

E.M.W. TILLYARD and C.S. LEWIS, *The Personal Heresy*,  
Oxford University Press, 1965, 150 pp., 6/-.

Professor C.S. Lewis once defined the 'Personal Heresy' as the belief that poetry is, or should be, the expression of the poet's personality. In this essay he mentioned Dr. E.M.W. Tillyard's *Milton* as an example of the 'personal heresy'. This initiated a controversy, which was first published in 1939 and is now reprinted in paperback. Professor Lewis defends an objective and impersonal theory of poetry. He considers poetry as an art or a skill comparable to the skill of any technician, and protests against the contemporary tendency to 'poetolatry'. So does Dr. Tillyard, but he believes that the general truth expressed by the poet cannot be separated from the latter's personality. Though rejecting the notion that poets are supermen, he yet contends that the poet and the ordinary man are on two different levels of feelings. The controversy gave rise to such questions as: what is personality? What is the role of the poet? What is poetry about? The answers to these questions are the most interesting part of the controversy. This exchange of opinions, while remaining courteous, is very challenging; it sheds light on questions essential to the understanding of poetry and helps the reader to define his own approach to it. — H. Maes-Jelinek.

In *Revue des Langues Vivantes = Tijdschrift voor Levende Talen*, 33(1967)3, p. 335.