Satire As a Social Force

By John M. Raines

Satire might well be called the stepchild of the arts. Although its spirit has always been present, and has at times manifested itself in all the arts—notably in poetry, painting, and music—it has to a greater or less degree been rejected by them all. Aristotle, who knew the thing although not the name, spoke of epic and tragic poetry as the product of the greater and nobler spirits, satire of the lesser. The Romans, proud to claim satire as all their own, none the less placed it rather low in the poetical hierarchy, and the greatest of their satirists laid no claim to genius; indignation, he said, had to serve instead to make his verse. In all the endless poetical theorizing of the Renaissance, satire certainly was awarded the least consideration; and even in the age of the Enlightenment, perhaps the most satirically gifted of all literary eras, utterances upon the theory of satire are few and scattered. Dryden's essay on satire is one of his weakest prose pieces, consisting mostly of a digest of preceding theories, with only a few, if invaluable, notes upon his own beliefs and practices. The great Romantics, although not wholly rejecting satire, with the exception of Byron certainly fought shy of it; and today the new criticism in its re-evaluation of imaginative art has ignored satire almost entirely.

The reasons for such neglect and hostility are not far to seek. Satire, by its very nature, infringes upon the province of criticism; and poets and critics have always been notoriously unfriendly. The poet is a noble fellow; he has always tried to make man forget for a moment his animal heritage and convince him that at times he may become only a little lower than the angels; whereas the satirist insists upon reminding him that he is often a great deal lower than the beasts. Further, the poet may at times soar so high as to overtop himself a little; and when he does, the satirist is apt to loose a shaft of wit and bring him tumbling back to earth. Thus, it must be distressing to a poet who has written such grandiosely sonorous lines as

> *Where their vast courts the mother waters keep,*
> *And undisturbed by moons, in silence sleep.*

to find them turning up in a satirist as

> *Where their vast courts the mother strumpets keep,*
> *And undisturbed by watch, in silence sleep.*

Critics are in general respecters of The Poet—though not, perhaps, of particular poets—and they resent seeing their idol so disrespectfully handled by one who is, like themselves, essentially a critic. Then, from both poet and critic comes the charge of the lack of that "high seriousness" apparently so essential to great poetry; and once this has been made the poor satirist, lying between two camps, comes under the fire of both. I shall, on the contrary, attempt to justify his existence: to show the conditions that summon him to activity, to characterize the methods which he uses, and to demonstrate his value to a society which having called him into being, often reviles or ignores him.

Poetry is a social art; that is, an art which has a relation to and a function to perform in the human world from which it springs. Of no department of poetry is this so true as it is of satire. One can perhaps imagine a poet, entirely detached from his contemporary world, writing solely to please himself and his God; but so situated, the satirist would starve for a topic. His method is critical, his milieu the contemporary scene, as it offers to him matter for praise or blame—principally blame. That society must be in a degree organized, to provide him with standards to adopt or reject, and it must be sufficiently free to allow him to speak. The writings of the first great satirist I know—the prophet Amos—provide an excellent illustration. When he said to the overfed, overdressed women of Israel,

> Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring and let us drink, the Lord GOD hath sworn by his holiness, that, lo, the days shall come upon you, that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fishhooks, and ye shall go out at the breeches, every cow at that which is before her,

he was applying a standard—that of his great discovery, ethical monotheism—to a corrupt and degenerate contemporary society which was for a moment so apalled by him as not immediately to silence him. The great prophets who followed him, both in time and largely in point of view, found satire a weapon indispensible to their armories. Social criticism and satire always go hand in hand.

Such evidence as we have indicates that among the Greeks satire originated in part as religious ritual and in part as social protest. Wandering bands of Dionysiac revelers, we are told, would serenade unpopular members of the community with highly abusive accounts of their shortcomings and misdoings, and in this process lay the germ of what is perhaps the greatest collection of satire the world has known, the Old Greek Comedy. How effective such abuse may have been we do not know; but some evidence may be gained from a parallel reported to me from modern China. My informant, a missionary girl, told me that the head of her mission, a fat, baldheaded man named Wilson, was unpopular with the native workmen because of the low wages he paid. Finally a group of them demanded more money. When their request was refused, they did not stop work, but began to sing, and their theme was, "Mr. Wilson's head resembles an electric-light bulb." This theme they elaborated throughout the day, and departed at night, still singing. The following day, they considered the physical characteristics of Mrs. Wilson, and my missionary friend implied that the terms in which they did so were not for her to tell to me. When on the next day they began to consider the peculiarities of his daughter, Mr. Wilson capitulated, and the wages were raised. We can at least hope that the early Greek protestants had equal success.

