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LEVELS OF MEANING IN LITERATURE

THE longer one has been familiar with a great work of literature, the more one's understanding of it grows. It would be hard to formulate a more elementary principle of literary experience. Its plain implication, that literature has different levels of meaning, was made the basis of a systematic development of criticism in the Middle Ages, and a precise scheme of four levels of meaning—the literal, the allegorical, the tropological or moral, and the anagogic—was worked out and adopted by many great medieval writers, notably Dante. Modern criticism has not only ignored this, but seems to regard the problem of meaning in literature as merely an offshoot of the corresponding semantic problem in current philosophy. In offering a few suggestions about the possibility of a modern restatement of the medieval theory, I propose to by-pass the philosophical questions involved, on the ground that the obvious place to start looking for a theory of literary meaning is in literature.

The First Level.

Let us start with the word "symbol," confining ourselves to verbal symbols. A symbol ordinarily implies at least two things, A, the symbol proper, and B, the thing represented or symbolized by it. With verbal symbols particularly, however, there seems to be a locus or path of signification which passes through a number of B's. The verbal symbol "cat" is a group of black marks on a page representing a noise with the mouth which represents an idea called up from experience of an animal that says meow. A verbal

symbol may be of any size: a word, a letter, a phrase, a sentence, or even larger word-groups may be symbols. The total verbal structure, the poem or the book, may be regarded also as a single symbol-complex. But whenever we attempt to answer the question, what does this symbol or symbol-complex symbolize? we find ourselves travelling a centrifugal path from the verbal structure to a realm of experience outside it.

We find this more difficult at some times than at others. It is easy enough to say, up to a point, what "cat" symbolizes, even what each of the three letters in it symbolizes. It is harder to say what the word "of" symbolizes, or the final letter of the word "lamb." Here we have to enlarge our unit of symbolism to give an intelligible answer, and in the process we become aware of another direction of meaning, a direction not centrifugal this time but centripetal, not running outward into experience but inward into the total meaning of the verbal structure. The word "of," we say, has not, like a noun, a direct one-to-one correspondence with a thing symbolized: one has first to relate it to other words. But it is clear that the same syntactic aspect of meaning is relevant even to nouns.

If a writer uses the word "cat," that verbal symbol represents, in addition to its centrifugal locus of meaning, a portion of the author's total intention in putting it there. Its meaning in the verbal structure cannot be understood without relating it to the structure as a whole. Nor can we ultimately interpose even the "author's intention" between the verbal symbol and the verbal structure, for the author's intention ceases to exist as a separate factor as soon as his verbal structure is fixed. Centripetally, then, the verbal symbol does not represent anything except its own place in the verbal structure. We said that the latter may also be regarded as a single symbol-complex. But from the centripetal point of view, in which the unit of symbolism is to be considered only in terms of its place in the total verbal structure, the total verbal structure itself does not "mean" anything except itself.

Most uses of the term "literal," whether medieval or modern, fail to make this distinction between the syntactic and the representative relations of a unit of symbolism. I do not understand the common assertion that the verbal symbol "cat" "means literally" a cat, the animal that says meow. It is surely obvious that the verbal symbol stands in a descriptive and representative relationship to actual cats. Dante says, in commenting on the verse in the Psalms, "When Israel came out of Egypt": "For should we consider the *letter* only, the exit of the children of Israel from Egypt in the time of Moses is what is signified to us." But an historical event cannot be literally anything but an historical event; a prose narrative describing it cannot be literally anything but a prose narrative. In taking his example from the Bible, Dante perhaps felt the necessity of making first of all a respectful genuflection to theological rationalism: in any case there is no such pseudo-literal basis to his own *Commedia.*

The literal level of meaning, though it takes precedence over all other meanings, lies outside the province of criticism. Understanding a verbal structure literally is the incommunicable act of total apprehension which precedes criticism. The preliminary effort to unite the symbols in a verbal structure, and the *Gestalt* perception of the unity of the structure which results, are the closest we can come to describing the literal level. Every genuine response to art, whether critically formulated or not, must begin in the same way, in a complete surrender of the mind and senses to the impact of the work of art as a whole. This occupies the same place in criticism that observation, the direct exposure of the mind to nature, has in the scientific method. "Every poem must necessarily be a perfect unity," says Blake: this, as the wording implies, is not a judgment of value on existing poems, but a definition of the hypothesis which every reader must adopt in first trying to comprehend even the most chaotic poem ever written. In the theory outlined at the end of Joyce's *Portrait*, the first of the three attributes of beauty, *integritas,* corresponds to our literal level.

