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PROBLEMS OF PERSONAL LIFE

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THE TRAVEL DIARY OF A PHILOSOPHER
THE BOOK OF MARRIAGE
THE WORLD IN THE MAKING
EUROPE
THE RECOVERY OF TRUTH
CREATIVE UNDERSTANDING
AMERICA SET FREE
SOUTH AMERICAN MEDITATIONS

COUNT HERMANN KEYSERLING

PROBLEMS
OF PERSONAL LIFE



*Translated from the French, in collaboration
with the author, by*

MERCEDES GALLAGHER PARKS

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P R E F A C E

AFTER the lectures I delivered at the Palais du Trocadero in Paris in the month of March, 1931, an unknown Frenchwoman wrote to me: 'It is not "esprit", it is bread that you give us.' Never did an appreciation cause me greater pleasure. For the longer I live, the less I am interested in mere brains — in the intellectualistic and literary sense of the word — on their own plane. Such brains can be met with at every street corner. Time was when Socrates, by merely framing syllogisms, could not only astound 'the man in the street' but even give a strong impulse to human progress; by leading intelligence into recognizing its own laws, he endowed it with a sense of responsibility; thence derives all our science. Nowadays, on the contrary, intelligence, much more subtly differentiated, has quite come into its own, and grown very sure of itself; but it no longer feels responsible for anything. In the most harmless instance, it lives self-sufficiently, on the plane of literature or of mathematics, and it is not due to pure accident that a certain representative mind of our days covers both these fields of activity at the same time. In the same way, many poets who, twenty years ago, would have led a bohemian existence and stormed against the 'bourgeois' order, now develop

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into excellent high government officials and even ambassadors. Literature, at the present day, commits one to nothing. In the worst case, intelligence acts in a purely destructive way. No comparison can be more absurd than that of the Russian revolution and the French; the latter strove to base *life* upon reason: whence, by logical necessity, a prompt restoration of the traditional order, though, of course, in a new incarnation, better adapted to the spirit of the times; whence again, as a final consequence, the most 'bourgeois' system that ever was. The Russian revolution, on the contrary, is inspired by a spirit that has lost the respect for life; since its advent, the execution of those who do not think as the leaders do, has become as normal a thing as the elimination of a mistaken term is in mathematics. The humane idea has lost all strength and all prestige. And unless a profound change takes place in men's souls, we shall have to reckon with decades, perhaps with centuries, of massacres. Incidentally, periods of war and revolution are especially favourable to the business of prostitutes. Hence another shade of meaning implied in my affirmation that, to-day, brains can be met with at every street corner. . . .

In my opinion, the only way of salvation open to humanity is a successful reinstating of intelligence into its place within the general scheme of life. Of this scheme it is but a component part, and historically speaking the least important one. At the present moment, no man gifted with vision has any longer the

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right to hope that science and a rational compromise among selfish interests will create, through their own forces, a new cosmos of humanity. Since intelligence has detached and even cut itself completely off from life, and since life must always remain, in spite of all, the human being's last mainspring, progress, if it continues in its present direction, will only succeed in revolutionizing the irrational strata and forces of man ever more thoroughly; a progressive vitalizing of what Antiquity and also the Middle Ages called the demons will then unavoidably come about. Already, in many countries, are men directly opposing Blood to Spirit; the intermediate layers which form, precisely, the soul — the regions of sentiment, affection, emotion — no longer play a part. The beast of prey is getting the upper hand in man. And in such countries as are called progressive, where it is not the hot-blooded beast of prey which predominates, it is the all-devouring white ant; such is the preposterous sense of the present North-American civilization. Man is working at full speed to dishumanize himself.

As I have myself lived through many a catastrophe, I have forcibly acquired some experimental knowledge of the lowest depths in man. However, it is only through contact with the primeval humanity of South America that I have realized the structure of eternal human nature, independently of historical contingencies. In the book which will probably remain the crowning work of my life, *South American Meditations*, I have tried to break man up into his permanent and

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irreducible elements, starting with what is mineral and ending with what is spirit in him, up through cold and warm blood, 'gana', and the emotional and sensitive order. I have there defined man's original composition and, within its limits, his ideal possibilities. I have endeavoured to show in general lines the defect of principle which causes the misery and horror of our time, and to point out where salvation can be found. It is not necessary for me to go back to that book, whose formulas and explanations are final within the limits of my capacity. But what I evidently could not do in a book treating of first principles and causes, was to apply the general ideas I had there acquired to the particular and intimate problems of every man.

After my lectures at the Trocadero, my French publisher and friend Maurice Delamain begged me to compose a quite small book which should contain precisely such applications. He told me that my philosophy of the affections and passions of the soul was essentially 'proximiste' — an admirable French neologism which will live on as a name for a particular manner of philosophizing — and that my mission in life made it a moral obligation for me to deal directly with those problems which every one of us has to face. At that time I had to refuse. I was in the full labour of my *Meditations*, and I could think of nothing else. To-day, circumstances have altered. After having written, at the request of *Atlantis*, the well-known German magazine, the essay on the family, of which

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the reader will find a modified and developed version in this volume, and after having seen how many people are, precisely, craving for truths bearing on personal and familiar problems, I made up my mind to write this little book, of which the original bears the title *La Vie Intime*.

However, I decided to compose it in French. The following were my reasons. My cosmopolitan character has nothing whatever to do with politics; here I am anything rather than an internationalist. However, I am convinced that Spirit, in the deepest and most essential sense of the term, has nothing to do with those telluric problems of which the whole political world forms part. So true is this, that to speak of a French or a German 'spirit' seems to me a mistake; what such terms, in so far as they have any value, really signify concern, is the *incarnation* of Spirit in special impulses, tendencies and groups of interests, all of which belong to the domain of what I call 'Gana', or else to the emotional order. One can only truly understand what spirit means by starting from that form of it which is both primeval and eternal: the religious spirit. True spirit does not belong to this work-a-day world. In its very essence it is not lay or secular. This is the true reason why a spiritual man is not so constituted as to succeed in earthly undertakings. Thus were the Middle Ages nearer to truth than our so-called age of enlightenment: men who lived within the spiritual life were conceived, basically, as superior to earthly events. The Middle Ages, on