Whatever may be the indebtedness of satire to the wandering Dionysiac revelers, in the comedies of Aristophanes, Eupolis, and Cratinus, satire spoke with its greatest freedom and possibly with its greatest force. Men of impure lives, corrupt politicians, the great dictator Pericles himself, had to see themselves dragged out upon the stage in recognizable caricatures, and mercilessly exposed in the most abusive terms at the satirist's command. Poets, musicians, philosophers all shared in the punishment. Plato suggests that some of the prejudice against Socrates which ultimately resulted in his condemnation and death arose from the picture of him kept consistantly in the public eye by the comic poets. We know that several times restrictive legislation was passed against the great comic satirists; and when, in 404 B. C., Athenian civil liberty came to an end, so ended the great age of Greek satire. Thereafter, comedy had to confine itself to general and politically innocuous topics; when in the third century Alcaeus of Messene directed a satiric epigram against

Philip V of Macedonia, that talented monarch predicted in an epigram equally good what Alcaeus' fate was to be—the cross.

To the Romans belongs the distinction of recognizing satire as a type, and distinguishing it from comedy on the one hand and the lampoon on the other. But again the political conditions of the great age of Roman satire precluded its flourishing in greatest freedom. Both Horace and Juvenal assailed political and social corruption, but they did so in general terms; even Juvenal's horrifying picture of the decadent Rome of his day could give little offense in high quarters. And it is primarily from the work of the Roman satirist that the later conception of satire derives.

The Middle Ages were not very productive of satire, although the spirit was certainly present; Dante on occasion shows himself no mean satirist, and Chaucer in spite of his kindly detachment is capable of devastating derision. Especially toward the end of the period such anticlerical poems as *The Land of Cockayne* show great satiric force. But the next great outpouring of satire occured during the Renaissance. The Humanistic spirit, inspired by its Greek and Roman predecessors, poured forth scorn of its enemies in the true satiric manner. The works of Ragelais, Erasmus, and More increased the materials of satire and expanded satiric methods; narrative and dramatic elements appeared that looked forward to the satirists of the Eighteenth Century and of our own day.

In the period immediately succeeding the High Renaissance, the satiric spirit was still present; in Elizabethan England, for instance, it made itself felt both in the drama and in formal satire; but the age was mostly concerned with other things. During the period from 1660 to about 1750 English satire, and, I believe, that of the world, reached its culmination. In the early years the great names of Butler and Dryden, in the later those of Pope and Swift stand without rival in the history of the type. The reasons for this culmination are complex; two points are to me of chief significance. Never before or since, unless in fifth century Athens, has the social aspect of literature been so insisted upon, both by poets and critics; never before or since, unless in fifth century Athens, has there been such unrestricted freedom of speech. In fact, in many respects the conditions that made possible the Old Greek Comedy were duplicated, especially in the England of the Eighteenth Century. Libel laws were loose; vengeance from above might threaten a satirist, but it was rarely executed; and the occasional restrictive legislation that was passed could generally be evaded. Thus Pope could say, "A knave's a knave to me, in every state," and direct his satire with equal impartiality against George II, Sir Robert Walpole, and the miserable James Moore-Smythe; Swift could satirically oppose and defeat a cherished measure of the English government, and though often threatened, escape scot free. The range of Eighteenth Century satire was almost as wide as that of the Old Comedy, and its utterance was almost as free.

After the Eighteenth Century, English satire declined. The great Romantics, were, like the great Elizabethans, mainly interested in other things. Only Byron preserved something of the true satiric attitude; and he mingled it with sentimental and melodramatic elements that did it harm. In comfortable, middle-class Victorian England, the satirist had little to say; and what he said was little heard. One has to look to the Continent, chiefly to the great Heine, to find first-rate satire. Even the breakdown of ideals at the end of the century produced no clear satiric voices, possibly because all standards to which the satirist could appeal seemed to have passed away.

