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**TAHA HUSAYN
PROMETHEUS IN THE WORLD OF ISLAM**

None of the profiles of the Arabian Modernistic men of letters is so clearly outlined and, at the same time, so well known in the contemporary cultural environment as is the profile of Ṭaha Ḥusayn - an outstanding writer, translator, patron of developmental changes in his country; a contemporary man of Renaissance - a humanist par excellence.

Although a lot has been written about Ṭaha Ḥusayn so far, surely this man is worth writing other works. This attempt of creating a biography may contribute to refreshing, or at least making the readers familiar with this important and well worth mentioning figure.

The author of this project hopes that she will be able to follow Ṭaha Ḥusayn, who has always been an unattainable ideal to posterity. The author also hopes she will manage to make others derive from this eternal source of knowledge.

The author is going to present briefly the most important moments in Ṭaha Ḥusayn's life as well as to make the readers acquainted with the works of this great writer. Three parts of Ṭaha Ḥusayn's autobiography are going to be used in this project: the first and the second ones entitled originally "al-Ayyām", both translated into Polish by the university professor Józef Bielawski, and the third one entitled "A passage to France" (originally "al-Ayyām vol. 3") translated into English by K. Cragg. Some of the fragments of letters written by Ṭaha Ḥusayn's wife will be also used. In order not to be more subjective and letting the author of this biography speak for himself, this project will include numerous quotations with a few comments so that the readers have their own opinion.

The first part of "al-Ayyām" is the recollection of the earliest life, the childhood spent in his home village. This is when Ṭaha Ḥusayn's outlook was moulded; when he got to know the world which was not always friendly

and in which he had to live. This is where he grew up among the members of his family, and this is where he derived timidly from the source of knowledge, although he knew that his vocation was to derive avariciously and incessantly.

Ṭaha Ḥusayn was born in 1889, in a small village in the south of Cairo.

"He was the seventh out of thirteen children of his father and the fifth out of eleven children of the same mother. Among this great number of young people and children he had a special place which distinguished him from his brothers and sisters, and he was aware of it. (...) Gradually, he became conscious of the fact why it all happened like that. He discovered that other people had the advantage over him; he discovered that his sisters and brothers could do what he was not able to do. He found out that their mother let his brothers and sisters do what he was forbidden to do, and this made him angry. However, his anger changed quickly into quiet and deep sorrow because he heard them describe things he did not know; and then he understood that they saw what he could not see."

Having suffered an illness at the age of three, Ṭaha Ḥusayn was deprived of his sight. As an inquisitive child, he felt worse being deprived of this important of perception sense. He compensated to himself for the loss being sensitive to auditory impressions and touch stimuli. That is why his descriptions are complete and vivid on the one hand but more sound-like than visual-like on the other.

However, this does not make the contents poorer. On the contrary, it is enriched with new for the common reader forms of comprehending the surrounding phenomena and experiencing things. Since his childhood, Ṭaha Ḥusayn manifested extreme sensitivity to outward stimuli. This sensitivity of soul and body made him think over and, at the same time, made him write such a valuable book as "al-Ayyām"; the book which is full of the author's critical observations, concerning people's characters and susceptibilities. If it had not been for the information about Ṭaha Ḥusayn's disability (which is often mentioned in his autobiography), nobody would have realized any weak points caused by lack of visual sense. On the contrary, the descriptions of the human inner nature compensate for the losses in descriptions of outer objects.

Ṭaha Ḥusayn was humiliated by the deprivation of his sight because this made people feel compassion, and sometimes even contempt, for him. He could not be up to the requirements imposed upon a healthy man, and this led to his alienation and isolation.

"He was very curious since his early childhood. He did not mind the difficulties he met on his way to know the world. This quality caused him

troubles; one small accident cooled down his cognitive zeal and filled his heart with shame. He sat down at the table to have dinner with his father and brothers. (...) He ate just like the others did. Suddenly, a strange thought came to his mind: what would happen if he took a bit of bread with both his hands instead of one, as he usually did?"

He did as he thought.

"Then his brothers burst out laughing, his mother nearly cried and his father said sadly:

- Why, son, are you eating like that?

The night that came later was hard. Since that moment his movements became gentle, cautious and shy. He found out that his will was strong. He prohibited himself from eating some dishes and he started eating them again at the age of 25. He did not eat soups, rice and many other dishes for consuming which spoons were needed; he knew he used them in a wrong way and he was afraid his brothers would laugh, his mother would cry and his father would admonish him with his quiet voice. (...) As a child he craved for the opportunity of eating alone but he never dared to reveal this desire to his family. (...) When he became self-reliant, this way of conduct was characteristic of him. (...) He resigned from playing those games and pastimes which made other people feel compassion for him or laugh at him."