The Second Level.

When we say that such a complex verbal structure has "meaning," we usually refer to the vast disordered tangle of centrifugal meanings running in all directions from its words and phrases. By the time we have apprehended the *integritas* or literal significance, we have recapitulated our whole education in centrifugal meaning, back to our earliest attempts to read. But after we have understood a verbal structure literally, we have then to relate it as a whole to the body of data which it represents.

This process introduces the conception "literary" to our discussion of verbal structures. Verbal structures which are not "literary" are primarily descriptions of facts or truths external to themselves. What interests, say, a scientist or an historian about words is their accuracy in reproducing scientific or historical data. But one of the most familiar phenomena in the "literary" group is the absence of this controlling aim of descriptive accuracy. We should prefer to feel that an historical dramatist was capable of reading and using his sources accurately, and would not alter them without good reason. But that such good reasons may exist in literature is not denied by anyone, although they seem to exist only there. Literature, poetry especially, may always be recognized by the negative test of the possibility of departing from facts. Hence the words denoting literary structure, "fable," "myth," and "fiction," have acquired a secondary sense of untruth, like the Norwegian word for poet, *digter*, which also means liar.

Sir Philip Sidney remarked that "the poet never affirmeth," and therefore cannot be said to lie. Literature presents, not an affirmation or repudiation of facts, but a series of hypothetical possibilities. The appearance of a ghost in *Hamlet* does not owe its dramatic appeal to the question whether ghosts exist or not, or whether Shakespeare or his audience thought they did. Shakespeare's only postulate is, "let there be a ghost in *Hamlet*." In this the poet resembles the mathematician rather than his verbal colleagues in history and science.

The relation of literature to factual verbal structures has to be established from within one of the latter. Literature must be approached centrifugally, from the outside, if we are to get any factual significance out of it. Thus an historian could learn much from a realistic novel written in the period he is studying, if he knows how to allow for its hypothetical structure. It would not do much violence to customary language to use the term "allegorical" for this whole descriptive level of meaning, and say, for instance, that a realistic novel was an allegory of the life of its time. In literary criticism itself, the second level of meaning allows the critic to employ himself in that routine but indispensable activity which the master-painters of the Renaissance assigned to their apprentices: the activity of filling in background. One begins talking about "Lycidas," for instance, by itemizing all the things that "Lycidas" illustrates in the non-literary verbal world: English history in 1637, the Church and Milton's view of it, the position of Milton as a young poet planning an epic and a political career, the literary convention of the pastoral elegy, Christian teachings on the subject of death and resurrection, and so on. It would be quite possible to spend a whole critical life in this allegorical limbo of background, without ever getting to the poem at all, or even feeling the need of doing so.

We do not ordinarily use the word allegory as we have just used it, however; we usually restrict it to the one exception to our rule that the relation of literature to fact must be established from outside literature. A writer is being explicitly allegorical when he himself indicates a continuous relationship of his central hypothetical structure to a set of external facts, or what he assumes to be facts. This continuous counterpoint between the saying and the centrifugal meaning is called allegory only when the relation is direct. If the relation is one of contrast, we call it irony. The purpose of allegory is to emphasize the connection of poetry with affirmative truth; the purpose of irony is to emphasize its withdrawal from it.

What position, then, does literature occupy in relation to factual verbal structures? We may get a hint here from another argument of Sidney, which follows a general Aristotelian line. Sidney suggests that poetry is a kind of synthesis of history and philosophy. History gives the example of the hero without the precept; philosophy the precept without the example, and poetry gives us the poetic image of the hero which combines the two. Or, as we may say, literature, being hypothetical, unites the temporal event with the idea in conceptual space. On one side, it develops a narrative interest which borders on history; on the other, a discursive interest which borders on philosophy, and in between them is its central interest of imagery.