About the Author

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In our own century, there has been a great deal of satire of one sort or another; magazines, newspapers even the God-forgotten radio teem with political, religious, literary, and social satire; the libel laws, and notions of social decorum, however, largely deprive the satirist of effectiveness. Most of the satire intended for mass consumption is crude enough, although at times clever and effective, as in the comic strip *Li'l Abner*. The literary satirist has tended more and more to draw away from the great public; to publish his stuff in clever magazines of limited circulation, or to write it so that it can be comprehended only by the clever few. Such poets as Eliot, Pound, and Auden have strongly manifested the satiric spirit; indeed, Yeats has classified most of Eliot's early verse, including *The Wasteland,* as satire. Such satirists of course can reach no wide audience because of their allusive and elliptical technique. Most characteristic of the period is the use of prose fiction as a vehicle for satire; a union begun at least as early as Lucan and consummated by Swift. Current satiric fiction, however, makes less evident its satiric bent. None the less, the satirist in the novel and the short story has been most typical of the literature of the decades immediately behind us, from the icy vulgarities of Ring Lardner to the elegant fantasies of Evelyn Waugh.

Satire, throughout its history, has been characterized by the consistent use of a method which although steadily becoming more complex and subtle, is present in the most primitive, as well as in the most sophisticated, examples of the type. That method is indirection, coupled with the appeal to standards. A good illustration is provided by the passage from Amos quoted above. On the face of it, this is not very different from any prophetic "woe," and belongs, indeed, to a well-known type of oracle used several times before by Amos himself, and characterized by its opening, "Hear this word." The chief difference resides in the comparison of the Israelitish women to cows. Cattle of Bashan were notoriously sleek and fat, as were the pampered wives of the Israelites. The comparison is also degrading; so degrading as to appear almost laughable, in spite of Amos's intense earnestness. It is moreover sustained in the subsitution of the word "masters" for "husbands," presumably in the threat about "hooks," and certainly in the ending of the passage. Not only has Amos made direct threats against these women, but also he has done it in such a way as to make their fate, however horrible, not tragic and dignified, but disgusting and ridiculous.

Amos's procedure is that which I find typical of satirists of all ages. He has set

up a standard (the holiness of God) by which these women have been tried and failed; he proceeds indirectly (the comparison to cows; he never speaks of "women"); and he has chosen his comparison so as to degrade his subject. Later satirists were to proceed much farther in indirection; but the basic methods are here. Satire does not indeed disdain frontal attack; but it prefers the flanking movement.

This indirection finally develops into irony; irony sometimes so elusive and sustained as to raise legitimate doubts as to the satirist's meaning. It may be playful and light, like Pope's "And sleepless lovers, just at twelve, awake," or savage and horrifying, like Swift's "Yesterday I saw a woman flayed, and you cannot imagine how it altered her person for the worse"; it may be as simple and direct as calling good, bad, and bad, good, or so complicated as to be ironical irony, in which the writer assumes the ironical manner but is actually saying what he means. Yet it is nearly always there, and the more sophisticated the satire, the more frequent and sustained it is. Compare, for instance, Aristophanes' attack on the demagogue Cleon with Pope's on George II of England. Here is Aristophanes, in Rogers' admirable translation:

O villain, O shameless of heart, O Bawler and Brawler self-seeking,
The land, the Assembly, the Tolls, are all with thine impudence reeking,
And the Courts, and the actions at law; they are full unto loathing and hate!
Thou stirrest the mud to its depths, perturb-the whole of the State.
Ruffian, who hast deafened Athens with thine everlasting din,
Watching from the rocks the tribute, tunny-fashion, shoaling in.

