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NOBEL COMMITTEE
The Swedish Academy
Oslo
Sweden

Mesdames et Messieurs,

I wish to propose that the **Nobel Prize** for Literature for the year 1999 be awarded to the writer **Arthur C. Clarke, presently resident at:**

Colombo
Sri Lanka

The works on which I base my proposal that Mr. Clarke be awarded the Nobel Prize are his novels *Childhood's End*, and *City and Stars*.

Although the rest of the opus created by Mr. Clarke represents just as respectable a basis for the award of a Nobel Prize, I shall restrict myself to formulating my proposal on the two works that I have quoted.

As you know, Mr. Clarke is an author of SF literature, and I am fully cognisant of the fact that the great majority of literary theoreticians do not regard such literature as being either serious or valuable. To date, a Nobel prize has never been awarded for an SF opus, although some of the authors who did receive the prize are, in addition to writing the usual and fully accepted genres, also authors of well known SF works for example, William Golding, 1983.

The members of the Commission who will judge the credibility of this proposal will surely be aware that there is a whole range of literary theoreticians who regard Science Fiction as one of the literary genres equal to all other artistic literary genres. However, despite all their efforts to draw attention to all the reasons that place the SF into the sphere of art, they have not as yet managed to achieve satisfactory results. This lack of results does not result from a lack of valid arguments, but primarily from the rigidity of the audience, both professional and non-professional.

For the sake of veracity and objectivity, however, I am obliged to admit to the fact that the corpus of SF contains a great deal more pulp than other literary genres, which is possibly the key reason why it still has not won more confidence from among the general public, and an appropriate status.

I believe that I am not the first person to have proposed that a Nobel Prize be awarded to somebody who has invested his or her entire creative energy into SF literature. I also believe that those preceding me had enclosed the necessary argumentation, explaining and justifying their proposal. Independent of their arguments, I am enclosing mine, in as brief a form as possible, needless to say. I am a Professor of Philosophy and History of Art. The bulk of my scientific and life efforts have been devoted to the study of the development of civilisation, in which field I have published several books. My understanding of SF literature and SF art in general is based on the results of my research into the development of civilisation. Given below is a brief presentation of this understanding of mine.

I believe that the history of human race is in fact the **ontogenical process** - process of creation of an artificial being. This process began some 10,000 years ago and it evolved in several phases. Its culmination and synthesis occurred in the middle of the last century. Together with a whole string of thinkers, beginning with F. Hegel and ending with F. Fukojama, I believe that history has run its course. But, in contrast to them, I further believe that history has run its course because its aim has been achieved the artificial being has been created and completed. The next stage is the process of its utilisation. It will be used as a “beingful” TOOL in the realisation of the key aims of HUMANKIND. The most important of them all and one that contains within itself all others is: to survive in a way specific to an intelligent species. In the process, the artificial being will, of course, undergo a long period of development and perfecting. That post-historic and EVOLUTIVE phase of its development will differ greatly (and it already does) from its PRESENT, historical phase, which was dominated by a REVOLUTIVE form of development.

History has gone through several phases of development, and I differentiate them according to the ways in which the human race secured its survival. Those “phases” of development are in fact the levels of development of human civilisation in general Thesis, Antithesis and Synthesis.

1. The first level, Thesis, is Neolithic civilisation. Nature produces everything, but man only collects and uses the fruits of its labour.

2. The Antithesis is the civilisation of Antiquity. Human race lives from its work. It is divided into masters and slaves, where slaves perform the physical and masters the mental part of the work needed for the human race to survive.

3 ..The Synthesis. Western civilisation. Man creates an artificial being (or rather, completes its development). It works, and man uses the fruits of its labour. Western civilisation is the level of civilisation development at which man begins to free himself from the necessity to work. As I have already said, history is the process of CREATION of an artificial being. The aim of history is fulfilled through its creation. For the human race, however, the artificial being is not the aim but a means, a “beingful” TOOL essential for the realisation of the aims of the species. The above stated clearly shows that realisation of those aims can begin only after the completion of history, and then through the UTILISATION of the artificial being. In other words, the end of history is neither the end of time, nor the end of development.