We may thus distinguish three main rhythms of literature and three main areas of it, one in which narrative controls the rhythm, one in which a discursive interest controls it, and a central area in which the image controls it. This central area is the area of poetry; the parietal ones belong to prose, which is used for both hypothetical and descriptive purposes. If we look at the word image closely, we shall see that it really means symbol in its centripetal aspect, so that imagery in this sense is figuration, the arranging and patterning of verbal symbols. In medieval and Renaissance times this formed part of the study of rhetoric, and so we may attempt a tentative definition of poetry as the form of verbal expression which is organized on rhetorical principles. Of these the chief is of course recurrent metre; the auxiliary principles, alliteration, rhyme, quantity or parallelism, are also rhetorical schemata. A commoner word for rhetorical figuration is style, but this word is too often used merely as a metaphor for the inscrutable mystery of genius.

It would be surprising to find any sharp boundary separating narrative prose from history or discursive prose from philosophy. We can only say that whatever is clearly hypothetical is clearly literary. On the discursive side, the question arises whether the whole section of philosophy called "metaphysics" should be an-

nexed to literature. The logical positivists claim that metaphysical systems are not descriptive of anything, but are hypothetical verbal structures depending for their integrity on propositions which are neither true nor false. A literary critic would certainly lose no respect for metaphysics if all this were true. And even if it is not, one has only to refer to Plato's dialogues to show how useless any patented formula of classification would be.

In any case we may isolate prose fiction as the form of prose which is organized on narrative principles, discursive prose being based rather on the proposition as its rhythmic unit. One may note in the history of discursive writing a recurring effort to isolate the propositional rhythm. Hence we have the aphorisms of Bacon, the quasi-Euclidean form of Spinoza's *Ethics*, the thesis form of scholasticism, and, more recently, the tabulated aphorisms of Wittgenstein. As a rule such attempts defeat their original purpose by giving the reader the impression of a rhetorical device. Nevertheless, the organizing rhythm of discursive writing is logical rather than rhetorical. As for narrative prose, it is clear that we cannot restrict the conception of narrative to the gross events: the basis of narrative is the temporal order of symbols; in particular, the word-order which is the movement of literature. We may, then, suggest a link between narrative and grammar which would enable us to associate our three areas of literature with the three areas of the trivium into which the study of literature was formerly divided. It goes without saying, of course, that all three literary elements are simultaneously present in all literary works.

Thus we may see how, for instance, a strong narrative or didactic interest in poetry tends to infuse poetry with the word-order of prose; and, conversely, how euphuism or elaborately figured prose tends to become "poetic." Criticism was late in understanding the importance of prose, and the subject is bedeviled by two linguistic difficulties. "Prosaic" is not, as it ought to be, the exact equivalent of "poetic"; and there is no short word corresponding to "poem" for a literary work in prose, nor for a literary

work in general: hence the use of such periphrastic cacophony as "hypothetical verbal structure" in the present article. Much more could be said on these points, but the general shape of the second level, or the external relations of literature with other verbal disciplines, should by now be clear enough.

The Third Level.

The composing of a factual verbal structure is a "critical" operation; the composing of a hypothetical structure is a "creative" one, not that the two are ever separable. If there are three general aspects of hypothetical writing and a single creative process, we may best study the latter at the joining points of grammar and logic, of grammar and rhetoric, and of rhetoric and logic. The link between grammar and logic is generally recognized: we need only refer to Aristotle's subject and predicate, and the metaphysical structures based on the fact that the verb *to be* implies both existence and identity. Again, a factual verbal structure cannot be descriptively correct unless it is verbally correct, and the accuracy of one's meaning is inseparable from the order of one's words. But this road is under construction: it is the other two that need surveying.

The link between grammar and rhetoric appears to be a subconscious paronomasia, or free association among words, from which there arise not only semantic connections, but the more arbitrary resemblances in sound out of which the schemata of rhyme and assonance evolve. *Finnegans Wake* is an attempt to write a whole book on this level, and it draws heavily on the researches of Freud and Jung into subconscious verbal association. Uncontrolled association is often a literary way of representing insanity, and Smart's *Jubilate Agno,* which is usually considered a mentally unbalanced poem, shows the creative process in an interesting formative stage:

> For the power of some animal is predominant in every language.
> For the power and spirit of a CAT is in the Greek.

> The sound of a cat is in the most useful preposition
> *Kat' euchen.* . . .
> For the Mouse (Mus) prevails in the Latin.
> For edi-mus, bibi-mus, vivi-mus — ore-mus. . .
> For two creatures the Bull & the Dog prevail in the English,
> For all the words ending in ble are in the creature.
> Invisi-ble, Incomprehensi-ble, ineffa-ble, A-ble. . .
> For there are many words under Bull. . .
> For Brook is under Bull. God be gracious to Lord Bolinbroke.