This is pretty direct abuse; but some indirection is kept, for in the play from which it is taken Cleon is represented under the mask of a Paphlagonian slave, against whom this invective is leveled. Now let us compare Pope:

While you, great patron of Mankind! sustain
The balanced world, and open all the main;
Your country, chief, in arms abroad defend,
At home, with morals, arts, and laws amend:
How shall the muse from such a monarch steal
An hour, and not defraud the public weal?...
To thee, the world its present homage pays,
The harvest early, but mature the praise:
Great friend of liberty! in kings a name
Above all Greek, above all Roman fame:
Whose word is truth, as sacred and revered,
As Heaven's own oracles from altars heard.
Wonder of Kings! like whom, to mortal eyes
None e'er has risen, and none e'er shall rise.

On first reading it is hard to see why this pasage caused Pope's friends alarm for his personal safety. But there was reason for their fear. Pope had taken a panegyric on Augustus by Horace, who meant it quite seriously, and applied it to George II, to whom it obviously did not apply; in fact, all the qualities for which that monarch was praised he notoriously lacked. Finally, the comparison to Augustus in the allusion to Horace works to the king's discredit; it establishes in the reader's mind the standard of the genuinely great figure of Augustus, against which he sees the paltry one of George. Further than this, irony could hardly go.

What is the impulse that leads the satirist to use so systematically indirection and irony? It is in part self-protection; when Aristophanes satirized Cleon as the Paphlagonian slave he no doubt hoped to avoid unpleasing consequences to himself (a hope, by the way, that was not fulfilled); Swift's admirable M. B., hard-headed draper of Dublin, was a necessary protective mask; and the same is probably true, though to a less degree, of the egregious Lemuel Gulliver. The device is, however, so universal as to suggest that this explanation is not complete. Probably sheer love of mystification has something to do with it; and this love of mystery may spring from one of the main traits of the satirist—intellectual pride and scorn. The peculiar audience of irony has been characterized by Fowler as "The initiate"; in his irony and mystification the satirist is perhaps saying to his public, "Unto you (who think and feel as I do) it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand."

From metaphor, irony, and allegory, long basic methods of satire, the step is easy to myth and symbol. The taking of this step seems to be the principal difference between the satire of today and the satire of the past. *Gulliver's Travels* stands on the brink of becoming a novel and a myth, but never quite takes the plunge; Evelyn Waugh's *A Handful of Dust* takes it completely. Consider, for instance this passage, in which Waugh introduces his worthless heroine Brenda to her worthless lover John Beaver:

> Shafts of November sunshine streamed down from lancet and oriel, tinctured in green and gold, gules and azure by the emblazoned coats, broken by the leaded devices into countless points and patches of colored light. Brenda descended the great staircase step by step through alterations of dusk and rainbow. Both hands were occupied, holding to her breast a bag, a small hat, a half finished panel of petit-point embroidery and a vast disordered sheaf of Sunday newspapers, above which only her eyes and forehead appeared as though over a yashmak. Beaver emerged from the shadows below and stood at the foot of the stairs looking up at her.

In the structure of the novel this marks the beginning of the intrigue which is to bring ruin to Brenda's decent husband, Tony Last. Waugh, however, does not permit it to be merely a structural device. The varicolored light and shade through which Brenda swims into view come from the strained-glass windows of her husband's sham Gothic castle, and for the moment transform her into a heroine of romance. I do not believe that the suggestion of Madeline in *The Eve of St. Agnes* is unintentional:

A casement high and triple arched there was,
All garlanded with carven imageries . . .
And in the midst, 'mongst thousand heraldies,
And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings,
A shielded scutcheon blushed with blood of queens and kings.

Full on this casement shone the winter moon,
And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast.

Brenda, then, appears in the setting of a medieval saint or virgin, offering to her destined lover all that she is and has: a bag, a small hat, some half-finished embroidery, and the Sunday papers. But it is not only Brenda who thus offers herself to Beaver. It is modern woman, bringing what she has to give to modern man. And at the foot of the stairs stands Beaver, looking up, a sorry modern parody of the medieval knight or mystic, adoring his beloved.

Indeed, the very structure of this extraordinary novel is symbolic. The sham Gothic with which Tony shelters himself from the world; his flight from his shattered medieval dreams to look for a resplendent city along the primitive Amazon; his finding instead the horrible Mr. Todd and being condemned to a lifelong reading of Dickens; and the final conversion of his Gothic estate into a piggery, all combine into a mythical representation of the romantic idealist confronted by modern life that is almost insupportable.