4. ..The phase which could perhaps be called anthropo-technological civilisation is the phase of the UTILISATION or USE of the artificial being. This is the phase of its EVOLUTIVE development. (Following the Synthesis, REVOLUTIVE development is no longer possible). In the course of the fourth phase, the artificial being will evolve both through improving and expanding man’s *lebensraum* into the expanses of the universe, and through developing the elements of one’s own, inner self-control and self-care, elements which should relieve man from having to take care of it.

The key method of using the artificial being could POSSIBLY be its utilisation as a means of encouraging the inner development of man. I believe that history is the time in which man’s creative intellect is utilised as a means of development of an artificial being, while post-history is a time of utilisation of a highly developed artificial being as means of man’s development. In other words, the evolution of man that was interrupted following the emergence of Homo sapiens some ten to fifteen thousand years ago would be continued in the time of post-history. One has to realise that the visible results of continued evolution should not be expected at the very beginning of post-history time.

In a number of my books I have shown that, following W.W. II, there began to emerge in the legislation of the most developed countries of the West something that I termed an artificial private owner. That something is the ability of the artificial being to control its own development and man, and not only as an individual but entire nations, states, governments and, ultimately, the entire species. One should not fear this ability of the artificial being, since it is precisely that which will make it possible for man to live a better life, with more freedom, and to realise the aims of the entire

human race. After all, that was the purpose of its creation and the aim to which the last 10,000 years of human existence have been sacrificed.

Human kind differs from other species in its ability to create an artificial being. That is what makes it an intelligent species. Beavers, bees, ants, spiders, cannot be regarded as intelligent since they do not create an artificial BEING, but only some artificial THINGS.

(The difference between things and beings is enormous. Aristotle defines beings as “Something DETERMINATED” (Latin: *Determinatio*). Even the great Hegel adopts this erroneous understanding, according to which a thing and a being are one and the same thing because a thing is also something DETERMINATED. ((A. Schopenhauer drew attention to this lack of differentiation between a being and a thing)). Aristotle gives a correct definition of a being when he tries to explain what a soul is, and when he says that the soul is “that something which gives motion to itself.” This is, in fact, a definition of a being. A soul is just a phenomenon in which beingness becomes directly apparent. I define a being as something that possesses the power for self-development and self-reproduction (for self-preservation). An artificial being differs from the natural being in not being an aim unto itself, but having a purpose it exists not because of itself but because of man).

Only the creative species can create an artificial being, and it is through this very creation that they uncover and prove their creativity. However, that creativity can be released only through the FREE activity of ingenious individuals. Ingenious individuals are those who are able to create certain elements, which may be of lesser or greater significance, but which are essential in the make-up of an artificial being. To possess ingeniousness is to possess the ability to create such elements - the ability to give birth by spirit. The Latin verb: *gigno, gignere, genui, genitum* = TO GIVE BIRTH TO. An artificial being is the product of a large number of spiritual births during the course of which the elements, from which it is composed, are created.

The new element, one that the artificial being is lacking, but which is vital to its functioning and its wholeness, comes into the world only once through an act of creation. Subsequently, however, even individuals who are neither creative nor ingenious can endlessly reproduce it. The reproducible quality of such an element and the need for its constant, repeated reproduction, is proof of its value. That which is not reproduced by anybody, or not needed by anybody, is something worthless, a mistake, a misconception.

Aristotle’s works are, for instance, constantly being reproduced since they form a part of the fundamental education of every generation, as do Euclid’s Elements (of Geometry?), technical discoveries such as a wheel or a cogwheel, the laws which ensure life in a community, the moral principle, etc, etc.