It is clear that Ṭaha Ḥusayn was mature despite his young age. He did not do anything what revealed his disability. Psychologically, this behaviour was an unprecedented example of self consciousness and maturity. This child could control his emotions and make decisions concerning himself on the one hand and was able to decide whether the behaviour of adults was correct or not, on the other. Ṭaha Ḥusayn's character as well as people who made him be aware of his disability as something worse, something he should be ashamed of, contributed to his self-control.

This self-control was clearly seen in his studies since the very beginning in the Qur'ānic School. This was where Ṭaha Ḥusayn accomplished two courses: one in the Qur'ān recitation, the other in the basics of Islam.

"He himself did not know when he learned the Qur'ān. (...) He recollected those times when he went to school sitting on the back of one of his brothers because the school was far away and he himself was too weak to walk."

Ṭaha Ḥusayn absorbed knowledge listening to his teacher and repeating after him. Then he was read suggested books; so he depended on many people. However, he did not feel bad at school. He was a good student, and, moreover, his teacher was also blind as well as some of the boys. At

school Ṭaha Ḥusayn did not limit himself to uncritical acceptance of what his teacher said; he asked questions and questioned those ideas that he did not understand or that were not logical to him. This often caused him trouble.

Ṭaha Ḥusayn did not only go to school to study; he took advantage of being a child. For a long time he attended school without learning anything; the only thing he did was playing with his peers.

This happened until his ignorance was discovered and he discredited himself before his father's and his teacher's eyes. They were disappointed which made him feel ashamed. His father told him:

"- Go away; I have thought you know the Qur'ān by heart."

And his teacher said:

"- God has rewarded me poorly for the time I had wasted with you and for my efforts I had spent on your learning."

These unpleasant events were motivated enough for Ṭaha Ḥusayn to learn the Qur'ān by heart and to deserve the title of Ṣayḥ.

The father wanted to have all his sons educated. He saw Ṭaha Ḥusayn as an al-Azhar University profesor in Cairo, sitting among his students under one of the pillars in the courtyard. Despite the financial problems, he was able to realize this intention gradually. However, the first sent to Cairo was Ṭaha's elder brother. Ṭaha was to learn suggested readings by heart till he was ready to go. So he went to the religious court to recite memorized parts of the didactic poem "Alfiyya" by Ibn Malik in the presence of the teacher.

At that time an immense misfortune came down on the family. Younger sister of Ṭaha's died.

"The girl was downcast and drowsy, but nobody noticed it. Sometimes children in villages and small towns are neglected, especially in families with many children. It is there that women believe in an irrational, peculiar philosophy of carelessness and "knowledge" which is almost criminal. A child complains but his or her mother rarely takes care of him or her... Which child never complains? (...) Even if the mother takes care of her child, still, she despises a doctor or she does not know any one. She trusts only criminal "quackish knowledge". Thus the boy lost his sight. he suffered from eyes inflammation which was neglected. Later, a quack doctor was called. He prescribed a medicine which caused his loss of sight. In the same way the girl lost her life. (...) What kind of illness was it? Only Allah knows."

Ṭaha Ḥusayn was highly critical about the backwardness of the then village. He was also critical about his family - his and his sister's ex-

amples were simply typical. He realized that his mother was dumb. And, despite the fact that it was the mother who contributed to the death of her daughter and to the disability of her son, he did not blame her for those tragedies, he saw the reason in the backwardness of the society and in the lack of elementary education. These led to such situations when one person made decisions for himself or herself as well as for his or her relatives. Thus, ignorance and conservative attachment to everlasting, traditional ways of treatment caused the death of the girl.

The description made by Ṭaha Ḥusayn was exceptionally careful. He did not keep secret that the example of his family was representative for most Egyptian families in those times. This clarity in formulating opinions is peculiar to the reality in which the author lived. This was an attempt to make people become aware of problems, an attempt to change the attitudes, which was later initiated by Ṭaha Ḥusayn in order to educate people and prepare them for taking advantage of the European cultural output.

The death of the girl initiated the series of misfortunes and suffering.

"Since that day everybody plunged into deep sorrow. Only a few months passed when the ṣayḥ lost his old father. After the next few months his mother lost her mother."

Finally in 1902 the plague of cholera caused the death of his elder brother, an eighteen-year-old student of medicine. The boy, being very sensitive by nature, felt this loss very much.