We have now traced, however inadequately, the course of satire through the ages, and examined some of its favorite devices. What conclusions can we draw concerning its function and effects?

If the ages in which satire has chiefly flourished—fifth century Athens, Augustan and post-Augustan Rome, the end of the Middle Ages, the Eighteenth Century, and the present be examined, they are seen to have at least one trait in common. They were ages of apparent solidity and security, which seemed destined to endure forever, but which were in fact soon to pass away. The citizen of Athens in 430 B. C.

probably had no more notion that his city was within thirty years of its destruction than the American business man of the middle twenties had of what was to happen in 1929 and after. Yet in all these ages old standards were being swept away, old systems were disappearing. Out of such ages as these rose the voice of the satirist. He is generally a conservative, from the very nature of his art an upholder of standards, and his protest against their destruction is inevitable. Aristophanes inveighing against the sophists of Athens; Juvenal against the corruption of morals in Rome; Pope and Swift against the intellectualism of the eighteenth century; Mr. Waugh against the spiritual dryness of the twenties, may speak with different voices, but utter the same word. Even of the apparent exceptions this is largely true; the great satirists of the Renaissance were appealing against the medieval spirit to what they conceived to be the spirit of Eternal Greece and Rome; and the great French satirists of the Revolution to the eternal standards of right reason against the irrationality of their time.

What effect did these warning voices have? If we can judge by the facts of history, very little. In spite of Aristophanes, political and social corruption swept Athens to her doom; in spite of Juvenal, the Roman Empire went staggering on to her destruction; in spite of Swift, we have the airplane and the atomic bomb before we are morally ready to control them. The direct personal satirist may have some immediate effect, as we have seen in our illustration from modern China; at a more sophisticated level Pope by his *Dunciad* reduced to obscurity and poverty some twenty or thirty hack writers of the day, and also, unfortunately, some two or three who deserved a better fate; and Swift by his *Drapier's Letters* was able to defeat almost singlehanded an iniquitous scheme of the English government; but the flood of corrupt and tasteless writing which was Pope's real objective flowed on unchecked, until it has reached an unparalleled volume in our day, and the liberation of Ireland, which was Swift's purpose, was not to be achieved for nearly two hundred years after his death, and then only in suffering and bloodshed.

"Satire," wrote Swift, "is a sort of glass, wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's face but their own; which is the chief reason for that kind reception it meets in the world, and that so very few are offended with it." In these lines the great ironist put his finger upon the major weakness of satire. As long as the satirist names names, so that his meaning cannot be mistaken, his work may be of some immediate effect; but if he does this, his writings are ephemeral, doomed to pass away when the personalities that evoked them cease to be important to mankind. If by dealing with the general and universal he writes for posterity, his work may be remembered, but it will accomplish nothing.

Has the satirist, then, any function to perform, and is his work worthy of serious study? I believe that the answer to both questions is yes. He is in effect a tortured spirit, crying out against the folly and the unreason of man, which are transforming what might be a paradise into a hell. The emotions with which he works are anger and envy. If we define envy as the emotional realization of the disproportionate, and anger as its result, we can see that these are emotional states constantly troublesome to all of us, and that the satirist's favorite weapons of indirection and irony are admirably chosen to effect a catharsis. When Pope writes

> *Sooner let earth, air, sea, to Chaos fall,*
> *Men, monkeys, lapdogs, parrots, perish all!*

whole hosts of inequalities come tumbling down into their true proportion, and with their fall the anger of the reader passes off harmlessly into laughter.

The satirist is, moreover a firm believer in the moral responsibility of man. Some of our current satirists, delicate spirits like James Thurber and E. B. White, have abandoned this post, and in their tearfully playful little sketches represent their characters, who are themselves, as the innocent victims of a great machine against which it is futile to contend. This may be why their work, at first quite entertaining, after a few readings becomes faintly nauseating. "We are such good fellows," they complain, "and look how roughly this heartless, witless world is using us." The great satirist is of sterner stuff. It has been said that however the matter may look theoretically, man has to act on the assumption that his will is free; on this assumption the great satirist speaks. Although he may recognize that certain human beings are victims of circumstances beyond their control, he wastes no time railing against those circumstances, but looks for the men that cause them. Thus Swift, when he became aware of the incredible wretchedness of the people of Ireland, wasted no time in mere laments, but fixed the blame squarely where it belonged—on the greed of the absentee landlords and the leaders of the English government, and the supineness of the Irish. The satirist is our constant reminder of man's moral responsibility.