If truth were known, we are compelled to reproduce misconceptions as well, not in historical practice but only in the memory, and we have to do it for the very reason of not repeating them in practice.

All I now still have to do is to speak the name of that artificial being.

It is best known under the name of Capital.

Needless to say, capital is not only a “relation between people and the attitude towards things”, nor is it only a large sum of money, or a company. Money is merely the “blood” of capital, or rather, the

artificial being; technology is its muscle and muscular system and skeleton; science is its brain; societies and nations its living tissue, etc. etc. There are already many economists who believe that capital is, in fact, the same as civilisation. All I want to add to that is that this civilisation is the material, i.e., the corporeal, form of the artificial being's existence. Finally, and for a specific purpose, I want to stress that religion, philosophy and art are constituent elements of the artificial being.

That was, in brief, the basis of my understanding of SF literature. Current critics view this philosophy of history of mine as a "considerable improvement in the understanding of history". I sincerely hope that it is going to make at least a similar impression on the people to whom this proposal is addressed, since it is only on the basis of such understanding that one can perceive the inevitability of appearance of SF literature, and its place among other creations of civilisation. I have not presented my views here in order to popularise my philosophy, but to provide a basis for an understanding of SF literature and to underline the soundness of my proposal. In doing that I may have turned this proposal of mine into a kind of scientific discourse, but even if that is the case I do not believe it to be a bad thing, since a proposal for the award of a Nobel Prize must possess a scientific base, or at the very least it must be approached with an adequate measure of seriousness and responsibility.

In the following text I shall try to describe, explicitly, the very place, cultural and historical, of SF literature.

When man believed that different deities had a crucial influence upon his destiny, as was the case in the times of Homer or Sophocles, literature was devoted to the relationship between man and those deities. In the Middle Ages, Europe believed that man's destiny was determined by God's will or God's grace. Literature of the time delved primarily into man's attitude towards that transcendent, monotheistic God.

When, in the middle of the last century, the synthesis of the artificial being was accomplished, lucid minds began to discern that man's life and destiny depend, to a great degree, on his attitude towards the artificial being. This presentiment manifested itself in the form of SF literature. I define it as a literary form that deals with man's relation to the artificial being, and with life that is based on the creation and utilisation of the artificial being. Authors of this artistic genre most often deal with man's attitude towards those forms of the artificial being which will, as they see it, develop at some point in the future. This creates the impression that SF is something that is based only on imagination, that it is just fantasy, with no connection to reality or with man's real problems, dilemmas, questions, aspirations, etc. However, if we do agree with the claim that man has created an artificial being, and that in this day and age his destiny, the point of his life and his very survival depend on his relation towards this being that he has created, then we will also have to agree with the claim that SF literature which deals with man's attitude towards that artificial being is, at least its greater part, a realistic artistic form. And that realism is far greater than we have been able to comprehend up until now. Notably, prior to giving the matter serious thought, it seems to us that the fantastic forms of the artificial being which are yet to develop in the future (such as future technologies, etc.) and life that could be based on it, are nothing more than figments of the imagination. Nevertheless, such ideas do issue to a great degree from the conscious or subconscious knowledge of the dialectics of development, and only to a lesser degree from one's imagination. Mere, mindless imagination is the source from which SF trash issues.

I trust that everything I have said so far can lead one to conclude that SF literature should be treated as equal to other literary genres. And that is not all. It has to be realised that SF is a great and original discovery of our time, or rather of the last 150 years of it. When I speak of an original discovery, I have in mind something essential that for the first time becomes an element of the artificial being.

Bearing in mind all that has been said so far, I do not see any reason that would make anybody's view about SF literature and art being worthless and second-rate and unworthy of a Nobel Prize, justifiable.

In order to be able to present one more extremely important argument in favour of my proposal, I have to say a few words about the novel as such, and about the cultural and historical circumstances in which it was created.

