fied and embodied. Until this point is made, the reading of modern works of literature is sterile and unprofitable. Once understood, however, the reader is naturally alive to the most subtle nuances of theme. He is not interested merely in a story, a fabrication—he is interested in life.

The Theme of Natural Order in "The Tempest"

LAWRENCE E. BOWLING[1]

THE temptation to see *The Tempest* as a romance is almost irresistible. Lytton Strachey has excellently summarized this aspect of the play: "In *The Tempest*, unreality has reached its apotheosis. Two of the principal characters are frankly not human beings at all; and the whole action passes, through a series of impossible occurrences, in a place which can only by courtesy be said to exist. The Enchanted Island, indeed, peopled, for a timeless moment, by this strange fantastic medley of persons and of things, has been cut adrift for ever from common sense." Strachey concludes, therefore, that at the time this play was written Shakespeare was "bored with people, bored with real life, bored with drama, bored in fact with everything except poetry and poetical dreams." In like manner, Dover Wilson remarks: "Is not *The Tempest* of all Shakespeare's plays the most Mozartian, the least amenable to discussion or explanation; a dramatic poem in which the author seems to soar altogether clear of the world of meaning and common sense."

The surface appearance of *The Tempest* does point in the direction of romance; but a close examination of the play reveals that it is not at all devoid of meaning and common sense, that it is in no way the "poetical dream" of a man bored with real people and real life. On the contrary, *The Tempest* is really one of the most intellectual and ideological of all Shakespeare's works, reflecting Renaissance ideals, and extremely amenable to discussion and explanation. Among the last works of a mature and practical playwright, it is one of Shakespeare's most significant commentaries upon the conduct of real human beings and practical government in a modern civilized state.

To Shakespeare and his Elizabethan contemporaries, no question was more fascinating or more important than "What constitutes the natural order of things in the universe?" To many, the idea of the chain of being seemed the best solution. That Shakespeare was familiar with this philosophical concept and was influenced by it is clear from the fact that he bases several of his plays upon it and has the wisest of all the Greeks outline the idea in detail in *Troilus and Cressida*. After listening to two long-winded harangues from Agamemnon and Nestor concerning why the Greeks have so long failed to defeat the Trojans, Ulysses goes straight to the point in his characteristic manner and explains that Troy still stands, not be-

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cause of the strength of the Trojans, but because of the weakness of the Greeks and that this weakness is due to the fact that the Greeks have not heeded the natural order of "degree." This speech contains the key to the meaning of *The Tempest:*

Troy, yet upon his basis, had been down,
And the great Hector's sword had lack'd a master,
But for these instances:
The specialty of rule hath been neglected;
. . . . . .
When that the general is not like the hive
To whom the foragers shall all repair,
What honey is expected? Degree being vizarded,
Th' unworthiest shows as fairly in the mask.
The heavens themselves, the planets, and this centre
Observe degree, priority, and place,
Insisture, course, proportion, season, form,
Office, and custom, in all line of order:
. . . . . .
But when the planets
In evil mixture to disorder wander,
What plagues, and what portents, what mutiny,
What raging of the sea, shaking of earth,
Commotion in the winds, frights, changes, horrors,
Divert and crack, rend and deracinate
The unity and married calm of states
Quite from their fixture! O! when degree is shak'd,
Which is the ladder to all high designs,
The enterprise is sick. How could communities,
Degrees in schools, and brotherhoods in cities,
Peaceful commerce from dividable shores,
The primogenitive and due of birth,
Prerogative of age, crowns, sceptres, laurels,
But by degree, stand in authentic place?
Take but degree away, untune that string,
And, hark! what discord follows!

In *The Tempest* we see what discord follows when the specialty of rule has been neglected and various persons fail to observe degree, priority, and place. This state of discord and disorder prevails until leadership has again been correctly reassumed and all individuals are willing to return to their proper places in the universal chain. Then and only then is unity and the married calm of states restored; then and only then does the play end.

Almost every character in *The Tempest* is responsible for one or more infractions of the natural order. The first person guilty of interference, and the one therefore responsible for the later guilt of the others, is none other than Prospero himself. In the opinion of the Elizabethans, the first duty of a ruler was to rule. Prospero committed a serious infraction by forsaking his primary duty as a ruler and putting his younger brother into his own position. In terms of the chain of being, Prospero was attempting to remove one of the prime links from the chain and shift a secondary link into that position. By the time the play begins, Prospero has become aware of his responsibility for his brother's guilt:

The government I cast upon my brother,
And to my state grew stranger, being transported
And rapt in secret studies.
. . . . . .
I . . . in my false brother
Awak'd an evil nature.

