

THE SHOE THIEF AND CORONA

“The Shoe Thief” is my latest play. I wrote it before the corona virus began. At that time it was still possible to understand.

An Afterword to “ The Shoe Thief “ 25 3 20

There are two forms of reality. One is human reality. It results from consciousness. The other is pre-human reality, nature – in the rest of this Afterword that form will be called Nature. We know Nature only through consciousness – in this Afterword that form of reality will be called Reality and sometimes Human Reality. Our existence depends on the relation between the two realities, Human Reality and Nature. They are essentially different. Only drama and death can penetrate the relation between the two. In drama Reality has the implacability of Nature. Drama makes the relation creative, consequential and logical. In drama (not theatre) this is enactment. All the subtleties of existence are in drama.

There is no reality outside Human Reality and Nature. A third reality would be supernatural. It is sometimes seen as the origin of morality. Morality is a human imperative invoked in the neonate monad, the new born child. It is the human imperative. Drama explores the paradox that we may sometimes break the imperative. All this is an eighteenth-century problem of Kant, Leibnitz and Hume. Roughly, Kant thought there was an alternative world, a prime reality, beyond ours but it was totally unknowable by us. Roughly again, Leibnitz thought that reality existed only in God and that all eternity was determined from its beginning. Hume was a Scots sceptic. Only drama can resolve the problem of the two forms of reality. Curiously the resolution combines Kant and Leibnitz and drama inverts scepticism as imagination made real and that is enactment.

We relate Human Reality and Nature in order to survive. In the Enlightenment Nature became better understood. (Bacon, Galileo, Newton.) Our power to use Nature increased. Later the Industrial Revolution greatly increased that power. Human reality exists only through our consciousness. Nature has no consciousness. (Animal pre-human consciousness is not consciousness of Reality. Pre-human animals may be aware but not conscious of self and its responsibilities.) We change Nature to supply our needs but nature remains immured in its own reality. Human purpose shapes our relation to Nature but Nature remains bound within its own reality. It is as if Nature and Humans were in two different worlds. Humans are mere lodgers, leasehold not freehold. Nature is indifferent to our needs. Industrialisation produces climate and territory change. Nature is indifferent to the changes. Nature has no purpose, no

intention. It is not creative. Evolution proceeds through accidents. The accident is perfected function. Nothing can go wrong in nature or be added to or taken away from it. Nature preceded human beings and at that time it reacted only to, within, its self (reaction 1.) Now it automatically reacts also to our use of it. The two ways of reaction inter-react. Climate degeneration is Nature's reaction 2 to Human action on Nature. Coronavirus is another reaction reaction 2 to Human action on nature. Both the climate change and Coronavirus might have been autonomous actions in Nature (reaction 1) before there were humans. But now it is certain that both are reaction 2 in Nature. That is, climate degeneration and Coronavirus may be seen as symptoms of the same cause. Humans will of course seek to create a cure to both symptoms. But a cure of Coronavirus will provoke reaction 2 in Nature. The Human effects of the cure might in time – a second, a day or an age -- be more harmful than the disease. It is not that Nature seeks to protect itself from the cure. It is just the logic of reality. In Nature there is no vacuum, intention or purpose. Nature consists of matter and accidents. Together they are the logic of Nature and of Reality. If it were otherwise it could be that the hammer sought to fall on the toe in order to cause it pain. But Nature does not make bombs, they are made by Human ingenuity, consciousness. We have no absolute control over nature. That is the limitation of Utopias. All civilizations end in the “accidental” of Nature. The reason is not psychological or social. It is the law of the two realities. Between Nature and Human Reality there is a gap. Nature is our greatest benefactor, the gap provides us with utility. The gap is a vacuum that is crammed with everything. It is another place but not the one Kant imagined. The gap is the cradle of death, death lives and thrives in the cradle. The danger of Modernity is that we have not learnt to live with Nature. We pillage it and treat it as a holiday racetrack. If we don't learn now to live with Nature our species will die. The solution to the problem is not science, manufacture or even more consumption. It is politics.

All purposeful and most un-purposeful human involvement with nature requires work. The Industrial Revolution created a new working class, the proletariat. The proletariat's economic structure, its means of existence, were destroyed by the new industrialism. Socially the Capitalists became the owners of serfs. This was not the naked slavery of imperialism. The serfs' work is more complex than that of slaves. To retain the serfs' co-operation the Owners must share with them a portion of the profit the serfs make. This is the wage. Partly to compensate the Owner for this sharing, but also because Industrialism increased its scope and mechanical specialisation, the Owner became more dependent on the serfs, and so the serfs share of the product had to be increased to maintain their consent or at least compliance. In effect the serfs worked in order to maintain serfdom. It is a wound at the bottom of class war. Ideology grotesquely seeks to hide the wound. Industrialism continued to increase its product by becoming more

complex. Consequently the serfs work became more complex and greater part of the increased profits had to go to them. The human relationship copied that between Human Reality and Nature. In time this had dangerous consequences. It was as if Nature and Human Reality changed their places.