"And the boy will surely forget it all" - he wrote about himself. "But he will never forget the last groan which was uttered by his brother before he became silent for ever."

Ṭaha Ḥusayn could not see how his brother was dying. He did not see a convulsive grimace on his face, his sweaty forehead or his body hurled by retching. Ṭaha experienced this death by listening to the groans, either weakening or intensifying. He created the vision of his brother's death from the sounds. This vision was not only extremely accurate but reflective and piercing with pain. Ṭaha Ḥusayn admitted that his personal loss was also a great loss to Egypt, as his brother had been a young, medicine student of promise who could have helped a lot of people stay alive.

Thus, since his childhood, Ṭaha Ḥusayn was a serious boy whose personal sufferings added to his behaviour this pensiveness by bringing sorrow and bitterness into it.

"The psyche of our friend was changed too. He knew Allah truly and he desired to win His grace, to become close to Him through alms, prayers and sometimes through recitation of the Qur'ān. And Allah knew that he

did not do it because of his fear. Ṭaha blamed the way of behaviour in secular schools and he knew that his brother had neglected his religious duties. Ṭaha devoted himself to different religious practices to make up for his brother's guilts."

This inner maturity and strong morality helped him take a wise and important decision; the kind of a thing that would not be done by an ordinary child. Ṭaha understood well what sin, negligence of duties and guilt toward God meant. However, he differentiated between the old, naive, superstitious folk traditions and the old, wise laws based on the Qur'ān. The former ones were rebuked by him, the latter ones were shown as examples. He also blamed the influence of the secular way of life of Egyptians although he praised some European patterns of life: the separation of the University teachings from their interpretations based on the Qur'ān and old traditions. Still, apostasy was something he thought was wrong.

His autobiography is also an abundant source of information about social relations and political events; that is why it is not only interesting because of its aesthetic but also because of its cognitive virtues.

Ṭaha Ḥusayn felt deep affection for the members of his family and he felt affinity for his friends. He was a man of great heart, but he hid all his feelings. He talked little about himself and he minimized his needs to the essential ones. he was shy and secretive. His character and his fear of people were the reason of his introversion to some extent. On the other hand, a will to help others became his most important aim. Ṭaha Ḥusayn lived for other people - teaching and transmitting the knowledge acquired in Europe into Egyptian reality. He wanted to contribute to the cultural and educational development of his country.

In 1902 his father fulfilled his promise - the thirteen-year-old Ṭaha Ḥusayn was sent under the protection of his elder brother to Cairo. There, he became a student of al-Azhar. Despite his eagerness for learning and diligence, this period was not one of the happiest in his life.

"His complexion was white, his clothes were run-down, poverty was his sister. (...) Although he did not look nice, it was nice to see him sitting among other students during a lecture and listening to the Ṣayḥ as if he were swallowing his words."

In spite of the fact that Ṭaha and his brother got very little money from their father to rent a room and buy food and books, he did not suffer from any inconvenience. The only problem for him was his bedroom too small and badly furnished. Although that he ate the cheapest food and his money was taken by his brother, he did not feel unhappy because he was not materialist. He was happy to be able to learn at al-Azhar, to be able to

broaden his mind and to know more and more. However, al-Azhar disappointed him.

The second part of "al-Ayyām" describes that period of Ṭaha's life which he spent in al-Azhar, a Muslim university of Cairo, founded in the 10th century within the grounds of the mosque of al-Azhar. Ṭaha Ḥusayn met a lot of students, older than he was or at the same age. He knew the life of a big city although he himself made no use of this knowledge. Yet he found out very quickly that his views of studying and the practice were two different things. The knowledge taught at al-Azhar was only the uncritical passing of old Arabic texts from different sources whose essence was interpreted according to the old, routine way. Because he contrasted with illogical statements and demanded explanations for vague ones, Ṭaha Ḥusayn was scorned among his teachers, and punished. On the other hand, he gained the support of some of his fellow students.

Ṭaha Ḥusayn demanded the real knowledge and he believed he would gain at least a small particle of it. Also, the possibility of studying in this university made him happy and strong. Undoubtedly, he knew the basic canon of suggested reading matter, the Medieval Arabic texts of great grammarians, men of letters and poets.

"He felt vaguely but strongly that the knowledge is limitless, that people sometimes sacrifice their lives to it out get what is only easily accessible. And he, too, wanted to sacrifice his whole life and to get the most of what is easy to access. (...) He arrived in Cairo, at al-Azhar and he wanted to fling himself into this ocean of knowledge and drink as much as Allah would allow even if he was to drown in it. Is there a better death for a noble man than the death while exploring the knowledge?"