Escaping to the island, Prospero begins his twelve years of suffering and regeneration; but even here he commits another infraction of the natural order, which is fundamentally the same as his first error. This is the unrealistic and sentimental attitude which he takes toward Caliban. Instead of accepting this half-beast as the subhuman that he is, Prospero attempts to elevate Caliban to the level of human beings by bringing him into his own household, putting him on equal terms with Miranda, and trying to educate him in the same manner as he does his own child. Prospero's undue kindness to the half-fish reminds one of the Fool's reference in *King Lear* to the ignorant cockney who, "in pure kind-

ness to his horse, buttered his hay." His treatment of Caliban as a human being continues, until the subhuman, accepting the elevation of himself to the equal of Miranda, attempts to people the isle with little Calibans. The typical Elizabethan view of the matter is the one which Prospero arrives at only after many years of trying to humanize the subhuman:

PROSPERO

Thou most lying slave,
Whom stripes may move, not kindness! I have us'd thee,
Filth as thou art, with human care; and lodg'd thee
In mine own cell, till thou didst seek to violate
The honour of my child.

CALIBAN

Oh ho! Oh ho!—would it had been done!
Thou didst prevent me; I had peopled else
This isle with Calibans.

PROSPERO

Abhorred slave,
Which any print of goodness will not take,
Being capable of all ill! I pitied thee,
Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour
One thing or other
. . . . . .
but thy vile race,
Though thou didst learn, had that in't which good natures
Could not abide to be with.

Only after this disappointing experience with Caliban does Prospero realize the fundamental nature of the blunder he had committed in his treatment of his brother Antonio. In the experience with Caliban, however, he realizes his error in time to restore the natural order before things get completely out of control.

That *The Tempest* is basically a treatise on practical government is specifically emphasized at two different points in the play when two separate groups discuss matters of state. The first begins with Gonzalo's admiration of the isle and his remarks concerning how he would rule if he were king on it:

GONZALO

Had I plantation of this isle, my lord,
And were the king on't, what would I do?
I' the commonwealth I would by contraries
Execute all things; for no kind of traffic
Would I admit; no name of magistrate;
And use of service, none; contract, succession,
Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none;
No occupation; all men idle, all;
And women too, but innocent and pure;
No sovereignty,——

SEBASTIAN

Yet he would be king on't.

ANTONIO

The latter end of his commonwealth forgets the beginning.

Gonzalo's inconsistency here is as obvious as Sebastian and Antonio say it is; beginning by observing what he would do if he were king, Gonzalo immediately eliminates himself and all other rulers by asserting that there would be no name of magistrate and no sovereignty. Although we do not like to associate ourselves with the two arch-realists, we must, if we are to take the characteristic Renaissance (and Aristotelian) view presented by Ulysses, agree with Sebastian and Antonio in this one point: that Gonzalo's utopian commonwealth would certainly be far less likely to produce innocence and purity than it would whores and knaves, as Antonio quickly points out. Alonso, with whom we are more sympathetic and whose opinions we more readily accept, observes that Gonzalo is talking "nothing." Whether Gonzalo's original intention really was merely to provoke the wit of the two realists, as he now says it was, the fact remains that his romantic commonwealth would not be practical.

Government is again directly focused upon when Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo form a conspiracy to overthrow Prospero. The drunken butler intends to establish himself as king and appoints the court jester and the half-fish as viceroys. Although Stephano's order does admit some degree, priority, and place, the no-government of Gonzalo would be less evil than Stephano's dictatorship of the drunken-dumb-and-dilatory, which is to be organized by completely inverting the natural chain of being and placing all the inferior links at the top. Whereas Gonzalo favored mere absence of any order, Stephano is for the presence of a positive disorder. Viewed in relation to Ulysses' standards, Stephano's brief regime serves as another good example of bad government.

The conspiracy of Antonio and Sebastian to murder Alonso illustrates another aspect of the theme. Having supplanted his brother, Antonio now becomes the example and precedent for Sebastian to do likewise. Antonio's remark that his garments as duke of Milan sit becomingly upon him reminds us of Ulysses' statement that "degree being vizarded, th' unworthiest shows as fairly in the mask." These younger brothers do not heed their natural duty to respect "the primogenitive and due of birth, prerogative of age, crowns, sceptres, . . . office and custom." Instead, they consider the sleeping king "no better than the earth he lies upon."

This is a sorry state for things to come to, and they might be expected to come to much worse if they were allowed to work themselves out without supernatural intervention. Sooner or later, Antonio and Sebastian could be expected to fall out among themselves and reduce everything to the universal chaos outlined by Ulysses:

> Then everything includes itself in power,
> Power into will, will into appetite;
> And appetite, an universal wolf,
> . . . . . .
> Must make perforce an universal prey
> And last eat up itself.