Finally, there is this to consider. Human *mores* do change, and occasionally for the better. One striking example, at least in the English speaking world, is the treatment of children. The enlightened Eighteenth Century, and much of the moral Nineteenth, was, to our eyes at least, unbelievably callous toward children. To realize this, one has only to look at Eighteenth-Century caricatures of the chimney sweep followed by his wretched little crew, or to read of the children condemned by the pious Nineteenth to spend their short lives pushing cars of coal through tunnels too small for men to enter. How did the change come about that? Not through any movement from below—no great social reform, I believe, has had such an origin—but from the efforts of a few dedicated spirits, willing to toil and suffer boundless contempt and scorn for their pains. Now in 1729 Jonathan Swift wrote an essay, "A Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of Ireland from Being a Burden to Their Parents or Country," an essay which has been read with horror and indignation by generations of readers—horror and indignation too often, alas, directed against the author rather than the horrors he describes. In it, Swift is not concerned with the lot of the chimney sweep or the child laboring in the mine, but of all children doomed, through the accident of their birth to

> such a perpetual scene of misfortunes as they have since gone through, by the oppression of landlords, the impossibility of paying rent without money or trade, the want of common sustenance, with neither house nor clothes to cover them from the inclemencies of the weather, and the most inevitable prospect of entailing the like or greater miseries upon their breed for ever.

With icy and irrefutable logic he demonstrates that the only possible means of making these children "sound, useful, members of the commonwealth" is to kill them at a year old and use them for food. As he concludes, he passes judgment upon other schemes, which, like this, combine good business with philanthropy, by making the business-like philanthropist who acts as his mask assert his good faith by denying that he expects to reap any profit from the scheme himself—his youngest child is nine years old, and his wife past childbearing.

When Swift wrote "A Modest Proposal" he was an old and embittered man. He, who thought of himself as "one who defended liberty to the height of his manly powers," had seen all his attempts defeated, his words fall upon deaf ears. All that was left for him was, to quote Herbert Davis,

> to carry the case before a higher court, to appeal to the conscience of mankind and bear witness before posterity, leaving them to answer his irony, and to decide in such a case—for there would be many others like it—what answer they would make to his modest proposal, what alternative they would have to suggest that he had overlooked.

Has posterity made any answer? At any

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believes his assignment has its importance and dignity, he likely can be counted upon to respond accordingly. The more I see of business establishments, the more I am inclined to believe that a principal cause of lack of enthusiasm, or even outright disloyalty, on the part of employees, lies in the failure of managers to let employees know that managers know their jobs are worth doing.

People must think their jobs important, but they must also believe that at least some other people think the jobs are important. I sometimes remark to personnel classes that if an individual gets up in the morning, looks himself in the bathroom mirror, any says with conviction, "You are no damn good," that man is in bad shape. And if he can add with equal conviction, "Nobody else thinks you are any good, either," he is in really bad shape. Few men have strength of character enough to resist the feeling among their associates, and particularly their employers, that their work is insignificant. Especially do I believe this to be true of the more intelligent and sensitive among our kind. And these are the more important people.

Opportunity for advancement is a relative matter. Not all men are possessed by a demon of aggressiveness and urge to dominance. Yet, each in his own way has a yearning for accomplishment and a desire for recognition by others.

Men find themselves continually torn between the urge to take a chance and the desire for security. There are those who seek the heady wine of adventure, and those content with the small beer of a regular existence. One must know the individual to say which spirit dominates him either generally or at a particular moment. Napoleon held out a lure to his followers of a marshal's baton in the knapsack of every private. But Napoleon was operating a "business" in which the spirit of wild opportunism ruled. Most commercial enterprises need a mixture of types, with the proportion of those influenced by an exceptional spirit of enterprise larger among the executives and lesser among the rank-and-file. And yet, if the whole organization is to maintain adequate vigor, an element of sturdy interest in opportunity must be present among the ranks as well as among the leaders.

