such and such a number of street casualties — his lips started to tremble, his mouth gasped for air, and his eyes started to weep.

"Perhaps you shouldn't stop visiting the psychologist ... " said his wife mournfully.

"No," he answered, after drying his eyes with his palm. "I don't think he could help me. In any case that cure has to take about three years. And if you count his fees it will make some £600. And if I have £600, which I have not, I would prefer to retire for a year and we could spend a whole year somewhere on the seaside."

"Oh, George!" said his wife, "but if we were on the seaside you'll have to see sometimes a poor jelly-fish drying on the sand; wouldn't that make you cry?"

He thought for a moment and then replied very seriously, with conviction in his firm quiet voice:

"No, it wouldn't".

Then I decided to take part in that talk. Like all his friends, I was used to his crying over any trifle, and what I had been asking myself for a long time wasn't why he was crying, but why sometimes he wasn't. Why he wasn't crying when I cut my finger, when he saw a man without legs and the right hand, when the child was killed by a car. And why

he thinks now that he will not cry when he'll see a jelly-fish drying on the sand.

"Why?" said I.

"You see ..." he said, "I shall put it back into the sea. I am not crying when I can help a little, when I can do something, when I can act. I'm crying only when I'm powerless."

"Look, George!" I said, and it was perhaps very silly of me to say what I said — "You know there are plenty of jelly-fishes on the seaside. You'll have a full-time lunatic job there to throw them all back into the sea. You'll not be able to do it, my friend."

He glanced at me inquisitively and I felt that his imagination showed him a picture of an army of poor jelly-fishes drying in the sun, and I saw that his lips started to shake with rapid intermittent involuntary movements ...

"Stop that, George!" I shouted with anger, "You, megalomaniac!"

It was the last word he could expect to be directed to him. He was sure there was not a trace of megalomania in him, and that nobody ever could suppose such an absurd and unjust thing. He looked at me as if I became crazy. But, and I don't know why, I was really very angry. "What do you think you are?" I asked, "God, The Creator Almighty?! Is it you who created life as it is, and all things as they are? You fool, do you mean that you are responsible for everything that happens? You see yourself as almighty enough to prevent all jelly-fishes from being dehydrated by the sun?!"

I said all that, and went out.

I have never seen him since, during my nights. And I believe I never said that I saw him in the daytime.

SKETCHES FROM A POLITE HELL

Suידecidedly decide I to break through bloody, a bloody, the bloody linglysh linguistic langousta, the last word of which statemently battlecry will sound ludicrous in the hearens of those who don't know that there is a lango in which usta means mouth, in my case a mouth full of twisted red flesh bulging under the roof vulgo palate and bathing its rose tip in the miniature sea of saliva, pressing and prezzing and prething against rows of white plastic, blastic, mlastic, iconoclastic teeth guarded by two dry lipbms, upper lipf and lower libv, upper limb and lover limf, and arching forward and forwart and forwarn and backhwardz and bequewarts and beghworts, and upwalds and upwartz, filling the whole mouth with its swollenness, the whole hole of the mouth with its red tumenascent beefsteakedness, all wet and barring the passage of bvreath from the larynx, to produce the unheard distinctions between bad and bed, between black call and telephone coal, between Miss John Smith and Mr. Joan Smith, and the fibre of the sound rebounds off and back into my gullet rejected by the feardrum of the native listener who cannot classify it as belonging to, as belonging in, as coming from, as ffallen offff off any step of the ladder in any county of the United Kingdom or the United States, of Canada or Ghana, of India or New Zealand, and when the behaviourist movements of the red meat in my mouth are windless and, leaving the air alone, guide my *hand* which pencils mute black signs on a piece of paper, then it is not the membrane of his ear but the cornea of his eye that rejects the scribble scribe, because the scribble scribe is neither

Partridge nor Oxbridge, neither pidgin nor Ogden and richin,
and therewherefromm has to be put aside like the corpse of
an acquaintance of an unknown passerby, because
whatsoever does not blong to, or blong in, exists not. What
other pooff of existence may there be, you think, except
blonging?