To the Elizabethans, such a condition was the logical sequel if even one link in the chain of order should swerve from its natural function. In the words of Shakespeare's representative contemporary, Richard Hooker:

> As long as each thing performeth only that work which is natural unto it, it thereby preserveth both other things and also itself. Contrariwise, let any principal thing . . . but once cease or fail or swerve, and who doth not easily conceive that the sequel thereof would be ruin both to itself and whatsoever dependeth on it? And is it possible that man, being not only the noblest creature in the world but even a very world in himself, his transgressing the law of his nature should draw no manner of harm after it?

By "any principal thing" Hooker means any chief or leader in its class. In terms of *The Tempest*, the principal thing which first swerves from its natural course is Prospero. It is proper, therefore, that he should be the one primarily responsible for restoring the order which he was the first to transgress.

Prospero's restoration of the natural order is accomplished partly by supernatural means, and the tendency has been to exaggerate the strangeness of these supernatural elements at the expense of their deeper significance in relation to the central theme. In *The Tempest*, more than in any other of Shakespeare's plays, the supernatural is used as a means of giving further amplification and extension to the natural. A good example is Prospero's magical tempest. Dover Wilson, commenting upon this storm, remarks that Shakespeare's first scenes are often symbolic of the rest of the play but that in *The Tempest* the

first scene "serves as a contrast, not as an initiation." On the contrary, it may be observed that in no other Shakespearean play is the first scene more completely or more appropriately symbolic of the play as a whole. The tempest in the natural sphere symbolizes the basic discord and confusion in the moral and political spheres. The title of the play refers not merely to the brief storm in the first scene but also to the greater tempest which is dealt with throughout the play.

In emphasizing the unreality of *The Tempest*, Strachey calls special attention to the fact that "two of the principal characters are frankly not human beings at all." Assuming that Ariel and Caliban are present chiefly because of their unnatural characteristics, he fails to see that their real function is to give extension to the chain of being by adding to the human order two supporting links from the superhuman and the subhuman. Ariel, associated with the finer elements, air and fire, represents not only the order of being above the human but also the finer qualities of man; he therefore stands for harmonious obedience to the natural order and is usually accompanied by music. Caliban, on the other hand, represents both the order of being below man and the coarser elements in human nature; associated with the lower elements, earth and water, and referred to as "tortoise" and "fish," he is disobedient to the natural order.

Another supernatural element commonly seen only as further evidence of the play's romantic character is the masque in the fourth act. The question is, does this masque have any function other than serving merely as an interesting interlude? Prospero says that his purpose in staging the magical show before Ferdinand and Miranda is to "bestow upon the eyes of this young couple some vanity of mine art"; but this display of Prospero's supernatural powers, when seen in relation to the rest of the play, has for us a deeper significance than that indicated by Prospero's statement. According to the stage direction, "Prospero starts suddenly" when he realizes that, in becoming unduly interested in his magic, he has "forgot that foul conspiracy of the beast Caliban and his confederates against my life." A moment's further delay might have proved disastrous. The masque illustrates, therefore, not merely Prospero's ability in the superhuman realm but also the great danger involved in such vanity, for he becomes so completely fascinated with his magic that he temporarily forgets matters of more immediate and more practical importance. Thus, the masque serves as a parallel to, or a re-enactment of, Prospero's original error, when he had become interested in secret studies of the spirit world to such an extent that he neglected his practical duties as ruler and allowed matters of state to get out of hand.

In no aspect of the play is the theme of inverted order more clearly or more cleverly presented than in Caliban's conspiracy to overthrow Prospero. Unmindful of the natural duty which the inferior link owes to its superior, Caliban is in constant revolt against his master, Prospero. But when he meets Stephano, who appeals to his lowest senses by giving him liquor, Caliban immediately accepts this person as his god:

> That's a brave god and bears celestial liquor;
> I will kneel to him.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> I'll show thee every fertil inch o' th' island;
> And I will kiss thy foot. I prithee, be my god.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> A plague upon that tyrant that I serve!
> I'll bear him no more sticks, but follow thee,
> Thou wondrous man.

He thus places the wise Prospero lower than the foot of a drunken butler, and Trinculo speaks less for himself than he does for Shakespeare and the Elizabethans when he observes that Caliban is "a most ridiculous monster, to make a wonder of a poor drunkard!"[2] By the end of the play, however, Caliban discovers the asinine ignorance of his error. To Prospero he now repents and pledges obedience:

> I'll be wise hereafter,
> And seek for grace. What a thrice-double ass
> Was I, to take this drunkard for a god,
> And worship this dull fool.

