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Editorial

Wells: The P.E.N. Club insists upon this, free expression of opinion—even of opposition opinion. I do not know if you are prepared yet for that much freedom.

Stalin: We Bolsheviks call it “self-criticism.” It is widely used in the U.S.S.R.

WE devote considerable space in this issue to material concerned with recent discussions on literature and the drama in the Soviet Union.

The importance of these documents does not lie exclusively in the analysis of certain literary tendencies or in the enunciation of the principles of Soviet criticism, important though these are, but in the broad picture it gives of the whole controversy, a very different one from the impression given in the Press by its selection of merely one or two incidents, like the censure of Zoshchenko or the criticism of Somerset Maugham's plays. Taken together, they reveal that what we have here is no bolt from the blue directed against the literary world, but the culmination of a discussion which began several years ago. Secondly, the resolution of the Central Committee reflects widespread criticism and uneasiness. As the *Literaturnaya Gazeta* says, the official leaders of literary criticism were the last to wake up to the significance of a growing storm of criticism on these issues. Thirdly, it is clear that the writers themselves, both creative writers and critics, are themselves genuinely concerned and are taking an active part in renewing literary standards and carrying the development of Soviet literature to a higher stage.

In other words, what we witness is not the spectacle of cowed and intimidated writers reluctantly toeing the Party line, but writers, readers and critics everywhere in the Union overhauling their work, vigorously criticising their weaknesses, evolving constructive plans for improvements, tackling the urgent tasks of clarifying critical theory. That this was initiated from the Central Committee is a great tribute to it. That it meets with immediate and widespread response is a further tribute, as it is also a sign of the close relation of the Party and the people and of the complete confidence of the people in the Party.

The documents recording the resolutions and the debates which

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have taken place in Russia are of particular interest, not only for the arguments brought forward but because taken as a whole they show clearly that the attitude of the Party and the Government to literature is completely different from that of a censorship and of rigid control. This fact is often overlooked just because it is so massive. While we are worrying about Zoshchenko, we are apt to forget that *the whole Soviet Union is arguing about this issue*. Authoritarian governments do not argue at all; they forbid; they decide over people's heads; they censor. The books which have been appearing freely for twenty-five years would never have appeared at all under a totalitarian régime. From the earliest days of the Revolution it was *after* books, plays, operas, films, musical works and so on had appeared, without interference, and had achieved a wide publicity, that criticism and discussion was launched. This is because, while the Party does not hesitate to lead, it is equally its responsibility to persuade, to carry the minds of people with it. Nothing can be done in the Soviet Union that is dictated from above. Soviet policy demands the whole-souled co-operation of the masses—not alone opposition or coerced acquiescence, but even indifference is fatal to it. More responsibility, more widespread understanding and intellectual agreement with policy, are required than under other systems.

That is why the aim of these discussions is to get literary men and their readers moving under their own steam. Merely to have banned the works of Zoshchenko would have effected nothing, and yet that is how many people are regarding the whole issue. The works of Zoshchenko have not been banned; they have been severely criticised. And, in any case, that is not the important issue. What are we looking at? What do these documents say? Why do we not see that what they represent is not an act of censorship, but something totally different—a *tremendous discussion by writers themselves*, which, to everyone with any kind of feeling for honesty, is transparently frank and sincere; no put-up job to please authority, but the beginning of a new movement in Soviet literature. What they are all talking about and thinking about is not a Government decree, nor Zoshchenko, but the future, their tasks, their opportunities, their resolve to go forward. Compare this with the attitude of writers to the Tsarist censorship, the stubborn, resentful silence, the determined and skilful evasion, the all but unanimous opposition to it. Can we suppose that Tikhonov and Simonov and the rest are to any less degree than Turgeniev

Editorial

and Tolstoi men of complete integrity? Nothing can ever make a Russian a docile time-server. No, these tough, vigorous, independent and 100 per cent. Socialist writers are afraid of no government and hostile to no government. They wholeheartedly agree with both the criticisms and the positive proposals, and what they say they mean with their whole hearts.

It is perfectly clear in what circumstances the mistakes to which attention is drawn arose. The war has overturned normal life in the Soviet Union to a very much greater extent than here. Authors have either been in the front line, using their craft in the cause, or evacuated to distant parts. Leningrad, the chief cultural centre of the Soviet Union, endured the cruellest siege in all history. Small wonder that the writers got out of touch; the Writers' Union found itself more concerned with finding flats for demobilised and returning literary men than with literary direction, standards lapsed, the continuous tension involved in keeping the development of theory in step with a changing situation was relaxed. There was a certain amount of literary anarchism, dilettantism and intellectual slackness and confusion.

Now Soviet writers are taking the situation in hand in a vigorous fashion that they may be worthy of a country that has shown such superb qualities, and capable of playing their essential role in face of the tremendous opportunities of the post-war situation.

Soviet Russia does not mark time; it goes on. It is very easy for us to misunderstand entirely the periodic shake-up which marks a transition to a new phase. We too often regard it as a crisis, the sudden revelation of a hidden weakness, a kind of halt or collapse. It is not so. It is a sign of strength, of vitality, of renewal and above all of that progress *per saltum* which every Marxist recognises as the method of evolutionary advance.

Let us look in greater detail at some of the issues raised.

The most severe judgment is delivered on Zoshchenko and Akhmatova, who quite clearly forfeit their right to membership of the Writers' Union by their open contempt for the Soviet way of life. They suffer, of course, no kind of exile or punishment. They are not, as our boggy-ridden alarmists would no doubt like to be able to put about, sent off to a concentration camp! It will be difficult for them to get their stuff published until they start writing something a good deal better than the trash they have recently got away with. That is all. The Zoshchenko that is thus censured is not, of course, the writer of the witty little satirical pieces that used to appear in

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Lilliput. These stories were mostly written twenty or more years ago and were tolerable then because it was a period of mixed capitalism and Socialism and a time when speculators, shady characters, and transition type of all kinds abounded. Even at that time they were not at all characteristic of Soviet life as a whole. Singling out as they did only the worst features, they had a sort of vogue here, not entirely because they were clever, but also because they spread the idea that the thriving Socialist society of 1936 was really only the muddle of inefficiency and bureaucracy that a highly tendencious satire of fifteen years before depicted. For the same reason, after the 1939 Russo-German Non-aggression Pact, it was the only Soviet book which was allowed to appear in translation in Germany. But Zoshchenko's recent work has consisted of either sordid muck-raking or cynical trivialities, quite devoid of the sparkling humour of earlier days. It has aroused a storm of indignant protest everywhere in the Soviet Union.

The Party has the responsibility for leadership and guidance in artistic as in all other matters, Communists not holding the narrow departmental creed that art is a sacrosanct province of its own, completely divorced from the rest of life. The Party has as much the right and duty to recall artists to their faith as expert doctors and engineers would have to check a lapse of members of the medical profession to the practices which obtained before anti-septic surgery and the germ theory of disease. No one questions the new creed; it is accepted as rationally and wholeheartedly as we accept modern science. Anyone reading the verbatim reports of the literary discussions can see immediately that tough, able and independent minded literary men do not for a moment resent or challenge this criticism. They welcome it as a call to take up their literary task with greater ardour and more care. It is not a case of an alien and uncomprehending officialdom lecturing a crowd of tame hack writers; but of the whole literary world making it *its own business* to put its house in order and doing so, as everyone who has recently returned from meeting the Russian writers tells us, with enthusiasm and seriousness and the utmost good humour.

Zoshchenko, then, does not matter in the least except as a most extreme and almost unique example of complete isolation from and hostility to the Soviet civilisation in which he works and to its moral standards. What annoyed all sensible Russians was the fact that a tiny literary clique were easy-going about what they acknowledged

Editorial

as pernicious and from motives of friendship and snobbery made a fuss of him and put him on the editorial board of an important literary paper. As to his story of the monkey, of which much more has been made here than in Russia, the point is a simple one. A literary man in "a safe hotel" tells the people of Leningrad and Stalingrad that they were stupid to fight on and get bombed; any monkey in the Zoo knows better than that. As Kingsley Martin says, the monkey stands for "a recalcitrant, discipline-disliking" soldier or fighting citizen. It is "positively pathological," he says, to object to this monkey view, even presumably at the height of the Battle of Stalingrad or the Siege of Leningrad. I venture to say that no journal in this country would print a story to the effect that any monkey in the Zoo had more sense than the Londoners who stuck out the blitz. If any paper had done so, Kingsley Martin's view would, I hope and expect, have been exactly the same as that of all decent Russians about Zoshchenko.

I notice that Mr. Richard Church, in *John o' London's Weekly*, speaks of Alexander Werth's "savagely ironical" broadcast on this issue. I did not find it so. Werth does not share the Communist point of view, and his position, too, requires him to write with some detachment, for the rest his account is admirably objective. Werth knows well what Leningrad went through, and I see not "savage irony," but understanding, when he writes: "The objections raised by the Central Committee to the story were that Zoshchenko had treated a town in the war zone with complete levity, and that the Soviet people in the shop and bath-house were made to appear at least as absurd—indeed, more absurd—than the monkey."

The only other person who has met with anything more than criticism is Tikhonov. We are told that he has been demoted. The facts are that before the war Fadeyev was President of the Writers' Union. When Fadeyev took on special war responsibilities, Tikhonov took his place. In the reorganised Union the position of President has been abolished. Fadeyev takes over the principal running of the organisation as Secretary, with fifteen sections each run by an assistant secretary, of which Tikhonov is one.

This kind of reorganisation, following a vigorous period of discussion and criticism, is a common feature of Soviet life and one which we find it extremely hard to understand. We are accustomed to allow rottenness to accumulate beneath a crust of respectability; our Press is in the hands of those who see to it that scandals are well concealed. When the lid does blow off, the facts are usually still uglier

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than we are allowed to know. A great hushing-up campaign seeks to minimise and obscure them. Not so in the Soviet Union, in which democracy flourishes on the basis of frequent and tremendous rows, vigorous, scathing and continuous criticism, newspapers full of exposures and denunciations every day, which would be enough to drive our carefully screened and buffered administrators and politicians frantic. This method of popular control, this insistence that people with responsibility shall live in the limelight of publicity, is an essential of Soviet democracy—far too democratic a procedure for most of us!

This has always been so. One remembers Stalin's campaign on business organisation and responsibility, various campaigns on the collective farms, then during the war itself the criticism of the old-time officers, the brass-hats and the Higher Command, of which the play *Front* by Korneichuk was a part. I doubt whether any such play frankly criticising the Higher Command could have appeared in this country at the height of the war.

Scores of other examples could be given. Commissars of Cabinet rank have been demoted, highly placed officials turned out and radical overhauls of personnel from top to bottom carried through. At the present moment this kind of exposure, reorganisation and tightening up is going on in the collective farm sector and in many sections of the administration. There have been similar campaigns in science, education, and many times in the field of culture.

It is invariably supposed in this country to be the prelude to the final collapse of the Soviet system, to a change of Government, a reversal of fundamental policy or what not. It is exactly the reverse. It is, on the one hand, the periodic elimination of bureaucratic abuses, slackness and so on, and, on the other, the radical alteration of methods required by the successful development of Soviet society. It is a sign of health and of strength. It makes for greater health and strength.

The present literary row is precisely one of this sort. No one in the Soviet Union is alarmed. A good, healthy, downright discussion rages, the gloves are off, everyone says what he thinks, the readers are in on this as well as the writers, everyone is interested. There is much hard hitting and very few hard feelings; many knuckles are rapped but no one is bullied.

G. W. Stonier, in the *Observer* for October 20th, quotes from Professor Janko Lavrin's introduction to his collection of Russian short stories: "There is a mistaken notion abroad that the Soviet

Editorial

authors have not the freedom to criticise conditions in their own country"; and caustically adds: "That is the notion certainly." Lavrin is correct in his statement and Stonier wrong.

The censure passed on Soviet writers and journals is not in the least a rebuke for criticising *conditions*. Soviet literature is full of such criticism. The row in question, the exposure of collective farm abuses and all the other campaigns, are just such criticism. The writers are censured for being too easy-going, *for not being critical enough*. Would that our own almost total lack of serious literary criticism could receive as severe a castigation. Would that our own purveyors of defeatism, decadence and contempt for human values could have their work subjected to such devastating and salutary examination. It would be good for all of us.

It is not the humorous sallies of Zoshchenko, the satirical condemnation of abuses, to which objection has been taken. *Crocodile* is full of humorous criticism. There is malicious fun, and scarifying satire at the expense of every kind of abuse and shortcoming in Press and short story, in novel and play, on the radio and in the music-hall and circus. To anyone living in Soviet Russia, the British view that Soviet authors are artists in uniform is simply incomprehensible.

Of course, this is no new charge against the Soviet Union from the ranks of Western individualism. Perhaps there is no more convincing exposure of its rottenness and no more moving statement of the real situation than that of Romain Rolland. Rolland started out with all the convictions of the typical liberal intellectual, and they drove him at first into the type of criticism of Soviet interference with freedom with which we are familiar. Two facts drove him inch by inch to overwhelming confidence in and support for Soviet Russia. Firstly, the realisation that the liberal attack was playing straight into the hands of the worst reactionary forces in Europe. The intellectuals, he says, were unfaithful; they deserted their posts; their vaunted independence was seen to be complete servility to their real masters. They made "excellent servants" to the reaction. Secondly, the full and frank discussion which he conducted in the Soviet Press with Gladkov, Gorky and others, together with his own observation of the widening freedoms of Soviet life, ultimately convinced him of the real harmony between individual and social in Soviet society.

He had hoped, he says of the days when he issued his great manifesto on Independence of Thought, signed by most of the great

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literary figures of the world, "for a valiant minority of intellectuals" who would really fight for the cause of progress and truth. He was completely disillusioned. "I had not," he confesses, "seen through to the depths of the bourgeois ideology or plumbed the hearts of that sorry species." They well knew, he says, "how to come to terms with life." He discovered "a profound disorder in their mental life—incredible hesitations and incoherence," the "vice of an idealism of thought far too habituated in the course of generations to exist on the margins of action, far too little accustomed to grapple with reality."

He says of their professed struggle for "freedom": Yes, the mind was free, and so were the reactionaries, to do what they would in the world. So many fine phrases, so many great words, but all, he came to see, emptied of their real content, become "fetish words," refilled with meaning the very opposite of that for which they were supposed to stand. "Words—abstractly true—it is so convenient to be true in the abstract."

"Ideological hypocrisy has never ceased to grow, with the rising tide of democracy."

So far Romain Rolland.

I cannot help feeling that behind much of the misunderstanding of this Russian situation there is firstly a profound feeling among many writers here and elsewhere in the West of being completely out of touch with the democratic environment and its tendencies; they loathe it as all conservatives loathe it, because at heart they despise the people and because they think they have more to lose than to gain in a society bereft of privilege; consequently they desire to retreat into complete isolation and, since they cannot honestly comment on the life whose drift they fear, they are reduced to morbid introspection, bitter cynicism and dreary lamenting. But I leave to Mr. Horvath a profounder analysis of "contemporary bourgeois folk-lore." Arising from this attitude is, of course, a complete rejection of the artist as a member of society and as a prophet of revolutionary change. Hence the completely nonsensical pose of the independence of art from politics and ideas, in spite of the Bible, Dante, Milton, Cervantes, Shakespeare, Dryden, Ben Jonson, Defoe, Swift, even Wordsworth and Shelley, not to mention Balzac and all the classical Russians from Pushkin to Tolstoi.

Secondly, from the same source arises this horror of criticism which is labelled artistic independence. I can only say that in view

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of deplorable depths of our own literature to-day the finest thing that could happen to us would be just such a scalding stream of criticism as is bringing new health and life to Soviet literature.

We cannot but rejoice that Soviet humanism is putting in its right place that inward-turning, utterly corrupt and anti-social literary tendency which, since Joyce and Proust, has been characteristic of our dying culture. Here it poses as the defence of individuality against State Socialism, of freedom against totalitarianism, and, with cynical hypocrisy, of Christian moral principles against paganism. The controversy is but the ideological expression of the antagonism between the new civilisation of Soviet Russia and the last stage of capitalism, between developed democracy and fascism. On the political side we see it in the sharp divisions of the Peace Conference and the world-wide anti-Soviet drive of these post-war years.

Whatever adds fuel to the fire of Anti-Soviet propaganda, or seeks to reinforce the claim that we alone stand for human rights and ethical integrity, while Soviet totalitarianism repudiates them, must be exposed as playing straight into the hands of the worst political elements, those who built up Hitler in the pre-war years, who hoped for the destruction of the Soviet Union, who supported every reactionary power in Europe, and would to-morrow, if they could, undo all that the war has achieved and wipe Socialism, trade unionism and democracy from the face of the world. Koestler, who openly advocates war against the Soviet Union, George Orwell, who hates it as violently as Churchill or Mosley, and others like them, are with little disguise carrying on the work of Goebbels where he left off in rallying all who will listen to them to "the defence of civilisation against Bolshevism."

But we are equally and indeed even more concerned with the well-meaning liberals who waver between this group and opposition to it. Of these, Kingsley Martin is an example. His letter in reply to my strictures in the last issue we print in full among "Communications." It is an interesting document. He begins by expressing great satisfaction that he is criticised by both ourselves and the extreme Right. It is difficult to argue with someone who doesn't see that we are in the middle of a war in which there are effectually only two sides. In such a situation, neutrality will always claim the moral superiority of being "above the battlefield" and will always represent the cowardice which refuses to take sides and makes a virtue of its irresponsibility. What does

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neutrality mean in effect? It means giving a platform for the enemy in every alternate number. It is not enough to say that from time to time an excellent article by Alexander Werth appears, or the Wallace Letter, if equal publicity is given to a full-page boost of Gollancz's *Our Threatened Values* by Joad or to the latest Polish anti-Soviet propaganda. It is no good the commanding officer holding his sector of the line on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, but letting the enemy through on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.

I not only admit in passing, but strongly emphasise, that Kingsley Martin is in quite a different position from Koestler, Orwell and the rest, and that a great deal of his article on *Morals and Politics* comes down definitely on the right side. That is precisely what makes his treason so deadly. It is not a "careless phrase" but a divided mind and fundamental lack of consistency that causes him after accepting the fact that if the means chosen does attain the good end it is thereby justified, to box the compass and assert that the only means chosen should be those that "are in themselves good." Kingsley Martin tries desperately to keep his balance by standing first on one leg and then on another, as is clearly shown in his article, with its glaring contradiction, which is a perfect model of the *New Statesman* itself. He complains bitterly that I call him a former pacifist who, even before the war, was sufficiently realistic to see the need for resistance. I regard that as a perfectly fair characterisation of both him and Victor Gollancz. It cost them both, to my recollection, much anguish of mind before they concluded that "the failure to act while action was safe has brought us to a pass in which one has to face the risk of war in order to avoid it."¹ "That," he continued, "for every man who saw the last war has been an almost overwhelming strain." It was, too, the pacifist that after Munich could still write: "To-day one dares to hope for another respite and therefore another chance of avoiding final catastrophe." But if Kingsley Martin can place his hand upon his heart and assure me that neither the belief that "all war is wrong," nor the belief that the values of Western civilisation are absolute existed in his mind between the two wars, I will delete his name from the list. But I will still say that by continually opening the columns of the *New Statesman* to such articles as Joad's exposition and defence of Gollancz's *Our Threatened Values* he has done as much as anyone to spread precisely that liberal creed which

¹ Critic in the *New Statesman*, October 1st, 1938.

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in his own words logically ends in pacifism and which is the whole basis of the world anti-Soviet campaign of to-day.

Moreover, he himself draws from it, and from nowhere else, the whole basis of his own frequent attacks on the Soviet Union, which are completely in line with those of Orwell and Koestler and add fuel to the fire. What is the use after that of pretending that his own ethical position is a more reasonable one? It is—or it *was*, until he hops back on to the other leg to join the champions of Western values.

Nor does it extenuate his offence that he makes certain perfunctory concessions as to Soviet achievements. It aggravates it. It is the whole function of these good liberals, who are so progressive, so sympathetic, who are *so different* from the real enemies of Russia, so warmly appreciative of what is good in the Soviet "experiment," to lower the defences of decent people by these professions and by publishing much excellent pro-Soviet material, only, having done so, the more effectually to switch over to an attack which is fundamentally quite as damaging as anything the worst reactionary ever wrote. It is another example of the ethical argument, where first he writes reasonably and thus makes reasonable people listen, and then somersaults over to the Joad-Gollancz position. In both cases his readers are themselves jockeyed into the divided-mind attitude that justifies itself by its progressivism while in effect it says the same as the enemy and goes over to the enemy's side.

How clear this is can be seen by glancing at the review article on *The Dark Side of the Moon*. Kingsley Martin complains that he never said that he accepted the propaganda lie about the Katyn murders, but, on the contrary, "pointed out that it would be easy to refute such dubious propaganda." In the first place, he did not point that out. What he said was that the Communist "could, of course, say much in reply" on "such a controversial issue," which is not at all the same thing. Secondly, I did not accuse him of accepting the Katyn murders, but of swallowing, hook, line and sinker, a book whose credibility must be damned in the eyes of every reasonable man because it contains that and other obvious lies. Once again, Kingsley Martin, like a reasonable being, does not accept outrageous lie No. 1, and the whole point of my rebuke depends on this "progressive" concession on his part; for having shown us all how moderate he is, he does accept outrageous lie No. 2, and we then have three columns of unadulterated and wicked

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nonsense about "Asiatic ruthlessness." Life is cheap in "Asia" (*sic*), misery among these degraded Bolsheviks "no longer produces reactions of pity," the contrast of our Christian kindliness and unwavering belief in inalienable human rights and Soviet brutality, devoid of such principles, pitiless and iron of soul. And out comes the old argument that the Leninists believe that the end justifies any means, even though he is in his letter frantically claiming credit for agreeing almost wholly with my refutation of all that nonsense. Let us be utterly frank. This article assumes what Kingsley Martin, when pressed in controversy is compelled to deny; it is rooted in the "Means and Ends" position and in Absolute Values; secondly, it does as much damage, as its author knows it does, as any anti-Soviet propaganda now being printed; indeed, it does much more damage, because of the source from which it comes. Such an attack completely crosses the line and is simply nothing whatever to do with "good and bad" existing side by side in the U.S.S.R. and subjecting "Soviet errors or evils to the usual process of criticism."

Kingsley Martin must really not be surprised if this thin disguise of friendliness does not, in the eyes of sensible people, excuse him for the acceptance and dissemination of accusations which, however balanced by admissions of certain achievements, completely concede the main charge and make inevitable a verdict of guilty against the Soviet Union. That is why we say he is a collaborator. No one wants to "wound" him, or "throw dirt" at him politically. This is utterly childish. We are concerned at the objective role which he, *and many like him*, play, regardless of their high personal qualities. This is a vital issue, a matter of life and death, and the exceptional danger of the delusions which these very qualities disguise demands a ruthless exposure. That has nothing to do with the respect and indeed affection which we may feel personally for some of those primarily concerned. Nor do we see, as he himself does, any grounds for either smug satisfaction or amusement in the contempt which his allies express for the liberal phrases with which he disguises his treachery. The Fascist has never had anything but contempt for the liberals and social-democrats who do their work for them. And when they have finished with them they treat them no better than the Communists they have betrayed.