It is possible that similar sputters and sparks of the fusing intellect take place in all poetic thinking. The puns in this passage impress the reader as both outrageous and humorous, which is consistent with Freud's view of wit as the escape of impulse from the control of the censor. In creation the impulse appears to be the creative energy itself, and the censor the force which adapts that impulse to outward expression, a force which might be called the "plausibility-principle."

The final cause of all this paronomasia is the single interlocking verbal structure which is the literal work of art. When this has been developed to the point at which the author's consciousness would normally accept it, it is still easy to see the links that hold it together. All symbols in a verbal structure are, to use a term now well established in criticism, ambiguous, both in sound and in meaning. The factual verbal structure reduces this ambiguity in two ways: first, by establishing a literal meaning, or context, and second, by aligning the verbal symbols with the things they describe. The hypothetical structure has deliberately discarded the latter: hence a poet's words, for instance, are limited in their meaning by the context alone, and thus preserve a good deal of their original variety of connotation. The repetition of a word in poetry does not necessarily involve a repetition of the same meaning, for the context may be different. Pope's *Essay on Criticism* uses the word "wit" in nine or ten different senses. If Pope's emphasis were on centrifugal or descriptive meaning, such a semantic theme with variations could produce nothing but inextricable muddle. But in a poem the different senses all help to build

up the word "wit" as a linguistic network of connotative meaning. The poet, in short, does not equate a word with a meaning: he establishes the powers or functions of words.

As for assonance, there is clearly room in semantics for a renewed study of what may be called rhetorical etymology, the verbal associations that underlie thinking. The original is always the unexpected, and the dialogue of Plato's that seems to me most prophetic of new developments in thought is the one that is generally regarded as an irresponsible *jeu d'esprit.* I refer to the *Cratylus*, which is clearly concerned with the relation between thought and verbal association. Free play with words passed itself off for centuries as real etymology, and when the latter was developed the former came to be regarded as fantastic nonsense. So it is from one point of view, but it still remains a datum for literary critics of inescapable importance.

The link between rhetoric and logic, between the image and the concept, is in the diagrammatic structures underneath our thoughts, which appear in the spatial metaphors we use. "Beside," "on the other hand," "upon," "outside": nobody could connect thoughts at all without such words, yet every one is a geometrical image, and suggests that every concept has its graphic formula. I do not know that psychology has seriously examined the way in which the arrangement of ideas in thinking is revealed in the images unconsciously employed to illustrate it; and of course literary critics are only just beginning to realize that the figures, illustrations, analogies and epithets — in short, the rhetoric — of discursive writing form an essential part of its meaning. But surely if someone says that science needs to be complemented by poetry or religion or personal emotion because it is a mere cold and dry approach to experience — a very common type of observation — he implies that his contrasting principle is warm and moist, and hence the old myth of the four elements of chaos, or perhaps an archaic creation myth like the one in the second chapter of Genesis, is the graphic formula of his argument.

Further study along such lines would tend, not to minimize or obliterate the distinction between hypothetical and factual writing, but to show how the literary or creative process makes factual verbal structures possible, in the same way that the hypothetical structures of mathematics make the natural sciences possible. And if the literary critic once understands the ambiguous nature of literal verbal meaning, he need never again be caught in the rat-trap of identifying all meaning with descriptive meaning. As descriptive meaning is objective and intelligible, literature, in terms of this theory, must be either meaningless or descriptive of something subjective or emotional — suggestive or evocative of it, rather, as the subjective is too vague to be described. This implies that literature is an elaboration of the lyrical *cri de coeur*, and implies many other things which the critic well knows to be absurd.