For the first time, Caliban is able to see things in their proper perspective and is willing to accept his natural position and support the other links in the chain.

All the other characters are likewise returned to their proper spheres of activity. Ariel, who had been imprisoned by Sycorax and later became a bond servant to Prospero, has now served out his specified term and is duly returned to his natural element, the air. Caliban is returned to his original position on the island—not taken to Naples, as Stephano had first intended. Stephano, who had recently attempted to instal himself as king of the isle, now admits in a pun that he would have been "a sore one" and becomes a butler again. The conversion of Sebastian is indicated by the fact that, whereas he had originally scorned miracles, he now admits that there are powers beyond the grasp of his realistic faculties.

[2] To be misled by Caliban's defense of his ownership of the island and his rebellious conduct toward Prospero and to see in the play "a discussion by Shakespeare of the relationships between the aborigines and their white conquerors" is to miss completely Shakespeare's real meaning and to display a type of sentimentalism of which Shakespeare and his Elizabethan contemporaries were not guilty.

Antonio is returned to his subordinate position under Prospero. Ferdinand, who has never attempted to interfere with the natural order and who, in contrast to Caliban, always recognizes and obeys superior powers, is "returned" to Miranda. Alonso resigns Prospero's dukedom to him, entreats his pardon, and will hereafter be a better king. And Prospero gladly gives up his superhuman powers in order to return to the strictly human sphere:

> this rough magic
> I here abjure.
> . . . . . .
> I'll break my staff,
> Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
> And, deeper than did ever plummet sound,
> I'll drown my book.
>
> *Now my charms are all o'erthrown,*
> *And what strength I have's mine own.*

At last, after much suffering for his original error, Prospero fully realizes that "the proper study of mankind is man" and not the spirit world. He is eager to return to that which is by nature his *own*. As duke of Milan, he will henceforth strive ever to be the best ruler and the best human being that he can. All the links in the chain of order have now been completely and correctly restored; the "calm seas" reflect the "unity and married calm of state," for each person has now found himself. As "the good old lord Gonzalo" so aptly summarizes:

> In one voyage
> Did Claribel her husband find at Tunis,
> And Ferdinand, her brother, found a wife
> Where he himself was lost; Prospero his dukedom
> In a poor isle; and all of us ourselves,
> When no man was his own.

The play itself is likewise an interesting paradox. On the surface apparently a romantic and unrealistic "poetical

dream" devoid of all meaning and common sense, *The Tempest* proves to be basically an extremely intellectual and realistic work, dealing with a group of characters who find themselves and become harmoniously readjusted by returning to their proper positions in the natural order.

The Philistines Like It

L. A. KING[1]

THE title, admittedly, is not immediately clear. By "philistines" a literature teacher like me would of course mean those unfortunate persons who have not chosen to major in literature but in some other subject such as chemistry or sociology or music. Their words and actions prove that they like it. *It* is a course in masterpieces of world literature invented and designed to bring philistines to like literature—and continue liking it and reading it for the rest of their natural lives.

The course was first tried in the early thirties, when general dissatisfaction was being expressed over the usual sophomore survey of English literature as a college requirement. A good many instructors felt that even for English majors the inclusion of minor figures of only historical interest was hardly stimulating and that the extensive arrays of fragments gave little real idea of the wholes from which they had been extracted.

It seemed obvious, moreover, that whatever dissatisfactions the majors in English might feel would be considerably multiplied in the nonmajors. The belief that too often the introductory courses in all departments were but the first steps in a rigid escalator structure intended to produce departmental specialists but not cultured human beings was also gaining support among educators. All these convictions I shared, and hence I began to build a course for nonmajors which would be sharply different from that for majors and which, I hoped, would leave them with favorable memories as well as credit toward the requirement.

As first constituted, the course leaned, it now seems to me, too heavily toward the enjoyment objective and was not so high in quality as it might have been. The books chosen, while recognizable as literature, did not raise the greater issues of life. I was not sure then that nonmajors would tolerate anything more difficult. But the students themselves began to protest against being considered capable of only "second-rate literature" and vowed that they could read as difficult material as the majors if only we would avoid literary technicalities. The content was accordingly made steadily heavier, even to the extent of raising the eyebrows of teachers of the conventional survey course. They declared the nonmajor course was more difficult than the majors would want. But the nonmajors do not object. Various types of books have been tried and various books within the types. One objective now prominent was not originally so highly valued as now. Student opinion has caused some modifications; books expected to be sure-fire successes proved duds. Other changes

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