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the other hand, never doubted the reality of such events on their own plane: consequently, they had agreed to entrust the management of these things to the representatives of Blood and not to those of Spirit. Something similar in principle took place in India, where Brahmins formed the supreme caste and despised kings, but had no ambition to govern. Modern ideas of internationalism, pacifism and of *ententes* among nations, by remaining blind to all real antagonisms, translate what is true within the spiritual domain into what are errors and falsehoods on the earthly plane. The awful catastrophes to which precisely war and post-war idealisms have led us can be so explained. On the other hand, what is in truth essentially spiritual, lives *through its own nature* on a plane superior to that of specific civilization, of tongues and of blood. What humanity has ever considered fitting in the case of the priest, is true for all beings of spiritual essence and orientation. Hence my particular brand of cosmopolitanism. If I felt profoundly understood and consequently happy when a South American statesman once apostrophized me as 'an honorary citizen of all the nations', it was because, as far as that which is Spirit in me goes, I feel truly independent of earthly contingencies, and so do I see in different tongues and different nations only different possibilities of realizing what I call 'Meaning'. Even so, according to the spiritual ends that I set myself, do I prefer this or that mode of expression.

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Now, why have I chosen the French form in this little book? It is because the French genius is essentially 'proximist', to employ again the happy word coined by Maurice Delamain. The Frenchman, when he thinks, generalizes more than anyone; he even generalizes to an unsufferable degree. The true culture, the true life of France, however, is centred in feeling and emotion. Owing to this fact, it is easier to treat of 'proximist' problems in French than in any other language. Again, its spirit evokes corresponding connections of ideas, so much so that, as far as I am concerned, it is easier to meditate upon these problems in French than in any other tongue. Finally, French expression, the most easily transmitted of all forms of the European genius, is most particularly so where personal problems are concerned.

BY way of conclusion, some technical indications seem necessary. One of the objects of this little book is to serve as an introduction to my principal works. What I say in it about personal and familiar questions is entirely new and unpublished. In particular does the chapter on marriage represent a much more advanced stage in the development of my thought than that which I wrote in the *Book of Marriage*. Naturally, however, I wish to attract more numerous readers, from now on, to my other books. And with this end in view, I have limited myself to treating only along broad lines those questions of principle which I have elsewhere studied in greater detail; but I am at the same time anxious to direct the

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reader who wishes to study one or another point more thoroughly. It has been my wish while so doing, to avoid notes, quotations and references, all of which make an unpleasant interruption in one's reading. With this object, I refer the English reader to the translations published by Jonathan Cape, London, and the American one to the identical editions by Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York, in the case of *The Travel Diary of a Philosopher*, *The World in the Making*, the *Book of Marriage* and *Europe*, and the same English publisher and Harper and Brothers in the United States for *America set Free*, *Creative Understanding*, *The Recovery of Truth* and *South American Meditations*. My book *Immortality* only exists in the German original, entitled *Unsterblichkeit*, but of *Menschen als Sinnbilder* there is an excellent French translation entitled *Figures Symboliques* published by the Librairie Stock, Paris.

Finally, I may recommend here to my readers the first good book that has been written about me and my work: the *Introduction to Keyserling* by M. Gallagher Parks.

The French original was finished in February, 1933. In this English version, I have included such slight modifications as seemed necessary in order to bring the book up to date.

HERMANN KEYSERLING

Darmstadt,
April 1st, 1934

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H E A L T H

DURING a period in which I felt very much inconvenienced by certain cardiac troubles which are habitual in me, I decided to consult one of the last remaining ones among those true general practitioners, now become so scarce, who diagnose a particular organ from the point of view of the whole body, and not inversely; he leads a somewhat eccentric life in a small German city. After having auscultated me, he said: 'I believe I can free you from your troubles. Yet are you sure that you will thereby feel better? You are accustomed to that ailment. If you are cured of it, it will most certainly be replaced by some new trouble to which it will take you a long time to adapt yourself.' I thereupon decided to take no treatment. And once I had had a good laugh at that illness with its formidable graecolatin name, I never again took it seriously. Consequently, it does not bother me any more.

I have perfected the system since. Every seven years, approximately, I get myself thoroughly examined according to all modern methods, some of which closely resemble the 'second-degree' tortures of the Middle Ages. And as soon as I am satisfied that some one of my organs, without being perfect, functions sufficiently well for a human of my years, I

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subtract it from the sum-total of my organism, just as in business one agrees to 'cut one's losses' with respect to certain sums. This means that I trouble myself no more about it, whatever may happen, unless, of course, an acute crisis should supervene. This manner of proceeding simplifies my life in a delightful way.

On the other hand, I practise an ever greater condescension towards my own habits. I ever think of an old friend of mine in his sixties, and gifted with exceptional vitality; he was in the habit of drinking at least one bottle of brandy a day, and his health was perfect. But he died suddenly after an unfortunate specialist had persuaded him that his habit was bad. I no longer believe at all in regimes which are good 'in themselves'. If I willingly try new drugs, it is because a long experience has taught me that all unexpected changes, especially when they mean a real surprise, act on the body as an exciting stimulus acts on the soul. This explains why so many different and contradictory cures can achieve good results, and why the popularity of one or another system is so subject to fashion. There can be no doubt, of course, that all regimes are not without danger for everyone. The majority of my ancestors ate no vegetables, and I myself consider that the day on which God invented that kind of edibles, He was particularly ill-disposed, for I do not know a single vegetable that I really enjoy. Now, once after an infection which I could not shake off, a doctor persuaded me to try the

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Gerson regime, absolutely without meat or salt. His reasoning, which persuaded me, was this: the microbes fond of the 'milieu' constituted by my carnivorous body might quickly feel disgusted if it transformed itself into a vegetarian. After two months of rigorous obedience to the Gerson diet, for the first time in my life I felt that my vitality was undermined; I was really in danger, and long months passed before I could regain my normal equilibrium. It is evidently impossible to feed lions in the same way as lambs. Constitution, and therefore heredity, are always of capital importance.

