

## Preface

This book was written for the general educated reader who I hope and believe still exists in this day and age of popular television, virtual reality electronic games, and widely read but often 'cheap' novels, co-existing – increasingly – with highly specialized books.

The idea to address 'the audience in the middle' came as I was leafing through the three-volume English edition of Mozart's letters – the fuller German collection runs to six volumes (plus one of Indexes) – and the many books written by the late Professor Wittkower on Bernini and 17<sup>th</sup>-Century Baroque. I admire deeply both artists and enjoy reading books about them; but as I was doing this I began to wonder how many, outside the smallish – I suspect – circle of people interested professionally in these great men, would ever set time aside to read such books let alone pay the high prices they (rightly) command. Indeed, my silent reasoning went on, even if they do read, say, Mozart's letters, would they ever understand them if they did not know the wider context, the people they referred to, or even knew fairly well the operas or other works of the genius to which these letters constantly refer? The same is true of Goethe, not least because of the multiplicity of his interests, and the other 'greats' discussed in this book.

My intention has thus been to write a book which would comprise a series of essays about well-known (and less well-known but interesting) figures, coming from different walks of life and different eras. Such a book might well be of interest to educated readers who, however, knew little or nothing about many of the geniuses discussed within its pages. Indeed, their interest might even be enhanced if the account of the lives and work of these geniuses was seen through my own experiences and resulting insights concern-

ing history, politics, character, emotions, perfidy, and loyalty, prompted by the lives of these people and my own long involvement in the world of law and politics. To this main and simple aim I added two more.

First, given that I am targeting the non-specialist (but open-minded) reader, I thought it might help him or her if I preceded the biographical account of my subjects with a small section setting the lives and careers of the great people discussed in this book within the context of their times and then highlighting those points that would turn out to be relevant to the subject's life and work. I did this not only for the sake of imparting some general information but, mainly, because like many (eminent) writers before me I believe that the work of great men is best understood if studied against the background of their times.

Secondly, and more importantly, I thought I would look at greater detail at the subject's 'darker' or, generally, 'less attractive' but also less-known side of his life and character. Such an angle might even be seen to add some originality to this endeavour by not only enhancing the narrative interest of the life described but, one hopes, also giving it 'a touch' of a thesis worthy perhaps of further study by someone more qualified than myself in psychoanalytical studies. In addition, such an approach seemed to provide a unifying element to the main chapters (2–9) while also giving me the opportunity to link them to the 'opening' ideas found in chapter one and put together an unusual synthesis of themes in the last two remaining chapters of the book (10 and 11).

My thesis thus is that great achievers have particularly intriguing *dual* personalities. At one level, this seems obvious enough since this du-

ality applies to us, as well. Yet, in the case of the great achievers most people know only their one 'shiny' side and ignore the other. This is particularly true of true geniuses whose exceptional talent and productivity attracts the attention of the public while their other half – their other 'self', sometimes dark, sometimes physically or mentally flawed – tends to be ignored, either because it is not known to all but the most widely read psychiatrists or because it has been deliberately concealed by individuals or various 'interest groups' acting on different agendas. This certainly emerges from most of the books I read in order to recount the lives of those who appear in this work, and these 'omissions' have made me consider in my *Epilogue* (chapter 11) various possibilities why this should be so.

In doing the above, I am aware that the idea of discussing – even more so stressing – the less-attractive side of a genius may annoy some readers. These readers may thus take the view that great achievers should be left standing on their pedestals, their statues not deprived of any of their luster. I am sorry when this proves to be the case and disagree with the idea that history and biography are better served by suppressing part of the truth. Politicians, doctors, or lawyers may, at times, be allowed – even justified – to be economical with the truth, but scholars should never be excused for such deliberate omissions. I take this view because as my own reading progressed, I came to the conclusion that knowledge of this 'other half' helped add humanity to the greatness of the person described. For humans are not perfect; they are mixtures of good and less good features. I would go further by suggesting that the realization of these weaknesses can even make us all more humble and more tolerant.