This is a peculiar credo, the summary of what was beloved by Ṭaha, of what he desired and he incessantly aimed at. The knowledge, used as a criterion for evaluating people, was his most important value. Hearing defects, sufferings, scarcity, disability and misfortune. However, before he reached it, he had to search for it, and suffer failures. Fortunately, he beat his friends at learning very quickly, which apart from his personal courage while discussing with professors, made him an honourable student.

"Schoolmates asked for help with grammar, stopped him, talked to him before or after the lecture, asked him to help with preparing the morning lecture. (...) They read for him and started to comment but he was better at it and showed more uniqueness. His schoolmates did not argue about anything, they listened to him carefully and with respect."

Still, the professors were of different opinions, which showed how conservative the university was and how narrow-minded the teachers were. Fortunately, there were few of them who valued Ṭaha Ḥusayn; but he, having become disaffected, stopped attending some lectures. Thus, his staying in al-Azhar was more and more pointless. After a few years of studying Ṭaha Ḥusayn recollected:

"This year was wasted and unprofitable; the boy learnt nearly nothing new except for what he read and what he was told by older students while they were studying or discussing. Having come back to al-Azhar the following year, he experienced deep anxiety because he did not know what to do. He could not stay in the village because he had nothing to do there. There were no advantages in staying in Cairo and listening to šayḥs' lectures."

Ṭaha Ḥusayn started to think his future over. he did not intend to let his father down; he himself wanted exactly the same thing his father did. He knew well there was no other alternative for him than a university post. He wanted it, he had a vocation for it, and it was what he could make a living by. What were other possibilities for a blind man in those times?

"The life itself imposed two possibilities of choice on people like him: the first was studying and getting a degree in al-Azhar. This guaranteed a daily ration of pancakes and a small salary. (...) The second was learning the Qur'ān and then reciting it during family ceremonies or funeral services. From time to time, he was frightened by the vision of the latter one by his father. So the only solution was to study in al-Azhar until his aim was achieved. Yet the whole process of studying was divided into two parts. The first one, "the material part", consisted of three stages: the enrolment, the awaiting and the reward. The second one, "the scientific way", obliged the students to attend lectures and to take exams after certain stages of learning. This was chosen by our friend."

Gradually, the life verified Ṭaha Ḥusayn's assumptions. He was made to exchange "the scientific stage" into the awaiting one. The discouragement of lectures and the financial situation made him give up the way he had initially chosen. This happened before he became the rightful student of al-Azhar. He became disaffected because of the lack of scientific competence of his teachers, he disliked the relations prevailing among the people of this university. His straightforwardness, idealism and being good-natured were contrasted with human faults, insincerity and hypocrisy.

"The boy found out for the first time in his life that all great esteem and fame, all forms of flattery and courtesy showed to eminent people were

nothing but idle talk. He also understood that loyalty most often is an empty word."

People like himself, hungry for knowledge and perceiving their professors' lack of knowledge and faults, were attracted by him:

"Those young boys couldn't breathe while being in al-Azhar."

As a punishment for his making fun of the professors, Ṭaha Ḥusayn was expelled from the college. However, after some time he was pardoned through the intercession of Aḥmad Luṭfī as-Sayyid¹, the editor of an influential daily newspaper, "al-Ġarīda"², with whom Ṭaha Ḥusayn established friendly connections and cooperation. Meanwhile, this distress was interrupted by the opening of the University of Cairo in 1908.

"At that time the University of Cairo was inaugurated and our youth rushed to enrol as its student. The zeal for life aroused in him; he established new contacts, and the professors could not be compared to the ones in al-Azhar. (...) The boy started a new life; he visited al-Azhar only once a week, sometimes twice. Although he was still enrolled there, he broke off with this college. He did not inform his father in order not to make the Šayḥ sad, and because his father did not know the new university and had no opinion about it."

Ṭaha Ḥusayn realized that the new university was better than al-Azhar. He wished to study there and he was glad that the political changes taking place in Egypt at that time made it possible to inaugurate it. The contacts with Europe helped liberalism in education and other domains spread. The University of Cairo was based on European standards which Ṭaha Ḥusayn wanted to know and which he had not encountered so far. He hoped to have an access to the real knowledge and he was not disappointed. However, realizing his father's opinions, he kept secret the fact that he had stopped studying in al-Azhar and began to attend classes in the University of Cairo. He did so because the older generation was unable to get to like the new methods of teaching.