BERGSON has said that the metaphysician's attitude towards life, differing in this from the scientist's, should be one of *camaraderie*. Can it be because I was born a metaphysician that I have always felt towards my body a gently ironical affection? I have never taken it quite seriously. I have always accepted good and bad health as equivalent alternatives. Not that I have not preferred the former (generally, not always: for some of our inner realizations, semi-invalidism, if not illness, is more favourable): but I have always considered that if even in the soul's domain it is unwise to moralize before having understood, it is very much less wise to approach the body starting from postulates none of which are, in all probability, truly applicable to it. The Spirit, naturally, wishes the body to be immortal, and nothing is in better agreement with the former's norms than the idea of a resurrection of the flesh,

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since eternal life on earth is impossible. Yet the foremost fact of individual physiological life is precisely its confinement within the limit of time. Under these circumstances, Spirit claims at least perfect health; not as a supreme ideal, but as a normal condition. But does such a thing as health really exist? Is its idea not a mere invention of purblind minds? Life swings along from one state of unstable equilibrium to another; this is why it must ever move forward, like a bicycle. Such instability is more or less clearly manifest according to circumstances, but it is ever there. From the viewpoint of each present state, all change is either pathologic or revolutionary or catastrophic. The more sensitive a human being is, the truer will this proposition be. It is this fact, and not really a poorer sort of health, which explains the perpetual indispositions complained of by artists and women. As a matter of fact, these sensitive people are better balanced than the men we call normal, for becoming more quickly aware of the slightest danger, they adapt themselves to it sooner and better. Theophile Gautier has said that only the bourgeois is subject to sudden collapse (in French: *il n'y a que les bourgeois qui crevassent*). He thereby meant that the dull man alone dies for purely physiological reasons, independently of the spiritual significance that death at such or such a moment may express. In the same sense, some American life-insurance companies, so I have been told, exact double or triple premiums from such clients as are affiliated to Christian Science; a painful

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financial experience has taught them that such people are apt to die without previous warning. Indeed, man must have a fairly dull mind if he can affirm in all sincerity that illness does not exist; hypnotized by his unbelievable belief, he runs the risk of dulling the edge of his sensibility to such a point that his consciousness will no longer perceive any alarm signal sent forth by the body. To sum up, it is not illness which has no existence; it is health.

Whoever posits health as an absolute ideal should believe, if his logic holds together, that we will some day succeed in abolishing death. This logical necessity is the only explanation of the success of Mrs. Baker Eddy, the prophetess of Christian Science, to say nothing of Mr. Prentice Mulford, who gave the title of *The Scandal of Death* (if I remember right) to a best seller. If man has once made up his mind to admit that human life is limited within time, I simply cannot see how he can set up perfect health as an ideal; for if ever this ideal came to be completely realized, all physical preparation for death would be entirely lacking, and so death would appear much more sinister, much more absurd even than it actually does. I am inclined to think that the deeply pessimistic views of the Greeks on death and the beyond are chiefly due to the fact that no other race has believed with equal sincerity in the possible perfection of bodily life. But I go further still: even in order to see in health a merely relative and not an absolute ideal, we have to begin by admitting that the banal existence

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of a dull fool whom nothing affects is preferable to a life intensely lived. For it is impossible to experience strong emotions without increasing life's fundamental instability. The Greeks of the mythological period were probably sincere when they affirmed the possibility of a complete harmony between spirit and bodily life. From the moment in which they became philosophers, they could but play with words by persisting in their ancestral belief. This explains why stoicism was the last word of antique thought, for stoicism is, at bottom, but a technique for saving appearances in one's own eyes. Christianity, by the mere fact that it realized more clearly what Spirit truly is, understood the body better at the same time. This is why it adopted, from the very first, a positive attitude towards ill-health. It is true that Christianity considered earthly life as guilt or the expiation of a guilt, which strikes the modern mind as a more legal than metaphysical interpretation, and is therefore hardly acceptable to an enlightened consciousness. Yet the original attitude of Christianity is certainly more true to the integral sense of life than that modern idea about illness being a misunderstanding or the sign of a backward state, an idea which implies or implicitly affirms that ill-health can be banished from this world. Not only is such a point of view false in itself; I even doubt the sincerity of any man capable of adopting it. Otherwise, there would be less nervous illnesses precisely in our own time, for nervous illnesses are the only ones which the patient can, so to

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speaking, create arbitrarily, such illnesses meaning at bottom but escapes or safe retreats. Those people who are the most obstinate in claiming that only health exists, almost always give the lie unto themselves by being ill — in an interesting manner, needless to say — as often as possible.

IN my opinion there is only *one* reasonable and yet dignified attitude towards one's body and its accidents: that is to accept health and ill-health as equivalent facts and as alternatives equally devoid of value. Not that I preach contempt for one's body; the fact is that there are and can be values only within the order of Spirit. The greater part of life does not belong to that order. I have shown elsewhere, at length, that man contains within himself mineral and plant elements, cold blood and warm blood, and that at the base of all psychical life there is a layer that I have called *gana*, whose own laws are absolutely contrary to all the needs of spirit; for which eating and being eaten are all one. What, according to Spirit, is Evil, forms the specific character of this primitive life, which is a life of the nether-world. I have also shown that elements such as these, however contrary to spiritual demands they may be, are yet integral parts of the human sum-total, with quite the same title as spirit. We cannot deny these principles without lessening ourselves. It is equally impossible to modify these elements to any appreciable extent according to our spiritual ideals, for freedom has no hold on them; the characteristics of *gana* are inertia,

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heaviness, blindness, routine repetition and a terribly faithful memory.

Things being as they are, self-conscious man cannot attain to lasting inward peace unless *he begins by accepting himself totally, such as he is*. Christianity, unfortunately, has taught us that Nature is sinful in its essence, nay, that it is contrary to God's will. The logical consequence, among its sincere adepts, is either a contemptuous attitude towards the body, or else an attitude made up of insincerity and cant, or finally, by a contrary excess, the absurd idea that, in spite of everything, the processes and destinies of the body should be and are in agreement with spiritual ideals. All false interpretations react on their object and deform it. The two first of these misunderstandings have not prevented life from being wide and deep, for they leave intact the tension which exists between Nature and Spirit. The third, which is a quite recent one, has had appalling consequences. Hence that moral ugliness which is characteristic in our days of the subconscious of typical Christians in Europe and above all in the United States, for the men who belong to this human type profess the most absolute optimism. Seldom does illness, for them, create serenity and a deepening of inner life; seldom is suffering a cause of progress. There is no more fatal categorical imperative than that which commands us to be in good health. And that same imperative becomes positively obscene when it develops into the further command to keep for ever young. Who-

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ever carries his true age gracefully, lives, so to speak, in beauty, for everything in him appears to be in its fitting place. The values proper to each stage of life then assert themselves, while its shortcomings will stand out as the shadows which light necessarily casts. On the other hand, whoever, wishing to improve upon Nature, goes beyond ornament and decoration, thereby deforms her. And what does he gain by it? I don't believe any woman was ever won by the deceptive appearance of an artificially rejuvenated man. If his vitality is unimpaired, he can inspire love in spite of all his wrinkles and grey hairs. So did Richelieu. Ninon de Lenclos, too, inspired passions at the age of great-grandmothers. It is never make-up, it is always Nature which calls forth love and passion.