Just as importantly, however, understanding the 'other self' of a great man (or woman) may also enable us to understand better not only his life, his agonies and internal tensions, and his loneliness, but also his work and public actions. Establishing links between flaws and behaviour, as well as the grandeur of their work, may not be easy. Yet I offer no apology if the causal links do not always prove one hundred percent convincing, because every lawyer (and, I would add, sci-

entist, medical or other) knows how difficult it is to prove causal links between acts, characteristics or human traits, and resulting behaviour. This is particularly true of history, where the problem of concurrent causes can give rise to considerable difficulties of attribution. Notwithstanding this caveat, the challenge posed by this difficulty (and enhanced by the absence of evidence, which the passage of time makes inevitable) proved, to me at least, irresistible. For it encourages the further study of the lives of great persons in an interdisciplinary way; and, where links (even limited ones) of cause and effect can be established, this sort of study can furnish us with the beginnings of fascinating new interpretations to works whose interest we may believe we have exhausted by our existing analyses.

This, then, is the kind of book I set out to write, and it is meant mainly for the kind of reader I described above. He or she will alone have to decide if the modest (or ambitious) aims I set myself have been achieved and, if so, to what extent. I hope, however, that this judgment will be passed by bearing in mind the parameters I set myself and have described in this Preface.

Three more things remain to be said to complete these introductory remarks.

First, psychobiographers (and others) often ask the question how does one select one's subjects? The generally accepted answer is that there is no one right answer. I tried to select people who satisfied the criterion of genius or, at least, 'very intelligent'. I also wanted them to come from different walks of life, provided their lives made interesting stories to tell. As I looked into their lives, I also discovered that they all satisfied the requirement of a 'second self' and thus justified both the title and the thesis of this book. It did not take me long to realise – and the same I am sure will happen with my readers – that many others, personalities, living as well as dead, could be added to such lists. If that is indeed so, then my basic thesis deserves further development and, naturally, refinement; I think few have looked at all the persons who appear within these covers with this idea at the back of their minds. These thoughts led me to add a chapter at the beginning and two at the end discussing the phenome-

non of 'duality' in more general terms than arise from the study of my eight 'subjects' but may be justified for others who could be added to my list. In this sense, these chapters attempt to give a sounder (but still fairly elementary) foundation to the wider thesis I have presented in the particular essays.

Secondly, I may have written for the general public, but the habits of forty years' experience as a Professor in Cambridge, Oxford, and London do not die easily. Thus, I have been unable or unwilling (or both) to write a text without giving references for what I have said, especially when I was consciously drawing on the learning of others even though I have done this as sparingly (given the nature of this book) as intellectual honesty allowed. But there is another reason why I chose to disregard the open declaration of war on footnotes that is so often pursued by English scholars of the 'purest' kind. That is because I am conscious (as my readers will soon also be) that I am not a specialist (in musical or psychological matters), yet I have not held back from expressing views that often differ from those of specialists in these subjects. The addition of notes in these cases was thus meant to alert my readers to the fact that most of the 'specialists' also disagree among themselves on matters of detail as much of substance. In light of such divergences, therefore, my opinion is that the general reader should not feel intimidated by the views of experts. On the contrary, his understanding of the subject will be enhanced if he tries to explain to himself (and others) why this expert view or other does not convince him.

If the above reasons explain why I did not banish completely footnotes from a book of this kind they, nonetheless, make clear why I avoided whenever possible producing *long and full footnotes*. So, first I 'banished' this material to the end of the book in the belief that in this way it can be safely and easily be ignored by all except those who happen to be interested in details. Second, in order to lighten these 'endnotes' further, I abstained from giving in them details of publishers and place of publication. This fuller information can be found at the very end of the book in a general bibliographical list, which I

tried to keep under control by mentioning in it mainly books written in English and deviating from this self-imposed limitation only where I felt an exception *had* to be made. The bibliography is thus self-consciously incomplete.