¹ Aḥmad Luṭfī as-Sayyid (1972-1963), Egyptian writer and commentator; publisher and editor of "al-Ġarīda", a newspaper; the leader of the Ḥizb al-Umma (the National Party); the Secretary of Education, the Chairman of the Commission for Arab Language, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cairo; his output includes philosophical works, translations of Aristotle's works, numerous articles, autobiography "Qīṣṣat ḥayātī"; he contributed to the introduction of a new style in the Arab literature - the style which was clear, simple, devoid of florid style, not rhymed.

² al-Ġarīda (Newspaper), an Egyptian newspaper appearing from 1907 to 1914; the organ of Ḥizb al-Umma (the National Party); founded and edited by Aḥmad Luṭfī as-Sayyid; it defended progressive social and political reforms; famous writers, among them Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal, had their articles published there.

The third part of Ṭaha Ḥusayn's autobiography describes mostly his contacts with the University of Cairo. Ṭaha Ḥusayn made an effort to be able to study there.

"He was destined to hear something different from what he used to listen to and from what he was bored by."

When he became a student again he was delighted because he knew he would be closer and closer to the real knowledge. He was captivated by a professor who delivered the first lecture.

"His words were clear, well-balanced, right and accurate. They were unusual and completely new. The boy's mind and heart were in the possession of them. (...) The first group of students went away, but our friend stayed there and listened to the lecture again."

The main difference between the two universities consisted in the fact that the teachers from the University of Cairo carried on their lectures using their own words and passing on the knowledge which came from different sources. They did not quote uncritically only one author. For the first time in his life, it was possible for Ṭaha to discuss with the lecturers, to make his own comments and, first of all, ask about everything he did not understand or which was not mentioned during the lecture. Thanks to this, he was quickly recognized as a very good student. Thanks to the new university, he not only revised his actual knowledge, but he deepened it as well.

"He was informed about such things which he had never had an inkling of. (...) The youth was not there for three days already when his life was surprisingly and completely changed."

Since that time, his ties with the new college were inseparable and his greed for knowledge irresistible. He was satisfied with this change. All transformations that took place in Egypt and thanks to which the new university functioned were welcomed by him. At the same time his ties with Luṭfī as-Sayyid were tightened. Ṭaha Ḥusayn's gift for journalism was found out then, and, under Luṭfī's supervision, he improved oneself writing critical and polemic articles. He also became involved in politics; he supported Luṭfī as-Sayyid's party.

"He associated with "al-Ġarīda" and its editor and professor, Luṭfī as-Sayyid. The tie between them was so strong that they met each other several times every week! (...) Soon, he started to train himself in the art of writing prose. As soon as he started to write, he was known for his impudence and criticism."

His language was biting and his remarks apt. He had his own style of writing. He was a novice in writing then, but his maturity and strong per-

sonality were easily seen in his texts. He thought he had a vocation for exposing hypocrisy and conservative ideas in order to show people the truth and the right conduct based on the real knowledge and awareness.

Apart from Luṭfī as-Sayyid, also 'Abd al-'Azīz Ġāwīš appreciated Ṭaha Ḥusayn's gift. He made Ṭaha write quite a few critical articles. Through this activity, he had closer associations with two leading Egyptian parties: al-Ḥizb al-Waṭani and Ḥizb al-Umma³. 'Abd al-'Azīz Ġāwīš, seeing Ṭaha as a man with an outstanding mind and a strong personality, suggested that he should go to France to study. Soon, there was a chance of sending the best students of the University of Cairo for scholarships. The young scientist was put to the test. He had to convince his teachers that he was the right person to get this scholarship. Also, he had to learn French and know the French literature. After a few attempts, he managed to prove that he was one of the best learners and that his disability would not interfere with his studies. He also obtained his Ph. D. thesis in which he presented the profile of Abū'l-'Alā' al-Ma'arri, a blind Arab poet, philosopher and philologist who lived at the turn of the 10th and 11th centuries. Finally, in 1914 Ṭaha Ḥusayn sailed to France to study. Thanks to his ambitions, he became one of the best students.

"Soon, the boy realized that he had come to this country in order to study, pass exams and obtain scientific degrees which had not been got by any of his fellow countrymen."

Even his ignorance of Latin could not stop him from realization of his aim. Despite the lack of money, he managed to master that language.

In Montpellier, where he studied, he was rewarded for his sufferings - he met a French girl who brought happiness into his life. When they met, she read French literature to him.

