



C H A R L E S B L I S S A N D A R T H U R K O E S T L E R

I read a report in the German "Spiegel" that Arthur Koestler delivered two lectures at the Nobel Symposium No. 14 which was held in Stockholm in 1939 under the collective title "The Place of Value in a World of Facts". In these lectures Koestler voiced similar ideas about the ethical behaviour of animals who don't kill members of their own species. I got the text of both lectures and was so enthralled that I sat down and conceived a long letter to Koestler hoping that he will take an interest in my work the more so as he has in recent books given the history of new ideas which has widened the horizon of human understanding in the world we live in.

It was my intention to bring first the two lectures, but the subsequent events have so much disgusted me that I don't do it. Instead I shall only cite my letters to Koestler. I say letters because he simply did not answer the first letter written in October 1970 and the second letter in April 1971. I then asked my former secretary Mrs. Maureen Gibb in London to contact Koestler and to ask him why he does not give me the meanest courtesy to say a few words in response (the more so as I had sent him the money for an airmail reply). It appears that once a man becomes famous he need not bother with men who are not famous. Here then are my two letters which speak for my sincere desire to find the attention of Koestler - alas in vain.

Arthur Koestler Esq., c/- Pan Books Ltd.,
33 Tothill Street, London SW 1.

Dear Mr Koestler,

For many years I have been a reader and admirer of your genius. Now, through the luckiest of chances I came across your lectures on "The Urge to Self-Destruction" and "Rebellion in a Vacuum". Good Heavens, I cried, here is a man who thinks the same thoughts which have invaded my own mind. But why have I missed out on your metamorphosis from a novelist to a brilliant scientist? The answer is that I myself stopped reading other books because my own books took up all my thoughts.

Now I rushed to the bookseller and bought your "The Sleepwalkers", "The Act of Creation" and "The Ghost in the Machine". And what I read enraptured me. I hope your wonderful gift of writing about the scientific mind and the evolution of science will be a catalyst to the many idiots in the university chairs (this is Kant's evaluation of them) who will start learning how to write about science.

Now, please don't think "O Lord here is an unsuccessful science writer who will now thrust his books on me, and will beg for some good words about them!" No. I am not an unsuccessful science writer, if success is not measured by the total of books sold. I am writing to you, because I am sure that you, who has painstakingly examined the acts of creative thought, may be interested in another queer quirk of "the ghost in the machine" - a mediocre scientist, a mediocre thinker, a mediocre musician, poet, etc. etc. anything - who, through some Adlerian urge to overcome his depressing feeling of inferiority - has stumbled on the solution of a problem of another dreamer and sleepwalker who dreamed of the solution, but could do nothing about it. For 300 years all scholars have thought that this problem is impossible to realise. The dreamer was Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz (as his name is spelled in English and French). In 1937 Professor E.T. Bell wrote in his Pelican Book "Men of Mathematics"

"The very diffusion of Leibnitz' genius made him capable of the dream which Archimedes, Newton and Gauss missed, the "Universal Symbolism". Others may bring it to realisation. Leibnitz did his part in dreaming it to be possible."

In 1951 Professor of Philosophy Dr. Oliver L. Reiser told in a lecture "Unified Symbolism for World Understanding in Science" given to the American Association for the Advancement of Science :

"Bliss realised the ambition of the great mathematician Leibnitz"

I thought it would cause at least a mild sensation. Yet, nothing happened. In some desperation I tried to find an explanation. I thought of Max Planck who said that a new idea does not convince the upholders of the old ideas. A new idea gains ground as the old professors die out one by one, and young minds take over. Planck was lucky. He found his quantum as a young man and he lived to 89.

I am now 73 but I found my purpose in life very late when I was 45, and even then I didn't know what is happening to me. I knew nothing of Leibnitz' problem. I knew only his differential calculus, which I learned in the highschool and university. There is only one explanation to my stumbling on his problem and solving it. It is the saying of Gray:

"Where Ignorance is Bliss, 'tis folly to be wise."

Now there is another queer chance happening. I am by profession a chemical engineer who worked in factories making electronic equipment. In order to get my factory girls do a good job I had to explain to them what ions are doing in a radio valve and what they shouldn't do, what electrons are doing etc. etc. Therefore I had to use plain everyday language. I was by some gift able to do it, because I have hated scholarly language since my early boyhood. Indeed, the incomprehensible science slang of the Kantian idiots are directly responsible for my belief that I am just an inferior idiot who simply cannot follow the flight of high thoughts. No wonder, that I could use everyday simple words to explain science to factory girls and students. In my lectures at Sydney University students said that they never heard a better lecturer.