It would not be wise to insist. The general conclusion of what we have been saying is this: there is only *one* real and final exit from the impasse created for consciousness by the disparity between the diverse layers composing a human being: it is that of benevolent condescension, of generosity towards oneself.

IN my opinion, only such generosity allows us to approach the ideal of Health. From the moment in which we accept ourselves such as we are, without striving to improve anything before we have understood it, we create that bond of sympathy which enables our conscious self to realize that primary synthesis which constitutes the human being: a synthesis whose elements are spirit, soul, flesh, *gana*,

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and even reptility and minerality. For this synthesis pre-exists in the sense that each of us, if he duly realizes and cultivates himself, can find the proper formula for the special rhythm that suits his or her own unstable equilibrium. It is always here a matter of a purely personal equation. There are no generally valid formulas and laws, nor is there ever an ideal which can be called universally valid. The famous *mens sana in corpore sano* of the Romans is only good for the primitive dynamic equilibrium of that shrewd peasant which the authentic Roman always was. Every superior being is sensitive, and he is unstable in proportion to his sensibility. The more Spirit develops, the more does the tension between its laws and those of *gana* increase. This does not imply that a spiritualized being is necessarily less sound than a man sunk in matter; his soundness is simply of a different kind. And surely his special kind of precarious balance is worth more, from the point of view of all spiritual ideals, than the apparent solidity of the dullard. Let us recall here the experienced fact that every man who is at heart vital prefers a strenuous life to that humdrum sort which passes for normal in the eyes of governesses and aunts. Every vital person desires and uses some kind of stimulant, ever frankly harmful judged by the standard of normalcy. I once knew an Englishwoman who used to affirm that love is a complication of diseases, and that she would never repeat the experience, because she dreaded anything which complicated life. To live heroically

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is a much more intricate business, much richer in difficult situations than to make love; yet every man who is 'sane' in the truest and deepest sense of the word will only hold such a life to be ideal, and no other. Looking at things from this angle, one may come to write an apologetic for wine, or rather an irrefutable panegyric of it. As long as death cannot be abolished, the ideal of perfect health will be devoid of sense. As long as man aspires to rise beyond his normal state, he will appeal to stimulants. For indeed, each higher state of dynamic equilibrium can only be reached after previous fixations have loosened. Stimulants are harmful only from the moment at which they begin to lower a man's level, or when they sap the foundations of his psycho-physical organism.

However, he who has reached a 'state of generosity towards himself' need no longer believe in mistaken ideals. And he who successfully embodies this fundamental matter-of-course attitude of 'ironic camaraderie' towards his own body thereby eliminates or neutralizes so many disturbing psychical influences, that, be he in good or bad health according to medical standards, he is as 'sound' as he can reasonably wish to be, for his personal equation needs just such a state of balance. No man in the world really wishes to change his personal equation, for it would amount to the loss of his identity. Medical science now knows how to cure many more illnesses than would have been believed possible, even in theory, twenty years ago. Yet although I think it likely that Nature will invent

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new diseases to make up for those she will have to give up — the grippe microbe, for instance, is surely more inventive than a great naturalist; each year he assumes new and unforeseen shapes — it is not at all impossible that we may yet go much further as regards treatment and above all in prevention; so the net result will favour so-called good health. Nevertheless, what seems certain to me and will surely remain true in spite of all progress that we can imagine, is that only a generous acceptance of human nature in its entirety creates the *conditio optima* for any special regime, treatment, or training.

FROM the point we have reached, we will easily understand the true meaning of that primary position which so many people accord to psychological healing in our time. In principle, the body should ever be cured by physical means, and the soul through psychic influences: for in these two cases we have to deal with different manifestations of life, each of which is best influenced by agencies partaking of its own nature. Yet since man is in no sense a machine, no airtight compartments isolate the different parts of his being, and the whole or any one fraction of it can be reached from any starting point, granted a knowledge of the *modus operandi*. There undoubtedly exists some special curative force with which all great physicians are endowed; it apparently consists in the power of irradiating that regenerative force which is constantly at work to repair the waste that incessantly takes place in us all. Some concentrate this force in

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their hands; they are the artists of massage and, in a higher degree, those who heal by a mere 'touch'. Others exert it through their voice, their mere glance, their sheer 'presence'. With it, they 'charge' the remedies they employ, be they good words or drugs. I don't believe that in any truly serious case (of course I am not speaking of surgical ones or of indispositions where a routine treatment suffices) a physician who is not a 'healer' in the indicated sense has ever succeeded in curing a single patient who would not also have recovered without his help; never, for example, have I heard of successful doctors not possessed by the *wish* to cure. The fact is that the man so gifted has his centre of influence situated in that 'point of indifference' in which body, soul and spirit converge and touch. Since man is essentially a subject, not an object; since the subjective and consequently the psychic predominates in him, it is clear that, when all is said and done, the deciding factors are his own attitude and his own inner strength. Hence the importance of the *wish* for recovery, in the patient even more than in the healer. Hence also the importance of spiritual questions for the solution of the most fleshly problems; this holds good even of digestion. A psycho-analytic discovery has often set right, at one blow, a long-standing constipation. There are of course cases where a right inner attitude does not suffice to cure a disease. But then one can meet men whom a 'higher idea', as an old French doctor used to tell me, that is to say an official job,

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a responsibility, a book to be written, will keep going at least, if not in good health. Such people do not struggle against their malady; the malady leaves them alone, or if it does attack them, it hardly disturbs their balance. The extreme case is represented by ascetics like Gandhi.