"He felt as if he was born again and since the moment he heard that voice for the first time, he never sank into despair again."

"The young man came to love the life on the 18th of May that year (i.e. 1915)."

Ṭaha Ḥusayn had never before known the feeling which can exist between a woman and a man. So far, he had been concentrated on studies, and had forgotten that he was a young man whose heart had been lonely. He fell in love with that girl. However, he was not allowed to be delighted

³ Ḥizb al-Umma (the National Party), one of the first well-organized Egyptian political parties during Modernism; founded in 1907; the first party with detailed political, social and economical programs including, for example, a postulate of obligatory elementary education; the main leaders: Ḥassan 'Abd ar-Raziq, Aḥmad Luṭfī as-Sayyid.

with this happiness. He had to come back to Egypt because there was no money for scholarships.

Some time later, the students got permission to continue their studies in France. This time Ṭaha Ḥusayn went to Paris to study at the Sorbonne, where he got his Bachelor's degree, and then in 1917 - his Ph. D. Here in Paris, he joined his beloved again, and he even lived at her place. In a flash of emotions, he told her he loved her. At first, she rejected him but some time later she invited him to spend holidays together and they got married eventually.

In 1919, after graduating from the university, Ṭaha Ḥusayn together with his wife and a small daughter came back to Cairo. He began to work at the University of Cairo; he lectured in History and Literature of the Ancient Greece. He took up writing and translating (for example: selected works of Aristotle). He wrote for the newspaper "as-Siyāsa"⁴. In those early years, he spent his efforts on classical and french literature. Gradually, he became engaged in research of Arab literature. In 1925 he took over the Department of Arab History and Literature. It was then that he published the first volume of critical research work on old and modern Arab literature "Ḥadīṭ al-arba'ā'" ("Wednesday Discussions"). Ṭaha Ḥusayn wrote and published a lot of works. In this short biography the author is going to mention only the most important ones.

In 1926 the writer started to publish the first part of "al-Ayyām" in a literary magazine "al-Hilāl"⁵. Also, he published the volume two of "Ḥadīṭ al-arba'ā'" and the work that made Ṭaha Ḥusayn a controversial writer in Egypt and later in other Arab countries. It was "Fī ṣi'r al-āhili" ("About the Ḡahiliyyas poetry") in which the author brought the genuineness of Old-Arabian poetry. Ṭaha Ḥusayn used as a research method the one that had been used by R. Descartes. According to this method, everything that is not unquestionable must be negated. Proceeding in that way, he analysed

⁴ as-Siyāsa (the Politics), an Egyptian newspaper edited by Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal; contributed to the promotion of new literary criteria; its editor, the supporter and fighter for liberal and constitutional ideas, published in as-Siyāsa some literary works; poets from the "Apollo" group had their poems published there.

⁵ al-Hilāl (the Crescent), an Egyptian cultural and literary monthly; founded and edited by Ġyur'ī Zaydān in Cairo; initially, the editor published mostly his own articles concerning Arab History and Culture as well as concerning contemporary Arab literature and Arab language; later, he started to publish fiction-short stories and novels in episodes, translated or not - in al-Hilāl; also, he published articles concerning the women's role in the process of the development of the nation, and the women's position in family and society.

a lot of literary sources and came to the conclusion that many of them, thought to come from the Old Arab period, were written much later - in the Omayyad and the Abbasid Age. Ṭaha Ḥusayn realized that his nearly apocryphal views would have been recognized as heretical by conservatives. So it happened. However, the most important thing for Ṭaha Ḥusayn was the truth itself and the desire of passing it on to people. His aim was to make the whole world look at the familiar matters in a different way, even if he would lose his position. In fact, so it happened but his aim was partly achieved - he succeeded in gathering some people as his allies who were convinced that he was right. In answer to his work, al-Azhar accused him of heresy. And again, Luṭfī as-Sayyid, the then Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cairo, stood up for him. He was also backed up by the Secretary of Education and the Prime Minister. Later, when the excitement between Ṭaha Ḥusayn and his opponents subsided, he took the office of the Chief of Faculty of Arts. He was very popular among his students.

In 1929, the first part of "al-Ayyām" was published in a book form. In spite of the fact that Ṭaha Ḥusayn did not want to become involved in politics, he could not escape from the changes occurring in Egypt. As a result of them, Ṭaha Ḥusayn was dismissed in 1930 after he had refused to cooperate with the newspaper "aš-Ša'b", which was the press organ of the new governing party, Ḥizb aš-Ša'b. Ṭaha Ḥusayn was against it and he objected to its backwardness and conservatism of ideas.

