

## PLOYS OF THE MIND

*The Freedom of the Imagination*

Human beings have an evident propensity, and certainly a remarkable capacity, for conceiving things otherwise than as factually they are. As an example of this there springs to the mind the little girl with a doll. We know it, and she surely also knows it, for the bundle of rags that in fact it is. Yet her treatment of it is not just an exercise in conscious make-believe. If playing is a matter of pretending things, then she is not merely playing with her doll. There is a factor more aptly referred to as fantasy than as play, a matter of feeling and 'imaging' things rather than of doing things. It would seem in short that the interpretation put by the child on the situation in which she finds herself is the resultant of an interplay between two analytically independent elements: the evidence of her eyes, and the promptings of her instincts. 'Throwing herself', as we might say, into her part as mother, she both knows and discounts the truth of the matter, namely, that she indeed is deliberately throwing herself into a part. One has only to reflect upon the ever-fluid, non-logical and composite character of one's internal vision of any emotionally potent facet of reality on which one permits one's mind unhurriedly to dwell, to acknowledge that if one's rambling thoughts remain at all attached to the relatively unchanging 'given', it is only by a very elastic string. Though it may well be that Freud's analysis of our thinking in terms of the dichotomy pleasure principle-reality principle should be accepted only for what it is worth as the oversimplification that it rather obviously is, this analysis does at least serve to remind us that it is not by the reality principle only that we naturally tend to be guided in our conceiving of the real. We do indeed have a remarkable capacity for conceiving things otherwise than as to our knowledge they undoubtedly are.

Why does the child hang up his Xmas stocking? Because he thinks Santa Claus is coming? Possibly—but not necessarily. Why then? Because in the official theory of the occasion Santa Claus is *supposed* to be coming. Factually he is perhaps not even expected. But notionally.

Or take the gracious practice of deeming honourable, in some unspecified sense, anybody who by whatever lawful means has found his way into Parliament: do we not esteem and trust him just a little bit more than we otherwise might do? In the theory of the parliamentary process, the players in the game are all of them as by definition honourable members. (It is tempting to believe that the knowledge of this may in some degree condition their comportment in the House.)

A possibly more apposite example of the dualism that can mark our appreciation of things is to be found in the daylight-saving fiction. By the stratagem of re-numbering the hours, we make it easier for ourselves to get up early. We both know and in effect forget that midday is not actually with us until an hour after our conventional noon. For we both remember and half-forget that it is by British summer time that we are proceeding and not by the 'true' time of the sun. Indeed we are probably all a bit dualistic in our understanding of much that we experience. At the theatre we are just as conscious of the presence before us of Sir Laurence Olivier as we are of the Hamlet whose role he is enacting. We similarly both assume and see through the imputed personality of the body corporate. And do we not all of us know how naturally it comes to the patriot to speak of his 'mother' country, or his 'father' land?

*Eggs that Pass—in the Mind*

Again there is conjuring. What a fascination it can have! Is it merely in its challenge to our astuteness in the detection of a trick? May it not be partly that there seems to be some plausibility in the performer's claim to have magical powers? In the theory of the conjurer's display, the moment when he makes a certain movement with his wand is the moment when the egg moves invisibly out of the hat on his right and into the hat on his left. This, the official theory of the matter, we very well know not to be true. Would we accept a bet at even a



thousand to one against its being proved to be true? Of course we would not. Yet, until we have fathomed the mystery we do, presumably, in a sense concede, or half-concede, the claim. There is an imagined, an imaginary, passing of the egg—a passing known to be non-factual, but conceived of as factual even so. A notional passing, let us say.

*Something in the Head yet Nothing in the Cupboard*

The case of Mother Hubbard's bone, though significantly different, in that it is here all just simply a mistake, is nevertheless instructively comparable in its way. Why did the old lady go to the cupboard? Not because of there *being* a bone in the cupboard. It was of course because she *thought* there was a bone. And there was indeed, in a certain sense, a bone, an imagined, pictured, expected, bone, in the cupboard as conceived by her. In the factual cupboard a strictly notional bone. A 'fictional' bone, does someone say? Fictional yes, but only in the sense in which the old lady herself is matter of fiction: the fictional notional bone of a fictional factual Mother Hubbard. The bone is no fiction of Mother Hubbard's. It is an element factually, not fictionally, present, but only in her fancied, her pictured, her notional, environment. In fact, admittedly, there was no such bone: not even fictionally.