Dentibus ille necat. / x Et fuge Jubbubbum,

Cave Gaberbocchum moneo tibi, nate cavendum x / Unguibus ille rapit.

quo non infestior ales, x Et Banderanatcham, quae fremit usque, cave.

**THE QUANTITATIVE METHOD
OF MEASURING THE RIGHT
OF ANY INDIVIDUAL
TO INFLUENCE
EUROPEAN CIVILIZATION**

by

Stefan Themerson

1 IV. 1949

Gaberbocchus Press Ltd. - Pamphlets

There is a steadily growing number of people who hold that the moral and social influences of certain persons or of certain groups of persons in European civilization is pernicious, and who therefore aim at counteracting and destroying it. In realizing these principles, they have up to now been hindered by the lack of a clear standard against which to measure the very objects of their investigations. And it is only the present writer who has given to the idea such a truly scientific form that, from now on, it will be possible to practise it in everyday life, public and private.

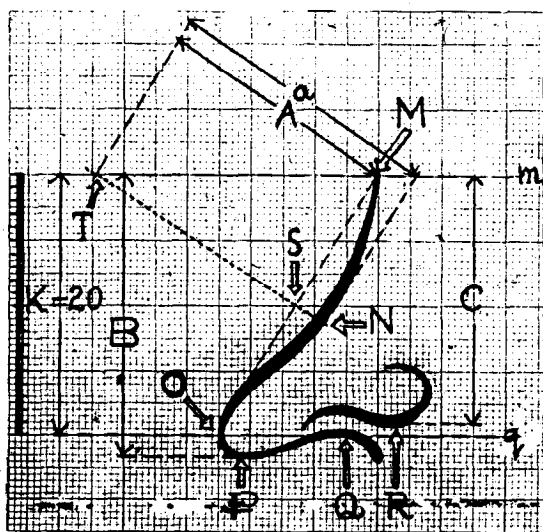


Fig 1

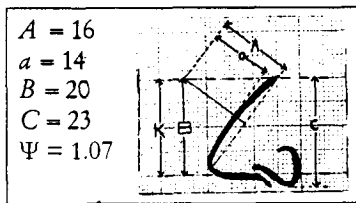
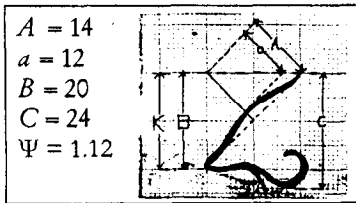
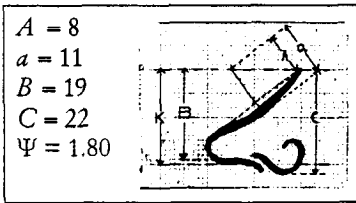
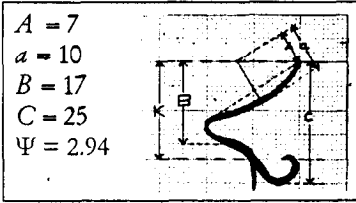
In order to find out whether a person (X) has or has not the right to influence European civilization, we have to take the said person's external organ of smell and mark on it 6 points annotated by letters: M, N, O, P, Q, R (figure 1). Through the points M and Q we trace 2 parallel horizontal lines which we annotate by the letters m and q respectively. The distance between them will give us the quantity K which, after dividing it into 20 equal sections, serves us as a scale for further measurement. Let us then connect the point M with the point O , and thus obtain the straight line MO , from the middle (S) of which let us trace a perpendicular to MO , which perpendicular crosses the line m in a point which we call T . Let us call A the length of this perpendicular (ST), and let us call a the distance between the point N and the point where the said perpendicular crosses the straight line m (or the section NT). Now, let the distance between the point P and the straight line m be called B , and the distance between the point R and the straight line m be called C . With the help of the scale K (always = 20), we now measure the sections: A, a, B, C , and employ the following GOLDEN FORMULA that has been worked out by the present writer:

NEU!!!

$$\Psi = \frac{2aC^2K}{AB^2(B+C)}$$

NEU!!!