Till 1934, when he came back to university, he busied himself with writing. In 1933, his monograph about the Prophet Muḥammad, "Alā ḥamiš as-Sira" ("On the margin of the biography of the Prophet"), and the other one dedicated to two most famous Egyptian poets Ḥāfiẓ⁶ and Šawqī⁷, "Ḥāfiẓ wa Šawqī" ("Ḥāfiẓ and Šawqī"), were published. "Du'a al-karawān" ("The scream of a partridge"), his first long short story was published a

⁶ Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm (1872-1932), one of the greatest contemporary Egyptian poets, called "the poet of the Nile"; finished the war school; worked in the Egyptian Department of War, took part in the expedition to Sudan; wrote articles engaged into the social situation; published: "Diwān" ("The Poetic Collection"), also some prose: "Layālī Šātiḥ" ("The Nights of Šātiḥ") - one of the first attempts to write an Egyptian novel.

⁷ Aḥmad Šawqī (1868-1932), rated as one of the most famous contemporary Egyptian and Arab poets; born in Cairo, studied law in France, went to England, Algeria, and Spain; he was given the title of "the prince of poets"; his works were mostly eulogistic, written for the leaders, but also social and patriotic ones; he wrote a collection of poems "aš-Šawqiyyāt" ("The Poems of Šawqī") and many plays, the most famous of them "Mišra' Kliyūbaṭra" ("The Death of Cleopatra").

year later. A psychological and philosophical study, describing an internal life of Abū'l-'Alā', "Ma' Abū'l-'Alā' fī si"nihi" ("With Abū'l-'Alā' in his prison"), was published in 1935. The next work was dedicated to an Arab neoclassical poet, al-Mutanabbī: "Ma' al-Mutanabbī" ("With al-Mutanabbī"), published in 1936. In 1939 the second part of "al-Ayyām" was also published. Soon after that, he took the office of the adviser in the Department of Education, where he worked till 1942. Working there, he executed the plans of cultural development of the Egyptian society. Among his achievements was the formation of elementary education. he postulated that women should have the same rights as men as far as education is concerned. After the Department had been eliminated, Ṭaha Ḥusayn became the Vice-Chancellor of the University in Alexandria, to the foundation of which he contributed a lot.

In 1945, again, he was removed from his active life. This break lasted five years; in 1950 he became the Secretary of Education. Meanwhile, he had a few short stories published, and began to issue a cultural monthly "al-Kātib al-Miṣrī" ("The Egyptian Writer"). In this paper he acquainted readers with literature of the East and the West.

On the 23rd of July, 1952, the Naser Revolution broke out. This, also, influenced the writer's activity. He often changed his workplaces but this did not stop him from publishing new works. In 1957 he published another volume of "Wednesday Discussions". He, again, took to translating the works of Sophocle in 1959. "aš-Šayḥāni" ("Two Šayḥs"), presenting the profiles of Abū Bakr and 'Umar, was published in 1960. Also, the third part of the memoirs came out in Beirut in 1967.

In his declining years, Ṭaha Ḥusayn was one of the most famous Egyptian writers. In the domain of literature, he introduced significant innovations into comparative research; he was critical about the old Egyptian literature indicating weak points and including criticism, he made the native and foreign literature, well known in the Egyptian society. He was famous all over the world. he got the degree of honorary doctorate from the universities in Lyon, Montpellier, Rome, Oxford, Athens, and Madrid. He was given Legion of Honor and the great cross of the Medal of Alfons 10th of Spain. He was a member of the Arab Academy in Cairo and Damascus, the Royal Academy of History in Madrid, and the academy Dei Lincei in Rome.

He died on 28th October, 1973. His wife, Susan, was with him until the last moment. She was his greatest love and he was grateful to her for her help thanks to which he achieved so much. He thought highly of her and valued her for being his best friend. He saw her as his guardian angel.

In the autobiography of Ṭaha Ḥusayn the language is modern and simple. He refreshed in all his works the lexis of the Arab language; also, he was not so rigid as far as the grammar rules are concerned. Thanks to this new tendency, Ṭaha Ḥusayn has been rated among Arab modernists.