*What—no Sunrise?*

'I doubt,' said a colleague, 'if there is an international society.' How then, he asked, could the study of the 'structure' of such a society become a subject in the university curriculum? Doubt it as he might, this could not affect the fact of that society's existence, in idea. In the idea, that is, in the light of which relationships between the governments of sovereign states had for so many a past generation been officially carried on. For the assumption of an international society, having a membership of sovereign states, 'persons' every one of them, with capacities appropriate to their role—it is on that, rather than on any matter of tangible fact, that official relationships rest. The assumption of such a society, the idea of it—or, why not?, the notion of it—with the notion of the personality of its members and of their subjection to international law; unseen as it may be, this is the premise, the 'dogmatic' premise, of

the process in which the world treats itself, conventionally, as one.

France, in idea, and Britain, in idea, are not merely countries, but persons, and, with sufficient luck, good friends. The friendships, like the personalities, of sovereign states, are such not by nature but by imputation. As they are not naturally, but notionally, persons, so they may be notionally friends. For such in the official theory of their relationships they ordinarily are.

In the light of the facts (exclusive of the facts as to her state of mind) Mother Hubbard's movements made little sense. In the light of the theory of her moving, her moving made sense enough. Official behaviour, if sense is to be made of it, needs to be construed in the light of the theory, the official theory, of that behaviour. And in the official theory much may be notionally thus-and-so, while factually otherwise. Are France and Britain ever friends in fact? Do France and Britain, as capable of friendship or enmity, exist, in fact? What is France, in fact, but a stretch of territory? But what, by contrast, is France in idea?

*Realism versus Realism*

It is thus that we are led to recall our two different kinds of 'realism'. There is the realism that must deny that anything happens except in tangible reality; that must therefore deny that what has only happened virtually, or shall we say, only happened in effect, has happened at all. But there is also the second kind of realism, for which the happening-in-effect is also a way of happening. For the former kind, the earth may indeed turn upon its axis, but in no sense can the sun be considered as getting out of bed. For the latter, there is a sense in which the sun does indeed get out of bed; notionally, and as it were, albeit not factually, get up is precisely what the sun does do. And thus, to recognise that things happening in effect do indeed also happen—happen, that is, in a sense: this is itself a variety of realism. If to deny the sun's rising is realism, it is crude, rudimentary, naïve; whereas to assert the rising-in-effect is mature, sophisticated, refined. And the case for the sophisticated variety of realism is that it rings the more true—the more artistically, poetically, humanly true.



In the familiar story, it was the little child who insisted, when the emperor was displaying his wardrobe, that in fact he was not clad. His, we may say, was the naïve and irrelevant kind of realism—given, that is, the object of the exercise in which his elders were engaged. It is likewise a naïve and irrelevant realism that on Xmas morning denies the existence of Santa Claus. Or which doubts if the hostess is indeed quite so sorry as she seems at the going of her guests. It would require a particularly naïve kind of realism to offer comment on a game without any reference to the theory of the game. For only in terms of the theory of whatever game it is can any sense be made of what is happening at any point in the playing of it. It is therefore in terms of the theory, and not just of things to be seen, that a game as a going concern has need to be followed and understood.

The world official system, the universal social set-up, the global 'game'. Whichever we choose to call it, what we have here is a going concern, whose momentum is such that it is hard to imagine its being arrested. It looks like going on going on. Even if we be thinking to try to stop it, we had better try to understand it as it is. And for this purpose it is a special kind of thinking, to be undertaken in a special kind, so to say, of thinking-cap, and not just sharper eyes—a cap made for thinking in terms of entities which are notional, not real—that we shall require.