Finally, I must confess that in endlessly analyzing, synthesizing, reinterpreting, and re-writing the varied and rich material I had to read in order to write this book, I may have learnt something about myself while trying to understand my complicated subjects. This gradual realization, already known to psychiatrists, has not convinced me to accept the view that all history is biography, for such an approach would tend to leave out of the picture reactions dictated by circumstances and events rather than personality traits. However, in writing this book I have moved closer to the idea that all biography contains elements of autobiography. For the student of another person's life must learn to get under his skin in order to understand him better just as an actor must do the same if he wishes to render convincingly a character he is interpreting. In order to do this, however, one must constantly ask himself how he would have reacted if faced with this or that occurrence or that dilemma in his own life. I think W. H. Auden may have had something like that in mind when he once wrote that the novelist

"in his own weak person, if he can,

Must suffer dully all the wrongs of man"

Well, 'dully' I did not suffer the high and low moments of my subjects; but experience them I did (or tried to) as I much as I could in an attempt to understand, albeit slightly, some of their doubts, dilemmas and agonies.

This intense effort to understand my subjects before describing them to my reader has strengthened my view that much history consists of biography and the latter, if it is properly undertaken, contains a fair dose of autobiography and (amateur or professional) psychology. So, if my narrative succeeds to help some of my readers to find in their own experiences events or feelings that come to the surface because of reading about the lives of my great achievers, these readers may even feel that the benefit of studying this book may have doubled; for in reading it they

may have completed a journey of self-discovery and not only discovery. For my part, there is no doubt that I felt enormously humbled by having realized early on in my writing the need to 'learn thyself' while trying to put yourself in the posi-

tion of your subject in an attempt to understand, praise or criticize what he was trying to achieve.

June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2008

B. M.

## Acknowledgements

Like all my books this, too, owes much to the intellectual stimulation and support received from many colleagues with whom I have been discussing on and off, and over many years, the ideas contained in it. The list of all those to whom I feel indebted is too long to be repeated here, for one is talking of literary debts of a lifetime. Yet two law colleagues, Professor David Anderson of the University of Texas at Austin and Professor Douglas Laycock of the University of Michigan, kindly read some of the chapters and helped me tighten the narrative by questioning the substance and presentation of my thoughts and arguments. The same wider debt is owed to my good friends Professor Guido Alpa, whose breadth of learning is as impressive as his willingness to share it, and Justice Dominique Hascher, who has taught me over the years many things about French culture.

Equally sincere thanks go to my old friend (and Harvard-educated) Dr. Nikos Kouretas, whose medical expertise is equaled by his general knowledge of literature and music. Like all trained psychiatrists he proved a sympathetic listener to my non-expert speculations externalized with the confidence that only non-experts can possess. To the extent that my limited forays into his field of knowledge are just about tolerable, it is because of his patient guidance; though, of course, he is in no way liable for the remaining errors and misunderstandings.

Assembling the paintings reproduced in this book required the assistance of many people and museums who are thanked in the acknowledgments along with the copyright holders of the negatives. Here, however, very special thanks must be given to three persons: Mrs. Martha Frick Symington Sanger, who went to extraordinary lengths to assist me in tracing a selected sample of pictures pertaining to Henry Clay Frick's

life and art collection, Mr. David Finn of Ruder Finn, New York, who generously allowed me to spend many hours rummaging through his photographic records, especially his magnificent collection of pictures of Bernini's works and, last but not least, the Director of the world-famous Lawrence Steigrad Fine Arts Gallery, Alexa Davidson Suskin, for promptly obtaining for me permission to reproduce the marvelous portrait of Sir Joseph Duveen.

At a more personal level my wife Eugenie and my daughter Julietta offered a stream of common sense reactions and objections to much of what I was trying to say or write. More particularly, they constantly reminded me how easy it is to go wrong and become too 'academic' – which to their normal (and healthy) minds means running the risk of becoming too technical and thus 'boring' – while sifting through so much and varied material and trying to simplify its presentation to make the account readable. I readily confess it was not easy to achieve the right balance between matter and style. Yet it was exhilarating trying to reconcile the two as well as the valuable but differing advice I was receiving from various friends.

Finally, thanks are also due to Ms. Kathryn Ritcheske, one of the most reliable and kind students I have had in my long career as a law Professor for carefully proofreading the manuscript and preparing the name index, and last, but by no means least, to my friend Professor Claire Germaine, Law Librarian of the Cornell Law School, (as well as Mr. Matt Morrison, Law Lecturer and Research Librarian of that same library) for supplying me with amazing speed the very diverse material used in this book that is rather difficult to find in the calm surroundings of the South of France, which have these days become not just my second but my most cherished home.