Experts who are familiar with at least the general guidelines of the history of philosophy and the history of literature will realise that the genre of the novel had achieved the culmination of its development at the time when ideas, born of classic German idealism primarily its Hegelian variance spread. It was that same period which saw a development of ideas of bourgeois philosophy, from existentialism, through voluntarism, to nihilistic views.

It was the time when man saw himself as a subject that is both a substance of himself and of the world in general, and not as an ACCIDENT (?) or the PHENOMENON of some TRANSCENDENT, METAPHYSICAL BEING. This atheistic thought was not only an assumption which provided the basis for all, or almost all, philosophies of the time, but it was also an issue point for the artistic writers of the time. I have specifically in mind those whose interest lay in the phenomenon of man, and these were primarily novel writers. A novel is a literary form in which man concerns himself with the relations towards his own self. Influenced by Hegel's dialectics, writers devoted themselves to the first and the most important part of a man's life, the part in which man develops and which most often ends in marriage, or something similar. The remainder of his life is given in a brief epilogue. A novel is, therefore, a literary form that deals with the development of an individual, and not with his ENTIRE LIFE, as is often wrongly said.

When, in my philosophic texts, I write about that particular period of history, I point out that this is the level of development at which the being became cognisant of itself, BUT ONLY AS AN INDIVIDUAL. This "individualistic" self-cognition of a being is superbly expressed in Hegel's and, for instance, Kierkegaard's philosophies on one side, but also in the works of Balzac, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Proust and, ultimately, of Joyce on the other

The further course of history (in fact, the post-historic period) has shown that neither the philosophic system nor the novel as such have provided the final answer to the question of a being with regard to its essence and its destiny.

For the sake of this appeal it is important to draw attention to all the efforts invested in revitalisation of a novel and into making it a rich literary form. Those to have gone furthest in their efforts are those who tried to revitalise it through the total destruction of its inner structure, and even negated the elements that Aristotle quoted as being essential (not only in a drama). However, the Agony of a novel was a simultaneous search for a new, more appropriate literary form.

In order to demonstrate how this problem was resolved, I am compelled to delve once again into the realms of philosophy, but only as much as is necessary to clarify the reasons which lead me to regard SF literature as not only worthy of a Nobel Prize, but also just like other great achievements as something of immeasurable value.

From the cradle of English empirical philosophy there began to emerge a cognition that the highest form of a being is not a mature, fully developed individual but a species. Species is the infinite, or rather the immortal form of existence of a being. Through development of the theory of evolution and something of what is known as inductive logic, which I regard as epithetic dialectics, the human

race has created a contemplative and cognitive instrument for the perception of a species as such, and through it a perception of itself. There, where today we can find any kind of philosophy and any kind of thinking process at all (a thinking process which is not just a sterile self-serving, schoolish-come-philosophical oratory), we are dealing with a species which (through the brain of an individual) is contemplating itself.

The same can be observed in literature where, instead of an INDIVIDUAL, a SPECIES is becoming a new subject which, in an artistic way, poses certain essential questions about itself. But in order to be able to ask the questions in an appropriate manner, and to provide answers to them, a new literary form was necessary. That new form, the EPIC, was discovered by SF writers.

Strictly speaking, they were the ones who realised that the current artistic perception of a man can most comprehensively be expressed through the form of an epic, which, incidentally, has been used as an artistic form since the very dawn of written civilisation. The epic form of today, developed exclusively within the framework of SF literature, is far more defined and much more purposefully profiled than that dating from the beginning of human literacy. In the current epic the species is the subject, just as it was in the early ones (in the old epic that subject may have been a tribe or a nation, since the concept of a species had not, by then, been quite clear). The species and its characteristics are represented by individuals who are the bearers of the general properties of the species, or rather, of its abilities. The story that the epic recounts is the time of the existence of the species. New SF epics demonstrate that their plot can span a period extending across tens of thousand to millions and even billions of years. These epics describe the appearance and development of (intelligent) species primarily of the human species: its attitude towards the artificial being; towards other intelligent beings; aims of the existence of the species; the ultimate purpose; the possibility of transcending the conventional: the phenomenal way of existence, etc.