DIE INTERESSANTESTE ERFFINDUNGS DER NEUZEIT!!!



The individual *has* the right to influence European civilization if his

$$\Psi > 1$$

and that right arises in accordance with the increase of the value for his Ψ (fig 2).

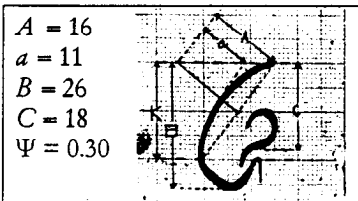
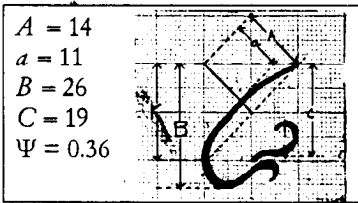
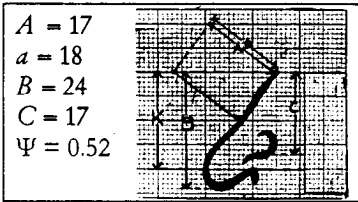
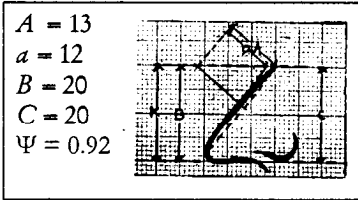
An individual has no right to influence European civilization if his

$$\Psi < 1$$

and that lack of right persists through all decreasing values for his Ψ .

$$\Psi = 1$$

(with the approximation = $\pm 8\%$, i.e.: from $\Psi = 0.92$ to $\Psi = 1/08$) gives us the picture of an intermediate individual, very difficult to define and classify, and thus undoubtedly dangerous in a normally functioning society.



We are convinced that our QUANTITATIVE METHOD should oust the unmodern, uncontemporary, unscientific, dilettante qualitative methods, and that it should be put into practice in parliaments, United Nations organizations, and all social institutions.

Now, by the quantitative method, a vote of somebody who has on his face a

$$\Psi = 0.36$$

cannot be equal to a vote of somebody who has on his face a

$$\Psi = 2.94$$

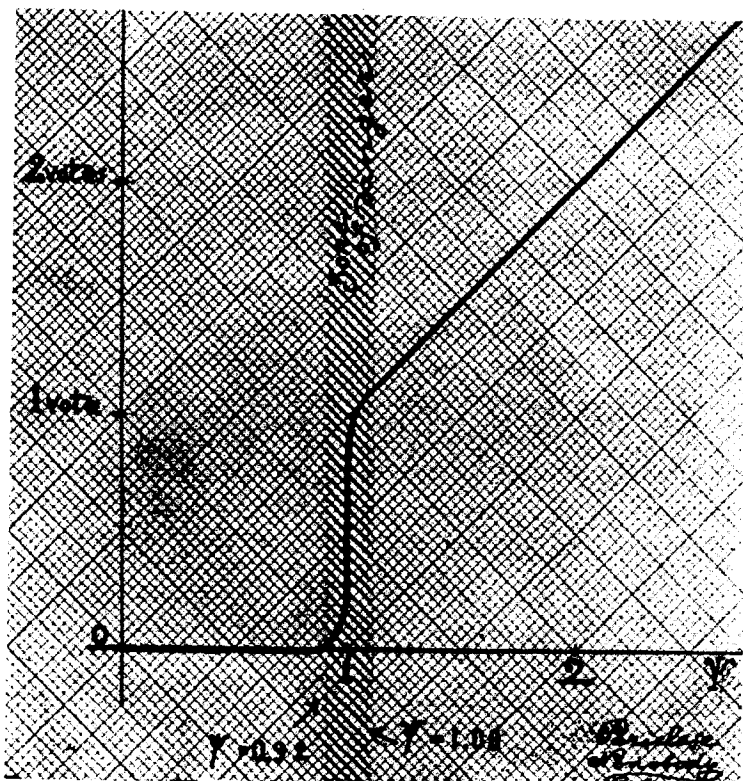


Fig 2

NOTES

1. 'The Aim of Aims' (1976) sometimes appears as prose and sometimes as verse. Versions of this text have appeared in:

Dialectics & Humanism, vol.VII, no.4, Warsaw, Autumn 1980, pp.37-39 (based on texts from various poetry readings, 1976-79);

'The Aim of Aims', *PN Review* 23, vol.VIII, no.3, Manchester, 1981, pp.6-7;

'Cel Celów', *Nowe Książki*, no.10/750, Warsaw, 31 May 1981, pp.59-60 (Polish translation by Ewa Krasieńska);

'Cel nad cele', *Literatura na Świecie*, no.3, Warsaw, 1989, p.337-341 (Polish translation by Anna Kołyszko);

Blank Page no.2, London, June 1989, n.p.; and

Collected Poems, Amsterdam, Gaberbocchus Press/De Harmonie, 1998. p.140.

Various fragments of this text were read by the author at:

National Poetry Centre, London, June 1976;

GLC Dial-a-Writer, London, April 1978;

France Culture, Poésie Ininterrompue, Paris, November 1978; and

De Populier, Amsterdam, December 1979.

2. Written in the late 1940s or 1950s, 'Man's Superiority to the Beasts', is published here for the first time. The corrected typescript of the text ends with a comma, but the manuscript suggests that this is the conclusion.

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3. 'Castor & Pollux' (1954) previously appeared in *Other Voices*, vol.1, no.2, London, 28 January 1955, n.p., and *Collected Poems*. Gaberbocchus Press/De Harmonie, Amsterdam, 1998, pp.110-111.

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4. 'He was 47 or 48' was written in 1957 or 1958. It is published here for the first time.

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5. 'Sketches from a Polite Hell' (1959) also is published here for the first time. There is a similar play with language, in 'Meet another philosopher...', a prose poem, in *Collected Poems*, Gaberbocchus Press/De Harmonie, Amsterdam, 1998, p.142. Stefan wrote the following introductory remarks for 'Sketches From a Polite Hell' in December 1959:

'Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have been asked to say anything that pleases me even if it does not please you. This is it.

There are some people in various countries who seem to be irritated by the difference which has developed between languages as they are spoken and the same languages as they are written.

The solution they usually choose is to change the way of writing so that what you see on paper would agree with the sound heard by your ear.

In England, for instance, George Bernard Shaw wanted to promote the invention of a systematic phonetic alphabet; in France, par exemple, Monsieur Raymond Queneau makes haphazard attempts to amuse readers by writing down some jokes the way they are spoken by some vulgar French people.

My idea is the opposite. I suggest that instead of making people write as they speak, we should try to make them pronounce as we spell, and this is an example of how this idea would sound in practice.'

6. 'The Quantitative Method to Measure the Right of Any Individual to Influence European Civilization' was intended to be the first issue in an unrealized pamphlet series by Gaberbocchus Press. Instead, it first appeared, in a slightly different form, as 'Nonobody's mathematical bio-pianolas', in *Cybernetics, Art and Ideas*, ed. by Jasia Reichardt, Studio Vista London, 1971, pp. 39-45. As a preface, Stefan wrote: 'This is part of a novel, *Professor Mmaa's Lecture*, written in 1940-42, in France. Some fragments of it were published in London in 1945 and in volume form it appeared in 1953. The passage about 'noses' was not included in the volume because, owing to some specific sensitivities of the times, it was thought that what was meant to be sardonic would look sordid. Today, Nonobody, the termite scientist, would probably be noticing and analyzing not so much the homos' preoccupation with the shapes of their probosces as the hullabaloo they make about the absorption of light by their epidermis.'

This edition is limited to 60 copies.

This is number 6.



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