### *Conformism is Enough*

When what we wish to explain to ourselves is the relatively frictionless co-existence of individuals in a smoothly flourishing society, we know how useful it is to make investigation into that body of shared assumptions, or belief-system, in terms of which they in common face their common problems. When, however, it is the co-existence of states that we would explain, we find a difference; it is idle to ask what beliefs are cherished by the states: for states, as such, have none. Men in general may have their beliefs, about states. But it is not in terms of these that the states have dealings with each other. Their dealings are referable not to anybody's actual beliefs, but rather to certain official dogmas, traditional in the relevant milieu, and retained as the premises for the persisting feasibility of

forms of co-operation which nobody as yet would wish to discard.

What is one saying except that the world of international relations is a notional, not a factual, world: and that the existence of this or that possible element within it is a matter of 'doctrine'? A question, in short, to be answered in the light not of tangible factors but of the assumptions officially presupposed.

### *Fifty-seven of Them?*

What then is doctrine and what are its kinds? Etymologically, doctrine is presumably teaching, learning, the substance of something taught. And if, while the earth is round, we teach that it is flat, the difference between matter of fact and matter of doctrine becomes plain enough.

Of what varieties of doctrine have we now become aware? Of what kind do we first receive a dose? 'The goblins will get you if you don't watch out.' Folk-lore? 'And the morning and the evening were the first day.' Myth? 'The music of the spheres', cosmological doctrine. 'The geocentric universe', astronomical doctrine. Horoscopes, astrological doctrine. 'All men born free and equal', social doctrine. 'Vox populi, vox Dei', political doctrine. 'Parallel lines never meet', geometrical doctrine. 'Original sin', theological doctrine. 'The id', psychoanalytical doctrine. 'Vicarious liability', legal doctrine. 'No parliament can bind its successor', constitutional doctrine. 'No taxation without representation', politico-philosophical doctrine. 'God the meaning of human existence', theologico-anthropological doctrine. And finally—notebooks ready please—'Sovereign states subject to international law'—diplomatic doctrine.

### *Second-order Formulations*

Now there is one thing that may be said of these many varieties: they are all, by the simple process of specifying in terms of what kind of doctrine it is that they have their ostensible validity, reducible to statements of fact. '“All men are liars” is a lie.' That may well be a true statement of fact: for it may indeed be true that 'all men are liars' is a lie. It may equally, however, be true to say, of 'all men are liars', that it is a



proposition of subjective anthropological doctrine. True statements of fact can thus be made about lies, and also about propositions of doctrine. Yet neither a lie nor a proposition merely of doctrine is itself a true statement of fact.

No doubt this sort of thing is all very obvious; yet it may just often enough be overlooked to make the stressing of it worth while, for safety's sake—when one has need to think.

### *Three-storied Universe?*

The world society, the social cosmos—there could be other terms for it—is sometimes, in particular, referred to as the multi-state system (the system, that is, of the many sovereign states). But the subject to be studied is not just the system of states. It is human society, comprehensively, as a whole. Better then to call it the many-levelled society, with the multi-state system as the layer at the top, not altogether unlike the water-lily-covered surfaces of a series, or system, of ponds (the lilies drawing nourishment from mostly invisible sources down below). Two below-the-surface levels, at least, require separate recognition. Basic to the whole is the level of human life as physically, biologically, and psychologically lived—the life of men and of women and of men-and-women-to-be. And intermediate between the actual life of human units, and the notional life of states, there is the complicated habitat in which there live and have their hybrid part-actual-part-notional being the numberless and variegated assortment of groups, groupings and organisations, in and through which men associate together to strive the more effectively for ends they have in common.

Very important among the groups, no doubt, are the nations, very important among the organisations, the governmental systems. It is at this intermediate level between the solid earth of manhood down below and the stratosphere of statehood up above that, for the purpose of universal sociology, the multi-dimensional interplay of social forces goes perennially on. Soldiers fight, it is true, and soldiers die; but it is armies that win battles. It is as important to try to understand the facts of life at this intermediate level as it is to appreciate the distinctness, the difference in conceptual kind, of the life of the states 'up there'. If there is any single short formula wherewith to