In this issue we print a résumé, with long excerpts from speeches and resolutions, of much interesting material on the literary

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controversy in the Soviet Union. Mr. Horvath's article on "Contemporary Bourgeois Folklore," and Douglas Garman's Communication on "Personality and the Planned Society," shed much light on the egocentric morbidity of Akhmatova and Zoshchenko and their opposite numbers in the West. We hope to print in the next issue the important speech of A. A. Zhdanov to the Leningrad Writers.

The ethical issue which we opened last quarter we continue in this number in the controversy with Kingsley Martin and the interesting article by Professor Russell, who, writing as a non-Marxist, yet demolishes the pretensions of the Absolutists with the completeness which we might expect from any scientific student of the development of thought and morals.

May we express our pleasure at the very many articles and communications which we have received from all over the world as well as from this country. It is becoming a serious problem to find room for them with our limited supplies of paper. (The ceiling may be temporarily off the dailies, but it is not off the quarterlies.) It is fortunate that we are all more or less inured to queuing! If important articles sometimes have to wait, it is quite unavoidable, especially as the balance of each number has to be carefully considered and articles cannot be published in order of arrival.

We have decided, however, to commence with this quarter what we hope will be a series of MODERN QUARTERLY Miscellanies, in which, without further delay, we can publish some of the excellent material which we have in hand. We begin with a Literary Miscellany; we hope to follow this with miscellanies of historical, scientific, philosophical and economic writing.

Irrationalism in Contemporary Bourgeois Folklore

BY GEORGE PALOCZI-HORVATH

1

*"When I read science I turn magical;
When I study magic, scientific."*

PALINURUS: *The Unquiet Grave.*

FUTURE students of Western intellectual folklore will no doubt pay a great deal of attention to the twentieth-century irrationalist renaissance of magic-bound intellectualism, which turned scientists against science, philosophers against philosophy, which produced mysologist logicians and a frustrated intellectual *élite* preaching sub-human values.

Such magical renaissances can be observed in many civilisations. Whenever the sum total of rational knowledge of the given civilisation endangers its system of magic there is an intensive attempt on the part of the "guardians of magic" to atomise rational knowledge, to camouflage science as magic, to pretend that the *calculable* is *incalculable*—to preserve "the essential incomprehensibility of things."¹

That contemporary Western civilisation is greatly magic-bound and that magic and science operate side by side in it is fairly obvious. In this respect "modern" Man does not differ greatly from "primitive" Man, who also used real science side by side with magic, which Frazer called "bastard science." By "real science" we mean in this context the primitive Man's rudimentary store of knowledge and his attempt at rational enquiry into the nature of his environment. Magic and science were closely bound together in practical activity. Rational knowledge guided one part of primitive Man's activity, while magic dealt with the *incalculable*. One aspect of the history of progress towards civilisation is the history of the activities by which the "incalculable" is being reduced.

As the whole social order of Western civilisation, together with its magical façade, is being threatened by social and economic forces and by our comparatively new knowledge of Man and society (which makes some of our most urgent problems perfectly

¹ The terms "magic" and "science" are used here in the broadest possible sense, denoting primary human attitudes.

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calculable), the threatened civilisation takes economic, social and intellectual defensive measures. Such a defensive measure is the present irrationalist renaissance.

Western bourgeoisie in its youth, when still fighting against feudal civilisation, was not afraid of science, but regarded it as an ally or as one of its auxiliary forces. Magic and irrationalism were then on the side of decaying feudalism. Expanding bourgeois civilisation watched with enthusiastic impatience the efforts of science to reduce the territories of the *incalculable*. Each such reduction produced new possibilities for expansion. The belief in Reason, in the calculability of things and in scientific progress grew enormously.

Bourgeois folklore and its attitude to science changed when bourgeois civilisation started to show signs of age and decay. It became day by day more obvious that it could not solve the problems created by its own industrial revolution; that its economics of abundance turned into an economics of poverty leading to wars and depressions; that its expanding democracy turned into restrictive plutocracy; that production for the producer's sake is a suicidal way of running the human household, leading to unemployment and starvation. Even technological progress turned from friend into foe. New inventions were feared, they were bought in order to suppress them. *Science, the former ally and auxiliary force, became an enemy of the existing social order.* Bourgeois civilisation can no longer cope with its own problems, therefore Man and Nature, human society and economics must appear *incalculable*. If reason reigns, then bourgeois civilisation has to admit its own impotence and bankruptcy, hence reason must be dethroned.

All those whose interests are really or supposedly tied to the decaying civilisation, want to believe at this stage in the essential incomprehensibility of things. Cults of Unreason are revived or new ones invented. *Instead of Reason and Science, Magic and Unreason are the allies and auxiliary troops.* Magic is now again waging its defensive battle against science, which again points to the downfall of the old and heralds the advent of the new civilisation.

Decaying bourgeois civilisation produced the well-known artificial division of Man into two compartments: the private individual and his *homo politicus* self. As soon as this unnatural differentiation is produced, social relations appear as non-human material objects, "things." *Hence the great difference for bourgeois Man between the*

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"human" relations of private life and the material, "thing-like" non-human relations within society.

Society, the sum total of private human beings, appears to be a chaotic complex of dead objects or magical fetishes. The intellectual and the artist should not deal with the non-individual, non-human and incalculable "abstractions" of human society, because, according to bourgeois folklore, he would thereby lose his cultural elegance and would become a "pedestrian" rationalist. The social realism of a Dickens, Tolstoy, Zola or Balzac is outmoded. The artist is expected to commit an act of self-mutilation and limit himself to be "just a private person." The masses of ordinary people appear to such a self-mutilated intellectual and artist as abstract and material objects. The "masses" are for him an incalculable and hostile manifestation of "the chaos of things." So he is very lonely.

The bourgeois intellectual as such was educated by the school system of the ageing bourgeois civilisation. School, Press, family—his entire environment is at this time already magic-bound. His real or supposed interests are closely tied to the near-bankrupt civilisation which has a climate of anxiety, a feeling of impending doom. His intellectual values are also closely related to bourgeois values. Thorstein Veblen gave a masterly analysis of these values in his *Theory of the Leisure Class*. He pointed out that the bourgeoisie took over the "conspicuous waste" values of the aristocrat and the country gentleman. Conspicuous waste in some form or other was a symbol of rank and caste in many primitive and non-primitive civilisations. The aristocrat who consumes without production ranks higher than artists, thinkers and scientists and much higher than those who make a living by commerce and industry. Bourgeoisie, though based on mass-production, took over the feudal-aristocratic values and evolved an exaggerated reverence for the conspicuous waste of the non-producer.

"Elegant dress serves its purpose of elegance, not only in that it is expensive, but also because it is the insignia of leisure. Much of the charm that invests the patent-leather shoe, the stainless linen, the lustrous cylindrical hat, and the walking stick, which so greatly enhance the native dignity of a gentleman, comes of their pointedly suggesting that *the wearer cannot when so attired bear a hand in any employment that is directly and immediately of any human use*. Elegant dress . . . is the insignia of leisure. It not only shows that the wearer is able to consume a relatively large value,

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but it argues at the same time that he consumes without producing" (Thorstein Veblen. My italics).

The real purpose of articles of clothing is camouflaged by a *l'art pour l'art* etiquette of dressing. Its expensiveness is also an insignia of exclusiveness. *The same attitude and ceremonial habits can be observed in intellectually elegant circles.* The real purpose of thinking and knowledge is camouflaged by an erudition-for-erudition's-sake etiquette. The "higher" intellectual values are connected with leisure. The Elegant Soul has expensive-exclusive mental vestments which also suggest that the wearer cannot "when so attired bear a hand in any employment that is directly and immediately of any human use." As the gentleman pretends to be of higher rank than the physician or some other brain-worker, so the owners of elegant souls despise the "functional intellectuals" who are consequent, disciplined, logical and rational. Bourgeois elegance is based on production for production's sake, intellectual elegance on erudition for erudition's sake.

The institutions of gentlemanly learning aimed and partly still aim at producing "elegant souls," or, in other terminology, at uniting the economic and intellectual vested interests. The exclusive schools do not impart knowledge or prepare the intellect for useful tasks: they teach the ceremonies, jargon and etiquette of intellectual elegance. They teach sciences as special tools for isolated territories, but condition the pupil against science and logic. To press things to their logical conclusions is not only ungentlemanly, according to their etiquette, but also a bad way of dealing with the essentially incalculable world. The *sense of balance*—that is, the secret formula for mixing plain muddleheadedness with logic—is more important than knowledge. Actually, this *sense of balance*, together with intellectual etiquette, gentlemanly taste and aristocratic accent, is the knowledge of the "unknowable" which the lower class "mass-man" can never hope to attain.

Equipped with this *knowledge of the unknowable*, the elegant souls come out of the training centres of the bourgeoisie as safe medicine men of class magic. They have learned the "sense of balance"—that is, *to guard the preponderance of magic over science*, to fit in each new bit of knowledge into the system of magic. As the only market for their type of artistic and intellectual production is the bourgeoisie, they are also tied to it by "erudition's vested interest," whether they are content to serve or *épater* the bourgeois. But many of them through the differentiation of their taste

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and sensitivity cannot feel real solidarity with their class. So they are doubly isolated: *within* the decaying old and *from* the new ascending civilisation. They are, in fact, in an "unquiet grave."

2

*"... poised between shocking falls on razor-edge
Has taught himself this balancing subterfuge."*

AUDEN.

The over-simplified approach of the first section of this article was a necessary introduction to the study of certain "surprising" symptoms and trends in contemporary Western intellectual life. The surprising *volte-face* of rationalist thinkers, of scientists who come out on the side of irrationalism, the muddled thinking of certain teachers of philosophy, the inconsistencies of existentialism, the "treason" of "leftish" intellectuals, the spectacle of Western intellectual and artist groups suffering from pessimism, self-disparagement, isolationism, world-renunciation and the cult of unreason: are easier to analyse if we bear in mind that all these "paradoxical" personalities and tendencies are partly determined by the general turning of bourgeois civilisation from science to magic. As a matter of fact, when this general turning occurred, great numbers of intellectuals all over the world started to feel and behave in the same "surprising" manner. This is of course an *idem per idem* explanation, stating that a *great number of bourgeois behaved like bourgeois*. Their inconsistency, frustration, guilt-complex and despair was partly caused by the fact that *the real function of their vocations was now hostile to the new interests of their decaying civilisation*. They became, so to speak, the displaced persons of the intellect. Their static position in dynamic society standardised them to a great extent. There are many thousands of "unquiet graves" all over the world which differ only in quantity of erudition and frustration, as full and less full *objet d'art* shops differ from each other.

Dr. Julian Huxley pointed out in a recent article that changed food habits can form variations and even new sub-species within a species. The elegant souls could be then called a sub-species of the bourgeoisie, determined among other factors, by their mental food habits. They all pride themselves on their omnivorous intellectual gluttony, yet out of the thousands and thousands of new scientific publications each year, they make a fashion only of the handful

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which seem to prove the incomprehensibility of things. Lately they have fed a great deal on the writings of Eddington and Jeans and on existentialism, so it may be of interest to cast a glance at these.

During the between-wars period, *physicists* like Sir Arthur Eddington and *astronomers* like Sir James Jeans appeared on the platforms of the Sunday papers to inform lay humanity of the *philosophical* discovery that unreason reigns in the world, that "causality is nonsense," that "Nature abhors accuracy and precision above all things." Some biologists also felt attracted by the Sunday pastime of Eddington and Jeans, and the lay public, together with the masses of elegant souls, did not notice that *experts in physics, astronomy or biology might be dilettantes in philosophy and sociology.*

Professor Stebbing (an "expert" on philosophy and logic) attempted to inform the lay public that these amateurish philosophical escapades are nothing but "idle diversions of men of proud scientific attainments." Niels Bohr (who was during this period rightly reported as the "father of quantum theory") declared that *his purely scientific investigations did not disprove causality* (as Eddington suggested), and in any case "the task of science is both to extend the range of our experience and to reduce it to order." Millikan, Professor of Astronomy and winner of the Nobel Prize, worried by the idle diversions of his fellow astronomer, Jeans, reminded the lay public that "the two major contributions of science to human progress are to be found in the conception of the reign of law, and in the idea of evolution." But commercial journalism continued to boost the idea of chaos and unreason because this was consistent with the ruling folklore.

Jeans, in *The Mysterious Universe*, admits his incompetence in philosophy when he writes: "I can claim no special qualification beyond the proverbially advantageous position of the mere onlooker. I am not a philosopher either by training or by inclination." Professor Stebbing gave the obvious answer in pointing out: "it may be true that the onlooker sees the best of the game, although he can hardly do so unless he knows the rules observed by the players. . . . Jeans would rightly resent the claim of a philosopher who had no technical knowledge of astronomy, to put forward *discredited astronomical theories as if they were the outcome of the latest developments of science.*"

It is, of course, a surprising and paradoxical situation when great scientists whose whole existence is based on reason, whose

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everyday working tool is calculation, measurement, logic and causality, appear suddenly eager to find the universe "mysterious" and reason dethroned. The fact is though that their fine brains were also influenced by the general turning from science to magic; that they too were artificially divided into "private persons" and their public self. This "public self," then, was greatly influenced by their civilisation. So these great scientists and some of their colleagues *are* magic-bound in the amateurish pastime of their private life. Professor Stebbing wrote about Jeans and Eddington: "Both these writers approach their task through an emotional fog; they present their views with an amount of *personification* and metaphor that reduces them to the level of revivalist preachers."

The same could have been written about the *biologist* Alexis Carrel, who puts forward pre-Platonic ideas on *psychology* "as if they were the outcome of the latest developments of science," or about the *philosopher* C. E. M. Joad, that star of medicine men, that most able guardian of the "ever-normal granary of magic." Joad admits in a recent essay (*On Being no Longer a Rationalist*): "That I am laying myself open to the charge that *my emotions were first stirred and that my mind has followed them, much as the feet of a hungry dog follow his nose*; that as a result I have been engaged in inventing arguments for what *I now irrationally hope and am instinctively disposed to believe . . . of all this I am fully aware and do in part avow. . . . This stirring of the emotions is nothing but the sound of God knocking at the door of one's heart*" (my italics).

If Professor Joad wrote this essay under the title "On being no longer a philosopher" no one would have any quarrel with him. But when his stirred emotions, irrational hopes and instincts lead him to a certain religious belief and when these beliefs are put forward as if they were the outcome of the latest developments of the science of philosophy, then we can take this only as a clinical demonstration of the tendency described above. The "elegant souls" the world over only follow him and the Jeans, Eddingtons and Carrels in mixing up branches of science and levels of experience.¹

¹ No one criticises the admirable work done by Eddington, Jeans and Carrel in their own branches of science. The fact remains that in their amateurish philosophising their "public self" seems to be conditioned by the mental climate of their society. They "believe" in science without having an all-round scientific attitude. They like the incalculable more than the calculable.

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"Existentialism" is such a mixture. The recognised father of existentialism, Kierkegaard, was justly called "the poet of religion," chiefly because he expected his readers to grasp his concept of *Existenz* (which does not denote *existence* or *life*) by frequently bridging logical gaps with acts of faith—faith in the incalculable. For Kierkegaard's *Existenz* manifests itself in *sublime moments* of utmost concentration of the innermost man at times when the human being has to make an "either-or" choice. This choice, as the concept of *Existenz* itself, has many mystical characteristics. Through the right kind of choice a human being can attain "existential thinking," but *the choice itself depends upon an inner impulse*.

Jaspers, one of the important modern existentialists, in his *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*, introduces the concept of *Grenzsituationen*, of inescapable border situations (death, suffering, struggle, guilt) in which the Kierkegaardian "choice" has to be made. According to Jaspers, there are three basic ways for meeting these choice situations: (1) by sinking back into frustration, scepticism, cynicism or Nihilism; (2) by taking refuge in fixed convention and (3) by finding support in "existential" thinking. Jaspers' main work (*Philosophie*, 3 vols., 1931) explains that for him the scientific attitude is "taking refuge in fixed conventions." He states that in philosophy, as opposed to science, there can be no progress, because *philosophy shows the essential incomprehensibility of things in the world to our rational consciousness*. According to Jaspers, the task of philosophy is to help the individual to face the ever-recurrent and inescapable *Grenzsituationen* of suffering, death, struggle and guilt. Philosophy should go on searching for "truth" and for the "one being."

As suffering, death, struggle and guilt occur in human society, Jaspers' existentialism seems to put forward his *religious-philosophical* discovery of the essential incomprehensibility of things as a *sociological* law working in human society.

The double defeat of the bourgeoisie in the France of 1938-44 witnessed an existentialist revival led by literary philosophers like Sartre and Camus. They, with Celine, Malaquais, St. Exupéry and others were intent in their *literary activities* on depicting not the defeat of France in 1940, but the defeat of mankind *sub specie æternitatis*. An average French intellectual without philosophical training would probably define existentialism to-day as a theory advocating the fullest realisation and expression of the isolated

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inner man. Influenced by the intellectual climate of Sartre and Camus, he would probably say: "Life and the world are incomprehensible. There is no hope for humanity. Nothing is important, only the realisation of one's *Existenz*, even if necessary, through crime."

Both Sartre and Camus create their own philosophical terms; they produce new "magic-words" and "pivot-words" which are *not defined* but *circumscribed* by poetic illustrations and picturesque analogies. As a matter of fact, you have to *feel* what the new word means, just as Kierkegaard gave up as hopeless those who failed to experience that inner impulse which is necessary in the sublime moments of despair, suffering and the intense feeling of guilt. Camus' pivot-word, "Absurdity," is defined, not by a philosopher, but by a gifted novelist. After getting the "feel of the word," you just have to regard it as an axiom that *the world is absurd*, if you want to follow him in the discussion of the basic problem of philosophy, which is, according to Camus, simply this: "*Why not commit suicide?*"

Sartre and Camus use semantological and phenomenological analysis in their attack on rationalism, but forget about semantics, logic and phenomenology when they start to deal with their own magical words supporting irrationalism. Their constant habit of mixing terminologies and levels of argument leaves the impression of intelligent, erudite but mentally undisciplined people who want desperately to prove to themselves that the "world is irrational." Camus admits though that there is a desperate desire for clarity in human beings, but does not see that this statement suggests the existence of a similarly desperate desire for obscurity and irrationalism.

As a matter of fact, existentialism seems to be a much-needed comfort for those elegant souls who need a high-level, "philosophic" blessing upon their desperate clinging to the incalculable.

There are many similar comforts—similar in the sense that they soothe the feeling of guilt (guilt against self and society) by postulating *Grenzsituationen*, by explaining it with "original sin" or some other man-made meaningless concept. Furthermore, they all mix the various branches of science dealing with various aspects and levels of reality, in order to prove that the human world is incalculable, hence we cannot put our global household in order.

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3

"I, a stranger and afraid
In a world I never made."

HOUSMAN.

Let us now take a closer look at a sample magic-bound, elegant soul. Cyril Connolly gave an admirably frank and thorough analysis of the elegant soul in *The Unquiet Grave* which he wrote under the pen-name, Palinurus. His analysis receives added authority by his position in English literary life. He is the editor of the *élite* literary periodical, *Horizon*. Bourgeois literary columns praise his erudition, his elegant style, his "superb gift for words and epigrams." *The Unquiet Grave* was described by reviewers as a "beautifully written book" which enriched the "world's stock of profitable introspection." In other quarters the book was attacked for its topsy-turvy logic. This was not quite fair, since it is clearly stated by the author: "What follows are the doubts and reflections of a year, a word-cycle in three or four rhythms: art, love, Nature and religion; an experiment in self-dismantling, a search for the obstruction which is blocking the well, and whereby the name of Palinurus is becoming an archetype of frustration."

To attack him for giving a frank and fine diagnosis of the frustrated, neurotic, isolated and unhappy bourgeois intellectual is simply pointless. To complain that in his activities he does not try to cure frustration, neurosis and destructive isolationism, is like complaining because the patients of a hospital are not physicians.

Connolly-Palinurus was also criticised for never bringing "his own range of personal reaction into comparative relationship with any coherent external system of values. Self-examination without discipline or definite purpose beyond discovering self is likely to discover very little, but with a great deal of fuss" (R. G. Lienhardt in *Scrutiny*). Though this criticism is well founded and justified on the level of rational literary criticism, on the modest level of folklore Palinurus' self-examination leads to quite useful discoveries.

What does Palinurus believe?

"I believe in the two-faced truth, the Either, the Or and the Holy Both. I believe that if a statement is true then its opposite must be true. . . . I know there are thousands like me: Liberals without belief in progress, Democrats who despise their fellow men, Pagans who still live by Christian morals, Intellectuals who cannot find the intellect sufficient."

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In the strict meaning of the term, Palinurus is inconsistent and his logic seems topsy-turvy. But if we study him *with the hypothesis that his function and that of his intellect is to uphold the magic and folklore of the bourgeoisie*, then his everchanging and capricious opinions, beliefs and convictions appear most consistent and purposeful. For Palinurus—who is not only the “archtype of frustration,” but also of the Elegant Soul—each branch of science is a useful tool as long as it can be used to prove or illustrate the incomprehensibility of things, and becomes a “dangerous excess” and dogmatic oversimplification if it remotely suggests their comprehensibility. This is actually a general practice in magic-bound civilisations in which isolated facts of science are used as magical words. The same magical word is used as a self-evident truth if it serves the environmental bias of the individual and is exposed as “bastard science” and silly magic if it is used by the opponent. When he dislikes the magic which the opponent used, he takes the trouble of thinking. *This is the true function of intellect in magic-bound individuals*. Palinurus describes something like this when he writes: “Thus I fulfil the childhood pattern of making little expeditions into the world outside my myth-mother, and then running back to her apron.”

The Unquiet Grave is full of illustrations to the above. When Palinurus muses on the mystery of Man, he writes about the psychological effects of sex, of glands and drugs, of climate and food. Yet he is against a “materialistic view” because “that leads to its own excesses, such as a belief . . . in the biological nature of psychology.” Though most of his amateur psychologising is of a biological nature, he thinks this science is an “excess,” evidently a “bad thing,” if it threatens to make its own subject comprehensible. On p. 24 of *The Unquiet Grave* the belief in the biological nature of psychology is an “excess,” while on p. 25 it is stated: “The spiritual life of man is the *flowering of his bodily existence* . . . this life has now become artificial, out of reach for all but the *rich* or the *obstinately free*” (my italics). Are the two statements inconsistent? Not at all. They represent a very consistent effort to guard the interests of “the rich or the obstinately free.”

§ In order to show that this is not an isolated attitude of Palinurus, we quote two of his opinions about happiness. On p. 89: “Happiness consists in temperance and self-knowledge, and now both of these are beyond the reach of the ordinary people, who, owing to the pursuit of their violent sensations, can no longer distinguish

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between pleasure and pain." Without stopping to wonder why ordinary people are capable of violent sensations and incapable of distinguishing between pleasure and pain, we just have to take note that there are further "good things," higher values which are beyond the reach of *ordinary people*. P. 93 gives further enlightenment: "Perfection of form or increase of knowledge, pursuit of fame or service to community, love of God or god of Love—we must select the Illusion which appeals to our temperament, and embrace it with passion, if we want to be happy." Again, without stopping to think about all the delightful implications of this sentence, it is most instructive to see that *their* (the ordinary people's) violent sensations are "bad things," while *our* passion (that of the rich and the obstinately free) is a "good thing."

Palinurus, who has "nothing to say to the masses," remarks about the ordinary people: "The tragedy is that there are too many of them and that they outgrew the servile functions for which they were encouraged to multiply."