The so-called primacy of psychological treatment can therefore be reduced to this: in the last instance, it is always the 'subject' in man which decides, this 'subject' being a unique entity in each individual case. This 'uniqueness' can only be reached in its inner depth by a corresponding other 'uniqueness'. Hence the need for 'sympathy' — a sympathy of which 'confidence' is only a superficial expression — between doctor and patient in all complicated cases. If there exist so many different and contradictory methods for curing, it is evidently because each practitioner has his own special clientele. Yet the proper plane of 'uniqueness' is situated at a greater depth than consciousness, than intelligence and even than soul, as usually understood. It is the plane proper to the Creative Evolution of life itself. If we consider the question from such a depth, we cannot maintain a clear distinction between body, soul, spirit, etc.; they all hold together and determine each other's conditions. On this plane, the manifold phenomena, irreducible to each other's terms, when we look at them superficially, appear to be truly the many-shaped *expressions* of one self-same 'Significance'. The latter is in one case predominantly telluric, in another

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predominantly spiritual; this depends on the personal make-up of the individual subject. There are many men and women on whom Spirit has not yet descended. Yet they too are in the last analysis 'subjects'. That is why the very greatest physicians are probably those who lived in periods when medical science hardly existed at all. The most fatal weakness of man, as regards the understanding and daily practice of life, is his primitive tendency to generalize, his inclination to believe that Unity must needs exist everywhere, and to build it up on every plane. The postulate of Unity is good only for the domain of Spirit, and everything does not belong to the domain of Spirit. The prototype of generalization, so dear to scientists, is superstition, for superstition, in each of its manifestations, establishes more links between unconnected facts than the most complete differential equation could ever do. Hence the immortal prestige of superstition.

A later chapter will show us that if we start from that irreducible multiplicity which is life as we all know it, it is possible to create a synthesis on a higher plane. But this kind of synthesis is something beyond all possible health. On the plane of this synthesis, the problem of health ceases to exist.

AS opposed to this, the moral question in its primary sense belongs in its entirety to the domain of health. Originally, morals mean nothing but Form and Order. There are no immoral plants or animals. In their case, Nature alone maintains the

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specific norms and orders which define and assure both outward and inward equilibrium. In the case of man, gifted with a consciousness and with free-will, it is necessary for imagination to perfect what Nature had merely sketched out. The more primitive men are, the more rigid are their morals, for there the role of intelligence is small in proportion to the part that instinct plays. This holds good of individual as well as of social morality, for man belongs to a group from the start; in the beginning of evolution, the social and the individual consciousnesses coincide, and however far differences may later go, the original union is of so profound a kind that a physiologically anti-social man is always a problem for pathology. His prototype is the criminal.

In this sense, morality and health undoubtedly belong to the same plane. On the other hand, morality and spirituality are situated on radically different planes. One of the great errors of the Christian tradition in Europe consists in perpetuating the prejudice that moral questions belong to the spiritual order. It is certainly possible to create a connection between any one moral order and the demands of Spirit. Yet, fundamentally, morality has nothing whatever to do with Spirit. This is the reason why Hindoo wisdom, the deepest of all in the understanding of these problems, taught that spiritualized man is, owing to this quality, beyond Good and Evil; whatever he may do, he is right in doing it, for everything in him harmonizes with the

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spiritual Significance which dominates him. The day on which Saint Augustine said: 'Do thou love, and thou mayst do whatever thou willst', he was on the path of just this truth. Up to the present, these questions have only been looked at from the point of view of Spirit. If we start from that of telluric life, we must say: the Sage, as also the Saint, is never moral; the norms of Spirit are totally different from those of earth; if the principles of gravitation, of inertia, of dead-earnest govern the latter, Spirit in its essence is play. Spirit does not take seriously the facts and happenings of earthly life as such, and the problem of health and consequently of morals apply to these. The ascetic who repudiates earthly bonds and obligations is much more immoral at bottom than the artist who lives apart from social laws, and it is but just that he should seldom enjoy physical well-being. Even to-day, few people realize that truth which I consider irrefutable, for since the dawn of time men have agreed in granting to the Saint and the Sage the right to have a thoroughly personal 'morale'. It has been found right that Buddha should abandon his wife, that Christ should deny His mother, and that Saint Francis should disgrace his father. On the other hand, the artist has always been considered immoral. He has been despised or admired for such immorality, according to the spirit of the age. Every one knows that there is something wrong about an artist who lives a respectable middle-class life. It is because the usual 'health' of the artist can-

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not but look somewhat morbid to the eye of the crowd.

It is distressing to think of the many lives ruined by that prejudice about the moral order being a function of the spiritual. Moral questions have, in themselves, no spiritual significance; they are pure questions of physiological equilibrium. Yet for that very reason are those in the wrong who like to call themselves strong and free and who proclaim that the functions of sexual life have nothing to do with morals; they have everything to do with morals, for such functions, on which the whole duration of human life depends, are of primary and capital importance from the point of view of 'health'. What is really true is that sexual questions have no spiritual importance whatsoever. How many young souls have been ruined by the prejudice that masturbation is a crime punished by physical decay! Through how much ugliness has our planet been disfigured owing to the persecution or else to the exalting of homosexuality! It is perhaps in going directly as far as the theoretical limit, as one does in mathematics, that I will best succeed in making clear the essence of the problem. I therefore affirm this: in principle, 'vice' may be eliminated from life as a useless concept, for it owes its existence only to the placing of a false accent on certain physical deeds and gestures. Among the Greeks, homosexuality was certainly over-estimated, but since they associated its idea with beauty and elevation of soul, since through their bent for this form

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of love, they never compromised the perpetuation of the race, their morals never degenerated into ugliness. On the other hand, the preposterously late discovery of sex in North-America, and the excessive weight placed on mere physical satisfaction, have brought about over there a hypertrophy which renders vicious even innocence itself. In Europe, it is the work of D. H. Lawrence which best helps one to grasp the meaning of these phenomena. Lawrence's books, however fine they may be in a literary sense, are pornographic by excess of puritanism. We have elsewhere demonstrated that in Puritanism the psychological accent falls upon the word 'pure'; consequently the transition from moral to sexual purism is easy and even inevitable, while one persists in the Puritan attitude. In order to reach a view of sexual problems in agreement with Significance, one must step beyond all prejudices about purity, for everything in life is not pure, and many things can only so become through manœuvres which render odious what is perfectly normal. This liberation from the Puritan prejudice was the ideal of Lawrence himself. In his last preface to *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, he has indeed stated what will be the norm of to-morrow's humanity: all that which is natural is normal in its normal place; all problems must be posited in the way in which they really posit themselves. D. H. Lawrence did not succeed in realizing his ideal, because he remained puritan at heart to the very end. Yet in the sense in which Lawrence aspired to do it, vice can