epitomise the conditions in which humanity seems now condemned if at all, if only for a season, to survive—it is 'Danger, states co-existing overhead!' Not—nations co-existing. Exalted as they are, and important as they are, the nations are not so inaccessibly intangible as that. The nations do have their home among the human groups; and as groups in general are not mere abstracts, neither are the nations in particular. They consist of human beings. But the states—the members of the international club? These, the states, are not groups; they are, on the contrary, countries—countries conceived of not as groups but as individuals. They exist at all, indeed, only as conceived of. For the country, in international society, is not a tract of territory (though it *has* one). It is a person, a notional person, that, and nothing more. The France of international society is not the France of geography. She is, rather, the France of diplomatics and of international law. Sometimes it seems that she might more appropriately have been designated Paris. But no. What gave, formerly, much of his importance to the King of France was—France, the tract of country. Without that, what was he? And what gives now her importance to France, the international person, is likewise mainly France, the tract. That, as well no doubt as its inhabitants, and much besides. We speak of 'international' relations. Small wonder if we are apt to forget that it is with inter-sovereign-state relations, on the level of the water-lilies, that we are primarily concerned. As men behaving in the world of fact produce changes in the world of law, to be appreciated in a special professional thinking-cap developed for this purpose, so men, including men playing roles in governments, produce, by their behaviour in the world of fact, changes in the notional world of diplomatics, some of them also incidentally in the world of international law—each of these worlds giving occasion for our wearing of a further kind of thinking cap.

### *The Limitations of the Single Eye*

We may say indeed about social and political matters that there seem to be two broad types of thinking—thinking which takes as pivotal the dichotomy factual-notional, and thinking which slurs this dichotomy over. For 'sophisticated' realism it



is necessary to retain and to practise the two types of thinking together. Relatively rarely does one encounter those who in their thinking about politics employ patterns appropriate to the processes and problems of both levels of experience at once. One should interest oneself therefore in the sociology of appreciation and study those forms of cultural conditioning which make men's thinking what it is. One should notice in particular the conditioning which makes men's judging what it is. For though judging is the function of the individual, it is by the individual-in-society that it is done. And society is not without its influence upon how it happens.

*Is not Essentialism Essential?*

No one ever physically encountered Nature 'herself', as distinct from natural objects and events. But what we do not and cannot encounter we can, as philosophers say, 'posit'. And having thus, by positing her, conferred on Nature a quasi-existence, we can thereafter 'postulate' her existence as, in effect, given. 'In effect.' 'Given.' Are there no such 'things' as Ignorance, Disease, Famine and Unemployment? Is there no such thing as War? Are there only ignoramuses, invalids, hungry workless people, and men sitting, or dying, in holes in the mud? A platonist may be pictured as one who sees war as not less real than is the sitting of men in the mud, unemployment more real perhaps than men without work. We can hold our breath for a time, and, for a time, with an effort, we can focus our imaginations on miserable humans rather than on human misery. But why try it, unless just to know what it feels like? Is it not more sensible to think about war and unemployment, while at the same time remembering why in terms of human lives we dislike them? To impute, as if without question, an independent existence to a 'universal', such as goodness— independent, that is, of the existence of things, and conduct, and people recognised, by us, as good—is to 'hypostatize', as we say, the quality of goodness. And we may go further, and conceive of it as thing-like, even as personal, nay, even as divine: in which case we reify it, personify it, deify it. Good things we see as having existence. Goodness by contrast is an 'essence'. If this imputing of reality to essences is not perhaps the only tendency to which the term 'essentialism' has been

applied, it is what is meant by it here. And the question one is asking oneself is whether, were we not given to it, we should be able to achieve very much, with our thinking, at all. Is it merely a disability, this disposition we have to think of War as an evil to be combated and if possible eliminated rather than to think of the avoidance only of particular wars? Anyhow, be it a disability or not, the disposition is sufficiently common. The important difference is not that between thinking and not thinking of, say, War as such: the important difference is that between merely conceiving of War and conceiving of it as an entity independent of our so conceiving of it. To believe in essences, in the sense of conceiving them as entities independent of our conceiving, is the particular kind of essentialism which we may style 'ontological essentialism'. For ontology is concerned with whatsoever 'is', independently of its being known or thought about or conceived of. (Alternatively to being believers, in this as in other matters, we may be out-and-out disbelievers, or we may occupy the betwixt-and-between position of the agnostic.)