The establishing of the powers of words in literature takes us much further than a mere recognition of ambiguity. The understanding of metaphysics seems to depend on a technique of meditation based on the connotative aspect of meaning. One normally starts with a key word or concept, nature in Aristotle, form in Plato, noumenon in Kant, duration in Bergson, and considers the term in its centripetal relationships. The same is even more obviously true of theology. This power of comprehension is, of course, transferable and expansive: we may pass from one philosophical structure to another until we become aware of a larger verbal form called philosophy. The key words, nature, form, substance, time, being and the rest, thus expand into conceptual archetypes, the linguistic elements or principles of this larger verbal form. The same thing happens with images. All criticism of poetry that gets beyond the second level of "background" begins with structural analysis, which identifies the recurring symbols and themes in the verbal structure, and separates them into their elements: this is the *consonantia* stage of Joyce's theory. But these elements are the elements of literature as a whole, and are not

confined to the structure in which they appear. Structural analysis thus expands into functional analysis. Moby Dick cannot remain within Melville's novel: he is bound to be incorporated into our total verbal experience of leviathans and dragons of the deep from the Old Testament onward. This is not a mere process of association: the associations consolidate into archetypes of imagery. The archetypal features of narrative are of equal importance, and may be perceived in the different types of resolution: the quest-resolution of romance, the festival-resolution of comedy, the death-resolution of tragedy.

This conception of archetypes is based on the fact that literary education is possible, and that the understanding of individual works of art does expand into an understanding of literature as a whole. Individual works of art lose nothing of their individuality when we realize that they are not a series of bottled feelings, to be uncorked and resmelt like perfumes. The person who has attained a mature understanding of literature, beyond both dilettantism and pedantry, understands it archetypally, whether he himself realizes this or not. I add this last clause because of certain features in modern literature that have, until very recently, discouraged critics from trying to understand it on the third level. One of these is the law of copyright, which prevents a writer from using another man's work as the basis of his own, as Chaucer did. This, by exaggerating the uniqueness of the work of art, has developed a criticism of connoisseurship, which talks less about literature than about the pleasures of possessing books. Hence a division grows between the creative and the critical functions which could hardly get started in an age which understood the real meaning of literary convention.

The importance of convention in literature is in facilitating the comprehension of it on the archetypal level. For instance, when Milton sat down to write a poem in memory of a friend of his named Edward King, the question he asked himself was not, "What can I find to say about Edward King?" but, "How do the

conventions and traditions of poetry demand that this sort of situation should be handled?" Poetry demands, as Milton saw it, that the elements of his theme should be assimilated to their archetypes. Edward King is, first, a dead man, who according to Christian doctrine will rise again. Hence the poem will not be about King, but about his archetype, Adonis, the dying and rising god, called Lycidas in Milton's poem. This archetype prescribes the convention of the pastoral elegy, which historically developed out of the Adonis lament. King was also a poet and a priest, and is thus similarly linked with the appropriate archetypes Orpheus and Peter. All of these are contained in the figure of Christ, the archetype of King as an immortal soul. The poem urgently demands the kind of criticism that will absorb it into the study of literature as a whole, and this critical activity is expected to begin immediately, with the cultivated reader. This gives us a situation more like that of mathematics or science today, where the work of creative genius is critically assimilated to the whole subject so quickly that one hardly notices the difference between the two kinds of activity. An even closer connection between creation and criticism may be seen in Dante's *Convivio*.

The tropological level, therefore, is the archetypal level, or the mythical level, for I do not see any way of distinguishing archetype in this sense from myth. In all the kicking around that this latter term has had in current criticism, one may notice, as usual, three main types of what are generally called myths: the narrative myth (creation myth, death and resurrection myth), the image myth, including the myth of the god, or archetypal human character, and the conceptual myth. But the third level is traditionally the moral level as well, and we may inquire here what sense can be given to this word in criticism.

There is clearly no use looking for direct correlations of aesthetic and ethical standards: one of the first laws of literature is that morally the lion lies down with the lamb. Bunyan and Rochester, Jane Austen and Huysmans, Shakespeare's sublimity and

Shakespeare's obscenity, all belong together. Morality, like truth, is not *within* literature at all, and to derive moral values from it we must again approach it from outside. So far from being "moral" in any direct sense, the moral value of art seems actually to have something to do with the breaking down of customary moral reactions. This arises from the very nature of art as hypothetical. Morality is constantly tending to incorporate itself in a series of implied or expressed affirmations. But as soon as morality has decided one thing, the poet is apt to hypothesize another; and, as with truth, the affirmation limits, and the hypothesis seems to have something to do with emancipation or deliverance from the affirmation even if we believe the affirmation to be true or good.

The moral value of art is connected with the fact that it forms part of a "liberal" education, and the axiom underlying a liberal education is that something does get liberated, even from the knowledge of good and evil. This something is not the liberating of the individual from the social imperatives of truth and goodness, but his introduction into the free world of verbal hypothesis. If we compare tragedy in art with suffering in life, for instance, we can see that the containing hypothetical form of the art makes tragedy pleasurable, even when there is no denial whatsoever of the reality of suffering. Liberation here is not escape, but an increase of intelligibility, a release of the powers of words.