The relationship of workers and Owners constantly threatened the Owner's profits, their share of the product. On top of this there was the competition between Owners. It could not be completely contained by the Owners' conspiracies amongst themselves and against the serfs. The Owners were not motivated by paternalism but by profit. These changes constantly threatened the Owners' profit and their ability to invest more of it into their industry to increase their profits. This was an inevitable consequence of the class relations, but it also expressed the more fundamental relations of Human Reality and Nature which gives our species its identity. The simmering panic led to the creation of the Finance Industry. The Finance Industry (a subsection of Capitalism) is run by humans but according to the laws of Nature not creativity. Its mechanism is that of nature, not creativity but accident. It is as if Finance were run not by people but by their shadows. Bad art does not destroy good art but accidents destroy creation. There were now two accidents. Those of Nature and those of Finance-Capitalism. The working of Nature is the first accident, Capitalism itself is the second. It works through accidents not just in economic collapses, slumps and so on, but more insidiously in unforeseen distortions in Human culture. Capitalism not only controls the economic system, it forms the culture through which the system exists. The system was originally maintained by the Owners sharing some of the products with the workers. It was an early form of Consumption. The Finance Industry (which proceeds by accidents) provided excesses that destroyed the Human Culture based on creativity. In its place it put bloated Consumption. It is as if it would be what happened in Nature if reaction 2 became reaction 1. As a result Human creativity is replaced by bloated Consumption. Capitalism plunders the earth, distorts reality, not only to increase its profits but to control and seduce the former proletariat that is now the consuming class. It destroys the human imperative in Human Reality and its culture and sells the remnants on the consumer market. It sells back to the consumers the remnants of their own Humanity, so that Humanness becomes a spectre of itself. Instead of Nature being the raw product of industry, the workers' humanness becomes the raw material of Capitalism. It is a double accident that exceeds the accidents of Nature. Ultimately the cure for Coronavirus will become a source of profit. The whole of human culture has become the Entertainment Industry (EI.) The double accident and the culture of the EI have produced the Coronavirus.

Material production is governed by the relation between Human Reality and Nature.

For good or bad it must conform to the logic of the relationship. The Finance Industry gave the Financiers the power of God. The definition of a God who produces not miracles but accidents is the Devil. The Coronavirus is a disease of Capitalism.

I have described the state of our present life theoretically. It can be put in an image.

A fairground roundabout. Painted wooden horses go round and round on the roundabout. This is the first human societies. The passengers on the horses look ahead. They believe they and the horses drive the roundabout. Their belief is confirmed by their own daily labour on land and in forests. They can't see the engine in the middle that drives the roundabout. In the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution bicycles replace the painted horses. The pedallers know how bikes work because they make them in industrial workshops. They look ahead and don't see that the wheels don't touch the ground or see the engine that drives the roundabout. The engine is nature. Perhaps in time Capitalism will replace the pedallers with robots.

The accident in Capitalism and the accidental in Nature combine. The double accident drives society faster. This causes climate degeneration and Coronavirus. The figures in the daily media reports of the state of the stock exchange are the temperature of the diseased. As the roundabout goes faster the figures will be replaced by the number of dead. When the roundabout breaks the catastrophe will scatter the pieces beyond recovery.

Our society is held together not by culture but by bloated Consumption. We ride the roundabout, disgrace reason, abuse knowledge and corrupt morality. The whole culture and its social life have been turned into the Entertainment Industry, the EI. We don't live in a democracy but in a Capitalist oligarchy. A few years ago Trump and Johnson would not have got political power. It would have been unthinkable. They have succeeded in getting it because the double accident and the culture of EI turn the seriousness, gravity and sometimes tragedy of politics, into farce. Trump and Johnson are stand-up comedians without a sense of humour. Trump can deceive others because he first deceived himself. He judges the state of his country and civilisation by the state of the stock exchange. Johnson's first act as prime minister was a budget to accelerate the excesses that led to the crisis. Now he says the crisis will soon be over and boasts that he will soon get the economy roaring ahead again. You can hear the chaos in his head in the shape of his speech patterns. They are the sound of an accident.

What will follow after Trump and Johnson? The wisps of Fascism are already in the

air. In Hitler's Germany, if you were imprisoned for not being a good Nazi then the cost of housing and feeding you in prison, your guards' wages, your torturer's wages, the cost of your trial, and the wages of the hangman who hangs you, were totted up in an invoice sent to your spouse or children for payment. That is an ultimate image of the human accident. Coronaviruses' victims pay the invoice of Capitalism.

The solution of the problem is simple. It is a just democracy. No multi-billionaires and food banks for hungry children who salt their food with tears. It is difficult to create democracy because we do not even try to.

Our theatre is as paralysed as the rest of the Entertainment culture. We have good dramatists who write good plays about bad social wrongs. But their plays become anecdotes – as if you took a cooling drink to victims dying in a burning tower. That is because our theatre doesn't have the knowledge or creative craft and skills to stage them. Ironically in the Entertainment Industry many of their plays are performed in pubs.

This Afterword is not about the characters and incidents in "Shoe." Instead of story I have put gaps in the play where the story usually is. In the Entertainment Industry stories are ideological distortions. But all the parts of our problem are in the play.