Now, if not all essentialists are of the ontological variety, what other variety is there? The other, very important, variety of essentialist is the one who, without necessarily believing in what he conceives of, nonetheless proceeds on the assumption of its independent being. Has my country a manifest destiny? I may genuinely believe so, provided I am an ontological essentialist with respect to destiny as such. But, whether believing in destiny or not, I can nonetheless choose to proceed in practice *as if* I not merely conceived of, but believed in, the destiny of my country, and therefore of course the element, or factor, or principle, or what have you, to which traditionally, the designation of 'destiny' has been given. To have doubts about the ontological status of essences is not therefore necessarily to reject them. We may continue to conceive of them but not with the same 'logical' status as before. What we do not believe in we may nevertheless be content to 'postulate'. And this, if essentialists merely in the 'methodological' sense, is what we presumably do. Did the English, on the morrow of Dunkirk, believe in eventual victory? Who knows? The question was, wisely, not asked. What matters was that as good methodological essentialists they proceeded to



proceed as if they did believe in Victory with a capital 'V'. Do we believe in fairies? We can act as if we did. Do we believe in the will of the people, in human rights, in the conscience of mankind? We can act as if we did.

Is not methodological essentialism socially essential?

### *The One-world Philosophy?*

Near akin to essentialism—if not even perhaps a form of it—is a propensity no less important: the imputing, namely, of oneness to what may merely be the sum of many parts. To see the body corporate, the crowd, the flock of starlings, the statistical category of the workers of the world, not just as multiple but as unitary, to see the learned world not merely as so many allegedly learned persons but as that singular something to which they belong—to see it as indeed an 'it' and not merely a 'they', this too is an achievement of which few of us, if any, are apparently incapable. We may call it, if we like, a mere ploy of the mind. But it is the avoiding of it, the strict and consistent 'nominalism', the thorough-going 'methodological individualism', the denial that the committee, or the school, or the Church, or the team, or the nation, or the human family is anything more than the mere sum of its members, this it is that, like the holding of the breath, demands an effort which, for many of us, it is difficult to sustain. As we cannot hold our breath while asleep, so we cannot, in our unthinking moments, eschew the 'holism' which imputes their wholeness to social, and other such, wholes. For, like essentialism, holism, to many of us, comes 'natural': and, though we expel Nature with a fork, back and in she comes again (this last being a typically essentialistic formulation of what we are in reality saying about the way in which we think). Even if at the ontological level we feel constrained to doubt, since we cannot demonstrate, the reality of, say, the nation, we may nevertheless, and indeed we had better, on the level of daily political and social living, relapse at least into that methodological holism which allows to the committee credit for having done something on an afternoon when its members, having lunched over well, have not individually done very much.

### *Shifting Perspectives*

Opposed, whether on the ontological or on the methodological level, to holism, are collectivism and individualism. Meet my family (holism). Meet the members of my family (collectivism). Meet my brothers, Tom, and Dick and Harry (individualism). Or again: Bring me my dinner; bring me all the things you have prepared for me to eat; bring me my soup, my meat, my pudding. Our union struck, we all came out, every man Jack of us downed tools. The Church disapproves, your country needs you, Cambridge won, let Europe arise, the new generation is in revolt (holism). All churchmen, all the young people (collectivism). Every good European, every young person (individualism). Is it useful to restrict oneself to one way of thinking and speaking, if all three have their valued uses? Is it not better to notice how intriguingly they live together, without necessarily causing confusion, in our mind? No doubt they might indeed cause confusion, in our thinking, but need they? Not if we appreciate and apply the relevant distinctions. Not, in particular, if, reserving the ever-debatable question of the 'ontological' status of essences and of wholenesses—the question, that is, of their independent givenness as presences 'out there'—we accept, though it were only for purposes of our thinking and our speaking and our concerted acting, such tools as our convenience may require.