Yet Palinurus, who is above the crowd and knows the mysterious formula of the magical sense of balance—does not seem to be happy. He constantly complains of "morning tears," of melancholia, despair, frustration, *Angst*, guilt-complex, claustrophobia, neurosis. "I am one of those [he writes] whom suffering has made empty and frivolous: each night I pull the scab off a wound; each day, vacuous and habit ridden, I let it re-form. . . . When I contemplate the accumulation of guilt and remorse which, like a garbage-can, I carry through life . . . I feel Man to be of all living things the most biologically incompetent and ill-organised." (Here his psychology seems to have a biological nature.) His prevalent mood is that of "misery, disgust, tears and guilt"! Elsewhere he says: "I see the world as a kind of Black Hole of Calcutta, where we are milling about in darkness and slime; now and then the mere being in the world is enough to give me a violent claustrophobia."

He suffers a great deal from his isolation, yet "fraternity is the State's bribe to the individual" and "the egoism of materialism . . . killed friendship by making such demands on the individual that comradeship can only be practised between workers and colleagues for the period of their co-operation." So the trouble with comradeship seems to be that it *is* comradeship.

But isolated, *Angst*-ridden, unhappy Palinurus would not and could not change. In most of his moods, even in the most despairing ones, he has the consolation of his "obstinate freedom," of his

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elegant soul. His isolation appears to him that of the *élite*—which, in his chronically undefined language, alone can produce culture and civilisation. Culture, according to him, is the product of solitary giants.

"The more books we read [he writes] the sooner we perceive that the true function of the writer is to produce a masterpiece and that no other task is of any consequence." After this, he proceeds to name a few authors who produced masterpieces appealing to him. He immediately points out that "such a catalogue reveals its author. What is common in thought to these twelve writers? Love of life and nature; interest in mingled with contempt for humanity. All are what Palinurus has been called by his critics: Earthbound." And furthermore: "The artist, like the mystic, naturalist, mathematician or 'leader,' makes his contribution out of his solitude."

This megalomania which admits only super-achievements of leaders, coupled with lack of belief in progress and contempt for humanity, is very revealing indeed. The masterpieces are obviously not being produced for the masses or for despised humanity. What is then the spur? In one of his moods Palinurus feels that "insanity beckons us to fulfil high destinies."

Those readers who remember that Hitler, in his 1936 Nuremberg speech on *Kultur*, also stated that culture is the product of solitary giants, or who detected some slight agreement between Mussolini's attitude to war and one of the capricious opinions of Palinurus, should not jump to the conclusion that the inhabitant of the unquiet grave is a crypto-fascist. He just has his fascist moods, like most of the Elegant Souls. As Connolly wrote in *The Condemned Playground*: "We all when tired and disillusioned have fascist moments, when belief in human nature vanishes, when we burn with anger and envy, like the underdog and the sucker, when we hate the virtuous and despise the weak, when we feel as Goebbels permanently feels, that all fine sentiments are ballyhoo, and that the masses are evil, to be resisted with cruelty born of fear." By *we* he obviously does not mean the underdogs or the masses, but the *élite*.

The very individual "personality," the very personal "individuality" of the elegant souls, with frustration, guilt and all, seem to be highly standardised products of their age and their society.

"As a myth, however, and particularly as a myth with a valuable psychological interpretation, Palinurus clearly stands for a certain will-to-failure or repugnance-to-success . . . an urge toward

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loneliness, isolation and obscurity." This is, so to speak, the summing up in *The Unquiet Grave*. The erudite author no doubt read his Durkheim according to whom *not nature but society is the true model of myth*. If that be so, Palinurus and the fraternity of Elegant Souls are about as obstinately free as the dogs of the late Professor Pavlov.

Old Age and Natural Death

BY P. B. MEDAWAR

THE problems of old age and natural death are hardly yet acknowledged to be within the province of genuine scientific enquiry. This does not mean that biologists are ignorant of the fact that such problems exist, nor that natural death is altogether insusceptible of scientific treatment. It simply means that no such treatment has been given it as yet.

This neglect is partly the outcome of a certain quickening in the tempo of biological research. The biologist of to-day is a busy man: he has no time for anecdotes about the age of tortoises, and wants more evidence than Metchnikoff had power to give him before he takes steps to modify the flora of his bowel. Yet nearly all the great theorists of the last century were fond of teasing themselves with speculations about death. "*Qu'est ce que la vie?*" Claude Bernard¹ asked himself: "*La vie, c'est la mort.*" Life is combustion, and combustion death. "*La vie est un minotaure, elle dévore l'organisme.*" This is only one of alternative views on the nature of natural death. The distinction of first suggesting that natural death might be an epiphenomenon of life, rather than something of the very nature of the act of living, is shared unequally between August Weismann² and Alfred Russell Wallace. (Wallace's views are known to us only through a casual letter he once wrote to Edward Poulton.³ They are about the same as Weismann's, though less confidently and much less lengthily expressed.) But before I try to give an account of Weismann's views, we must have a few definitions; for the trouble with "natural death" is not that it lacks a meaning, but that it has the embarrassment of two or three. By "accidental death," then, or simply "death," is meant death from any cause whatsoever. "Natural death" is that sort of death by accident to which the age-specific decline of our faculties, *senescence*, has made a certain contribution, however small. The contribution grows larger as we grow older: what lays a young man up may lay his senior out: but it always falls short of unity, for no one dies merely

¹ *Définition de la Vie* (1875); one of the essays reprinted in *La Science Expérimentale*, 7th ed., Paris, 1925. Also Bernard quoting Buffon.

² *The Duration of Life* (pp. 1-66) and *Life and Death* (pp. 111-61); essays reprinted in *Weismann on Heredity*, ed. E. B. Poulton, S. Schönland, and A. E. Shipley; 2nd ed., Oxford, 1891.

³ *The Duration of Life*, pp. 23-4.

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of the weight of years. The greatest clinical pathologist of the last generation¹ looked back upon his life for such a case. He once thought he had found it in a colleague ninety-four years old, whose life seemed merely to evaporate to dryness; but autopsy showed a lobar pneumonia of four days' standing. Some of Ludwig Aschoff's predecessors were evidently more lucky, and Metchnikoff² has revived for us the following less than specific account of death from pure old age:

"The old man feels weakness gaining on him . . . the skin becomes insensitive, dry, and cold . . . speech dies out on the lips, which remain open; life quits the old man from the circumference to the centre; breathing grows more laboured. . . ."

It *sounds*, Laurence Sterne might have said, more like a death from boredom.

We shall be obliged to use the term "natural death" in the rather wide sense of the foregoing definition. Popular usage quite rightly fines it down to forms of death to which senescence has made a pretty big contribution, for it seems absurd to say that a man of forty could die in part of old age. At all events, what we are to discuss is not the event, death, but the *process* of senescence. (The definition of death itself, in the most familiar of its several meanings, can be valid only with reference to some stated "level" biological organisation. A society will die before its individual members, an individual before his cells, and a cell before its ferments have stopped working. But legally, I suppose, a man is dead when he has undergone irreversible changes of a type that make it impossible for him to seek to litigate.)

Weismann believed that natural death had evolved under a Darwinian régime of natural selection. The "utility of death," he says, is this. "Death takes place because a worn-out tissue cannot for ever renew itself. . . . Worn-out individuals are not only valueless to the species, but they are even harmful, for they take the place of those which are sound." It follows that "by the operation of natural selection, the life of a theoretically immortal individual would be shortened by the amount which was useless to the species."³ In this short passage, Weismann canters twice round the perimeter of a vicious circle. By assuming that the elders of his race are decrepit and worn out, he assumes all but a fraction of

¹ Cf. *Lancet*, 235, p. 87, 1938.

² From Demange. See note 1, p. 36.

³ *The Duration of Life*, p. 24.

what he has set himself to prove. Nor can these dotard animals "take the place of those which are sound" if natural selection is working, as he tells us, in just the opposite sense. It is curious that Metalnikov in his comparatively recent *La Lutte contre la Mort* (1937) should give these fallacies a seventy-five year run by twice repeating them with approval word for word. The problem is, *why* are the older animals decrepit and worn out? And for this Weismann has no sufficient answer. It must be obvious that, senescence apart, old animals have the advantage of young. For one thing, they are wiser. The Eldest Oyster, we remember, lived where his juniors perished. They are wiser, too, in their experience of infection, for an animal which has survived a first infection is better equipped to deal with it a second time. In the majority of animals "immunological wisdom" may be a better bargain than anything they may have by way of mind. We are always inclined to overestimate the value of mental wisdom, though no one, I suppose, has the temerity to doubt that the giraffe owes more to his long neck than to the organ poised on top of it; and the logic of brute fact tells us that the extinct reptile, *Diplodocus*, which had a brain in the pelvic region as well as up in front, drew little advantage from his power to reason not merely *a priori*. No: what kills the old animal is not in the first place decrepitude, but something which has the dimensions of the product of time by luck.

Weismann had a theory not merely of the evolution of death in animal populations, but also of the mechanism of senescence in the individual. He believed that a limit to life was set by an inherent limitation in the power of germ cells to divide. "We do not know," he says, "why a cell must divide 10,000 or 100,000 times and then suddenly stop,"¹ as he thought it did. As a matter of fact, we now know that no such inherent limitation exists; but Weismann's theory—if we disregard the fact that the progeny of a cell which divided only 10,000 times would fill a millionfold the utter limits of known space—shows that he had not appreciated the "asymptotic" character of the process of age-decline. He had no grasp of the *process* of ageing. We don't suddenly grow old, and the cells within us do not suddenly stop dividing. Those that do stop come to rest in a decent orderly fashion. Charles Minot² was the first to make this clear. He took over Weismann's idea that death had evolved by natural selection, and turned his mind to ageing in the

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

² *The Problem of Age, Growth, and Death*, London, 1908; a series of lectures first published in *Popular Science Monthly*.

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individual alone. His views were original and still are theoretically important, so they deserve a fuller treatment than they commonly get.

Minot used growth as a measure of vitality; not the mere rate of growth, but the *specific* rate, which gives us a measure of the capacity of living tissue to reproduce itself at the rate at which it was formed. It is simply the rate of growth at any chosen time divided by the size by then achieved—in other words, by the material theoretically available for further growing. It cannot be denied that the specific growth rate *is* a measure of vitality, though not perhaps so complete a measure as Minot in his time believed. Minot found that the power of tissue to reproduce itself at the rate at which it was formed fell off through life from earliest childhood onwards. He found that the decline was faster in children than in their elders, and, indeed, that it fell off more and more slowly as life went on. The inferences he drew were these. There is no period of increasing vitality leading to the mature state and thereafter to the senile; the process of ageing goes on continuously throughout life. And ageing is faster in young animals than their elders—"a strange, paradoxical statement." "Our notion that man passes through a period of development and a period of decline is misleading . . . in reality we begin with a period of extremely rapid decline, and then end life with a decline which is very slow and very slight."

This is a good moment to ask what the life insurance companies have to say about these problems. Their evidence is at first sight very helpful. Look at the curve from which the actuary computes the force of mortality at various ages—the curve which defines, for each age of life, the numbers still living of a certain initial number born alive.¹ From the twelfth or fifteenth year onwards in human life, the curve is smooth; there is no break or discontinuity, no hint at all that at such an age the prime of life has ended and old age begins. Nor is this generalisation false for animals other than man. "Life tables" for them are pitifully meagre; but Leslie and Ransom made one lately for the laboratory vole,² and here too

¹ For the terminology used in actuarial work, cf. L. Hogben: *The Measurement of Human Survival*, in *New Biology*, ed. M. Abercrombie and M. L. Johnson. Penguin Books, London, 1944.

² P. H. Leslie and R. M. Ransom, *Journal of Animal Ecology*, 9, p. 27, 1940. For life tables for invertebrate animals, cf. A. J. Lotka, *The Elements of Physical Biology*, Baltimore, 1925; W. H. Dowdeswell, R. A. Fisher, and E. B. Ford, *Annals of Eugenics*, 10, p. 123, 1940; C. H. N. Jackson, *ibid.*, p. 332. Jackson finds that the life table of tsetse flies is biased, during the rainy season only, by an element contributed by senescence.

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we find the same smooth passage to extinction. "Voles drop off at all times of life," says Elton,¹ speaking of this evidence,

"though not at the same rates. And these are not 'ecological' deaths; few of them probably are 'parasitological' deaths. We hardly know what process is at work, and for want of a better term we may call it 'wear and tear.' This has the suggestion of an internal breakdown in the physiological organisation. *We might almost say that the process of senescence begins at birth.*"

This final inference, which I have italicised, is by no means immediate. The actuary's life table is not a mapping of the course of individual life: it is founded on the *distribution* through life of the ages at which people die. It thus relates to no event in life save one, its end. Even if the sudden flowering of an evil gene caused voles to age and die within a day, the ages of their deaths might well be so pieced out among the population as to yield just that smooth, continuous curve the actuary maps for us. If, however, the population is reasonably uniform, then the life table (or rather, the force of mortality computed from it) does indeed give us what may be called a "statistical picture" of the course of ageing. For we may define "senescence" as that which predisposes the individual to death from accidental causes of random incidence; and it follows that the frequency distribution of the ages of death gives us a statistical picture of the magnitude of this predisposition. Many sciences use a picture of this sort, and some use no other; the problems it raises are interesting, but not at the moment relevant.

Minot wanted to bring not merely size, but shape as well within the ambit of his laws; but complained, as many have done since, that "we do not possess any method of measuring differentiation which enables us to state it numerically." Such attempts as have been made to do so support his theory; for example, the rate of change of shape of the human being falls off progressively through life.² But we do know that Minot's laws are by no means commonly true of faculties other than those which turn upon the pattern and the rate of growing. The sort of sensory, motor and "mental" tests that are used to measure physical and intellectual prowess usually give their best values in the neighbourhood of the age of twenty-five, or later. Usually, but not always: it is around the age of ten

¹ C. S. Elton, *Voles, Mice and Lemmings*, pp. 202-5, Oxford, 1942.

² P. B. Medawar, *Proceedings of the Royal Society. Series B*, 132, p. 133, 1944.

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that hearing spans highest in the sonic frequencies.¹ Information of this sort is intrinsically important, for it does something to confirm a theorem of wide significance that many clinicians have long taken for granted—that the time of onset and rate of ageing of the faculties and organs may vary independently within fairly wide limits. Other evidence tells against it. One of the most useful lessons to be learnt from the natural historian's studies of animal longevity² is that the life span varies greatly in length between quite closely related types of organism. What can this mean, if not that the ageing process in the individual as a whole is geared by one or two limiting or "master" factors?

Minot's special theory of the ageing process is just as unusual as are his general laws, for he believed that cellular differentiation is the cause of the progressive fall away of growth potential. Cellular differentiation—the degree of musculiness of a muscle fibre, for example—has never been measured, but Minot guessed that if such a measurement were to be made, the curve of increasing differentiation would be found to be the exact complement of that which plots the declining energies of growth. To put it in another way: that which we call "development" when looked at from the birth end of life becomes senescence when looked at from its close. It is an attractive idea, but such little evidence as we have speaks against it. The tissue cultivator, who grows cells in blood and tissue media outside the body, finds that "old" cells have just as high a *capacity* for growth as young ones. They simply take a longer time to set about it.³ It is perfectly true that some very highly differentiated cells, like those of nerve and muscle, lose their power to multiply by fission. But that is more of a mechanical accident than a slur upon their vitality; after all, a nerve cell may be some yards long. Neither adult nerve nor adult muscle has lost the power to *grow*, and if a muscle or nerve fibre is cut into two, healing and replacement will start up from one end or the other. But whatever the rights and wrongs of Minot's special theory, he has left us with two ideas that which any future theory of the ageing process must analyse and suitably explain: the first of the continuity of the ageing process, the second of its great span in time.

¹ Y. Koga and G. M. Morant, *Biometrika*, 15, p. 348, 1924. Cf. the data summarised by V. Korenchevsky: *Annals of Eugenics*, 11, p. 314, 1942.

² The most important of these are by S. S. Flower. See note 2, p. 41.

³ Cf. the evidence summarised by P. B. Medawar, *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 35, p. 590, 1942.

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Some mention must now be made of the celebrated and widely misinterpreted views of Elie Metchnikoff on ageing.¹ Metchnikoff believed that much of what in ageing seems to us to be very "natural" is in fact abnormal. How much of ageing he held to be so is far from clear, though he seemed to think, as Buffon did and later Flourens, that an animal's total span of life should be between five and seven times the period that passes between birth and the onset of sexual maturity. Self-intoxication by the products of bacterial decomposition in the large intestine was chiefly to blame for the pathological changes of senescence. The theory has a homely origin. The mammals, Metchnikoff argued, do not void their fæces on the run, and yet are exposed to countless dangers by doing so when standing still. In order to choose the most appropriate time for defæcation, mammals must therefore have large intestines in which to store their fæces.² Bacteria flourish in the store-house so provided, and the absorption of their evil humours brings about a state that ranges from the malaise of constipation to the chronic and cumulative toxæmia of pathological senility. Cells intoxicated beyond redemption are attacked and eaten up by the phagocytic cells which, conveniently enough, Metchnikoff himself had earlier discovered.

Most laymen are convinced that there is something in this theory, and it has not lacked zoological champions of the greatest eminence. "Certain it is," said MacBride³ some twenty years later, in the course of a violent attack on mathematical biology, "certain it is that in human beings, when the toxins produced by proteolytic enzymes are got rid of, many of the signs of old age may disappear." But a biologist can pick holes in each single theorem. Some mammals do defæcate while running. The malaise of constipation is at once relieved by bowel movement, and fishermen who habitually defæcate at ten-day intervals are not the debile wrecks that Metchnikoff's theory would have us think them. The large intestine, too, is no mere dustbin. Herbivorous animals get some of their food from the action of cellulose-splitting bacteria within it. The bacteria may, moreover, synthesise vitamins, which are absorbed directly or may be recovered by eating the droppings themselves—

¹ *The Prolongation of Life* (trans. P. Chalmers Mitchell), London, 1910.

² It is a popular fallacy that fæces await evacuation in the rectum. This is so only in cases of chronic constipation. Cf. Sir A. Hurst, *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 36, p. 639, 1943.

³ In the discussion of G. P. Bidder's Linnæan Society lecture on ageing (note 2, p. 40). MacBride had been particularly upset by Karl Pearson's statement that mental deterioration in man began at the age of twenty-seven.

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a slap in the eye for Metchnikoff's theory. The theory is dead, and nothing is to be gained by propping it up into a sitting position.

In the first twenty years of this century, there began to accumulate new empirical evidence concerning the "immortality" of the ordinary non-reproductive cells of the body—more exactly, the immortality of the cell-lineages to which, by successive acts of fission, such cells may be ancestral. Leo Loeb and later, more clearly, Jensen showed that several tumours will grow indefinitely if handed on by grafting from one animal to another.¹ For a few pence one may buy from the laboratories of the Imperial Cancer Research Fund a rat bearing Jensen's rat sarcoma. Its cells are lineal descendants of those which Jensen first transplanted some forty years ago. The technique of growing cells outside the body proved as much for the cells of normal tissue. A strain of connective-tissue cells was started by Carrel and Burrows in 1912.² The first year's growth was not enough to demonstrate the perpetuity of the cell lineage. We are "not justified," said Ross Harrison in 1913, "in referring to the cells as potentially immortal . . . until we are able to keep the cellular elements alive in cultures for a period exceeding the duration of life of the organism from which they are taken. There is at present no reason to suppose that this cannot be done, but it simply has not been done as yet." In due course it was done, and the strain was with us until 1939. Tissue-culture has other evidence to offer us of death. We are told that one of the last experiments of Thomas Strangeways was to cultivate the connective-tissue cells surviving in a sausage—as neat a demonstration as one could wish of the tenacity of the *vita propria* and the half-truth that is legal death. So let us submit yet another zoological simile of common speech to the censorship of our new wisdom. The earth stirs over Mendel's grave when we say that two people are *like as two peas*. Many fish, moreover, never drink. "As dead as mutton" is likewise superannuated by the march of time; and those whose most pressing fear it is, that they will be lowered living into their graves, can have their doubts resolved: they will be.

(The so-called "immortality" of the Protozoa is like that of the tissues: not an immortality of cells but an indeterminateness of cell lineages. Obviously the cell lineages of protozoa are in some

¹ A clear elementary account of this early work is to be found in W. H. Woglom, *Fifth Scientific Report of the Imperial Cancer Research Fund*, p. 43, London, 1912.

² There are quite a number of popular accounts of this work, e.g. in A. Carrel, *Man the Unknown*, New York, 1935; L. du Nöuy, *Biological Time*, London, 1936.

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cases immortal or indeterminate, for otherwise they could hardly be with us to-day. But does this immortality depend upon the performance of an occasional act of nuclear reconstitution, or can protozoa thrive for ever by the mere act of dividing asexually into two? The matter has long been controversial.¹ Some of the early investigators believed that, in default of such "rejuvenation," a protozoan lineage must undergo a microcosmic cycle of growth, maturity, decay and death, just like the cell population of the higher organisms. Others believed that vegetative fission would suffice. When it came to be known that the former opinion was founded at least in part on the use of faulty techniques of cultivation, the latter dispossessed it. But Jennings² is now inclined to doubt whether asexual fission is in itself enough, and the more recent genetic evidence suggests that some sort of nuclear rehabilitation is from time to time required. Ordinary asexual fission is, from the mechanics of the process, a very exact division of the parent organism into equal parts. The genetical sins of the parents—the lethal or unwholesome mutant genes—are thus allotted to their progeny with Biblical justice and more than Biblical precision. The nuclear reconstitution spoken of above is, in effect, a device by which such genes may be eliminated from the stock. The organisms which inherit them die soon, or fail to reproduce; the others, often a minority, carry on.)³

With such new facts as these at his disposal, and others of great value added by himself, Raymond Pearl⁴ made the next important attack on death in 1922. Pearl himself showed that an animal's span of life was governed by inherited factors and was within certain limits subject to experimental modification. The total span of life may be increased not by adding a few extra years to its latter end nor, if it comes to that, by intercalating new life at any intermediate period; but rather by stretching out the whole life span symmetrically, as if the seven ages of man were marked out on a piece of rubber and then stretched. The length of life may thus be treated as a function of the *rate* of living. One simple way of lowering the rate of living—an ingredient of many a centenarian's

¹ Cf. H. S. Jennings, *Problems of Ageing*, ed. E. V. Cowdry, 2nd ed., pp 29–46, Baltimore, 1942.

² *Journal of Experimental Zoology*, 99, p. 15, 1945.

³ Cf. B. F. Pierson, *Biological Bulletin*, 74, p. 235, 1938; T. M. Sonneborn, *ibid.*, p. 76. I am obliged to Professor J. B. S. Haldane for pointing out the significance of their evidence.

⁴ *The Biology of Death* (Lowell Lectures), Philadelphia, 1922; *The Rate of Living*, London, 1928.

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recipe for long life—is to withhold with known precision the sort of food that is used for the supply of energy: a restriction of calories, as we say, rather than a systematic *malnutrition*. McCay and his colleagues¹ have shown that by such means the life span of rats may be greatly lengthened. The same is true of flatworms, as Child told us;² of certain sea-squirts, and odd, aberrant, worm-like creatures called the Nemertines.³ These latter have the advantage of the rat, for if deprived of food they react by growing smaller, thus literally retreating into second childhood. They do not quite exactly retrace their steps, “advancing backwards” (as was said of a recent famous military campaign) along the path they followed in development; but in a sense they cheat Time. The fact that starved rats outlive those which habitually eat sufficient is often used as evidence of the relativity of biological time; but in reality, it is evidence less of the tortuous mysteries of time and space than of the virtues of sobriety and moderation.