Without knowing anything of Leibnitz' dream, somehow the chemical engineer was suited to realise that dream, because (as I learned much later) Leibnitz demanded that his "Universal Symbolism" should be "very popular, very agreeable to the people" and he mentioned illiterate peasants who could already understand the rudiments of certain symbols (the moonphases in their calendars, etc.) without much words. And so using my gift of simple words I realised Leibnitz' dream the way he wanted it to be done. But by doing this, I have committed a scientific sacrilege. It is not popular with scientists to be popular in science. I do believe that my symbols and my rules of my simple symbolic logic and semantics have been abhorrent to the linguists and logicians whom I approached. Just look into any textbook on symbolic logic and you will realise that their abstract symbols are hopelessly out of reach even to university students and cannot help them to think out logically their problems. Least of all can scientific symbolic logic help ordinary people. But my Leibnitzian "Algebra of Thought" can be taught already in the kindergarten, and even to illiterates.

I was aware of that arrogance of scholars to allow only scholarly language to be the gauge of scientific achievement. And so I sat down and in 7 years of hard work I wrote a large book, and did my best to use scholarly language. But I could not help showing that even children can grasp it and use it in their daily problems. Moreover, for 300 years Leibnitz' speculation was considered impossible to realise, and no chemical engineer is going to convince the old professors that he has done the impossible. That was in 1949 when my large book was published. Today 21 years later, hardly a week passes without a wonderful letter arriving from some young professor and scholar congratulating me, etc. etc. and wishing me all success.

But what I wanted is to be allowed to demonstrate in the classrooms and in the kindergarten the usefulness and practicability of my simple logic and semantics. And this opportunity was never given me, no matter how many hundreds of educational institutions I approached.

Enough of all this. This is not the reason why I am writing to you, because I could not find anything in your books which is a beacon to Leibnitz' idea. But I found plenty of beacons to other thoughts, and this is why I approach you. Something else happened in that meandering, sleepwalking way of scientific discoveries. Just by following Leibnitz' thought I stumbled on other discoveries which simply took my breath away, and these discoveries are the answer to many of the questions you are asking in your books. This is why I am writing to you.

I am elated by the thought that you are not a man on the payroll of an academic institution, and that therefore you need not uphold the theories of your school. I am elated also by what the reviewer of your "Ghost in the Machine" wrote in the Times, namely: that there will be plenty of biologists...more than ready to explode like bombs." I am enraptured by your rebellious thoughts, and I greet you as a brother in rebellion.

Using your ingenious idea of bisociative conscious thought I have in my dreamwalking bisociated two matrices previously considered things apart. This way I came to a new interpretation of facts known to every scholar, but also to every layman and laywoman, and, worst of all, known even to children. That scholars have not seen and bisociated what was before their very eyes, this they don't forgive. They look at me blankly, refusing to understand what I am saying, though it makes sense to them. But lay people act likewise. If what I say is so simple, though new in interpretation, why not have our teachers and preachers, our scientists and educators come upon it before me, when it was so simple or rather looks simple now when I found it. But my troubles are not finished yet.

That new interpretation of the facts of biochemistry, biology, cosmology, etc., has driven me in some sleepwalking way to another discovery. Again the facts are simple enough, indeed they stare into the faces of all anthropologists and

archeologists, and indeed a few of them have got a hunch and have hinted at a new possible bisociation. But nobody listened to them. One of these men was the late Harvard professor of anthropology Clyde Kluckhohn. He was so engrossed with my new interpretation and findings that he tried to get me a publication grant from the Carnegie Foundation, and he tried to get me into Harvard. He failed in both attempts and complained bitterly to me in one of his letters that "irrationalities" govern the institutes of high learning - a fact which tallies with your findings how discoveries are made, torn down and forgotten, only to be rediscovered long after the original pioneer has died.

How different my life could have been, had Kluckhohn not died. Alas, I have lost my benefactor and seem to be destined to die forgotten. I have stemmed this trend by publishing my own books (as I was a manufacturer most of my adult life), and have brought them in many university and public libraries of the world. But it was and still is a hard task. It has made me a rebel against organised science.

When my good wife died as a result of our bitter experiences with the educators, experiences which brought us both into the abyss of desperation, I decided to write my large book. I decided to say it all, but this time not to scholars and not in scholarly language (as I had done in my first book). I decided to write a book in simple common language with lots and lots of pictures as a kind of "pictorial popular pocket book for the intelligent man and woman, boy and girl". This book is now with the printer, and I enclose the first copy of the promotion paper which contains the cover and two pages of the text. Kindly read it carefully and I am sure your interest will grow and you may ask me (with the enclosed postcard) to see more of my book. You may also be intrigued by my exhortation to the librarian which runs:

"Will you give this book to those who need it most - our teenagers?"

I am writing to you because you yourself have expressed similar thoughts, and hence my book could in a way supplement your own concern with man's future (words on the cover of your "Ghost in the Machine"). I could quote and quote from your books, and I am sorry that the book is already printed and with the binder. I would have been only too happy to incorporate your own thoughts in support of mine. I could quote and quote from your book in this my letter to you, but you know your thoughts only too well, and you will find them in my own thoughts, though expressed in awkward (perhaps) language, because I am not a writer. Let me therefore quote only a few scholars whom you have quoted in your books.

On page 229 in your "Ghost" you quote George Wald who said:

"The good questions are those an intelligent child asks, and, getting no answers, stops asking."