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certainly be eliminated, in theory, from normal life; it will then only be the expression — and an equally normal one at that — of pathological constitutions. Now, practice is tending towards the theoretical ideal. Prostitution is seriously at a discount in the whole world, from France to Soviet Russia. The transformations which render such development possible are certainly not signs of immorality; they announce the dawn of a new form and a new order of life — and never was morality anything other or greater than that. Let us consider the level of general education and co-education which is ours after the victory of feminism over the whole planet; let us realize the instruction that each youthful being inevitably receives, to-day, in theoretical and applied natural science; let us remember that the enormous majority of our contemporaries is now constrained to earn its living outside the home: given such conditions of life, it is manifestly impossible to bring back that innocence of young girls and that sheltered life of young married women which was the ideal of so many generations in past times. In theory all men will be obliged to admit henceforth that women have the same right to the 'living one's own life' attitude and the same liberty which they have always claimed for themselves. Yet it is by no means certain that this must needs alter working morals; be that as it may, appearances will hardly change. Young Frenchmen who travelled in Germany before the war often considered German girls to be lacking in seriousness; with Nordic peoples it was not French

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girls but French young married women who enjoyed such a reputation. Whatever truth was therein contained, expressed that general law discovered by the ethnologist Leo Frobenius, that with all matriarchal peoples, the virginity of the young girl who wishes to marry is obligatory, but after marriage she can permit herself some liberties; with patriarchal peoples, on the other hand, the young girl may have adventures, while the wife is bound to be faithful. To-day, undoubtedly, as far as the liberty granted to young girls goes, there is a convergence of all women towards the patriarchal type, which is in Europe the Nordic one, though I very much doubt that the Latin maiden who wishes to marry will ever become very free and easy in her morals. In any case, this evolution has a positive value in that 'vice' diminishes on every side.

There is, at any rate, no danger of the coming of a period of lasting 'immorality'. Since morals signify Form and Order within life, the absolute lack of them spells disintegration; this is the precise sense of the word 'demoralization', and disintegration necessarily leads to the death of the race. On the other hand, for the very reason that morality is Form and Order, neither more nor less, phases of immorality are normal phenomena when a given order falls to pieces; the case is identical with that of war, which appears to be a normal thing as soon as the equilibrium between two nations is destroyed, though it legalizes all that which is considered crime at peace times. Nevertheless, immorality is only normal as a brief transitional state.

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At no time in history has immorality long held sway. Out of temporary disorder, inevitably, a new order is born, that is to say, a new morality. And this, again, signifies a new state of health. The state which prevails in Europe as I now write, in the beginning of 1933, is no longer the immorality of the first post-war decade, but the dawn of a new morality.

WE have stated that, in reality, health does not exist. In a similar sense might one say: Morality (with a capital M) does not exist. There are several good possible sets of morals — there are not many, just as there are not many different types of animals and plants, for even in theory, the number of possible states of balance is restricted — and many ‘morales’ that appear theoretically good are in reality execrable. The problem which faces everyone is that of finding the set of morals which is fit for each particular case. Thanks to the law of large numbers and to the remarkable uniformity of men in all elementary things, the problem actually assumes in the majority of cases the shape it has ever assumed. Yet things work out quite differently as regards meaning. A new perspective, a new understanding of facts does really re-shape them, because in the case of spiritually conscious man, Significance creates the facts, the contrary proposition not being true. The same facts have a different meaning for man according to the degree of his understanding. Now, the deeper understanding of which we are capable to-day automatically annuls the old order of things and puts a new order

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in its place. Whoever has understood the true meaning of morality is no longer fettered by prejudices belonging to the past, however powerful these may be. He will not thereby become less moral, but on the contrary: he will cease to think himself superior when he revolts against common sense; he will be no *surréaliste*, since reality, properly understood, will suffice him. Now what is true of morals is also true, exactly in the same sense, of health. There is no good or bad health 'in itself'; there are only many particular and special states of psycho-physical balance, all of them essentially unstable, but more or less successfully adjusted in the total scheme of beings and of things. In order to accept this truth in the case of ourselves as towards others, we must be, in the first place, generous; generous in matters of physiology as of morals. And just as the comprehension of the relativity of all moral attitudes and rules does not make a man immoral, but on the contrary moral out of a higher morality, even so does generosity towards his physical self not render a man complaisant in the English sense of the word 'self-indulgence'. Generosity is never weakness; only the strong are capable of generosity. The human being who has reached this inward distance in relation to his ego, thanks to which comradeship and ironic affection become possible, has *ipso facto* attained that level where the only worthy form of self-control can at last be realized: not that of the tyrant, the policeman or the usher, but that of the elder friend who knows and understands all, and who guides his juniors with light touches towards their own good.

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LOGICALLY, the primary preoccupation of man should be health. In reality it is far otherwise. His primary preoccupation is not even life; it is property. Macchiavelli gave the following advice to his ideal prince: (I don't recollect the exact text, and my capricious memory may well have turned the picture into a caricature): 'Kill as many men as you choose, for there will always be heirs to rejoice at it; but take great care not to despoil of a single penny the living who are destined to go on living.' Indeed, the deepest instinct of every being is Original Fear. And primarily this Original Fear does not bear on death, but on starvation. This is the reason why the soldier, certain that his material needs will be provided for, and to whom is granted the right to rob and pillage when necessary, is, as far as his instincts are concerned, the man who enjoys the most utter security.

As a safeguard against Original Fear, the instinct of security constitutes the first active impulse in every living being. However, true security is not guaranteed by armour, but only by the impossibility of exposure to attack. Such a feeling can only spring from the *right* of property, that is to say, from the exclusive right to occupy the space necessary for existence. That is why, if we except the soldier who enjoys the right to violence,

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the 'man of property' alone feels secure on this earth; thus can we explain the fact that every normal being will sooner or later feel the imperious necessity to take root in it.