In the extreme case, when life is held altogether in abeyance, we may properly speak of immortality. Freeze a tissue such as mammalian skin to the temperature of liquid air (something less cold will do) and the resumption of life will then await the convenience of the experimenter.⁴ The idea is an old one. Until he tried to freeze two carp, John Hunter—⁵

“imagined that it might be possible to prolong life to any period by freezing a person. . . . I thought that if a man would give up the last ten years of his life to this kind of alternate oblivion and action, it might be prolonged to a thousand years; and by getting himself thawed every hundred years, he might learn what had happened during his frozen condition. Like other schemers, I thought I should make my fortune by it; but this experiment undeceived me.”

These particular carp died, though latter-day experimenters have been more lucky.⁶

Raymond Pearl agreed with Weismann that in some manner

¹ Cf. C. M. McCay, pp. 680–720, in *Problems of Ageing* (note 1, p. 38).

² C. M. Child, *Senescence and Rejuvenescence*, Chicago, 1915.

³ See J. Needham, *Biochemistry and Morphogenesis*, pp. 524–9, Cambridge, 1942.

⁴ Cf R. Briggs and L. Jund, *Anatomical Record*, 89, p. 75, 1944; J. P. Webster, *Annals of Surgery*, 120, p. 431, 1944. The author has often confirmed their observations.

⁵ J. Hunter, *Of the Heat of Animals*, in *The Works of John Hunter, F.R.S.*, ed. J. F. Palmer, Vol. 1, p. 284. The phenomenon which Hunter unluckily failed to demonstrate is called “anabiosis.”

⁶ E.g. N. A. Borodin, *Zoologische Jahrbuch*, 53, p. 313, 1934.

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or other natural death had evolved, but that it evolved under the auspices of natural selection he irritably denied. ("Probably no more perverse extension of the theory than this was ever made.") Yet for so brilliant a man, Pearl's own theory of the mechanism of ageing in the individual is curiously inadequate. "Specialisation of structure and function necessarily makes the several parts of the body mutually dependent for their life upon each other. If one organ or group, for any accidental reason, begins to function abnormally and finally breaks down, the balance of the whole is upset and death eventually follows." But is not this a description of the "proximate cause" of almost any form of death? Something gives way, no doubt: one man will be as old as his arteries, another as his liver. But gross abnormality apart, why should any organ break down? Apparently because of the wear and tear of merely working, and Pearl tells us that "those organ systems that have evolved farthest away from the original primitive conditions . . . wear longest under the strain of functioning." It is only towards the end of his book that Pearl puts forward his theory in this relatively specific form. Earlier—and see how much more easily he breathes the air of amorphous generalisation—he tells us that the somatic death of higher organisms "is simply the price they pay for the privilege of enjoying those higher specialisations of structure and function which have been added on as a sideline to the main business of living things, which is to pass on in unbroken continuity the never-dimmed fire of life itself." A stirring thought; but Johannes Müller had said as much some eighty years beforehand¹ and with proper scientific caution had remarked: "This has the appearance of explaining the phenomena, but is in reality a mere statement of their connection, and it is not even certain that as such it is correct."

Let us turn now to one last famous speculation on the problem of natural death. Minot, we saw, left us with the capacity for growth as an upside-down measure of the rate of ageing. Suppose an animal increased in size indefinitely: would it die a natural death? Hardly, if so important a function as growth were left undimmed by age. But before hearing Bidder's answer,² the question can be put a little more exactly. The distinction is not between animals which continue to grow and animals which stop growing, but between

¹ J. Müller, *Elements of Physiology* (trans. W. Baly), Vol. 1, pp. 35–6 (and cf. vol. 2, p. 1660), London, 1840–2.

² G. P. Bidder, *Proceedings of the Linnean Society*, p. 17, 1932, *British Medical Journal*, ii, p. 583, 1932.

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animals without and with a *limit* to their size. How the limit is approached is neither here nor there. It may be approached asymptotically, as in mathematical theory, or finally—to a maximum—as for all intents and purposes it is in fact. According to Bidder, fish grow without limit and never undergo senescence nor suffer natural death. Indeed, he does not “remember any evidence of a marine animal dying a natural death.” Now a mechanical limit is set to the size of animals on land, as Galileo and many others since have taught us; and according to Bidder this limit is set, or has come to be set, by an intrinsic limitation of the power of growth, with senescence as its outcome. “Did old age and death only become the necessary fate for plants and animals when they left the swamps, claimed the land, and attempted swiftness and tallness in a medium $\frac{1}{800}$ of their specific gravity?” Bidder believes that this is so, if the quite special category of “parental” death, like that suffered by the male salmon, is left out of count.

We will skip blindfold over the causal nexus that relates the limitation of growth to the degenerative changes of old age, and ask ourselves if Bidder’s main thesis, that marine animals do not die natural deaths, is in fact true. It is a “highly debatable problem”—that is to say, one with so little evidence to its credit that no debate is in reality worth while. We have, it appears, little to say about the death of fish that Ray Lankester did not say in his Prize Essay on longevity some eighty years ago:¹ “they are not known to get feeble as they grow old, and many are known *not* to get feebler.” “Real evidence is practically non-existent,” said Major Flower,² though he could tell us that “under favourable circumstances some fresh-water fishes may live for half a century.” The fact of the matter is that the energy that might have been devoted to a theoretically straightforward solution of the problem has very often been dissipated in digging up anecdotes about longevity from obsolete works of natural history. Nor has the research been theoretically prudent, for often no distinction has been made (though Lankester insisted on it) between the mean expectation of life and the total life span. It proves that we cannot accept the claims of most of the famous human more-than-centenarians, so what faith are we to have in the pedigrees of tortoises and trees? No one has yet made a systematic study of whether

¹ E. Ray Lankester, *On Comparative Longevity in Man and the Lower Animals*, London, 1870.

² See the series of articles in the *Proceedings of the Zoological Society* (latterly *Series A*), 1925, 1931, 1935–8.

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even mammals *in their natural habitat* do indeed live long enough to reach a moderate though certifiable degree of senility. As a matter of fact, the contribution that senescence makes to accidental death can be deduced with reasonable accuracy from the mathematical character of the actuary's life table. For if the "force of mortality" were constant and independent of age; if, that is to say, the chances of dying were the same in the age interval 100-101 years as in the interval 10-11 years; then the curve defined by the life table would be of the familiar die-away type that describes, for example, the loss of heat from a cooling body. But no life table has yet been made for a mammalian species in the wild. All that can be said so far, in the spirit of Lankester's generalisation, is that *some* mammals do *not* appear to live that long. Hinton's studies¹ on fossil and recent voles of the genus *Arvicola* showed that "not only are the molars still in vigorous growth, but the epiphyses of the limb bones are still unfused with their shafts. Apparently, that is as far as actual observation goes, voles of this genus are animals that never stop growing and never grow old. But no doubt, if one could keep the vole alive in natural conditions, but secure from the fatal stroke of accident, a time would come when . . . the animal would become senile and die in the normal manner." Burt's study² of mice of the genus *Peromyscus* led to a similar conclusion; but there, so far as I know, the matter stands. The difficulties of constructing life tables for animals in the wild are technically formidable, but they must be solved, if anything more than progress in speculation is to follow.³

From the standpoint of evolutionary biology an animal's expectation of life in its natural surroundings is much more significant than the degree of decrepitude to which it may be nursed in laboratory or zoo. It is a fair guess that much of what we call the senile state is in the ecologist's sense merely pathological. Senility is an artifact of domestication, something discovered and revealed only by the experiment of shielding an animal from its natural predators and the everyday hazards of its existence. In this sense, no form of death is less "natural" than that which is commonly so called.

Some interesting conclusions may be drawn from the fact that

¹ M. A. C. Hinton, *Monograph of the Voles and Lemmings*, Vol. 1, p. 48, British Museum, London, 1926.

² W. H. Burt, No. 48 in *Miscellaneous Publications of the Michigan University Museum of Zoology*, May, 1940. I must thank Mr. D. Chitty for this reference.

³ The problem is being investigated by the Bureau of Animal Population, Oxford. (See also note 2, p. 33.)

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the latter end of life is ecologically atrophic or vestigial. It has several times been pointed out¹ that the changes which an animal may undergo after it has ceased to reproduce are never directly relevant, and are in most cases quite irrelevant, to the course of its evolution. A genetic catastrophe that befell a mouse on the day it weaned its last litter would from the evolutionary point of view be null and void. This state of affairs is tacitly acknowledged in the celebrated half-truth that "parasites live only to reproduce": the whole truth is that what parasites do *after* they reproduce is not on the agenda of evolution. The same applies to what may befall a mouse when it reaches the age of three, if in fact it never (or hardly ever) lives that long. We shall return to this point later. For the present it may be said that the existence of a post-reproductive phase of life is not causally relevant to the problem of ageing, for it is just that very ingredient of the ageing process—the decline and eventual loss of fertility—which it is our chief business to explain.

* * * * *

What is the upshot of all this speculation? I think many biologists would agree that Weismann was in principle correct, and that the process of senescence in the individual and the form of the age-frequency distribution of death that mirrors it statistically have been shaped by the forces of natural selection. But before looking into this belief more closely, it will be as well to start this section, like its less technical predecessor, with a few definitions.

First, "evolution." Biologists often speak of organs, tissues and even cells "evolving," but it must be recognised that this manner of formulation is by modern lights imprecise, or, what is not quite the same thing, inexpedient. These various things do indeed participate in evolution, just as our noses participate in our motion without themselves being mobile. What moves in evolution, what evolves, is an animal *population*, not an individual animal; and the changes that occur in the course of evolution, if we put a magnifying glass to them instead of feeling obliged to peer dimly down the ages of geological time, are changes in the composition of a population and not, primarily, in the properties of an individual. In visual analogy they are to be likened, not to a transformation scene at the pantomime, but to the sort of overlapping transformation we watch at

¹ Cf. G. G. Simpson, *Tempo and Mode in Evolution*, p. 183, Columbia University Press, 1944.

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the cinema when one "set" slowly evaporates and is dispossessed of the screen by another.

Further, whatever form evolution may take, or whatever may bring it about, contributions to evolutionary change are paid, if they are paid at all, in one currency alone: offspring. Animals favoured by the process which, wise after the event, we call "natural selection," pay an extra contribution, however small, to the ancestry of future generations; and this brings about just that shift in the genetical composition of a population which we call an "evolutionary change." The problem of measuring natural selection, which so worried Karl Pearson,¹ is thus solved: the magnitude of natural selection is measured by the relative increase or decrease in the frequency with which the factor which governs some heritable endowment appears in the population.

I said, earlier on, that any theory of the origin of the ageing process must take two things into account: the early onset of what is in the technical sense senescence, and the continuity of its expression through life. I would like now to suggest that the "force of mortality" has been moulded by a physical operator that has the dimensions of time \times luck. Let us examine how natural selection will work upon a population that is potentially immortal; of which the individuals remain, for all the time that they are alive, in the fullness of physical maturity. Such a population will contain old animals and young. The old are old in years alone: we are so used to hearing the overtones of senility in the word "old" that we must forcibly adjust ourselves to accept this important qualification. The old animals I shall speak about are "in themselves" (to use a category of lay diagnosis) "young." They will no doubt have the advantage of their juniors in reflex and immunological wisdom, but these advantages will in the first approximation be disregarded.

Upon this population exempt from age decline we shall now superimpose a variety of causes of death that are wholly random or haphazard in their manner of incidence. The causes of death being random in nature, and susceptibility to it independent of age, it follows that the probability that an animal alive at the beginning of any span of time will die within its compass is likewise constant. The one-year-old is just as likely to see his second birthday as is the fifty-year-old to see his fifty-first. But the

¹ Cf. K. Pearson, *The Chances of Death and Other Studies in Evolution*, 2 vols, London, 1897.

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chances *at birth* of living to age 1 and age 50 are very different indeed; for as Weismann pointed out, though the significance of it escaped him, the older an animal becomes the more frequently is it exposed to the hazard of random extinction. Likewise a true coin that ten times spun has turned up heads will turn up heads on the eleventh spin in just 50 per cent. of trials; but the chances of turning up heads eleven times running are very small indeed. The upshot of this is that young animals will always outnumber old.

Let us in imagination mark a group of 100,000 animals at birth and follow it through life, supposing that the chance of dying within any small interval of time is constant, and equal to one-tenth per annum of those that remain alive to submit to the hazard. The survivors at the end of the first year will be 90,000; at the end of the second year, nine-tenths of those alive at its beginning, namely 81,000; and so on, through 72,900, to numbers in the long run very small. In a population with a "life table" such as this, supposing that it is not decreasing in numbers, a certain steady state of ages will be reached, a certain definite age-spectrum or composition with regard to age. At this steady stage, youngsters are being fed into the lower reaches of each age group at the same rate as death and the passage of time remove them from it. The shape of this "stable age distribution" (which is moulded, odd though it may seem, by the birth-rate per head alone) is that of a die-away exponential curve, such as one so often meets in the numerical treatment of natural data. The number of animals in each age group bears a constant ratio, greater than unity, to the number of animals in the age group following next.

What is important from our point of view is that the contribution which each age-class makes to the ancestry of future generations decreases with age. Not because its members become progressively less fertile; on the contrary, it is one of our axioms that fertility remains unchanged, so that the reproductive value *per head* is constant;¹ but simply because, as age increases, so the number of heads to be counted in each age group progressively falls. It is at least as good a guess as Weismann made, that the process of senescence has been genetically moulded to a pattern set by the properties of this "immortal" age distribution. It is by no means difficult to imagine a genetic endowment which can favour young animals only at the expense of their elders; or rather,

¹ The term is technically defined in R. A. Fisher, *The Genetical Theory of Natural Selection*, Chap. 2, Oxford, 1930.

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at their own expense when they themselves grow old. A gene or combination of genes that promotes this state of affairs will under certain numerically definable conditions spread through a population simply because the younger animals it favours have, as a group, a relatively large contribution to make to the ancestry of the future population. It is far otherwise with a genetic endowment which favours older animals at the expense of young. Reflection will show that the gene or genes concerned cannot plead for a retrospective judgment in their favour; for before the animals which bear these genes give outward "phenotypic" evidence of the fact, they are on equal terms with those that do not. The greater part of the ancestry of the future population will thus have been credited indifferently to both types, since a gene qualifies for the preferential action of natural selection only when, to put it crudely, it manifestly works. This does not imply that a late-acting gene which confers selection advantage cannot spread through the population. It can indeed do so; but very much more slowly than a gene which gives evidence of itself earlier on. The later the time in life at which it appears, the slower will be its rate of spread; and the rate in the end becomes vanishingly small.

The consequence of any decline in the fertility of older animals is cumulative. Once it has happened, a new set of events may be put in train. Consider the fate of genetic factors that make themselves manifest in animals that bear them, not at birth nor in the first few days of life, but at some time later on. Quite a number of such genes are known, and what is said of them applies equally to genes which have an expression, but a variable form of expression, throughout the whole span of life. It may be shown that if the time of action or rate of expression of such genes is itself genetically modifiable, then, if the gene confers selection advantage, its time of action or of optimal expression will be brought forward towards youth, as it spreads through the population. If, by contrast, the gene is "disadvantageous," then its time of action or threshold of unfavourable expression will be pushed onwards in life while it is being eliminated from the population. The former process may be called a precession of favourable gene effects; the latter, a recession of those unfavourable. Neither process can come into operation unless the fertility of the population declines with age, so that the reproductive value of its members falls; and the latter process, the recession of unfavourable gene effects, will be modified by the fact that the later an "unfavourable" gene comes into operation, the

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slower will be the process of its removal from the population. (At some critical late age, perhaps, an unfavourable gene is eliminated so slowly that natural selection cannot challenge its reintroduction into the population in the process of gene mutation.) The precession of "favourable" gene effects will in its turn be modified by the fact that reproduction cannot start at birth, and nature has found in higher animals only the most indirect substitutes (maternal care, and the blunderbuss of huge fecundity) for the theoretically desirable state of affairs in which an animal is born mature. Because of the hazards to which baby animals are exposed (and this is just as true of human beings) the reproductive value of the individuals always rises to a maximum before eventually it falls; and it is at the epoch of this maximum, therefore, that the "precession" of favourable gene effects will automatically come to halt. It is not surprising, then, to find that in human beings the "force of mortality" is lowest just when the reproductive value would in the members of a primitive society be highest—in the neighbourhood of the fourteenth or fifteenth years of life.¹ Nor is it surprising to find that "senescence" begins then, rather than at the conventionally accepted age of physical maturity somewhat later on.

* * * * *

The foregoing paragraphs represent no more than a few extra guesses woven in among Weismann's original hypothesis of ageing. If what Weismann believed is true, then nothing very radical can be done by way of modifying the course of growing old. Scientific eugenics could in the long run give us a more generous span of life; but only, it seems, by engaging life in lower gear, by piecing out the burden of the years into a larger number of smaller parcels, so prolonging youth symmetrically with old age. But the inevitability of old age does not carry with it the implication that old age must be a period of feebleness and physical decay. If specific secretions of the ductless glands fail; if assimilation becomes less efficient, so that essential food factors fail to penetrate the gut wall; if chronic low-grade infections persist because the defences of the body lack power to overcome them; in all such cases it should be possible to remove, at least for a while, any ingredients of the senile state for which they may be specifically responsible.² The solution of these problems is a matter of systematic empirical research.

Side by side with research of this type there should be undertaken

¹ A correlation pointed out by R. A. Fisher (see note 1, p. 45).

² Cf. the work of Dr. V. Korenchevsky's Gerontological Research Unit.

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a thoroughgoing physiological analysis of the mechanism of ageing. I shall sketch one possible line of analysis here, because although the layman often understands the nature of scientific problems and can usually grasp the principles of their solution, he has, as a rule, very little idea of how scientific work is actually done.

If a physiologist were to study the problem of ageing from scratch, he would not even begin to try to modify the time-course of senescence by the administration of vitamins or elixirs compounded of the juices of the glands. He would first of all try to piece together a full empirical description of the phenomenon of ageing, as it is reflected in structural changes of tissues and cells and, more particularly, in the type and intensity of tissue and cellular metabolism. Only scraps of such information are now available: he would have to collect more. (The physiologist might in any case become more fully aware of the dimension of time in his experimental work. Nearly all his work is done with mature animals; studies on youngsters and animals past the reproductive period are far too few.)

With an adequate background of purely descriptive evidence, the physiologist could then bring the experimental method to bear. The first problem he would seek to solve is this: is the phenomenon of ageing something "systemic" in nature—something manifested only by systems of the degree of organization of whole animals—or is it intrinsically cellular? Studies on tissue cultivation have given a partial answer to this question, but there are grounds for supposing that in certain critical respects it is misleading. One promising alternative that has become available to him is the technique of tissue and organ transplantation between animals of different ages. The majority at least of the members of very highly inbred strains of mice are from the standpoint of tissue-interchange genetically identical, for after many generations of repeated brother-to-sister mating they come to resemble each other (sexual differentiation apart) almost as closely as identical twins. One may therefore interchange parts of their bodies on a scale limited only by the exigencies of technique; one may make time-chimeras of youth and old age. How, then, does tissue transplanted from a baby animal to a dotard develop in its "old" environment? Does it rapidly mature and age, or does it remain like a new patch on an old pair of socks? Conversely, what is the fate of tissue grafted from old animals into youngsters? If ordinary laboratory mice are used for such experiments, as very likely they

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have been, or even what are sometimes with undue optimism called "pure strains," then the evidence is falsified at the outset; for the transplantation of tissues between animals very little dissimilar genetically simply provokes an immunity reaction, not different in principle from that which governs the outcome of certain blood transfusions, as a consequence of which the grafted tissue is destroyed.¹ But if suitable genetic precautions are taken, these problems and others of similar generality are capable of solution. Only when they are solved can the physiologist begin to ask more specific questions, such as whether the determinative factors of ageing are humoral in nature or of some other more complex type.

It is rather urgent that research of this type should be undertaken. Man's mean expectation of life at birth has increased very dramatically over the last 100 years, but chiefly as a consequence of reduced mortality in infancy and childhood. The mean expectation of life at the age of forty has increased hardly at all. But because of this reservation for life of many who would otherwise have died, the age-spectrum of the population, i.e. the proportion of its members within each age group of life, is in many civilised countries shifting slowly towards old age.² In forty years time we are to be the victims of at least a numerical tyranny of greybeards—a matter which does not worry me personally, since I rather hope to be among their numbers. The moral is that the problem of doing something about old age becomes slowly but progressively more urgent. Something must be done, if it is not to be said that killing people painlessly at the age of seventy is, after all, a *real* kindness. Those who argue that our concern is with the preservation of life in infancy and youth, so that pediatrics must forever take precedence of what people are beginning to call "gerontology," fail to realise that the outcome of pediatrics is to preserve the young for an old age that is gruged them. There is no *sense* in that sort of discrimination.

¹ Cf. the review by P. B. Medawar, *British Medical Bulletin*, 3, p. 79, 1945. Complete genetic uniformity is not, as a matter of fact, necessary for successful transplantations. Ovaries may be transplanted from one female mouse to another (and their progeny distinguished from those of the foster mother) *either* if the genetic composition of the grafted tissue differs from that of the host by genes that do not govern the formation of antigens (e.g. the yellow gene in mice: G. G. Robertson, *Proceedings of the Society for Experimental Biology and Medicine*, 59, p. 30, 1945); or if the grafted tissue contains no antigen-determining genes that are not also present in the host, the converse state of affairs being irrelevant. Cf. W. L. Russell and J. G. Hurst: *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 31, p. 267, 1945.

² Cf. L. Hogben, *op. cit.* (note 1, p. 33). For the population of the U.S., see W. S. Thompson and P. K. Whelpton, *Estimates of Future Population of the United States, 1940–2000*, National Resources Planning Board, Washington, 1943. F. W. Notestein *et al*, *The Future Population of Europe and the Soviet Union, Population Projections 1940–1970*, Office of Population Research, Princeton University, 1944.

Absolutism and Ethics

BY L. J. RUSSELL

I. Absolute Right and Wrong

THE range of my topic is roughly indicated by the quotations which follow. These quotations do not belong to anyone in particular. The questions are all rhetorical, expressing convictions as firmly believed in as the final generalisations. They give the tenor of many discourses reported in the Press, and one meets them frequently in conversation.

"If there is no absolute right and wrong, what right have we to blame the Nazis for their worst atrocities? What is to prevent anyone from doing as he likes, if he has the power? What becomes of moral conduct?"

Again: "If we lose our belief in religion, what is there to make us believe in any absolute right and wrong? How can a non-religious advocate of morals fail to see that he is living on capital accumulated by Christianity?"

Finally: "The decline in moral standards which we have witnessed both in national life and in international relations is a direct consequence of the decline in religious belief, and nothing can arrest it save a revival of faith in religion. Without religion civilisation is doomed."

It is these views I propose to discuss; and I shall begin with the central one, that of the need for an absolute right or wrong if there is to be any justifiable regulation of conduct.

The conception of an absolute right or wrong can be approached critically in various ways. It can be attacked directly, by asking how such absolutes could be established. This mode of attack is somewhat technical. It raises questions about the conditions under which ethical statements can have meaning or significance, and how they can be tested. Or it can be attacked indirectly, by giving an alternative account of ethical statements, showing how they arise, and bringing out their complex nature, and their complex relation to social conditions. Though it is incomplete, and leaves a good many loose ends, this indirect method is more concrete, and enables ethical statements to be kept in close relation to social processes. It is the method I propose to follow here. It should be remembered that it tells only one half of the story, and needs to be supplemented by the direct method.