Sceptical though we remain as to the objective existence of a Santa Claus, we may postulate it, none the less, as a matter of season-celebrating method. Knowing, for a fact, that the customer is wrong, we may, in point of selling method, behave as if he were right: that is to say, proceed upon the methodological premise that he is. Our ontology sees him as fallible, and in this case definitely wrong: our methodology treats him as if necessarily right. To underplay the logical distinction between the ontological and the methodological would itself be a blunder—of method. To deny it would be a failure of understanding.

### *Words, and Images*

The personifying of the social whole: is it, as some have thought, no more than a clever dodge, hit upon at some point



in the past, and adopted for its evident usefulness, its relevance to the survival of the race? Or do men, in speaking of groups as persons, so speak of them because it is so that they conceive them? Even if some don't, some, it seems, do, and probably always have done, at least since the Old Testament writers used Israel, in the singular, as their symbol. No need for the social cosmologist to assess the relative prevalence of these respective ways of using what all might agree in identifying as a metaphor. Suffice it to see, and to say, that the metaphor, as a verbal device, has the two sorts of use. Necessity we are told is the mother of invention: clearly metaphorical, the motherhood here ascribed. But what about love for the motherland? Is there no such distinctive emotion? Is the use of the mother terminology in this case metaphorical and nothing further? The question is whether the language which here does justice to the way we conceive things is strictly speaking metaphorical at all. If we do in fact conceive of death as stalking the land, and removing people with 'his' hand, then it is at least questionable whether in so speaking of him we are using language in even approximately the same way as when we describe necessity as a mother. Let it at least be accepted that a metaphor, if that we are to call it, may often be a significant index of how men conceive, and in that sense see, their world. We may indeed express ourselves in metaphors, but we can hardly think in them. Rather may we think in those 'images' of which the metaphors, if that we are still to call them, are the attempted reflection.

#### *Fighting Ships and Warring States*

The line between the mere metaphor, employed and enjoyed as such, and the reflection in apparently metaphorical language of the terms in which things are actually conceived, may be a shifting one. But analytically it can be important even so. 'When my ship comes home' seems to be strictly metaphorical. 'The ship of state' seems rather less essentially so, for one surely does tend to think of statesmanship in terms of helmsmanship. And the term 'fighting ships' is hardly metaphorical at all: it presupposes that ships do positively fight, that battles at sea are indeed fought between ships. Granted that not even in the theory of the matter is the state a kind of ship, or even a quasi-

ship, it does rather seem as though in the theory of the matter actual ships do actually fight. Ought we to be protesting that strictly the ship is only a machine used, in the fighting, by the captain? Or that the captain-plus-crew-plus-ship are a machine used by the commanding admiral, or the super-commanding admiralty, or by the country as a whole, in its fighting? Once we progress beyond the point at which the fighting is done only by men against men, it seems simplest to see it as done by ship against ship, and to say that, if this sort of encounter is fighting only in a figurative sense, then in modern conditions there isn't any fighting done, at sea.

It seems simpler. Might we not go further and allow that it positively *is* simpler? The reductionism which, basing itself on analytically valid distinctions between realities like fighting men, abstractions like fighting states, and betwixt-and-betweens like fighting ships, resolves to think only in terms of the tangibly real, soon involves itself in artificialities of mental usage which are not really simple at all.

Take, for instance, the battle fleet. On one level, it can be conceived as so many thousands of sailors distributed between so many ships; on another, as so many ships manned by so many sailors; on another, as so many divisions, comprising so many ships manned by so many sailors. There is an obvious sense in which the ships do of course exist. They exist as ship-shaped physical things. But as feminine their existence is notional only, not real. The fleet as so many ships is not merely simpler than the fleet as so many sailors. The fleet as so many ships is also real. But the fleet as so many fighting ships, especially as so many female fighting ships, is partly notional only.

And what now of the states? Of these by contrast it must be said that their very existence is not less notional than is their femininity.