The moral level is the social level, for it is by virtue of its archetypes or myths that the work of art becomes the focus of a community. Factual verbal structures help to emancipate the human mind from the pragmatic and compulsory rituals of animal existence by giving it a conscious vision of what it has to do and see. Literature takes its place in a second effort of emancipation, which gives man a vision of the total range of his creative powers, and of his own world in relation to that total power. We express one-third of the freedom of this vision, in which all the delight and instruction of art are fulfilled, when we speak of freedom of thought.

The Fourth Level.

It is a simple axiom in the sciences that a "new" discovery merely articulates what was already latent in the order of nature. What we have just said should illustrate something of the vulgarity of the notion that a poet sits down with some blank paper and produces a new poem in a special act of creation *ex nihilo.* The poet's new poem merely articulates what was already latent in the order of words, and the assumption of a single order of words is as fundamental to the poet as the assumption of a single order of nature is to the natural scientist. The difficulty in understanding this point arises from the confusion of language with dictionary language, and of literature with the bibliography of literature. Language in a human mind is not a list of words with their customary meanings attached, but a single interlocking structure, one's total power of expressing oneself. Literature is the objective counterpart of this, a total form of verbal expression which is recreated in miniature whenever a new poem is written. Literary education, which assimilates separate works into archetypes or myths, leads us toward an intuition of this total form. And just as physics can be looked at from one point of view as a set of inferences from the assumption of a physical universe, so literature may similarly be regarded as a set of inferences from the assumption of a verbal universe. This verbal universe is that total vision of creative power which we met at the end of the third level, and which is not a diffused but a single vision, and to which every work of literature in the world owes everything it has of wonder and of glory.

The assumption in the word "universe," whether applied to physics or to literature, is not that these subjects are descriptive of total existence, but simply that they are in themselves totally intelligible. No one can know the whole of physics at once, but physics would not be a coherent subject unless this were theoretically possible. The argument of Aristotle's *Physics,* which treats physics as the study of motion in nature, leads inexorably to the

conception of an unmoved mover at the circumference of the world. In itself this is merely the postulate that the total form of physics is the physical universe. If Christian theology takes physics to be descriptive of an ultra-physical reality or activity, and proceeds to identify this unmoved first mover with an existent God, that is the business of Christian theology: physics as physics will be unaffected by it. The assumption of a verbal universe similarly leads to the conception of an unspeakable first word at its circumference. This in itself is merely the postulate that literature is totally intelligible. If Christian theology identifies this first word with the Word of God or person of Christ, and says that the vision of total human creative power is divine as well as human, the literary critic, as such, is not concerned either to support or to refute the identification.

In Dante's day the case was different. The whole idea of four levels had originally come from theology, and had been worked out in connection with the link between the Word of God and the Bible. For Dante, therefore, the anagogic level of total intelligibility was identical with the unfallen world of Christianity. Even Sidney, when he says "nature's world is brazen; the poets only deliver a golden," is probably thinking of two existent worlds, as he obviously does not mean that poetry gilds nature. In our own day, when Joyce speaks of the final *claritas* or intuition of the total form of art, he uses the theological term "epiphany," though without committing himself to the theological affirmations involved.

Still, the religious annexation of the anagogic level of literature is a historical fact. For us the immediate problem is to study the archetypes or myths of literature as parts of a whole, which we can hardly do without the help of the integrations of myth which have been made in the higher religions and incorporated in their scriptures and sacred books. Thus the Bible becomes, for the literary critic, an example of the literary form of the scriptures, which unites narrative myths (creation, redemption, etc.), image-myths (the city, the garden, the personal God) and conceptual myths.

The study of scripture as a certain type of hypothetical verbal structure would give point and direction to the current interest in myths and archetypes, which latter, it should be said, cannot be studied as separable content, but only as part of an analysis of literary form. This in turn would give point and direction to the allegorical criticism which is the main concern of the learned journals. And while the final insights into literature are unspeakable, and the fourth level is perhaps, like the first, largely outside the direct scope of criticism, the climbing of this four-storey mountain of meaning does not lead simply to an *O altitudo!* but to a panoramic view of the surrounding fields of cultivation.