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II. Institutions as Guiding and Controlling Behaviour

It is important at the outset to view the situation as concretely as possible, and to consider not merely society in general, but a particular society at a particular epoch, with its traditions and institutions, if we are to see the ways in which behaviour is turned into certain channels, and prevented from taking certain forms. Institutions express the standardised ways in which the members of the society meet some of their needs. They are not, of course, mystical entities having lives of their own independently of the persons who are living under them. It is persons who maintain institutions; and the continuity of an institution depends on the process by which the children of the community are trained in the prescribed ways of behaviour which constitute the institution. To define an institution is to indicate these prescribed ways of behaviour. An institution is relatively static if this training is so successful that the children in their turn, when grown up, become guardians of these ways of behaviour, insisting on their maintenance and training the new young people in them. This process is interrupted in many primitive tribes to-day by the young men going away to work for whites; on their return to their tribe they are no longer so interested in the old ways, and the older men, mistrusting them, may refuse to initiate them into the more important traditions. Institutions are never completely static, even when their outward form seems unchanged. The division of the members of the community into social classes, depending on a variety of qualifications such as parentage, amount of property possessed, profession, marriage, and so on, has been one of our institutions; and any change in the type of qualification, or the importance placed on it, and again any change in the amount of prestige attached to any particular class, was a change in the institution itself, and a change in the modes of behaviour of the members of the community in regard to it. Again, the ownership of property is one of our institutions, which changes with changes in the privileges and responsibilities of owners of particular kinds of property, or with differences in the laws relating to the rights of married women to hold property, or in the laws relating to inheritance and to death duties, and so on. The system of apprenticeship as a mode of training craftsmen was an institution which was profoundly modified when apprentices ceased to live in the houses of their masters. The mode of educating the young by segregating

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them into schools for a certain period is an institution modified by every change in the age of entry and of leaving school, in the type of education regarded as desirable, in the provision for further education, and so on. Social history at its best is an account of the characteristic institutions of a society at various periods, of the ways in which these institutions are interrelated so as to provide for the various needs of the members, to express and partly determine their outlook leading to changes in particular institutions and so to changes in other closely related institutions. The history of the Churches as institutions has to do not merely with the systems of belief of the various denominations, but with the ways in which membership of a particular religious denomination, and of a particular congregation, affected the behaviour, the prospects of employment, the possibilities in the way of living, of the individual members. When membership of the established Church was obligatory on all citizens, the Church touched people's lives on far more sides and far more intimately than it does to-day. Birth, education, sickness, poverty, death were all the close concern of the Church; a good deal of the social life, especially in the country districts, was associated with it. All this made it possible for religious belief to have a stronger influence on ordinary behaviour, just through the varied workings of the Church as a social institution, than it has to-day, when so many secular agencies make the major provision for things with which the Church was once closely associated.

The main institutions of a particular community at any particular epoch are kept alive by the exercise of steady pressure by the conforming members on one another and on deviant members. Some institutions affect only particular classes, others affect the whole society. Institutions mark out the "roads" along which persons are expected to walk; they enable behaviour to be in certain respects standardised.

Thus in studying human behaviour we cannot simply take what people do in certain generalised types of situation (hunger, danger, rivalry, courtship) and attribute it to human nature, without consideration of the way in which the behaviour is modified by the institutions in which the persons were brought up. Human behaviour is not the outcome of human nature in such generalised situations, but of human nature as conditioned by the institutions of a particular society. Even the strengths of the emotions, and their modes of expression in certain types of situation, may be

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standardised within certain ranges in a manner which varies from society to society. The strength of a person's desire to accumulate private possession, and his behaviour in regard to them, cannot be simply detached from the institutional "roads" of his society and attributed to him as belonging to his nature. The same can be said of beliefs as to what kind of conduct is right or wrong, or what kind of situation is good or bad. But this is so important a point for our present subject, as to need separate treatment.

III. Institutions and Principles of Conduct

Institutions have on the whole grown rather than been consciously made. They can be looked on as arrangements for satisfying some of the basic needs of individuals—for food, clothing and shelter, for a mate, etc.—and for carrying on from generation to generation the knowledge of the technical skills, the principles of social order, the practices needful for the society as a whole, and a host of other things. All this is seen more clearly from a study of small primitive societies than from our own more complex society, but it is equally true of ours. Arrangements which are fundamental for the particular society which affect so much of life that a member of the society cannot imagine how they could be modified on a large scale without throwing the whole of life into confusion, will provide the basis for principles of the greatest stringency in the regulation of conduct. Thus with different types of social arrangement, emphasis on particular principles of conduct will differ. In many primitive societies, for instance, the main lines of work and of conduct are determined for each individual by his relations of kinship, by blood and marriage, with the other members of his own group and of neighbouring groups. The social organisation depends on each individual following the prescribed rules. The marriage of a youth in one village to a maid in another village may mean the setting up of a complex set of obligations, as regards periodical interchanges of gifts, and of services of various kinds, between the families of the pair, and special modes of behaviour participated in to some extent also by the rest of the members of each village, as in the case of Dobu Island.¹ In the particular case of Dobu, the working of the system requires that a pair in the same village should not marry (though it sometimes happens, under strong protest) and, again, that a youth should not marry into a

¹ R. Fortune, *Sorcerers of Dobu*.

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village into which his sister has already married. Either of these things would throw the whole system of social relationships into confusion. For members of our society, such rules would carry no weight; for the Dobuans breach of the rules would be shameful and wrong. Again, the behaviour toward a father's sister, or toward a mother's brother, or toward one's prospective wife's mother may be so important in the organisation of the society as to provide the basis for obligations of great stringency.

IV. The Sociological Study of Primitive Behaviour

In attempting to understand the principles of behaviour fundamental in a particular primitive society, many modern anthropologists have found inadequate two modes of approach, both used by past students of society. The first is that of ethical intuition; by which the investigator endeavoured to see what intuitions of rightness primitives had as the basis of their behaviour, pronounced these to be correct or incorrect, and in the latter case tried to explain the error on the ground of depravity, or of lack of width of view, or in some other way. This method is similar to the method which underlies much of the history of science as it used to be written, in which the historian noted the scientific opinions and discoveries made in the past, contrasted the mistaken views with "What we now know" to be true, and looked about for some reason for the errors, such as mistaken views of the world, or inadequate precautions. What this method fails to do is to give an insight into the grounds which convinced the past scientists themselves of the truth of their discoveries; which can be gained only by a detailed consideration of the whole social and intellectual past situation, in which the historian divests himself for the time being of the superior scientific knowledge his own age affords. In a similar way, what the anthropologist has to do is to leave aside his own convictions as to the superior "rightness" of the principles of his own society, and to endeavour to see in detail what convinces the primitive people he is studying, of the naturalness and rightness of their principles of behaviour.

The second mode of approach found inadequate is that of psychological insight, by which the investigator tried to construct a concept of a hypothetical primitive man on psychological lines, from which to deduce the principles of conduct he found in primitive peoples. This method involved a comparison of a variety of

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tribes, so as to get general principles of behaviour common to a large number of primitives in different parts of the world, and thus to discover "the" primitive outlook. Its main defect lay in just this comparison, which was too often premature, institutions in tribes in different parts of the world being attributed to the same psychological motives on the ground of apparent similarities of functioning, without sufficient consideration of the differences due to their interrelations with the other institutions, often entirely different in different societies, with which each was associated in its concrete tribal setting. There resulted an oversimplification due to premature generalisation, which imported greater uniformity into primitive practices than more careful investigation was able to justify. The notion of totemism, the concept of incest, the explanation of the nomenclature of classificatory kinship relations, are examples where this method has led to much plausible psychological generalisation, with inadequate observational controls.

This psychological approach is not condemned by the anthropologists of whom I am speaking as totally wrong, but only as insufficient, and as needing supplementation through a far more concrete, detailed study of particular tribes in their specific setting, whose object is to make out the ways in which in a particular tribe any particular institution functions in the whole life of the tribe, and to see its interrelation with other institutions in the given environment. Because of its particularity and detail, this third approach can be called sociological; its methodological assumption is that both ethical insights and psychological motives must, to be properly understood, be related to the concrete social setting in which they occur.

I am concerned here only with the ethical insights. One of the fundamental factors in this matter has already been mentioned, viz. the great part played by personal relationships in the way in which primitive institutions function. Malinowski has brought this out very clearly in his *Crime and Custom in Savage Society* in regard to the Trobriand Islanders. Dealing with the gift exchanges of fish and vegetables between the coast dwellers and the inland dwellers he shows how important as controls of behaviour are the reciprocal obligations between exchange partners, the publicity of the transactions whereby these obligations are met, and the general comment by other members of the community on the adequacy or inadequacy of their fulfilment. Because of these factors, breaches of the obligations are liable to react back on the offender. Similarly,

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with regard to the obligations set up between two families by marriage, he shows how on the death of one of the married pair, the survivor's mourning ceremonies are at least in part the public carrying out of an obligation to the family of the deceased, compensated for by gift payment by the family to the survivor. Ian Hogbin, in his *Experiments in Civilisation*, has brought out the same point with extreme clarity in his account of the natives on Malaita Island in the Solomons. He shows how a young child is introduced to various relatives, taught to behave toward them in certain specific ways, and encouraged to count on them for various favours, but as the child grows up he finds that he is expected in return to help them in their various activities. Fortune's *Sorcerers of Dobu* shows in detail, with special reference to the nomenclature of kinship and the changes in modes of address and of behaviour toward particular persons, that breaches of the principles of conduct required by the Dobuans would often lead to situations compelling the kinsmen of the offenders, if they condoned the irregularity, to act in ways irreconcilable with their normal practice. In *We the Tikopia*, Raymond Firth has brought out the same thing, his treatment of incest from the sociological point of view being particularly noteworthy.

I have mentioned only a few of the special studies of modern anthropologists, where the point I am concerned with comes out with great clearness, viz. that in the case of the primitive tribes studied by these investigators, there is a direct and concrete connection of the main principles of conduct with the particular modes of personal relationship which the tribal life involves. Some breaches involve a greater and more fundamental upsetting of these personal relationships than others; these are forbidden more strongly; and it is only a detailed examination of the whole tribal pattern of institutions that can give an insight into the reasons for the different degrees of stringency of particular prohibitions.

For many primitives, then, we can say that their insight into right conduct is determined by the fact that their institutions involve detailed obligations of the various members of the tribe to one another. The anthropologist's understanding of the situation depends on his being able to make out in detail how the fulfilment of these obligations enables the main needs of the members of the tribe to be met.

I leave aside at present the question of reaction against the existing institutions in primitive society, and of how recalcitrant

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behaviour may lead to their modification; and proceed to consider how far the sociological approach will enable us to understand ethical insight in regard to modern societies.

V. Differences between Modern and Primitive Societies

One contrast stands out at once. In modern society the links between individuals have been largely depersonalised; and a man has often to find his place and his function in his society by competition against strangers, among strangers. Our institutions have to prescribe ways by which persons mostly strangers to each other can engage in common purposes. They must embody principles of a more general kind than those of a primitive society. It is important to have principles making for mutual trust and co-operation between persons merely as members of the same society, or better still, simply as persons. There are, of course, many detailed obligations, depending on specific relationships, involved in modern institutions as in primitive ones, but the wider obligations are of outstanding importance. It is for this reason that the notion of universal ethical principles, absolutely binding on persons as persons, has so strong an appeal. What I want to suggest is that even in their generalised form such principles are derived from a study of the working of institutions in particular societies.

There are, however, many factors in modern society which obscure the link between the more general principles of conduct and the working of institutions. A few of these may be noted.

(a) The greater complexity of modern society, and the fact, just touched on, that one's contacts are often competitive, impersonal, or with strangers, make it at times difficult to see how one is effectively co-operating in any social life as such, and how one's lack of loyalty to an institution affects other persons, and especially to see how it reacts back on oneself. Often indeed—such is the complexity of modern society—it never does react back on oneself.

(b) In modern society there is far greater power of satisfying needs; and this brings home to many people the fact that the opportunity for satisfying these needs is not in their power. As society develops in power and complexity, the differences between modes of life become accentuated. The standard of life for the poorest may be raised, but the differences in opportunities for satisfying the needs quickened by the community's powers, stand out far more clearly. This makes it difficult for the individual to

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see the institutions of his society as instruments for the satisfaction of his needs. It is one of the outstanding features of a modern society that it raises in its members more needs than it enables them to satisfy through the normal course of social co-operation, or more than a few to satisfy at all.

(c) Loyalty to institutions, as we shall see, depends on incentives of various sorts, and the strengths of these incentives take time to develop. Changes in the way an institution functions—especially when new agencies come into being to meet the needs previously met by the old institution—can diminish the incentives to loyalty to it, and so weaken the sense of the importance of maintaining it through one's own behaviour. And modern society is essentially one of changing institutions, the changes often being deliberately sought for.

In consequence of differences such as these, it is more difficult for a modern individual to see the institutions of his society as the embodiment of principles which he can regard as obligatory on himself and on others, or to justify such principles by reference to the working of those institutions.

VI. The Sociological Approach to Modern Principles of Conduct

Let us start with the actual institutions of our own modern complex society, and ask what principles of conduct are required for their satisfactory working.

As Plato saw, any body of men who are co-operating for any purposes, good or bad, must keep faith with one another if they are to succeed: thus keeping faith is a universal condition of co-operative activity. Anyone who breaks faith, to that extent breaks social relations. In view of the enormous extent to which the activities of modern society depend on the co-operation, at widely different places and times, of individuals whose relationships are no closer than those involved in these co-operative activities, it follows that unless on the whole persons could be depended on to do what they had undertaken to do, modern life would break down. This principle is recognised in the institutions themselves, which embody various provisions for penalising more important breaches of faith. A similar reflection would arise in regard to the respect for life, and the avoidance of quarrels resulting in physical violence.

Principles of behaviour in regard to property, public and private, must be viewed in the light of the institutions of the community;

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for the community does not allow an absolute and unrestricted right to anyone to own things, and to do what he likes with them, but permits or restricts ownership and behaviour in different ways under different conditions. Thus, if the activities of the community are to be carried on satisfactorily, the directions issued from time to time with the authority of the community must be respected by all members of the community. This, of course, works both ways: the directions issued must be such as can be respected by the members, if matters are to go smoothly.

There are, however, a great many principles, whose maintenance is necessary for modern life, such as those involved in quarantine regulations, or the compulsory notification of certain infectious diseases, or many of those regarding the driving of motor cars; and these are just as stringent as the traditional ones. New conditions of life, and new knowledge of the consequences of certain types of behaviour, show new kinds of conduct to be essential if the activities of members of the community are to be carried on satisfactorily.

Critics may pounce on the word "satisfactorily" as giving up the whole case, and as involving a direct perception of a distinctively ethical quality. I reply that there is no single "quality" of satisfactoriness, and that what is satisfactory in any particular case depends on the whole circumstances, sometimes on the ends desired and on the means available for attaining those ends, sometimes on the type of activity engaged in, sometimes on the nature of a particular situation as such. It always has reference to something desired; if nothing were desired nothing would be satisfactory. It always has reference to a particular level of knowledge or ignorance; with advancing knowledge what was judged satisfactory may be no longer thought so. Cutting down trees for smelting iron, or burning coal in open grates, may appear satisfactory ways of using natural resources to one generation, unsatisfactory to another. Similarly with collecting legal evidence under torture, or sending children to work at the age of six.

Here then we have one way whereby certain principles of conduct may be seen to be important for the life of a community, and breaches of them penalised by law, or by social criticism. But there is another type of reflection, leading to the affirmation of principles not actually embodied in the institutions, and in many ways running counter to actual institutions. It arises from the fact that, as already noted, no community deals fairly with all its members.

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The needs of some individuals are met more satisfactorily than those of others, and this is felt to be undesirable. Again, the institutions themselves may involve situations in which an individual's interests are pulled in contrary ways. In *Crime and Custom*, Malinowski has given a good instance of this for the Trobriands, where a man's affection and ambition for his son (stimulated by one institutional situation) are in opposition to his duty to his sister's son, who is his legal heir. In this case evasive practices, to the advantage of the man's son, have grown up, and resulted in a partial change in the institutions; and this is one common way in which institutions are changed. But the evasive action would not be condoned (as it is within certain limits) unless there were some general sympathy for it, and this implies the recognition of an imperfection in the institutions themselves, and at least an implicit admission of a principle which would express a more satisfactory situation.

I see no need to appeal to any wider kind of insight than that afforded by actual societies. When the way of life made possible to one class of persons in the community is refused to other classes, it is inevitable that the question should be raised by many of the latter, and even by some of the former, why this should be; and for a community to be envisaged in which there are no unprivileged persons, but all are equal in this respect. There is no need to suppose that we could not recognise some form of inequality as objectionable unless we had a prior notion of equality as good. Again, when institutions encourage needs they do not satisfy, it is natural that this should be felt to be an imperfection. It is in such ways I think that ideas arise of rights which persons have, but which the community fails to secure to them; and that ideal principles of conduct are suggested, beyond those embodied in the institutions of any community whatever. The extension to all human beings of the conduct approved toward the nearest and dearest of one's companions, is a further step in the same direction.

Such ideal principles are intelligible so long as they are regarded as indications of a programme of institutional reform. Until they are concretely embodied in the institutions of a community the only compulsive power they have over their advocates (which, however, may be great) is that possessed by a programme for which general acceptance is being sought. They represent a state of affairs which, their advocates hold, would be better than the existing state of affairs; and this programme, like any other

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programme, needs to be put to the test before it can be regarded as justified.

VII. Morals and Religion

I can now return to the assertion quoted at the outset, that there has been a decline in moral standards in recent times, and to the suggested cause and remedy for this decline.

What is described as a decline in moral standards can be described in different terms, viz. as a weakening in loyalty to many of our institutions. A great deal of this must be attributed to a weakening in the incentives to loyalty provided by the institutions themselves. This weakening is partly due to the fact that the institutions in their combined working rouse without satisfying needs in many persons. The wage system in the nineteenth century laid down the conditions under which an ordinary person without capital could earn some sort of living, while retaining social approval. If he satisfied these conditions loyally, he might be poor, he might be unemployed for periods, but, provided he bore himself uncomplainingly, he was at least helping to maintain the existing order, living in short a good moral life, so far as this institution was concerned. But he was also, by his efforts, enabling many other individuals, who had no personal interest in him, to have rich satisfactions denied to himself. And this made him feel his own lack the more keenly, the more the productive power of the community increased. Again, the family system laid down the conditions under which an ordinary woman without capital could have a life of domesticity if she married, and if she remained a spinster, it opened to her a variety of opportunities for paid work of special kinds, at specially low rates, which encouraged her to marry; and if women satisfied these conditions loyally, they were maintaining the existing order, showing themselves moral, so far as this institution was concerned. So far, the life of the spinster was felt to be inferior; but as new forms of employment were opened to women, as new means of transport developed, more and more women came to object to the limitations imposed on their activities by the working of the family system. One of the methods adopted to safeguard the family, viz. the dismissal of women from certain kinds of employment on marriage, had the opposite effect.

Similar remarks apply to the changing relations between parents and growing children, brought about by new opportunities for education, amusement and social activities outside the home. In

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many ways the interests of young people between sixteen and twenty are much more up to date than the interests of persons between forty and fifty; and the capacity of parents to give sound guidance is called in question by their children just at the time when parents are most anxious to give it.

A weakening in the approval of old institutions does not always directly lead to behaviour calculated to discredit them. But it does lead to lukewarm support; and there is no field where faint praise is so damning: many young people are quick to feel the insincerity of a half-hearted attempt to defend an institution which is behind the times, and fail to be impressed.

I think, then, that a good deal of the behaviour which is taken as a decline in moral standards should be put down to a lack of loyalty to institutions in their old form, and to a feeling that some change is needed in them. This leads some people to experiment with their own lives, trying to find patterns of behaviour that will be more satisfactory. It also has the effect of leaving more irresponsible persons with less impressive warnings against anti-social conduct; and in this way it does contribute to a lowering of standards.

There is good ground for the statement that a weakening in religious belief is an important part cause of this weakening of loyalty. On the doctrinal side the change is connected with changes in the whole intellectual outlook produced in the last four centuries; but the effects on behaviour are not due primarily to intellectual beliefs, but to the connection of these beliefs with the Churches as social institutions. What count most are the changes already noted in the social functions of the Churches, and in their connections with other social institutions; for it was just these connections which made the religious doctrines impressive regulators of behaviour. The Churches touched ordinary social life on far more sides than they do to-day, and contributed powerful support to other social institutions.¹ And there can be no doubt that as the strength of this support declined, these other institutions were compelled to stand more on their own merits, and failed to do so.

It does not follow, however, that the only way to bring back moral standards is to quicken belief in religious doctrines. The

¹ Cf. Trevelyan, *English Social History*, p. 569: "It was no less significant that the Salvation Army regarded social work and care for the material conditions of the poor and outcast as being an essential part of the Christian mission to the souls of men and women. It was largely for this reason that its power has become a permanent feature in modern English life. It does not depend on revivalism alone."

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soundest basis for moral standards is loyalty to social institutions felt to be worthy of loyalty; and to secure this, old social institutions have to be changed so as to make them more capable of satisfying the needs they themselves encourage. And again, as has been said, it is the Churches as social institutions that were the important influence. Merely to campaign on behalf of a set of doctrines, when so many of the sides of life which used to be connected with the Churches have become linked with new forms of organisation, is to work in vain. I do not want to rule out a strengthening of the influence of the Churches. There are many persons whose intellectual and emotional needs, under present conditions, would be best satisfied through this influence. But I do not think that the Churches can ever hope to function in the universal way in which they endeavoured to function in the past. There are large numbers of people to whom no religious doctrines—at least in their present shape—can hope to appeal.

Two points are important. The first refers to the rhetorical question quoted at the outset. "How can a non-religious advocate of morals fail to see that he is living on capital accumulated by Christianity?" It is difficult to see how any Christian could ask this question without remembering the centuries of persecution—"liquidation" is the modern word—of non-Christians, and the steady vilification of persons whose life and conduct, however good, were not based on Christian belief. But even with these malefic advantages, the Churches were not always the leaders in advocating reforms in moral standards. A great deal of the progress in social institutions and in moral insight came from people who were not in sympathy with Christian doctrines, and who sometimes received heavy penalties on this account. It is time to get rid once for all of the view that only religious belief can either justify or encourage morality.

The second point is that success in persuading people that only religion can justify moral conduct may be dangerous to morality, and will be so unless religion can maintain itself. It may be easier to convince people that morality is bound up with religion than to give them a vital religion. There is no objection to the argument that, while morality can stand on its own feet, its appeal is strengthened, for some people, by religion; there is every objection to making religion the only possible justification for morality. The incentives for high standards of conduct must in the last resort come from reflection on social institutions and what they can

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become, and from a realisation of the conditions required for the working of the institutions, and of the way in which an attempt is made to meet human needs through them. The soundest way to strengthen these incentives is to transform the institutions so as to make them an endeavour to meet the needs, not of certain classes of persons, but of all.

This is true equally of international morality. The trials of the enemy war leaders must be regarded as an emphasis on international institutions in the making, and as an attempt to carry them a stage further, rather than as an affirmation of absolute principles of right and wrong. But the difficulties of institution-making in the international sphere will still have to be faced, when the enemy trials are over and forgotten.