I have tried in my illustrated cover to indicate those questions, and I can prove that I have found an answer which will satisfy everyone, except some scholars.

One page 395 you quote Bartalanny who said:

"What we need is a new conception of man."

Well, I have given in my new book this new conception and the few men and women who have grasped it are entranced with it. They have even introduced their children to it and have reported that their children are "thrilled and fascinated". And that we need to give children and teenagers this new conception is exemplified by your quote:

"Is it true that life is nothing but Brownian motion?"

You said this in "Rebellion in a Vacuum" and you continued by quoting a psychiatrist Victor Frankl who said:

"Thousands and thousands of young students are exposed to (this) indoctrination. The result is a world-wide phenomenon: more and more patients are crowding our clinics with the complaint of an inner emptiness, the sense of a total and ultimate meaningless of Life."

I sincerely hope that you will find my popular pocket book just the right antidote to this malady among our students, and my rebellious attitude to the senseless and useless subjects they are forced to swallow in school and university will make them appreciative of the new interpretation of life and our place in this cosmos of ours. There is indeed a "Rebellion in a Vacuum" and this vacuum must be filled. Your books are doing just this, and my book could be a supplement to your preaching. I hope you will agree to this.

I followed your quote of Frankl the psychiatrist, because I myself have been led on the trail of my discovery by a world-famous psychiatrist Dr. Brock Chisholm, the first Director General of the United Nations World Health Organisation. When he said that words have caused an infectious epidemic of the minds of mankind, and we must reverse the process by a "re-education of mankind" he came in time to my knowledge, because my Leibnitzian "Algebra of Thought" is just the simple tool for starting this re-education in the kindergarten, in the primary school, in the highschool, college and university.

One of my greatest friends and supporter is another psychiatrist Dr. Douglas N. Everingham, now a member of the Australian parliament. He has lectured on my

work at a Medical Congress in Sydney, and has written a burning letter to all concerned in the Australian Medical Journal: "A Message to Mortals".

Well, I have said enough, indeed too much in this overlong letter. So let me end it with two things of personal concern:

1. Please receive an Australian calendar with my best wishes for a most creative year in 1971. Please read the notes on the inside front cover.
2. Please receive the epitaph I wrote to my good wife Claire. On page 440 you published Benjamin Franklin's sweet and funny epitaph in which he expressed his belief about the transmigration of souls. Read my epitaph and realise that my interpretation of the transmigration of souls can be understood and accepted even by atheists, provided they realise that there are more things between heaven and earth of which our philosophy has never dreamt of. These words are much better translated in German where philosophy is translated as "Schulweisheit." This too has helped me to become a rebel against the "Schulweisheit" we are made to swallow.

Lastly the last lines in my epitaph may show you that we have much in common, not only in rebellious thoughts, but even in our upbringing.

And so, dear Mr. Koestler, please read this letter in the spirit it has been written, and kindly post the postcard back to me. I thank you for the privilege of having read your wonderful books, which are classics already, and to which I sincerely hope, my own book will be a "supplement" for children and students. In this hope I greet you from afar with all my best wishes. I am

Yours sincerely,
C.K. Bliss

Mr. Arthur Koestler
C/- Penguin Books
Hamondsworth, Middlesex, England.

13 April, 1971

Dear Mr. Koestler,

Nearly six months ago I did send you an important letter C/- Pan Books. I attach the copy of this letter with the registration slip affixed. I then waited and waited, and hoped that after the postal strike in England, a few words from you would arrive.

But nothing came. Being sure that the registered letter to Pan Books has arrived, but has not been posted on to you, I am now writing to you again this short letter this time C/- Penguin Books. Again registered:

Now it may be that you are too busy to answer the many letters you surely receive. But my letter is different. I am sending it on a special letterhead which I designed in some sort of desperation. People who receive letters take a first look at Who is Who. Who indeed is Mr. Bliss? Never heard of him. True enough. But you, who has searched the recesses of the human mind and the acts of creation which take place therein, you surely know that the few men whose brains have become the unhappy vessel of a new idea, a new truth, that they had to live out their unhappy lives in misery and obscurity. They were then "re-discovered" much later.

You have written such wonderful books on Aristarchus, Pythagoras, Kepler, Galilei and Newton, you should be receptive of the work of a man who has done much more than they have done. And this holds true even with the greatest of them all with Isaak Newton. In my letter to you I have quoted Prof. Bell, who said that not even Newton dreamed the dream of Leibnitz, the discovery of the "Symbolis Universalis". Only I am the first man who has accomplished just this. And you should look up and take notice.

But I can't force you to do this. At least give me the meanest courtesy of acknowledging my first and this probably my last letter. I enclose a postcard, and 2 international postal coupons to pay for the airmail fee. I enclose also the cover of my last book. Now in all decency you must answer, and I shall be satisfied even with a "Scram!" because even a "Scram!" from the great Koestler is something, isn't it? So, please say something. I am

Yours sincerely,
C.K. Bliss

Today the 7th October, and there is no answer from Koestler and neither one from Maureen Gibb. This ends this unhappy affair.

The End.