Organizations which build for permanence, must usually stress the need for security, and tend to recruit, sometimes in excess, those to whom the factor of security is highly significant, Banking, in its very nature, falls under this category. Banks want "steady" employees, for the most part, not those of risk-taking temperament. The severe lessons of the 1920's and 1930's reinforce this lesson. And yet in banking there should always be a place for a chosen few with outstanding imaginative qualities, to leaven the lump.

Men vary in their ability to respond favorably to routine. Some find a safe refuge in the daily round of repetitive performance; others are less readily tamed by habit. And there are those who pass long periods in seeming contentment with their routine lot, only to break out in an expression of resentment often injurious to the interest of the organization. If we could only know accurately the whole personality of men, we could hope to place them in work reasonably well suited to their variety-monotony response pattern. Our success in this field still depends largely upon the astute summing up of individual personality by the executive mind.

My final point was that an assignment must be generally attractive to the individual, particularly wherever we deal with long-term assignments. Most of us can stand drudgery and uninteresting work if we have reason to believe the situation will change shortly in our favor. It is when we become convinced that we face an indefinite future of drudgery that we are impelled to break out of bonds.

You may believe that this point is highly theoretical and a typical observation from the academic ivory tower. Let me pose this simple question to you. How many people do you know, working for others, who face each working day with joyous anticipation? Does my very phrasing here seem ironical? There are degrees of difference in revulsion from the daily round of affairs, of course. But how many people do you know at any level who seem really content in their occupation? I am not referring here to the casual, half-humorous complaints with which all of us seek to relieve the pressures of life. Rather I am thinking of the moment when we confront our place in life and either in anger or resignation reflect that if we could, our feet would have trod other paths. Let me point out that the relative fluidity of our social order in America causes this consideration to be of more importance than is true where the weight of a more static social order tends to bind people to the wheel of life.

Even if you accept much of what I have said, perhaps you are wondering what the moral is. To my mind, the moral is that those organizations flourish best wherein the executives and supervisors recognize both the dangers and opportunities inherent in the use and manipulation of people. And this requires the employment of the art and practice, unfortunately not yet the science, of personnel management. It is the most demanding, the most difficult, yet in my estimation the most rewarding of human activities, to be able to so balance and apply the human factor that the managerial effort is crowned with success.

One of the most revolting terms with which I am familiar is "Human Engineering." People are not machines, as managers above all should know. Their reactions are always likely to contain the unpredictable. And yet, properly and sympathetically guided, reined in here and encouraged to move freely there, they are capable of rising to extraordinary heights of achievement, both as individuals and in teamwork. It is to move toward such accomplishment that managers are retained, that executives exist. And for this reason we cannot repeat too often the saying that "The mark of the superior executive being his ability to deal with people, the main burden of executive art and action lies in the field of personnel management."

Satire . . .

rate, children no longer labor in the mines and there is more official concern with the poor. This is perhaps the last hope of the satirist—that some day his collective utterance may serve as one of the forces that move mankind toward good.

The satirist is man's public conscience. This function he performs, not by extolling man's virtues, but by revealing his faults. He is the constant corrective to such complacent optimism as that of the noble lord who, objecting to the legal regulation of the employment of children by chimney sweeps, asserted that such matters could be safely left to the conscience of the most moral people on earth—the English. Man constantly tends to relapse into the beast; the satirist attempts to prevent that relapse by reminding him, in the ugliest terms, of his bestial heritage. Like the individual conscience, he is seldom heard; that is not to his discredit, but mankind's. We are now beginning to reap a whirlwind which is largely of our own, and our ancestors' sowing; Aristophanes and Swift saw very clearly of what that sowing consisted. Their words have fallen heretofore upon deaf ears; later generations may listen and be saved.

Milton Analized

The Poems of Mr. John Milton: the 1645 *Edition.* With essays in analysis by Cleanth Brooks and John Edward Hardy, has recently been published by Harcourt, Brace and Company. Mr. Hardy is an Instructor in English at the University.