Marxism and Christianity

BY ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON

“EVER since the conversion of the Emperor Constantine,” writes George Thomson in *Æschylus and Athens*, “Christianity has been, in its official form, as distinct from revolutionary heresies, a religion of the ruling class; yet, like Orphism, it began among the proletariat and it retains to this day the marks of its humble origin. We still sing in the Magnificat, forgetful of its social implications, ‘The hungry he hath filled with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away.’ We still adhere to the doctrine of redemption, which originally connoted the action of a slave in purchasing his liberty. We still bend the knee before the Cross, which, like the Orphic Wheel, was once the symbol of a contemporary reality.”¹

The history of the evolution of Christianity from a workers’ movement into an “opium of the people” has yet to be written. Such a history is not to be expected either from the professional theologian or from the old-fashioned Rationalist. The professional theologian sees in Christianity a divine revelation, the influence of which has been wholly for good; the old-fashioned Rationalist sees in it a combination of fraud and folly, the influence of which has been wholly for evil. Here the Marxist historian can do a useful job. He is accustomed to look for contradictions in his subject matter and to find in them no mere *reductio ad absurdum*, but a key to interpretation and a guide to action. In Christianity, therefore, as in everything else, the Marxist will expect to find positive and negative elements, some which have made for progress and liberation, and others which have made for reaction and repression; and he will not be disappointed.

Christianity was an offshoot of Judaism. A historical appreciation of Judaism is therefore an essential preliminary to a historical appreciation of Christianity. How was it that Palestine, of all countries in the world, gave birth to a religion which, in its ultimate development, proved to be the death-knell of the ancient world and the ideological harbinger of that medieval world from which our own has sprung? The answer to this question must be sought, not in metaphysical speculations about the “genius of the Semitic race,” but in the material conditions of Jewish history. Palestine

¹ *Æschylus and Athens*, pp. 159–60.

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is the meeting-point of Africa and Asia. In antiquity it was the cockpit in which rival empires contended for mastery. If Egyptian armies invaded Asia, if Assyrian, Babylonian or Persian armies invaded Egypt, if Ptolemies fought Seleucids or Seleucids Ptolemies, Palestine bore the brunt of the shock. Hence, while the primitive tribes which inhabited Palestine were subject to the usual economic distresses attending everywhere the transition from barbarism to civilisation, they were subject in addition to the misery which always befalls peoples who occupy a "no man's land" between clashing imperialisms.

The result was twofold. The brutalities, deportations and enslavements attending successive conquests bred in Palestine, as they bred elsewhere, a mass hatred of the exploiting power. But, until the advent of Rome, the domination of one conqueror never lasted so long as to extinguish totally all hope of liberation. Hence the exploited masses in Palestine kept alive the spirit of revolt long after it had been trampled out everywhere else in the ancient world. The oldest literary monument of their struggle is to be found in the prophetic literature of the Old Testament. Early prophets like Amos are revolutionary poets or pamphleteers, inveighing against capitalists who sell "the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes,"¹ and against priests who batten on the oppression of the poor. Naturally, their protests are conditioned by the ideology of their age. The principal exploiters whom they had to fight were priests. The supernatural pretensions of the priesthood had to be met by claims equally imposing. The spokesmen of revolt therefore invoked the god of their nomadic forbears, Jahveh, against the multifarious Baals and Astartes whose shrines were the strongholds of the exploiter. By degrees monotheism became the ideology of the movement. In the Pentateuchal law which became the nucleus of the Jewish Bible, and especially in Deuteronomy, the motives of monotheism and social justice are inextricably intertwined. Finally, in the later prophetic literature, the hope of liberation from exploiters, native and foreign, crystallises round the imagined figure of a kingly leader who will break the empires of the world in pieces and usher in a golden age of peace and plenty.

The reconstruction of early Jewish history is of necessity a hazardous operation. The Jewish records are the work of uncritical scribes and have been edited and re-edited in the interest not of historical truth, but of religious edification. From the time of

¹ Amos ii. 6.

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Alexander, however, we have the advantage of knowing, not only what the Jews said of themselves, but what others said of them. Particularly instructive is the hostile picture painted by Tacitus early in the second century A.D.¹ The chief count in his indictment of the Jews is their propagandist activity. They attract the dregs of society. They teach people to despise their country and their country's gods. They practise mutual aid among themselves, but are enemies of mankind. They are disgustingly prolific, and so fanatical that they despise death in battle or by the hand of the executioner. They refuse to honour kings or emperors with statues. In short, they are a dangerous secret society—a State within a State. This passage shows what it was to which the ruling class of the Roman Empire really objected. It was not that the Jews had a peculiar religion: the Romans were used to peculiar religions. It was that the Jews *propagated* their religion. They refused to accept the status of one subject people among many. They looked upon their way of life as the ideal way of life, destined to triumph over the whole world, and on their god—Jahveh of the prophets—as the only god, destined to sweep the Græco-Roman pantheon and priesthods into the dust-bin of history.

Of course this was not true of all Jews. The class structure of society in Palestine was the same as elsewhere; and the richer Jews, especially the priestly aristocracy, found no difficulty in coming to terms with the Empire. Moreover, the Jews by now were not confined to Palestine. Scattered over the Mediterranean were colonies of Jews in very various circumstances—some, as at Alexandria, privileged and prosperous, others, like the Jewish colony at Rome, a by-word for poverty and squalor. In the *diaspora*, as in Palestine, the richer Jews put their Messianic hopes in cold storage and made the best of things as they were. But the poorer Jews everywhere were a rallying-point for revolutionary agitation. The Sibylline Oracles, in which the downfall of the existing world order and the advent of the Messianic kingdom are prophesied in rude hexameter verses, exemplify the kind of propaganda they conducted.

Christianity, as its name denotes, arose out of Jewish Messianism: "Christ" is simply "Messiah" translated into Greek. The first use of the word "Christ" (or its near equivalent) by a Roman writer is in the passage of Suetonius which records that the Emperor Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome because they "constantly

¹ *Histories*, v. 4-5.

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made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus.”¹ That is, the poverty-stricken population of the Roman ghetto rioted in the belief that the deliverer had appeared. A few years later Suetonius records Nero’s execution of “Christians, a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition.”² Messianism in any shape would be mischievous from the point of view of the ruling class; and if we take into account the fact that the propaganda of the new sectaries prophesied blessings to the poor, woes to the rich, the destruction of the existing order by fire, and the advent of the “kingdom of God” in place of the empire of *divus Caesar*, we need feel no surprise that it met with violent repression.

But Messianic propaganda was of interest to others besides the enemies and the custodians of established order. The richer or even the moderately well-to-do Jews, both in Palestine and in the *diaspora*, had an obvious interest in countering it. Left to itself, it would lead to a clash between Jewry and the Empire; and once that clash occurred, Rome was not likely to discriminate nicely between Jew and Jew.³ From the point of view of the middle-class Jew of the *diaspora* it was necessary to stave off a clash at all costs. One way of doing so was to divert the movement into other-worldly and therefore innocuous channels. Many well-to-do Jews, like Philo of Alexandria, had studied Greek philosophy and were familiar with the Orphic doctrine, current in philosophical literature since Plato, that the body was a tomb from which the soul could be released to eternal bliss by the practice of ascetic virtue. They were familiar too with the Stoic doctrine of the *logos*—the divine reason which operated in the world and inspired men to virtuous action, and which they equated with the “word” of God which in Jewish mythology had created heaven and earth. If the masses of the Mediterranean cities could be persuaded that the Christ, the deliverer who was to redeem them, was no earthly king, but a divine being, and that the kingdom which they were to expect was not of this world, but above the clouds and beyond the grave, the revolutionary sting of Messianism would be drawn.

This is the propaganda with which we meet in the Pauline Epistles. It was pointed out by the Tübingen school of critics in the last century that the New Testament contains not one, but two brands of Christianity—the essentially Jewish doctrine of the

¹ *Claudius*, xxv. 4.

² *Nero*, xvi. 2.

³ This is the argument put into the mouths of the Jewish Sanhedrin in John xi. 48.

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Sermon on the Mount, and the very different doctrine of the Epistles. This is perfectly true. But the Tübingen school did not cast their net wide enough. For them, the difference between the two turned mainly on the question whether Christians were or were not bound to observe the Jewish law. That, in reality, was only part of a deeper and wider question, viz. whether the aspirations of converts were to be directed to a millennium on earth or to "pie in the sky." If the former, then the movement would be a revolutionary agitation based on Jewish Messianism, and a clash with Rome would be inevitable. If the latter, then Christianity might hope for an accommodation with the Empire, once the authorities were satisfied that it was free of any taint of treasonable aims.

Not only were the propagandas of Messianism and Pauline Christianity different, but the figures round whom they respectively centred were, to begin with, different too. One of the most puzzling features of the New Testament, on the assumptions of traditional Christianity, is the silence of the Pauline Epistles about the life and work of Jesus. Apart from a few brief touches which may easily have been interpolated, the "Christ Jesus" of the Epistles is not a man at all, but a god of the familiar "mystery" pattern who dies and rises again to confer "newness of life" on his votaries. He is not localised or dated, and his teaching is not quoted.¹ This is perhaps the most impressive of the arguments put forward by J. M. Robertson, Drews, Couchoud and their school for the wholly mythical character of Jesus. Yet when we turn to the Synoptic Gospels we get the impression, amid much that is obviously legendary, of another Jesus—one whom the writers nowhere call God and who nowhere calls himself God, who lived in a particular Roman province at a particular date and was executed by a well-known Roman procurator on a political charge. For those not gifted with the eye of faith it is difficult to see any connection between this Jesus and the Pauline saviour-god. We are evidently dealing with two different movements. If further proof of this is needed, it is to be found in the passages in which Paul (or the writer who uses his name) refers to some who preach "another Jesus, whom we did not preach,"² and anathematises those who preach "any gospel other than that which we preached."³

Marxism teaches us to view such movements against their economic background. We should expect *a priori* that a movement

¹ 1 Timothy, which *does* mention Pontius Pilate, is admitted even by professional theologians to be a forgery of the second century.

² 2 Cor. xi. 4.

³ Gal. i. 8.

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which pinned its hopes to a catastrophic overturn of the existing world-order would appeal to the disinherited classes, and that one which tried to divert such hopes into other-worldly channels would appeal to those with something to lose. Our *a priori* expectation is borne out by the evidence. The party in the early Church who clung closest to Jewish Messianism and its millenarian hopes, and who rejected Paul as an apostate, were called Ebionites ("poor men"). They were especially strong in Syria—the part of the Empire in which traditions of the early movement might be expected to persist—and seem to have continued in existence until the rise of Islam. Pauline Christianity, on the other hand, from the first had moneyed supporters; and their money was a potent weapon in drawing the teeth of the revolutionaries. We read repeatedly in the New Testament of money collected by Paul and his associates for the purpose of relieving "the poor among the saints" and, no doubt, rendering them more amenable to the opium peddled by Pauline propagandists.¹ Whether these episodes are historical or not, there is no doubt that that was the reputation which the Pauline party had. They had money, but no mass following; the Messianists had the makings of a mass following, but no money. The correct strategy for the Pauline counter-propaganda to Messianism was obvious.

The diversion of Messianic propaganda into safe channels was naturally made easier by the ruin which overtook the Jewish revolutionary movements of the first and second centuries A.D. After the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 conversion to Judaism was forbidden on pain of death or forfeiture of goods. Pauline Christianity profited by the distress of Israel. The Gospels, which gradually took shape during the half-century or so after this, were edited and re-edited in an anti-Jewish sense—"rewritten three times, four times and many times," says the pagan critic Celsus, "in order to provide answers to objections." Thus every artifice is employed to shift the onus of the Crucifixion from Pilate on to the Jews—even to the point of improbably representing Pilate as finding "no fault" in a man who said he was king of the Jews!² By the middle of the second century we find the Church completely severed from the synagogue, the Jewish people saddled for all time (in Christian eyes) with the guilt of deicide, and the apologist Justin protesting the loyalty of his co-religionists to that Empire which they had

¹ Acts xi. 29–30, xxiv. 17; Rom. xv. 25–6; 1 Cor. xvi. 1–3; 2 Cor. ix; Gal. ii. 10.

² Luke xxiii. 3–4.

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formerly execrated as "Babylon the great, the mother of harlots, drunken with the blood of the saints!"¹

The victory of safe, other-worldly, Pauline Christianity over turbulent Messianism was accompanied and indeed made possible by a profound change in Church organisation. This had originally been democratic. In the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, a work dating from late in the first or early in the second century, we get a picture of primitive Messianist congregations which reminds us in some respects of the branches of a modern working-class organisation. Each congregation is governed by popularly elected officers ("bishops" and "deacons") answering to modern branch officials. The work of propaganda is done by travelling speakers ("apostles" and "prophets"), who receive hospitality, but are forbidden to take any other payment for their services. Congregations are warned against careerists ("Christmongers") who try to live on the movement. Of a professional clergy boasting "apostolic succession" there is here no trace whatever. But during the second century there is a change.² The elected officials come to be regarded as entitled to continuity of office—a phenomenon not unknown in modern Labour movements. In this way officialdom became a vested interest. Finally democracy disappeared, and the clergy, and above all the bishops, were regarded as holding office by divine authority transmitted to them from the first apostles. It is easy to see how this development facilitated the repression of revolutionary tendencies and made possible eventual collaboration between Church and Empire.

The path of the collaborators was not smooth. The extent to which Messianism retained its hold on the rank and file is shown by the popularity of such a work as *Revelation*, with its lurid invective against Rome ("Babylon") and its vengeful visions of blood and fire. The leaders of the Church would gladly have excluded the book from the canon, but simply could not do so. For long, therefore, the imperial authorities continued to regard the Church as politically dangerous. But in the third century the Empire went to pieces so completely that desperate remedies were necessary. More than one emperor seems to have played with the idea of making Christianity a State religion. Finally, Constantine took the plunge

¹ Rev. xvii.

² The change seems to have been begun locally even earlier. The First Epistle of Clement, usually dated about A.D. 96, scolds the Church of Corinth for "sacking" some of its officials. This Epistle contains the first extant statement of "apostolic succession."

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and struck a bargain with the bishops. From leaders of a suspected and often persecuted movement they found themselves transformed into court favourites and pillars of society. In a very few years imperial authority was helping the bishops to define the "orthodox" Creed and to impose it, when defined, on those Christians who were inclined to kick against the new alliance of Church and State. Naturally, the Creed which received official approval consists of a string of Pauline and other-worldly dogmas, and leaves the revolutionary message of primitive Messianism severely alone.

Christianity has borne the marks of its dual origin throughout its history. On the very morrow of Constantine's establishment of the new religion, the slaves and serfs of Roman Africa raised the Donatist slogan, "What has the Emperor to do with the Church?" and began a revolt which lasted on and off until the fall of the Empire. During the Middle Ages the sect variously known as Paulicians, Bogomils, Cathari or Albigenses, appearing first in the east and later in western Europe, absorbed into its ranks various persecuted splinter-parties and provided a rallying-point for resistance to a Church which had become little more than a great feudal vested interest. The story of the suppression of the Albigenses in the thirteenth century is one of the bloodiest in medieval history. With the rise of the bourgeoisie at the end of the Middle Ages, dissentient Christianity acquired a more definite political content. The Lollards and Hussites demanded the confiscation of the swollen wealth of the upper clergy on the ground that property might lawfully be taken away from unworthy holders, and that bishops and abbots by their worldliness and wickedness had shown themselves unworthy. The Reformation rallied to its banner, not only landlords and capitalists covetous of Church land and plain bourgeois resentful of priestly interference in daily life, but artisans and peasants demanding social equality in the name of the Gospel. By the second half of the sixteenth century we meet with sects which deny the Trinity, interpret the Bible allegorically, question the immortality of the soul, and hold that "all things come by nature." The revolt against the medieval Church was to know no halting-place short of modern materialism. Thus Christianity, working out its internal contradictions, ends by negating itself.

Just as the slaves and serfs of the Roman Empire evolved an appropriate ideology in Christianity, so the modern working-class movement has evolved an appropriate ideology in Marxism. The difference between Christianity and Marxism is such as we should

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expect between the outlook of a servile class without civil rights, political experience or scientific training, and a wage-earning class who by generations of struggle have won the right to organise industrially and politically, and who by the nature of their employment enjoy an increasing measure of education. For the slaves and serfs of antiquity the objective conditions of liberation did not exist; they therefore pinned their faith to an impossible miracle—the advent of the Messiah and the disappearance of the established order in a cosmic cataclysm. For the modern working class the condition of liberation is the intelligent use of the rights already won as weapons in the further class struggle which lies ahead.

The Marxist, therefore, can no more be a Christian than a modern astronomer can believe in a flat earth, a modern biologist in the chimera and the phoenix, or a modern jurist in witchcraft. But because the Marxist must reject the Christian ideology, it does not follow that he must regard all Christians as enemies of Socialism. That would be as foolish as the policy, censured by Marx and Engels in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, of treating all classes but the working class as “one reactionary mass.” In so far as the Churches are interlocked with the capitalist system and oppose the international working-class movement (as, for example, the Roman Catholic hierarchy from the Vatican down mostly does) they are our enemies and must be fought on every front, political and ideological. On the other hand, there are thousands of Christians, clerical as well as lay, whose economic interests range them with the working class, but who are linked to the Churches by family tradition, social ties and lack of scientific and historical background. It would be a gross error to antagonise them, as the old-fashioned freethinker too often does, by indiscriminate attacks and sectarian sneers. In dealing with them the Marxist will remember that Christianity has never meant the same thing to everybody. The Christianity of General Councils, Popes and cardinals, the Inquisition, the blasphemy laws, the Tory Party at prayers and General Franco is one thing; that of the Albigenses, the Lollards, the peasant revolts, the Levellers, Conrad Noel, the Dean of Canterbury and the average church or chapel congregation in an industrial district to-day is another. Many a professing Christian to-day is a good working-class fighter, but with an ideology a little out of date. He is a friend. The fight is the test, and if well fought, will itself in good time correct the ideology.

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*Excerpts from a Review of Zoshchenko's "Before Sunrise"
in the "Bolshevik" (No. 2, January, 1944)*

THIS work of Zoshchenko's is utterly alien to the feelings and thoughts of our people. Zoshchenko's stories are based upon a petty bourgeois conception of the world; he paints an extraordinarily distorted picture of the life of our people. Entirely preoccupied with his own emotions, he forgets that man lives in society. "I'm wretched and I don't know why," he begins and, to find solace, turns back to his past life to recall "those things which had made the deepest and most vivid impressions," emotional thrills, even smells! He then proceeds to relate sixty-two indecent escapades. It is not possible in the Soviet Press even to tell the contents of such a vile story as "An Old Man Dies," the theme of which is a description of the lechery of a dying man. Not to weary our readers with examples of unmentionable vulgarity, suffice it to say that in this book we are confronted with a sea of vulgarity and filth.

One wonders how it could happen that a Leningrad writer walked our streets, lived in our splendid city, and found nothing to write about except that which no one needs, which is alien and forgotten. Zoshchenko wanders about like a rag-picker among human dust-bins, searching for the worst that he can find. It is somehow hard to believe that during the great Patriotic War, this author, knowing well the struggle of the people of Leningrad in defence of their city, the self-sacrificing work of the women of Leningrad, found it possible to write only about ignorance and filth, when in reality the fine qualities of the Soviet people shone with especial brilliance, proving the might of their cause. But all that is fine, all those things which would have lifted any real person out of his melancholy, Zoshchenko stubbornly passes over.

At one time we used to try to persuade ourselves that Zoshchenko sought out these forlorn relics of the past in order to show them in his stories as decaying fragments of the old world. For triviality, contemptible futility, foul habits, the petty lives of petty people are the basic themes of all his writing; his heroes are all mischief-makers, shady adventurers lurking in the shadows waiting for better times. But now it is only too clear that Zoshchenko is himself a man of precisely this type.

For what kind of readers was this story intended? Few are to be found to-day, during this titanic struggle, who would find time for this type of morbid introspection. Zoshchenko says that he writes for people who have natures akin to his. And what is that? Apathy, melancholy, self-indulgence, a degraded view of women, a contemptuous attitude towards people in general. Real Soviet people, in spite of their wartime anxieties, still advance science and art for the good of the Motherland. Soviet

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writers, from the first days of the Patriotic War, found their place among the fighters for the freedom and independence of our splendid country. But Zoshchenko was never disturbed by artillery fire. It is difficult, he says, in the peace of "the forever blessed city of Alma-Ata," to imagine that the guns are roaring. Remote from the war, from the whine of shells, with nothing better to do, he seeks to justify his isolation and his depression in these unworthy tales.

Meanwhile, his fellow writers, Tikhonov and other courageous souls, know well what bombardment means and under the roar of guns they write things which people need and which are eagerly welcomed. To win the love of their readers by truth and not by trivialities is the duty of the Soviet writer.

If Zoshchenko could grasp this thought, the people of Leningrad would not be compelled to feel shame for a writer who formerly worked among them.

Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, August 14th, 1946

This resolution expresses grave concern that the chief literary journals of Leningrad, a hero-city, "famous for its progressive revolutionary traditions, always a source of progressive ideas and advanced culture," had got completely out of touch with the life of the Soviet people and had forgotten the positive educational role of literature in the Soviet State. "The Strength of Soviet literature, the most progressive literature in the world, consists in the fact that it is a literature which has not, and cannot have, any interests except the interests of the people." The task of Soviet literature, therefore, is to aid in the education of the people, especially the youth, to answer their questions, inspire people with courage, faith in their cause and the determination to overcome all obstacles. Instead, the literary content of these journals expressed a spirit of disillusionment and pessimism not in the least characteristic of the Soviet people, but showing the influence of the more decadent productions of Western bourgeois culture. Especially was this seen in the writing of Zoshchenko, Akhmatova and Khazin, who appear to grovel before this type of foreign literature.

The editors are criticised for allowing an easy-going attitude and personal friendship for such authors to determine what should be printed rather than a high standard of literary merit. All sense of responsibility before the people was thus lost and the artistic standards of the material published was lowered.

The Executive of the Union of Soviet Writers, and particularly its President, Tikhonov, are also blamed for not realising that they had a definite responsibility for maintaining the highest possible level of work in these journals.

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The Leningrad Committee of the Party is censured for allowing Zoshchenko to join the Editorial Board and for failing to give leadership to the journals. The Central Committee also censures its own section responsible for such matters for its negligence.

The Central Committee recommends that all necessary steps shall be taken to raise the ideological and artistic level of such publications, suggests that until conditions improve only one journal shall be issued instead of two, and recommends the appointment of an editor-in-chief to bear full responsibility, who is to be A. M. Yegolina.