#### *The Sovereignty of Theory*

The world society as so many female states is notional wholly. It is, that is, a world not found, nor even perceived, but a world conceived of—and conceived of as peopled not by individuals, nor even indeed by peoples, but by 'countries': countries peopled indeed by individuals, and themselves con-



ceived of as people. These countries—conceived of as people—as persons—each of them a distinct personality—are conceived as subject to international morality, and to international law, as well as to the restraints of good feeling among neighbours and friends. They are conceived of as alive, with minds of their own, aims, interests, objectives, policies, aspirations and scruples of their own, distinct in idea from those of their peoples and the individual people of whom their peoples consist. They are conceived of as capable of action and as acting—their action being conceived of as occurring as and when there occur the appropriate events, in the appropriate conditions, in the world of the tangibly real.

We do indeed speak of a gallant ship, and we do in fact seem to have the notion of the ship as gallant. We do report the battle in terms of the theory of ships versus ships. The only question is whether this theory is merely fashionable or whether it cannot, as a way of thinking, also claim to be 'correct'. For even if the language of 'fighting ships' may only be a fashion and not reflective of an orthodoxy, surely the contrary is the case with fighting countries—states at war. If France is the victor it is France indeed—not simply the people of France—that officially, that is in the official theory of the matter, wins the victory. The long and short of the matter thus seems to be that, though ships be but machines, countries, in the sight of the pertinent brand of theory, are not mere organisations or areas on the map. In the sight of 'diplomatic theory' countries, far from being mere machines, are persons—and international relations, in the sight of this particular brand of theory, are relations between persons, personified countries, countries, that is, in their character as states.

#### *A Case in Point*

Subtle as it may seem, the distinction we have here been drawing is fundamental: so much so indeed that the reader may be wondering why his familiarity with it has not simply been assumed. Does one need to labour the difference between night and day? The truth however is that our distinction is seemingly too fine for some.

On 19th April 1960 in an Easter editorial *The Times* provides us with a striking illustration. 'The international society,' it

points out, is 'a metaphorical expression'. In the context this intrinsically acceptable proposition could have no point except to suggest as problematic the status of moral judgment in international affairs. It was as if the wording were a veil with whose removal a void would be exposed: as if, in short, the idiom of international obligation were being revealed as that of make-believe and nothing more. To postulate a moral order for undergirding the social co-existence of men and women might be to base oneself on solid ground: but not so for the co-existence of countries. Only in a manner of speaking could peoples, as such, transgress. Such, or somewhat such, appeared to be the implication of the passage.

Language can indeed be merely metaphorical. 'He was a mother to me' says hardly more than 'He to me was like a mother'. Though in either form extravagant, the remark has still the flavour of a bald reportage. But have we not also the languages of mysticism, of poetry, and of social convention, in all of which metaphor is ubiquitous? Would mere similes serve for conveying all that ordinarily finds a vehicle in these?

Granted that 'international society' is indeed metaphorical; so also is many another expression whose aptness is not to be discounted merely by describing it so. Where, with the 'de-metaphoricising' process, would the great newspaper wish us to stop? Is not 'the brotherhood of man' a metaphor too, to say nothing of locutions more sacred still? And are we in international dealings henceforth to rely on nothing better than the quasi-loyalty of quasi-friendly peoples and the principle of quasi-good-faith? What becomes of the Commonwealth of Nations, the Atlantic Community, the conscience of humanity, or, for that matter, the reputation of *The Times*?

If the toughminded reductionists are able to reduce the thinking and conceiving that these sorts of language connote to the level of the simile, it is goodbye to much that we might be loth to forgo, including our hope for the building of a peace. For the difference, superficially so nearly imperceptible, between the two kinds of metaphor is that, while the one is the compression of a simile, the other is the expression of a myth. And we ought not over-hastily to think to deprive ourselves of myth. If to postulate an international society is to reveal



one's mentality as pre-scientific, how about one's respect for the sovereign people and the national will?

Granted that it is on man the mystic that the international order, in so far as we have one, must depend; so equally does the order on which so much is dependent nearer home. Almost it is as if the great newspaper were unaware that the foundations of society, even domestically, are credal rather than testably empirical, and under the delusion that the philosophy of obligation was more conclusively explainable with respect to the narrower sphere of social relatedness than the wider. One may be grateful for so timely an example of the kind of confusion that one is seeking to dispel. For while it is right to insist that the realm wherein states consort with one another is not just the realm of fact, this does not put it into the world merely of fiction.