SF epics have erroneously been called novels. The reason to this quite understandable and non-accidental mistake lies in the fact that, by using the IN MEDIAS RES technique, the authors of contemporary epics introduce us in just the same way as the authors of old epics did to the key period of existence of the species they are talking about, while the plot is abandoned to the individuals representing that species. This is somewhat similar to a novel and its internal, formal structure, and hence, the mistaken definition: SF novel. Clearly, SF literature is not being expressed through the epic form alone, but that form is its most adequate literary form, since through it the human race can, without too many obstacles, ask questions about itself and provide more or less comprehensive and detailed answers to those questions.

From Sophocles, through Shakespeare, to Dostoyevsky or Chekov, the bearer of a tragic plot in works of various literary genres has always been an INDIVIDUAL. SF literature makes the SPECIES the bearer of the tragic plot. Other theoreticians of SF literature have observed this great and highly significant innovation. I have already explained why this innovation is so important when I spoke about a species becoming the subject which, by way of *belles lettres*, questions the way, the sense and the purpose of its existence.

The most outstanding works in this area (among which undoubtedly belong the two previously mentioned works by Clarke) express an opinion whereby the survival of a very intelligent, creative or exceptionally able species is in fact an event that can be described as a great cosmic tragedy. Ascendance up the ladder of evolution (development) is the *condicio sine que non* of survival of any species and the realisation of the sense of that survival. However, elevation to a higher level of *being there* involves at the same time giving up of that which was at the lower level and which has captured the heart. In other words, the emergence within something that is higher is always accompanied by a very painful process of the dying of that which is lower. Two thousand years of

philosophical and artistic deliberation of development demonstrates that we cannot understand it in any other way than as an occurrence of a tragedy.

What happens when an author shows the greatness of humankind in a truthful and critical manner, as in fact does every SF writer of any standing?

How does a reader, a member of the human species, experience that? I will not reveal anything new if I tell you that the reader is filled with the Aristotelian “fear and compassion” for the tragic destiny of some great species; that he is developing sympathies for it, overcoming his egotism, learning the ability of self-abnegation and self-sacrifice, etc., etc. Even if an author is describing the tragic destiny of an exceptionally precious and able, hypothetically extra-terrestrial species, a member of the human species will feel “fear and compassion” for its tragic destiny. These emotions can grow in a reader because his soul takes pleasure in the great and precious forms of manifestations of the mind, even when it appears in the enemy camp. This particular feature of man’s mind could provide a kind of general basis for a great brotherhood of intelligent species in some very distant future.

So much then, briefly, for the cultural and historical place that SF literature occupies in the development of human civilisation, its main properties and its originality. The full experience of the greatness and the value of SF work can be gained only by reading it.

And now, I would like to say a few words about the above-mentioned novels, perhaps better to say, epics, by Arthur C. Clarke: *Childhood’s End* and *City and Stars*.

The first, *Childhood’s End*, contemplates the notion that man will follow the right path and realise the highest and the most perfect forms of his existence if he stops developing the artificial being at the moment when that being has reached the level of development, which enables it to provide man with a sufficient amount of free time to devote himself to his inner, spiritual development. That inner development could lead to the transformation of humankind into some infinite, non-material, spiritual entity that knows no individuality. In the course of that transformation the species as we know it today an entity consisting of living individuals would cease to exist. The plot of the epic *Childhood’s End* focuses on the description of the very time in which a thus conceived transformation occurs. All the newly born babies of one generation are transformed into that higher form of existence the Supra-conscience that will never know pain, sorrow or death. The parents, whose continuing life has thereby become pointless, seek solace and oblivion of their misfortune in the darkness of death.