Resolution on Zhdanov's Report adopted by the Meeting of Leningrad Writers ("Pravda," August 22nd, 1946)

After hearing Zhdanov's report on the Central Committee Resolution, the Leningrad Writers passed a long resolution affirming that they regarded the decision as wholly correct and endorsing it as a militant programme for all Leningrad writers. They pointed out that Zoshchenko had, during the war, stood aside from the struggle and had written a particularly disgraceful libel on the Soviet people entitled *Before Sunrise* which had been criticised in the *Bolshevik* in 1944. Unfortunately, no notice had been taken of this criticism. He had since followed this up with another cynical and malicious slander against the people of Leningrad called *The Adventures of a Monkey*. They criticised the poetess Akhmatova as a representative of the symbolist salons of the St. Petersburg of 1914, an aristocratic, drawing-room poetess, out of touch with the times and inculcating pessimism and decadence, superficiality and mysticism. The toleration of such work indicated that the principle of "Art for Art's sake" had taken the place of a sound appreciation of the social relations of the artist. The Editors of *Zvezda* and *Leningrad* had forgotten that no periodical, whether concerned with science or art, could be non-political. Thus instead of subjecting these writers to searching criticism those responsible had recommended Zoshchenko for membership of the editorial board of *Zvezda* and put forward both Zoshchenko and Akhmatova for leading positions in the writers' organisation. Very many writers had exaggerated their importance and overpraised their work. It was thus that intellectual confusion and cliquishness had entered the Writers' Union and much worthless stuff had been printed, solely from fear of offending prominent people and personal friends.

"This meeting demands of every Leningrad writer that he devote all his creative power to the production of works of the highest purpose and literary value, reflecting the greatness of our victory, the moving inspiration of restoration and Socialist construction, the heroic deeds of Soviet people. . . . In our works should be worthily and vividly reflected the image of Soviet man, brought up by the Bolshevik Party,

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tempered in the fire of the Patriotic War, devoting all his energies and talents to the lofty cause of Socialist construction and capable of overcoming all obstacles."

The Writers' Union must declare relentless war on all absence of political understanding, vulgarity, political neutrality and backsliding to the position of so-called "pure" art. It calls for the development of frank, objective criticism based on principle, as the most important condition for raising the ideological level of creative work. The Committee must adopt all measures to reinforce the links between writers and the broad strata of the working people, whose requirements and just criticism should guide every writer in his work. The fulfilment of these tasks is not possible without a clear understanding of the policy of the Party and the Soviet State and makes it incumbent upon members of the Union continually to raise their ideological and theoretical level and to ponder deeply over the political meaning of the important events around them.

Resolution of the Presidium of the Board of the Union of Soviet Writers, September 4th, 1946

This resolution, after traversing much of the previous ground, goes on to include in its censure other journals (the *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, *Znamya*, *Novy Mir*), the "Sovietsky Pisatel" publishing house, a number of authors, including Alexander Gladkov, Raytonov, Ivanov, Valetsky (for "writing empty pot-boilers" or works "showing a poor knowledge of life and material"), and Sergeev-Tsensky (*Brusilov's Break-through*), who is said to show an incorrect historical understanding in this work. The scenario writer Nelin (*The Great Life*, 2nd Series) is criticised, and a number of dramatists also come in for censure; Vodopyanov and Laptyev (*Forced Landing*), the Tur brothers (*Emergency Law*), Pogodin (*The Boat Woman*), Rakhmanov and Ryss (*A Window in the Forest*), Rybak and Savchenko (*The Plane is One Day Late*). These plays are said to show "political neutrality and a superficial and flat treatment of great vital themes."

The Ukrainian and other national literatures have not been helped to avoid bourgeois-nationalist tendencies and a romantic escape to the past which simply runs away from the complicated tasks of the present.

The resolution alludes in passing to the poems of Pasternak, which are characterised as being "devoid of significant content," "divorced from the life of the people and lacking in any understanding of the Social background." Other poets who come in for censure are Mezherov for his "sickly admiration of suffering and misery," Antokolsky for his "pessimistic tendencies," Kirsanov for "formalism."

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"Certain writers stand aside from the root problems of the present day, are ignorant of the life and needs of the people and incapable of depicting the finest features and qualities of Soviet humanity."

But responsibility rests on critics and leading members of the Soviet Writers' Union and by no means only upon the writers themselves. "Persons responsible for the literary guidance in literary organisations and the editorial boards of the magazines and publishing houses forgot that literature is a mighty weapon in the work of educating Soviet people." To this carelessness the Presidium attributes, for instance, the wide circulation of Pasternak's poems which have been acclaimed by certain critics, and also the growing carelessness of writers for the magazines who are producing slipshod stuff, in which little attention is paid either to content or form, and which as to style are a disgrace to the Russian language. Lacking the stimulus of serious criticism, many writers have ceased to try to perfect their writing or to improve their skill.

This general lowering of literary standards has had an adverse effect on the whole ideological life of the Writers' Union.

The literary critics in particular must remember the great tradition of Belinsky, Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov and Gorky. At present "the theoretical level of their articles is low, proper attention is not paid to an analysis of the ideological trend of literary productions. Important writers fail to come forward with critical articles and serious discussion is replaced by a noisy fuss about secondary literary issues, aesthetic subjectivism and aloofness from current political problems." This is reflected in the journal *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, the standard of which is regrettably low. It passes over the basic question of the ideological education of writers, fails to criticise sharply the above-mentioned alien influences in literature, and in general fails to bring clear principles to bear in its critical articles.

This backwardness of theoretical thought in regard to criticism and literature has had its effect on the teaching of the history of Soviet Literature and on the education of the Soviet writer, who should be "one who faithfully and sensitively expresses the interests of the people and the Soviet State and is the Party's assistant in the Communist education of the people." It has also found expression in three views which have obtained a certain vogue and which have not been seriously criticised:

1. That first-rate writing about our own time is not possible from contemporary writers and can only appear in the future. A harmful and muddled theory which rudely violates the traditions of Russia's great democratic literature.

2. Selvinsky's pronouncement proposing to replace "Socialist realism" by "Socialist symbolism."

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3. The theory of the Ukrainian writer, Peter Panch, of "the right of writers to make mistakes."

These very grave shortcomings and this breakdown in leadership would never have arisen if there had been a deep sense of responsibility to the people, Bolshevik adherence to principle, and an atmosphere of honest criticism and self-criticism, if the leadership had not failed to concern itself with ideological-creative problems. The collective spirit was not ensured in the work of the Presidium and the bulk of active writers were not drawn into its work.

The Presidium laid down as the main tasks of the Union:

1. "The task of turning the attention of the leading organs of the Union of Soviet Writers, its magazines and publishing houses and of all writers to themes of the present day, to themes of the heroic labour of our people in the restoration and development of Socialist economy and the representation of the finest aspects and qualities of Soviet humanity."

2. "It is essential to conduct among writers, systematic propaganda of the Party's policy on basic problems of internal and international life and to keep writers widely informed of the decisions of the Party and Government."

3. "All this work must be imbued with the fighting spirit of the active, militant ideology of Communism."

4. It is the duty of our writers, armed with the teachings of Lenin and Stalin, "to castigate those works which reflect the influence of decadent Western European tendencies, so uncharacteristic of Soviet people, unmask in these writings the nature of the surrounding capitalist world, fight against its disintegrating influence and explain the nature of modern imperialism, which is fraught with the menace of new sanguinary wars."

5. It is essential to raise the general literary standards and to refuse to allow the publication of careless, slipshod productions.

This decisive turn in the whole work of the Union of Soviet Writers can only be realised on the basis of the development among writers of politically and ideologically informed criticism and self-criticism.

Immediate practical measures:

1. To release N. S. Tikhonov from his duties as Chairman of the Board of the Union of Soviet Writers.

2. To convene a Plenary Session of the Board to discuss these decisions.

3. The Republics and Regions to hold meetings of writers to discuss these decisions.

4. To discuss in the near future reports from the editorial boards of the journals in question and the publishing house "Sovietsky Pisatel" from the standpoint of their practical fulfilment of the decisions of the Central

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Committee. To assist the magazine *Zvezda* and the Leningrad Branch of the Union of Soviet Writers in their reorganisation.

5. Plans for the training of young writers and the development of the Literary Institute.

6. Plans for ensuring the growth and political stiffening of cadres of critics.

7. The exclusion of M. M. Zoshchenko and A. A. Akhmatova from the Union of Soviet Writers "as not fulfilling by their creative work the requirements of Paragraph E of the Rules of the Union, according to which membership of the Union of Soviet Writers is open to those writers who 'uphold the Soviet Government and take part in Socialist construction.'"

"The Presidium of the Union calls upon all writers to rally to the work of fulfilling the tasks contained in the decision of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U.(B) and assures the Central Committee of the Party and Comrade Stalin that the writers' organisation will eliminate the shortcomings revealed and carry out the decision of the Central Committee in Bolshevik fashion."

Excerpts from the Speech of N. Tikhonov, formerly Chairman of the Board of the Union of Soviet Writers

Tikhonov frankly admitted the responsibility of himself, of the Board and of the Presidium for these mistakes. He spoke of their forgetting the most important thing, "the path of development of Soviet literature," of the blunting of their sense of responsibility to the people, of their failure to focus their attention on a deep analysis of the important works appearing during the war years.

The meaning of the recent decisions was by no means merely a criticism of certain mistakes. "It is that Soviet literature—advanced and powerful—must grow, incessantly revealing new phenomena of the life of a victorious people and their spiritual improvement."

After further references to the fact that the Presidium allowed itself to be concerned with secondary matters and neglected essential tasks, Tikhonov mentioned as an example of "grovelling before the bourgeois West" the fact that one author had taken a foreign novel and made it into a contemporary play about Soviet life, thereby revealing a total ignorance of Soviet humanity and an irresponsible attitude towards his own literature. Another writer "does not adapt foreign works, but in his writings you feel the imitation of bad models of the West."

Turning to other faults, the seriousness of which had not been realised, he mentioned once again the theory of "the right to make mistakes," which "disarms us in the face of an alien ideology." He then spoke of a

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certain tendency to sordid realism that "turned the beam of the literary searchlight on shady people, on scoundrels and depicts only negative types." He also criticised certain historical novels for veiling an escapist aestheticism, taking the form of "knightly romances," behind historical action. The poets' section, again, had failed to give an idea of "the ideological state of poetry to-day. It should have arranged discussions on the work of the greatest poets, analysed the works of young authors, helped them forward, not by simply analysing their books, but by seriously defining the trends of their development." The attention paid to dramatic art was poor and superficial and did not analyse the quality. "We have also to recognise our failure as regards the cinema, because the cinema drama is also a writer's business."

Concluding his speech, Tikhonov said:

"The decision of the Central Committee of the Party adopted on August 14th is the programme of our future activity. It states directly that the task of Soviet literature is to assist the State in the correct education of youth, of the new generation. If we set to work in a radical fashion to eliminate the mistakes we have made, we shall be fighting for the lofty principles of Soviet literature; if we regard our magazines as a great tribune, if we succeed in raising contemporary themes to their due level, if we are able, finally, to appreciate fully the international importance of Soviet literature and our responsibility for it before the Soviet people and the world as a whole, I do not doubt that we shall advance the whole development of our literature."

Excerpts from K. Simonov's speech at the Session of the Presidium of the Board of the Union of Soviet Writers of the U.S.S.R.

"Comrades, I think that the main things are clear to us. Firstly, it is clear that a very bitter ideological struggle is in progress in the world, in which we have to take part, and we have to fight a life or death struggle, as during the war, and there can be no breathing space in this matter. We, as writers, face tasks which call for the same self-sacrifice as during the war.

"Secondly, there is no need to think that inside our own circle we ought not to fight. The membership card of the Writers' Union lays down that a Soviet writer is one who upholds the Soviet Government, takes part in Socialist construction and writes. This has to be remembered.

"Much of what has been said here is correct, yet sometimes the discussion has assumed an unpractical character, as though we had gathered here to talk for a day or two more, and to let it rest at that. This is not the case. This time we shall not escape the work, but must and shall do it ourselves.

"Let there be fewer references to history, peeps into the past. Let us

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think about how we, at long last, can organise affairs in practice so that our Presidium works and gives guidance to literature. When we get this going we shall be able to fulfil the tasks before us; but otherwise we shall talk for a couple of days and afterwards there will be again the same disgraceful state of affairs as before, for which Tikhonov and all of us together are responsible."

Comrade Simonov then dealt with a number of organisational questions of the future work of the Presidium.

Excerpts from N. Aseyev's Speech

Aseyev criticised Tikhonov's report for reducing all the causes of what had taken place to oversight and excessive credulity. Why had not Tikhonov seriously grappled with the faults of Zoshchenko and Akhmatova and discussed their work with them? Why had he not warned anyone except Kirsanov "of the danger of falling into a literary abyss, into an unprincipled void." Herein lies the main portion of blame, which is not mentioned in the report: *friendly toleration of negative phenomena in literature . . .* the encouragement of bad literary taste, bad customs and habits. "Of course, they represent a special literary policy, of course they signify the dissemination of bad views on the tasks of literature, on the means of its artistic action, on the circle of problems it embraces. And it is just here that there arises what seems, at first blush, a private question, the question of a difference in tastes, as touched upon in passing by the author of the report.

"There are tastes inclined towards allegory, verbosity, an inflated complexity, a false significance. This artificiality is not only alien, but definitely hostile to art; it is precisely the temptation to which many succumb who do not clearly see the tasks and role of art. In literature it leads to the predominance of decorative, ornamental detail, to circumlocution, to expatiatory interpretations. Well-aimed, brief, direct statements are regarded as 'naked agitation.' A sort of happy medium is sought for, to be at the same time decorative, healthy, useful and allegorical.

"And all this takes place with the silent encouragement of the leadership of the Writers' Union in the shape of excellent comrades, tested by years of military trials, and, it would appear, capable, at long distance, of recognising a literary influence imbued with a hostile spirit.

"No matter what allusions are made to pressure of business, the matter cannot be presented as though one did not know of the existence of some production which is widely known and did not acquire this publicity only yesterday. No, it is not a matter of being too busy, but of relations of personal friendship, not even towards individuals, but towards literary tastes, towards that literary baroque, the distorted proportions of which

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enchanted a certain person's eye and influenced the tastes of young people, propagating outward beauty, a refined turn to the past. We ourselves, too, began to succumb to the charm of the past we have forgotten, or which is totally unknown to us, not taking into account that it is not dead at all, but, armed with steel claws, lives outside our frontiers, lending an ear and eye to our tastes. And this meant that yearning for it and the return to its traditions corresponded to grovelling before the West. The roots of these phenomena are one and the same: conciliatoriness towards an aesthetics which is hostile to us."

Excerpts from B. Gorbachev's Speech

"The decision of the Central Committee on the work of the Leningrad magazines is being discussed, not only by writers, not only by ourselves, but also by the whole country; and the ideological mistakes of these journals are indissolubly linked with the quality of the whole work of the Writers' Union. The fact is that within the walls of the Writers' Union *there is no creative life*: it is a mere literary office. There has been too much concern with business questions and too little of the right sort of personal help and criticism.

"If Panferov, our collaborator on the Presidium, our friend, had come to us with his article, *Skulls and Little Skulls*, and said: 'Give me some advice; should it be printed or not?'—we should have said to him: 'Don't print it.' We would have saved him from the reproaches of readers and writers who hurled themselves on him after this erroneous article had been published. If Vsevolod Ivanov had shown us his novel, *At the Taking of Berlin*, and we had stood firmly on principle, we would have said to him, 'Don't publish it.' And he would have re-written the novel. It is a disservice to advise a Soviet writer to publish works of low quality. The people, Soviet society, the Central Committee of the Party, have more than once criticised us writers. But I cannot recall that we have ever been criticised for holding too few sessions or for not launching a campaign. We have been criticised and are criticised for bad books, for publishing works of low quality and for failing sometimes to notice good books, as was the case with Panova's well-written tale, *Fellow Travellers*. Clearly then, the most important thing in our work should be the book, the manuscript, the creative work of the writer. Of course, we cannot, in the Union of Soviet Writers, teach a writer how to write. But we can and must assist him to think about life on the basis of principle. Panferov's article evoked a strong reaction in the Press, but did we ever discuss it in the Presidium? Panch advanced an erroneous 'theory'—'the right of writers to make mistakes.' Ukrainian writers discussed this 'theory'; it was also discussed in *Pravda*; we alone, in the Presidium, said nothing about it.

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"Just recall how it was with Zoshchenko. For his book, *Before Sunrise*, we criticised him as though apologising to him. We thought we were behaving in a good, comradely fashion towards Zoshchenko; actually we behaved badly, for we encouraged him to make still greater mistakes.

"It is necessary first and foremost to create an ideological, creative centre for our writers in the Union. For the fact that hitherto this has not been so, Tikhonov is to blame, as leader of the Union; but, of course, not he alone is to blame. Every member of the Presidium bears his own share of the responsibility. Each of us can say: 'I was not in Moscow,' 'I was in Germany,' 'I was in Japan'; but when we were here in Moscow, did we assist in the leadership of the Union? Let us admit that we did not do our duty as members of the Presidium, although no one imposed these duties on us. I do not recall anyone declining to be a member of the Presidium. Each one willingly accepted this honourable position, but not one wanted to bear the concrete responsibility for the common task. We have to admit that we experienced no real alarm or concern for the work of the Union. I will say more: up to the last decision of the Central Committee, we felt no alarm either for the bad books of our comrades. 'It was not I who wrote the bad book, it is not I who will come in for criticism,' some of us thought. Yet in fact it is the case that all writers, and first and foremost the members of the Presidium, who bear the responsibility for the bad book. We live collectively, in one organisation, we take part in a great literary process, and we answer for what takes place in literature. I am convinced that this tremendously important work cannot be done singly. Nothing can be done single-handed. The Union is vitally necessary to us.

"After the publication of the Central Committee decision, I pondered for a long time about what to do: ought I, as a writer and Communist, to stop writing books and sit down seriously to work in the Presidium. I decided that this was not correct, because I am a writer and must write books. But to write books and not work in the Presidium as well is wrong, because I am not only a writer, but a Soviet citizen, a Communist. Therefore, I must combine both. This is very difficult, but who in our country to-day is taking the easy road? Who demands the right to have a breathing-space? Do the workers who are restoring the devastated areas demand a rest? Why should we alone want an easy life?

"The decision of the C.C. of the Party on the Leningrad magazines has troubled me more than any decision concerning our literary work. I understood that it is necessary that I and all my comrades should immediately set to work in the Writers' Union to make it a genuinely literary creative organisation, to inspire new life into it so that we shall never more hear those bitter words, justly spoken to us on August 14th."

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ABSOLUTISM AND ETHICS

FROM H. LEVY

THE following remarks have been evoked by a reading of the MS. on "Absolutism and Ethics."

Russell sees the clue to the existence, development and transformation of ethical principles in the conditioning of individuals in a society, by social institutions that have been set up for the purpose of satisfying the needs of members of the community. He does not define the nature of these needs, or their relevant scope, or how uniformly they are experienced across the community, but since the subject is discussed at the social level, presumably they embrace the ordinary material necessities of existence as determined by the technical capacity of the community, intellectual, emotional, and cultural needs, and other social conveniences. Ethical principles then express themselves through loyalties by individuals to the institutions, or through loyalties to the ideas that the institutions have evoked but are unable to make concrete. Thus, in his treatment, he argues that in primitive societies the relationships between individuals were personal and binding, whereas in modern societies, so much larger and more complex, these relationships are between strangers. The personal bond that directs conduct thus having been broken, there emerges the social need for ethical principles of conduct that are binding on persons simply as persons. Again, when an institution fails to deal out adequate satisfaction to all, ideas of natural rights arise especially among the unsatisfied. Thus again ideal principles of conduct are suggested beyond those in operation in the established institutions. We notice that in one case the passage to general idealised principles occurs as a result of a quantitative change in size and in complexity of organisation of the community, and in the other as a result of a breakdown in the actual organisation, if the function of such organisation is considered to be to satisfy needs.

Now, a considerable part of the argument in Russell's paper is drawn from a study of primitive societies more or less at the tribal stage. In general, societies of this nature were not class-divided. They were socially uniform, and their institutions ran vertically down the community. Institutions did exist specifically for the purpose of satisfying the needs of the individual, and failure to function would be of an accidental character in the first instance. In more modern societies the non-satisfaction of individual needs however is not an accident in the sense that it might arise out of the idiosyncrasies of individuals. It has a social as distinct from an individual origin. It arises from something within the structure of the society itself, from the way in which

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production is organised, and the proceeds of production distributed. It follows therefore that those whose human needs are not satisfied will constitute, at one and the same time, roughly both an economic and an ethical class. Following Russell's argument, therefore, it would appear that as a consequence of such failure, loyalties will tend to be transferred from the institutions of the generalised community to the institutions set up by the class for the purpose of remedying the failure.

There are therefore two types of loyalty to be expected in a community that is at one and the same time a unity and a disunity, viz. loyalties associated with the community as a whole seeking to safeguard the continued existence of the community, but not its economic structure, and those associated specifically with the unsatisfied class. From the first emerges the generalised ethical principles we associate with duty to the community, and from the second the generalised principles that the unsatisfied class feels the community as a whole *ought* to profess and does not practise. These stood out in very sharp contrast, for example, at the time of the General Strike. Roughly, the first set concentrate on the "duties of man" and the second on the "rights of man." The two are not distinct, for *duties* cannot be implemented without rights and *vice versa*. It is along such lines that the ethical ideas of a group rather than of an individual nature emerged as a basis to the Co-operative and the trade union movements, and as an ethical background to the Socialist movement as a whole. The growth of the ethical ideas, and of the institutions for waging the struggle for satisfactions, develop together. When Russell tells us that the way to bring back moral standards in a so-called morally weakening world is not to re-quicken religious belief, but to change old institutions so as to make them more capable of satisfying the needs they encourage, he is pointing in the correct general direction. What is not clear in his statement is the idea that the leavening that must transform the old institutions in order to enable them to generalise the newly emerging ethical principles grows sharply within the institutions set up by the unsatisfied social class in their struggle for satisfaction. It has happened many times. An institution that begins at the bread and butter level, develops an intellectual analysis of the causes of its dissatisfaction, and this strikes back at the judgments, valuations and ethics of the unsatisfied class. Hanging for sheep-stealing is justice to the property-owning class whose sheep are stolen, but injustice to the class that must eat sheep if it is to satisfy its basic needs.

An interesting point follows from this approach. A member of the dissatisfied class may in certain circumstances not develop a class loyalty about which to focus generalised ethical principles. The requisite social conditioning by his own class institutions may be inoperative and he may become simply a disgruntled moral outcast, one of the

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lumpen-proletariat. Again a class-divided society produces individuals who have their material needs satisfied but not all their emotional or intellectual needs. This may happen in a wide variety of ways. The rich man may find that Lazarus at his gate is an infernal nuisance. Too many Lazaruses may in fact threaten the stability of his society. An intellectual analysis can convince him that it is no use simply kicking Lazarus out of the way. Something must be done about the society itself, something must be done to broaden its ethical principles and therefore also to readjust its social institutions; thus up to a point he throws in his lot with the Lazaruses. He has begun to be declassed, but in taking this step he has set off along a difficult path. Lazarus belongs to a class with a wide network of social institutions and has a class loyalty. The rich man does not, for his material needs are satisfied, and so he finds it difficult to identify himself completely with the Lazaruses. He does not have the same solid experiences that give body and meaning to their judgments and values. Accordingly, when the proletariat take control and begin to build a system with ethical judgments at variance with those he otherwise possesses, he may become like the poor man with no class loyalty, a disgruntled outcast, an individualist with a private ethical system and no class loyalty to give it solidity. He is declassed, belonging neither to the satisfied nor to the unsatisfied. Like Koestler, he may seek a purely internal subjective loyalty with no objective equivalent.