What we have just said renders intelligible the fact, so difficult to understand at first sight, that property and not force enjoys original prestige. If on the plane of spiritual connections, moral authority is superior to force, the prestige of property is equally superior to it on the plane of all that is earth-bound. The fact is that in the most primitive states, serfdom for the payment of debts appears a perfectly natural thing, which does not even need the resort to force in order to be carried into effect. He who gives or lends thereby acquires, in the estimation of the deepest natural instinct, all the prerogatives of a buyer. The primary link of the social contract between employer and employed is not constituted by loyalty, for loyalty can only be founded on Spirit, which must itself create the bond in order to be bound by it; it is the material relation towards the master who 'gives the bread'. So much does this idea form the rock-bottom of man's most ancient and most primitive strata, that in the innermost deeps of his earthly part he feels the prestige of all power to be this: one man owns so much more than others that even the sword itself obeys him.

The preceding considerations suffice, in my opinion, to prove the legitimacy of the proprietary instinct as well as the absurdity of all reforms based on the hope

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that this instinct can ever become dulled. Primeval instincts cannot change. To protest against elementary nature is not a sign of profoundness, but merely of a lack of clear thinking. We have certainly the right to try and embody spiritual ideals within matter, even though they may appear opposed to Nature; it is good to long to die for a spiritual ideal. Property, however, has no connection with the world of spirit. All its problems belong entirely to the realm of Nature, which all Spirit, however free it may otherwise be, must needs respect, just as the poet, if he wants to exert some influence, is bound to submit to the laws of language. In this sense, there is no better definition for that brand of idealism which would fain not respect Reality than this: it is an attempt to improve the world through non-existing means. We must once and for all, up to the Last Judgment, and even beyond (in case the latter event should, as the Orthodox Greek Church teaches us, result in the coming of a new earth) count upon the instinct of property as our safeguard against Original Fear. It is true that Property, taking it in the French sense of the term, is not the only safeguard capable of creating security; as a specific form, it is the expression of the Roman mind, and it can only be found within the original Roman radius of action; and as a principle, it represents that kind of security which is normal to matriarchal peoples, that is of those among whom the mother's spirit gives the tone. Patriarchal peoples, whose foremost instinct is conquest and not ownership, express

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the same original tendency through some one system of life-interest; hence the feudal system of the Germans; hence the common family property, almost impersonal in its essence, of Hindoo and Chinese communities and the so-called communism of the Russians (in reality, Russian communism does not exist except as a religion; it is a social system of State ownership elevated to the n th degree). Yet the patriarchal peoples also, exactly as the matriarchs, aspire before all else to security; only their particular manner of attaining it is surrender to the power of the suzerain, the clan or the State, which in this case is the sole owner of everything. If we look at the matter closely, we find that economic reformers are but deluding themselves with words when they claim to abolish property. None of them has really meant to do so, unless he had renounced the world; for there are — in this matter there can be no doubt — some rare beings so privileged by Spirit that the law of Earth has no hold on them. Those radical reformers whose aspiration was, at bottom, of social and not religious quality, have either wanted to abolish the property of others for the benefit of themselves or their class, or else they preferred some other system of property to that which they found at work. He who would busy himself with this world's affairs certainly may have more than common sense; he has no right to have less. Yet, very unfortunately, the majority of idealists have here sinned not by excess but by default. . . .

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LET us therefore cease to admire all so-called Idealism which is in reality a mere sign of crooked thinking. Yet, on the other hand, he who has clearly grasped the truths expressed in the preceding paragraph, will in no way find in them confirmation of traditional beliefs: since property constitutes the elementary safeguard against Original Fear, *it is absurd to associate the idea of it with any spiritual value whatsoever*. And whoever has so understood them is much more of a revolutionary, from the point of view of the contented middle class, than any economic reformer, however radical. For property, in his eyes, is by no means sacred. And once his mind is made up on that score, he will go much further still; he will necessarily begin to have doubts about all so-called 'sacred' rights. We have seen that true security is never guaranteed by armour; it can only be born of the *right* to property. Consequently, the right to property is more deeply rooted in instinct than any other form which embodies a 'right'. This is true to that extent, that the earthly root of all consciousness of right can be found in the sense of property. Originally, the sense of right has nothing to do with justice, since justice weighs claims, which no blind instinct could or would do; the latter simply asserts a personal aspiration towards security. In this sense, it seems a perfectly logical thing that the law-making nation *par excellence*, that nation which certainly invented formal legislation in the modern sense, the Roman nation, should have been the least metaphysical and the least spiritual

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among all those which have played a historical part. Law in itself is nothing but *fixation*, without the least moral or spiritual qualifications. It is the fixation of a space within life whose right to security from all trespassing has been recognized by society and is henceforward above discussion. Thus the fundamental right of all new civilizations was always the law imposed by the conquerors who outlined, on the ruins of the vanquished, new frontiers henceforth accepted as representing 'sacred rights'.

The man who has properly grasped these facts will never again believe in any 'sacred' rights. The truth of the matter is this; *of all fetishes, law, considered as the 'ipso facto' incarnation of justice, is the least noble.* It is exclusively owing to this association of the ideas of law and justice that it has been possible to uphold through centuries and millennia, with the consent of their own victims, the bitterest of injustices. All oppressions, all exploitations, all slaveries have their origin there. Law only becomes just when it fixes a bond which happens to be just in itself. Yet such a law cannot possibly be fixed once for all, for life changes from one instant to another, and every new situation needs an equation founded on new premises. For this reason, not only is that old Latin maxim *summum jus summum injuria* true, but every right understood as an immutable bond is immoral and evil in the deepest sense. Here applies all that which Jesus Christ has said against legal justice. Whoever still believes that the French Revolution initiated absolute

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progress has but to meditate upon the following fact: since then, Europe groans under the supremacy of the lawyer, a mind shaped by professional duty, which thinks only of defending what it owns or of gaining still more at the other man's expense, basing his claim on profitable fictions. We have explained it at full length in the *South American Meditations*: formal law is the child of Falsehood, and not of Truth. It derives from fiction; it tries to enmesh reality within a network of fiction, and to place it definitely within a framework also made up of fictions.