Leaving the Solar system the Supra-conscience destroys planet Earth. Transformation of the children was supervised by the “Masters”, members of a super-intelligent race that arrived from the universe with the specific task of overseeing the transformation of the human race into a Supra-conscience and to protect the children from any possible aggressive reaction by their parents. The “Masters” developed the artificial being to an extent that people could not even dream about. They rule the galaxy. But, these “Masters” in the image of Lucifer, were deeply unhappy sterile with no hope of ever being transformed into the Supra-conscience that they served. An incredibly highly developed artificial being and immense power were but a poor substitute for what for them was unattainable.

City and Stars deals with the concept that sees the development as being worthwhile only if the inner, spiritual development of man, and the development of the artificial being, take place concurrently. These two lines of development unite in the creation of a totally spiritual artificial being which is as omnipotent as God Himself, and which can control the entire galaxy. Its task is to safeguard the intelligent species and to enable them to live an appropriate life.

The plot of the novel describes the period when a member of the human race discovers that the intelligent species of our galaxy had joined forces to create such a perfect and infinite, incorporeal

artificial being, but by mistake their efforts produced something that was named Crazy Mind. Crazy Mind abhorred matter and began to destroy the galaxy. Overcome through the most intense efforts and at tremendous sacrifice, it was incarcerated within a black star. After that, a benevolent mind Vanamond was created after all. Its self-education and maturity took billions of years. Its main task, however, was to deal with Crazy Mind after it had escaped from the black star and to help the intelligent beings regain control of the galaxy. After the creation of Vanamond, the intelligent species left our galaxy, lured away by some fabulous promises. Only a very few groups remained, and they isolated themselves from the universe, enclosing themselves into everlasting and perfect machine-cities able to sustain the life of its citizens for billions of years. One of those citizens, Alvin, a resident of the City of Diaspar on planet Earth, discovered that which I have just recounted.

The language of these two novels, or rather epics or sagas, is highly sophisticated. Few are the writers in our century who have achieved such a high level of artistically refined narration from recounting of the plot to direct speech and dialogue. Clarke's works are of typically epic character. When read, they fill the reader with a deep and intense inspiration, as if he had just read some work of poetry. For it is the kind of inspiration that is usually generated by reflexive, spiritual poetry. It is my deep conviction that it is this very feeling of inspiration, rather than rational analysis, which is the infallible indicator of the exquisite value of his works. This is something which, I believe, should have been rewarded with a Nobel Prize a long ago, had it not been for prejudice towards SF literature, regarding it as being second rate.

The special reasons for awarding the Nobel Prize to Arthur C. Clarke are of a humanistic, sociological, culturological and pedagogic nature.

Above all, I have to stress that Mr Clarke writes and publishes his books at a time of overwhelming crisis of the scientific mind, at a time in which the Rational, critical mind has begun to lose faith in itself and in its creative power. Clarke's works have boosted the confidence of that mind in itself by, among other things, showing the magnificent panorama of human possibilities, a panorama which that mind should transform into reality through its own activity.

Clarke's works have contributed to the spiritual unification of humankind. Those who have read them realise that belonging to the human species is far more important than belonging to a nation, particular politics, religious group, etc., etc. It could even possibly be said that Clarke has done more for the preservation of world peace, however fragile, than many other people who have received the Nobel Peace Prize.

And finally, something which is possibly the most important aspect of all. Clarke encourages in his readers an affinity and love for the qualities and a way of approaching things which make an intelligent species great and good in the widest sense of that concept. Love for such qualities and such behaviour is, to a great degree, the condition for the survival of the species and its advance along the road to the realisation of great and precious aims, and for the materialisation of its own existence.

I do not believe the human race to be ungrateful, or that it is unable to repay with recognition those individuals who have contributed most to the achievement of its aims. After all, is that not why the Nobel Prize was established in the first place?

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