ON PERSONALITY AND THE PLANNED SOCIETY

FROM DOUGLAS GARMAN

THE purpose of Randall Swingler's communication in the last issue of the *MODERN QUARTERLY* was, he declares, twofold: "To assure Mr. Forster and those like him that Marxists share his awareness of the danger of mechanistic planning; and to try to indicate that the extension and development of Marxist thought, as a pre-condition of a fully planned Socialist community, is the only protection left for man's personal life and freedom of individual development, against the mechanistic materialism of capitalist monopoly or national socialist planners." Perhaps it is because I find this purpose to be unclear that his argument as a whole strikes me as being confused and unconvincing. Indeed, it seems to me that, in his desire to give "sympathetic and not merely polemical consideration" to Forster's point of view, Swingler accepts so many of his assumptions that it is often hard to distinguish between his Marxism and Forster's liberal idealism.

To begin with, there was nothing in the broadcast Swingler quotes from to show that Forster is concerned with distinctions between "mechanistic" and other kinds of planning; and it only clouds the issue

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to father this concern on him. The dilemma in which Forster finds himself is simpler. While he is in favour of economic planning, because without it "millions of people will have nowhere to live and nothing to eat," he is opposed to any planning "in the world of the spirit," which he fears will ensue as a corollary. It is a dilemma because Forster holds the view that "if you plan and control men's minds, you stunt them, you get the censorship, the secret police, the road to serfdom, the community of slaves." Apparently he has never considered whether the education he himself received involved any measure of planning and control of his mind. Yet it could be cogently argued that the *tabus* and prejudices of King's College and the Apostles impose at least an element of intellectual serfdom.

For this dilemma Forster sees no issue. It leads, he says, to a "collision of principles, a split in one's loyalties," which he proceeds to illustrate by a somewhat pathetic account of his dismay because a satellite town has been planned in the countryside which he has enjoyed since boyhood: "A little piece of England has died as surely as if a bomb had hit it." Incidentally, I find it difficult to reconcile this melodramatic hyperbole with Swinger's description of Forster's argument as "the clearest and most scrupulously honest statement." It is, surely, the most dishonest special pleading to equate the decent housing of a few thousand families, and all the opportunities this provides for the enlargement of the spiritual world, with the effects of a bomb. Indeed, it points to a central distinction between the Communist and the Liberal outlook.

Communists regard the individual values that Forster defends, the "little worlds of its own" that art creates, as bourgeois values and bourgeois worlds. This implies no condemnation of them—some are good, some bad—but simply describes them as products of capitalist society. But whereas Forster at one moment seems to admit as much ("In came the nice fat dividends, up rose the lofty thoughts") and is even in favour of a limitation of the dividends ("The poor have kicked. The backward races are kicking—and more power to their boots") he wants at the same time to preserve "the old morality," to which, by an intellectual sleight of hand, he attributes the validity of a philosophical absolute. It is this that Marxists deny. We reject such a morality: firstly because it claims to be an absolute independent of the society that gives rise to it; and secondly because it is held to be compatible with the avoidable starvation of millions of people. But while we are convinced, as Forster puts it, "that the new economy will evolve an appropriate morality," we do not conclude from this, as he argues that we do, "that when all people are properly fed and housed, they will have an outlook which will be right, because they are the people." That would merely be to substitute one absolute for another.

We do claim, however, that the morality that will be evolved by the

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new economy will be a different morality, and will be precisely because it will so enlarge the frontiers of the "world of the spirit" that they will admit millions of human beings who, in all previous forms of society, have been utterly excluded from citizenship. And we are in no way daunted because Forster, for the purposes of polemic, deigns to borrow from the reactionary arsenal of Churchill his discredited gibes about serfdom, secret police and censorship. On the contrary, we are inspired and encouraged by the vast spiritual enfranchisement that has already taken place in the Soviet Union as the result of the Socialist Revolution, as well as by the rapidly growing demand for such enfranchisement from the common people, particularly the industrial workers, in our own country. We recognise in it one of the chief, if not the most immediate, impulses to Socialism.

But Swingler's sympathy for Forster leads him to conceal this fundamental difference between the materialist outlook of Marxism and the idealism of Liberalism. When he says, "It is assumed that the self-conscious individual, the articulated personality, is the highest organic form of life that we know," he is apparently assuming an absolute, in the same way that Forster does, as though the "articulated personality" could be regarded independently of the form of society in which it exists. And he proceeds: "*Therefore* the personality of the individual, the personal life and personal relations, everything that used to be called 'the inner life' . . . is the proper field of the writer's research, and has been the subject of all secular literature in Britain up to our own time." Langland? Chaucer? Milton? Dryden? Swift? Defoe? Dickens? I cannot conceive how any student of English literature could even attempt to support such a conclusion; though it is perfectly understandable that a contemporary writer, unable or unwilling to face the implications of the profound social conflicts of our time, might seek to argue that *to-day* "the proper field of [his] research" is the "inner life." Indeed many of them have done so; and in doing so have retreated from the position of bourgeois rationalism into mysticism or silence. Huxley is only the most recent example of the first; and it is significant, as well as relevant to this discussion, that Forster, who is described by Swingler as "our greatest and most admirable *living* writer," has for so long been distinguished precisely by his silence. In view of Forster's immense talents as a novelist, it would surely be more just to him to describe him as one of the most tragic spiritual casualties of capitalist society in decline, thus distinguishing between the great creative writer of the past and the present apologist for reaction.

It is this same inability to free himself from Liberalism that accounts for Swingler's hesitation about the future. He regards it as "unwarrantable speculation" that society "as it comes nearer to the realisation of full communism, will express a new valuation of personality." "All that

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we can say up to the present is that in a planned socialist society, everyone will have the same chance to develop an outlook that will be right that Mr. Forster has had in this society. . . . Perhaps even better." The dubiety expressed in this "perhaps" is due, surely, to a lingering conviction that there is some absolute quality in the "rightness" of Forster's outlook; even though Forster himself admits to a "collision of principles, a split in one's loyalties." Moreover, Swingler does not look to Socialist or Communist society to heal these divided loyalties. On the contrary, he regards the "contradiction between social man . . . and personal man" as being fundamental and permanent. Hence, when he later concludes that "the function of art is the defence of the individual and unique personality of man against the regimentation of bureaucratic organisation," he appears to identify the planned society of Socialism with regimentation and bureaucratic organisation. In other words, his attempt to reassure Forster only leads him to express somewhat differently the very fear that assails him.

Swingler fails, it seems to me, to make the distinction, fundamental to the theory and practice of Marxism, between Socialism and Communism. As Lenin put it: "In striving for Socialism we are convinced that it will develop into Communism and, hence, that the need for violence against people in general, the need for the *subjection* of one man to another, and of one section of the population to another, will vanish, since people will *become accustomed* to observing the elementary conditions of social life *without force* and *without subordination*." In such a society the "individual and unique personality of man," far from requiring "defence" by the artist, will for the first time be free to develop and flower as one of the "elementary conditions of social life." But in order to attain to such a society, it is not "the extension and development of Marxist thought" that is necessary (which Swingler regards as "a precondition of the establishment of a fully Socialist planned society"), so much as the mastery and application of Marxist thought. And in achieving that mastery, since it involves the spiritual apprehension of our Communist objective, creative artists have a living part to play. It will be their success in playing it, and not their sympathy, that will assure "Forster and those like him."

2. FROM KITTY CORNFORTH

RANDALL SWINGLER condemns as "mechanistic thinking" the conception that "the emergence of a new level of social organisation automatically creates a new social consciousness." Of course, he is right, but only because he begs the question by using the word "automatically." As a result, I think, he fails to reckon with the real importance of the interaction of social organisation and personality.

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He underestimates the effect of capitalist society which, by isolating individuals and setting barriers of antagonism between classes and nations, creates the problem of the isolation of man from man, and the opposition of the individual to society.

And he equally underestimates the effect on individuals on working together in an organised way, which begins in the fight for Socialism and comes to fruition in Socialist society. It is a fact to be observed that people in changing society do change themselves.

Swingler says that "there is of course a fundamental contradiction between social man—man as a unit of society, and personal man, an organism uniquely differentiated from all other organisms of the same species." But is this true? I should say on the contrary that this contradiction only assumes fundamental importance under capitalism, which uproots the individual and turns him into a negligible "thing," a mere commodity so far as society is concerned. In self defence he has to develop a "personal life" apart from his working life, and painstakingly cultivate "personal relations."

But Socialism overcomes this contradiction. The problem Forster is so concerned about, the problem of the isolation of human beings one from another, begins to disappear, as they become connected in real life in building, or even in fighting for, a new order of society.

How do people in real life, in a factory, for example, overcome the de-personalisation of being a cog in a machine? In two ways.

The individualist relies on developing a separate private life. He gets comfort and happiness from home life, personal relations, gardening, hiking, sport, reading or, it may be, from the exercise of his skill as a craftsman. But there is still a flat contradiction between his life as a person, with interests and potentialities, and his life as an employee. One third of his life—the eight hours spent in the factory—is lost, and only the leisure hours count.

The Socialist solves the problem in another way. Looking for opportunities to strengthen working-class organisation and activity, new possibilities open out, and the eight hours spent in the factory gain a new significance. Personal relations and values enter into his life in a new way, the *contradiction* between work as a cog in the machine in the factory and the life of private interests and personal relations, begins to disappear.

The problem of the isolated individual, the problem of "connecting" one with another, the contradiction of man as a social unit and man as an individual—aren't all these problems peculiar to capitalism, a product of capitalist anarchy and class division?

Under capitalism each has to fight for his place; under Socialism everyone is wanted. This means more than economic security. Capitalist education is divorced from life; after three years at a university, there is often still the problem of what to do. Socialist education is connected

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with life at all stages. Social security means something more than £2 a week if you are unemployed or sick. It means knowing there is a place for you, that, whatever your abilities, you will have a chance to use them, and that they are wanted. Consider the case of Dr. Astrov in *Uncle Vanya*. If he lived to-day he would get a lot more satisfaction out of his afforestation. Instead of being a hobby, a personal crankiness, it would be a useful part of the common effort.

Under capitalism, each individual builds a precarious island of personal relations. Who cares for him? Only his family and friends. And the constant tendency of the competitive world is to narrow the island—even personal friendship and family ties are constantly threatened and broken up from outside (as, for example, by the Means Test). The island is widened, even under capitalism, by the comradeship of the working-class movement. But with the achievement of Socialism, the separate islands of comradeship are extended until they meet and become a continent, the whole of society united for a common purpose.

Consider the isolation of Indians from Europeans in *Passage to India*. It is a real thing. But is there the same gulf between Ben Bradley and Joshi? The gulf is bridged by the common activity for a common objective.

Thus I should say, in contradiction to Swingler, that in a planned society everyone will certainly have a much *better* chance to develop an outlook that will be right than Mr. Forster has had in this society, and a much *better* opportunity to cultivate and enjoy personal interests and personal relations. If we accept Swingler's argument, Forster has possibly been denied nothing. Would Forster agree? Maybe I have totally misunderstood him, but I should have said that Forster registered with extreme sensitivity the sense of isolation that is typical of society to-day. The Forsters as well as the workers have much to gain from Socialism.

E. M. Forster fears a planned society. But isn't this the fear of an *external* force, of being planned *for*? Forster visualises the individual, in the stony, meaningless, hard-faced capitalist world of "telegrams and anger," being deprived of his last solace, the freedom of his personal life. But Socialism means participation in planning. Not an outside alien force planning and controlling my mind, but myself with others like me planning and controlling our own daily lives. Under capitalism, the individual has the power to plan and control only his own private life, and that is constantly encroached on by uncontrollable outside forces. But Socialism immeasurably extends the sphere of control, and a new factor enters. Working together people achieve more than the sum total of their isolated efforts, a new value is realised, the value of participating in something human that is bigger than any single human being.

And this leads me to one more comment on Swingler's contribution.

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Is it true that the function of art to-day is still nothing but "the defence of the individual and unique personality of man against the regimentation of bureaucratic organisation"? I think in saying this Swingler simply takes over the whole outlook of the isolated individual in the alien capitalist world and remains insensible to the new relationships that are being created now in the struggle for Socialism, as well as in Socialist society—new relationships that involve new human values.

A feature of our time is the participation of individuals in a movement for a common purpose; joining together to achieve something of benefit to all, something that can't be got by individuals on their own. When this occurs, even in a small and relatively isolated instance, as, for example, the few men and women who got together as "squatters," new and vital things begin to happen. The individuals create the movement; it is nothing without them; but, organised together, they themselves become different.

The new thing created when you have people associated and organised for a common purpose—how the movement goes on and develops in spite of individual inadequacies and shortcomings; how people are transformed and their personal lives extended; how some flower and develop and others can't combine and turn sour; the exhibition of personalities in their individual human richness taking part in the movement, contributing to it, sometimes being personally advanced and extended, sometimes overwhelmed and thrust aside—isn't *this* the new kind of human relationship characteristic of our time? To write about it isn't just "propaganda." It is there, a fact. The individual and unique personality of man is creating something new, and the function of art is to reflect it.

ON HYMAN FRANKEL'S CRITIQUE ON WHITEHEAD

To the Editor, MODERN QUARTERLY.

May I correct Hyman Frankel's statements regarding Professor Milne's views in Vol. 1, No. 4 of the MODERN QUARTERLY. He writes that "Milne's theory leads to a picture of an expanding universe, but one which at a certain point in time must have come into existence." It does lead to this picture, and such believers in creation as Whittaker have stressed the point. But it also leads to quite a different picture of a non-expanding universe with an infinite past. In Milne's terminology the first picture involves what he calls the t -scale of time which is different for each observer, the latter the τ -scale. Here is what Milne and Whitrow¹ wrote as to the latter scale. "It is an invariant, and affords an absolute simultaneity, and the τ -scale can be shown to be

¹ *Zeitschrift für Astrophysik*, 15, p. 298, 1938.

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the only one which possesses this property. In this sense, as remarked earlier, it may be considered as an absolute time." In fact, in Milne's theory, absolute time has no beginning. The mathematics of many processes, particularly those involving light, turn out to be much simpler if time is measured on the t -scale with a finite past, and he therefore habitually uses this scale.

Any events can be described in two different and indeed contradictory ways in this cosmology. It is in fact beautifully dialectical, as I think the following passage¹ shows: "It is not a fanciful speculation to see in the interplay of radiation keeping t -time with matter obeying the classical laws of dynamics on the τ -scale a phenomenon giving rise to the possibility of change in the universe in time, and so an origin for the action of evolution in both the inorganic and organic universes." Milne's theory is certainly difficult, and no doubt he has sometimes contradicted himself. But it is the kind of theory which a Marxist would expect to be true. And to mention only one of the opposite world pictures which Milne at least claims to unite can I think fairly be described as a distortion of his theory.

J. B. S. HALDANE.

ON THE GREAT MORAL MUDDLE

To the Editor, MODERN QUARTERLY.

Returning from a holiday, I found among other papers on my desk a *Sunday Express* cartoon showing me genuflecting in company with Bill Rust before the oracle of Stalin, and a copy of the latest issue of the MODERN QUARTERLY lumping me with Koestler, Humphrey Slater, Joad and Gollancz as a traitor to Socialism and the traducer of the U.S.S.R. I had a good laugh over both documents; they appear to me on a par as representations of the truth.

Mr. John Lewis does make passing admissions that I was not at all points in agreement with the other writers to whom he refers, but he fails to point out that the position I have taken about the "Ends and Means" controversy is far nearer to his own than to that of Humphrey Slater. Indeed, had he not been able to fasten on a careless phrase in an article of mine, I am not sure that Mr. Lewis would have had any philosophic quarrel with me. I am reduced to the conclusion that his object in attacking me is not to refute my ideas, which in this matter are close to his, but to throw dirt at me politically.

This impression is confirmed by two passages in his article. In the one he says that I have swallowed "hook line and sinker, the Polish propaganda of the *Dark Side of the Moon*, in spite of the fact that the author

¹ *Proc. Roy. Soc., A*, 165, p. 354, 1938.

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makes full use of the Goebbels' supported lie that the Russians were responsible for the Katyn murders." This, oddly enough, ignores the fact that in my review of the *Dark Side of the Moon* I was careful to point out that it would be easy to refute such dubious propaganda as the Katyn murders included in an additional political chapter at the end of the book. Further, the main point of my review was to suggest that good and bad could, and no doubt did, exist side by side in the U.S.S.R., as elsewhere, and to ask on what Marxist or other grounds Communists refused to admit this obvious fact and to subject Soviet errors or evils to the usual process of criticism. This was the challenge I threw out to Communists, and Mr. Lewis ignores it.

My other complaint is against a piece of glaring and outrageous misrepresentation. Mr. Lewis quotes with approval my remark addressed to Humphrey Slater, that "logically those who demand absolute values should be absolute pacifists," and adds (as if I had myself taken this position) that "of course, many of them were pacifists, Aldous Huxley, Joad, Middleton Murry, Kingsley Martin himself. They and many others were pacifists while pacifism was undermining collective security." Mr. Lewis must well know that, as far as I am concerned, this is not only unfair, but simply the reverse of the truth. From the time when I became Editor of the *New Statesman and Nation* in 1931, it has stood continuously for collective security and for the closest relations with the Soviet Union. I was indeed associated with Mr. Lewis and many of his friends in the campaign against Mussolini in Abyssinia, throughout the Spanish struggle and in the organisation of collective resistance to Hitler. Mr. Lewis' obvious misrepresentation may have been meant to wound me, but, coming from a member of a party which from 1939 to 1941 opposed a war which Stalin has himself stated had from the first "an anti-Fascist character," it seems to amount to controversial suicide.

KINGSLEY MARTIN.

The Editor of the MODERN QUARTERLY will be pleased to receive communications raising issues for discussion or criticising articles which have appeared. Suggestions as to full-length articles are welcome.

We should be glad to receive articles on physical science, economics, æsthetic and literary criticism, ethics and philosophy. All articles are paid for.

Correspondence should be addressed to the Editor, Dr. John Lewis, 40 Claremont Park, Finchley, London, N.3.

Our Contributors

George Palocz-Horvath, is a Hungarian novelist who has also written on political questions. He is the author of *In Darkest Hungary* (Gollancz, 1944) in English. His latest novel, *The Survivor*, will be published shortly in Paris. He escaped from Hungary to Yugoslavia in 1941 and was engaged in war work until 1945 in Asia and Africa. Has just finished 1,000 *Million Natives at the Gates*, a socio-anthropological study of the de-colonisation process.

P. B. Medawar was educated at Marlborough and then at Magdalen College, of which he is now a Fellow. He is a University Demonstrator in Zoology at Oxford, and has published articles on growth (e.g. *Essays on Growth and Form*, reviewed in MODERN QUARTERLY, No. 3) and on transplantation immunity.

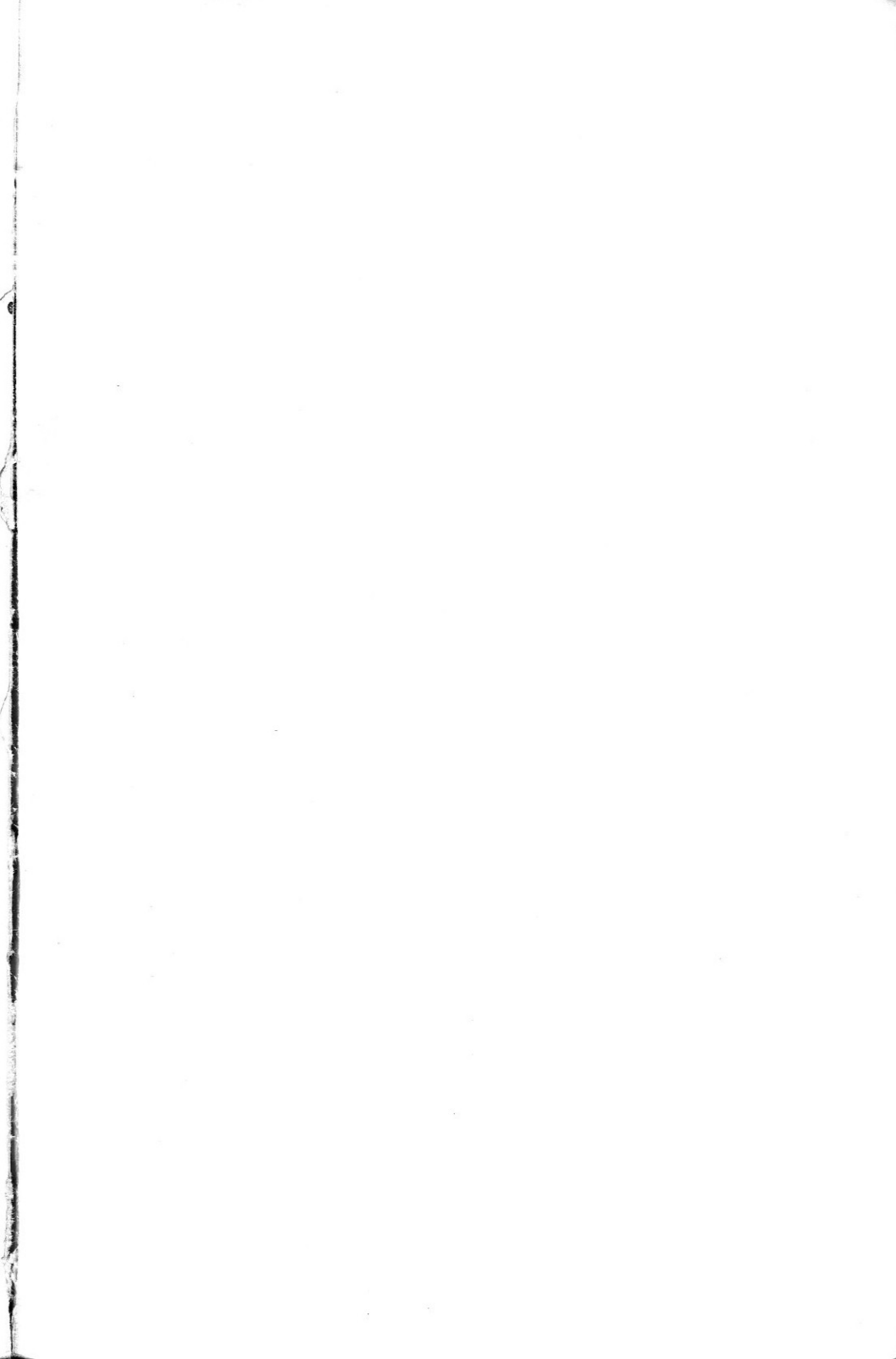
Archibald Robertson is the author of *Philosophers on Holiday*, *The Bible and Its Background*, *Morals in World History*, and *Jesus: Myth or History*, and a well-known writer and lecturer in the Rationalist Movement.

L. J. Russell is Professor of Philosophy at Birmingham University, and is the author of *An Introduction to Logic* and *An Introduction to Philosophy*. He is an authority on the philosophy of Leibnitz.

Our *Communications* are from: *Douglas Garman*, who is National Education Organiser of the Communist Party; *J. B. S. Haldane*, who is Professor of Biometry at University College, London; *Hyman Levy*, who is Professor of Mathematics at the Imperial College of Science and Technology; and *Mrs. K. Cornforth* who studied philosophy at Cambridge University and then at Columbia University, New York.

An important contribution from Professor J. B. S. Haldane on "The Mechanism of Evolution" must, to our very great regret, be held over until the next issue.

We have received urgent requests for Nos. 1 and 2 (New Series) of the MODERN QUARTERLY from Moscow; from the Editors of *Mysl Wspolczesna* (Modern Thought), Warsaw; The New York Public Library; and from other important quarters. We have no copies left. Would any readers be prepared to sacrifice their first two copies to supply these urgent requests?



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