The language in all his works is not mixed with dialects, even in quotations. The author used vocabulary, stylistic means and grammar in order to create coherence in all his works. Although he did not put any descriptions of characters and objects, his works are full of vivid depictions based on auditory and kinaesthetic observations and full of descriptions of inner feelings or psyche of characters. With no problems at all, we can find all those features in "al-Ayyām". It is a short story which gives information about the author and the epoch he lived in, about events taking place in the society, and about people surrounding the author. It is not only a historical report or biography. Sometimes, it makes people think for a while, give his opinions or choose; sometimes it is funny although further it is depressing; sometimes it gives examples.

The plot is from time to time dramatic and surprising; it goes on slowly - the author described each event precisely as if he wanted to recollect it and think about it. While reading, it is hard to believe that these happened in reality. The author judged his and other people's behaviour; he pointed out all their faults and weaknesses, he criticised and praised them.

In "al-Ayyām" there are very few statements of other people. They are usually reported which makes the whole work a long, critical, subjective monologue.

The characters are mainly introduced through the author's praise or rebuke of their personality features. We must trust the author; sometimes the description of behaviour helps. A reader meets a lot of people in this book - the author's family, friends, neighbours, professors, his wife and benefactors. We are also acquainted with the reality in small villages and Cairo; we are acquainted with political activists, modernists and conservatists from al-Azhar and liberals from the University of Cairo.

"al-Ayyām" is a source of information about Egypt in Ṭaha Ḥusayn's times. The profiles of typical Egyptians are masterly characterized. This book is full of realism and criticism which are widely used in modern Egyptian literature.

In this autobiography the author calls himself "the boy" or "the youth". He does not know everything; he often says expressis verbis that he does not have the faintest idea of some of the things, that those things are completely new to him and that he is frightened. To the readers he seems to be very shy and secretive on the one hand; but on the other, he is full of

fortitude and strong will, he is stubborn and curious about the world's affair.

In this work there are a lot of different interwoven threads; the plot is set in different places and everything happens during a few dozen years.

To sum up, it is worth explaining the title of this very work and comparing ʿAḥa Ḥusayn to Prometheus. The author hopes that the facts presented make the readers feel sure about this comparison.

ʿAḥa Ḥusayn - Prometheus, a human being of supernatural achievements. It is him who gave people a great gift, showed them what they could not see, the one who "robbed" the treasure house for the benefit of mankind exposing himself to danger. All this was done for mankind - not for fame, popularity or money. People have been given the light - we should pay homage to him. he was an ordinary man and still he was different. His ambition was to be followed by us - to explore the knowledge and pass it to others.

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QUMRANOLOGICA IX*

James H. Charlesworth and Henry W. L. Rietz (eds.) with P. W. Flint, D. T. Olson, J. A. Sanders, E. M. Schuller, and R. E. Whitaker, *The Dead Sea Scrolls · Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Texts with English Translations* vol. 4A: *Pseudepigraphic and Non-Masoretic Psalms and Prayers = The Princeton Theological Seminary Dead Sea Scrolls Project* (Mohr Siebeck Tübingen and Westminster John Knox Press Louisville, Kentucky, 1997) XXIV + 296 pp. DM 168,80 [ISBN 3-16-146649-7]; hence: *Psalms & Prayers*.

James H. Charlesworth and Carol A. Newsom (eds.) with H. W. L. Rietz, B. A. Strawn, and R. E. Whitaker, *The Dead Sea Scrolls · Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Texts with English Translations* vol. 4B: *Angelic Liturgy: Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice = The Princeton Theological Seminary Dead Sea Scrolls Project* (Mohr Siebeck Tübingen and Westminster John Knox Press Louisville, Kentucky 1999) XXIV + 196 pp. DM 148,00 [ISBN 3-16-146914-3]; hence: *Angellit*

Paweł Zdun, *Pieśni Ofiary Szabatowej z Qumran i Masady = Teksty z Pustyni Judzkiej* vol. 1 edited by Z. J. Kapera (The Enigma Press Cracow 1996) xxii + 198 pp. + 4 tables [ISBN 83-86110-25-2]; hence *Zdun*.

* "Qumranologica I" in *Folia Orientalia* XXXI (1995) pp. 211-238 plus missing notes on the back cover after p. 260, "Qumranologica II" and "Qumranologica III" in *FolOr* 32 (1996) pp. 165-182, 183-199, "Qumranologica IV" and "Qumranologica V" in *FolOr* 33 (1997) pp. 197-208, 209-222, "Qumranologica VI" and "Qumranologica VII" in *FolOr* 34 (1998) pp. 183-192, 193-202, "Qumranologica VIII" in *FolOr* 35 (1999) pp. 207-223. These review-articles will be referred to, if at all, by their titles only.