The two most fatal errors of the Christian era were the creation and the perpetuation of these two prejudices; firstly, that all those things which do not spring from a spiritual origin or cannot be reduced into terms of spirit are evils, which must be suppressed; and secondly that all facts can be transformed through spiritual initiative. The first mistake has led after many ups and downs, all of them unfortunate, to this idea which forms the basis of all modern social revolutions: that property means a theft. A notion all the more harmful since the men of property share it, in their heart of hearts, which fact gives them the feeling of being thieves; hence their exceeding lack of charity. This lack of charity, which characterizes the so-called Christian peoples, is entirely unknown among Orientals. The Hindoo tongue has not even got an equivalent for the word 'thanks', so natural does it seem that every man who has should give to him who has not. The other basic error of the Christian era

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has led to the supremacy of fixations born of fictions. Since it is obviously not true that the quality of all facts can be transmuted by Spirit, the dilemma has been solved by decreeing that definition creates the reality. Hence that good conscience of lawyers whatever cause they may defend. Hence, too, the possibility of that Treaty of Versailles, absurd from every point of view which reckoned with real forces, but whose authors sincerely believed that it was 'sacred' simply because it had been defined as essentially just. Hence again that American fiction according to which the only unbreakable natural law, foreseen in the Creator's plan, is that each man should pay his debts. The world-crisis, from the American point of view, has certainly come about against the will of Fate, *ὑπέρμορον*, as the old Greeks used to say, and consequently against the will of the Almighty God of Puritanism. . . .

Under such circumstances, is it surprising that the prestige of the very ideal of law should wane in people's eyes with the speed of geometrical progression, and that the revolt against all traditional fixations should become ever more violent? If, in the case of Property and Law, we had to deal with spiritual principles, the most reckless revolutionists would be absolutely right. These ideas, however, have no spiritual origin. They have sprung from the primary roots of life, from the very lowest depths, from what, in the *South American Meditations*, we have called the human nether-world. As expressions of elementary needs they are both

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legitimate and necessary. Only they should not usurp a significance which is not theirs, and their materializations should not conquer by imposing their own law outside and beyond their proper frame. On the contrary, Spirit should assign to them, once and for all, the very limited range which is theirs.

THE 'sacred' quality of Property and of Law means therefore an artificially-constructed fetish. This will appear to us in the clearest light if we consider that, once Property and Law have been recognized as 'sacred', the conquest of another man's possessions and the suppression of past 'fixations' (and therefore the bolshevist policy) should be equally so. The ideas and notions we have been dealing with so far refer to the static side of life. Yet, if we look at it from a wider angle, life is dynamic above all, and all dynamism necessarily trespasses upon and bursts asunder the rigid frames which obstruct its impulse. Indeed, to Original Fear there corresponds, on that same plane of the lowest depths, its dynamic complement, Original Hunger. This Original Hunger is the motive force of all growth. Now growth, by its very essence, strives ever forward, and therefore it will admit no final bounds to its ceaseless urge. Consequently, Original Hunger is fundamentally aggressive and insatiable. It is opposed by its very nature to all security instincts. Risk and danger are its elements; its aim is ever boundless. Hence springs a perpetual conflict with the whole order of Property and Law. In the human nether-world, a ceaseless war is waged

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between Hunger and Fear; no permanent and harmonious equilibrium is possible between them. And however high may be the vital plane on which events take place, never will this struggle cease and never will its character change.

We can clearly perceive what all this means in terms of current idealism if we truly grasp with no mental restrictions that absolutely all conquests — and not only all conquests but absolutely all change, all growth and all progress have ever taken place and *ever will* take place, inevitably, as a function of Original Hunger which is the born enemy of security. Whoever refuses to accept the right of conquest and the abolition of acquired privileges, thereby decrees that all progress is inadmissible too. Now, since life, however static, as long as it lasts — which means as long as it rushes forward into the future — has a dynamic side, no man ever relied exclusively on the principle of Safety. Each and all grant to themselves the right to progress; they only deny that same right to their neighbours or their competitors. We here reach the very root of Pragmatism, that philosophy of American origin, which has extended in our days to the whole West; that philosophy which holds that success as such creates right and legitimacy. Indeed, all rights, in their origin, are rights of conquest, and all crimes finally judged as such were originally attempts made by such as were later beaten, to change a given equilibrium to their own advantage. Had they not been successful, absolutely all the great statesmen who

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modified a pre-existing order would survive in history — in case they did survive — as criminals pure and simple. Hence that idea of the law of war, surely a more graceful idea than that of American pragmatism, but identical with the latter as regards its deepest meaning. Hence, too, the idea of victory meaning a Judgment of God, so firmly anchored in the hearts of South-American Indians, for instance, that from the very first Indian women considered it an honour to bear children to the *conquistadores*, the murderers or executioners of their husbands. Hence, finally, all those knightly ethics according to which only a life of conquest was truly worthy of a true man, and which despised the bourgeois, bent on preserving what he owns, and the trader. Thus, if to-day the word 'sacred' is only used to define Law, Property, and treaties, other times have only held as 'sacred' principles which were precisely the opposite of those.

Yet, obviously, Original Hunger, with its derivations, is no more 'sacred' than Original Fear. Why have men never succeeded in rendering war humane, politics moral, or trade altruistic? Because such 'progress' would at once render those activities impossible. Commerce is selfish or else it does not exist; it is impossible to do business without making profits, and this can only be achieved to the detriment of someone else; that modern fiction according to which good business is that from which both parties reap equal profits is probably the least honest among all the fictions invented by the spirit of our time. In

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the most favourable of cases, one of the parties is merely not directly exploited; when the Middle Ages defined one rate of interest as legitimate and another as usury, it was a case of deluding oneself with words; those modern financiers who decree that he that runs the risk has a right to all the profits, are at bottom more sincere. Money questions between relatives and friends would not be so dangerous to personal harmony, did there not intervene here, through natural necessity, a basically selfish agent, incompatible with the norms of an emotional order of a superior kind. For this very reason, where such an emotional order directs life, it is a generally admitted thing that economic questions must play no part in it; monks should own nothing; knights cannot be bought for any price, and among relatives in the wider or narrower sense of the term, material competition is not supposed to exist. This explains why the communist ideal cannot be uprooted: the fight of opposing interests could only cease if *all* men loved each other as near relatives do. Unfortunately, the world is not made up of near relatives, and if it were, we can hardly think it probable that all members of this numerous family would love each other. Business is business. However much we may dilute this principle, we will never succeed in making out of economic activity an ideal thing, for its roots reach down into Original Hunger. And were such Hunger lacking, life on earth could not exist.

What is true of economics is even more true of

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politics. It is impossible for it to conform to high morality; of all politics, that of priests — and therefore, in Europe, that of the Roman Curia — has even been the most astute. Indeed, how could precisely priests, this highly intelligent class of men, not have realized with particular clarity the contradiction that exists between the disinterestedness professed by every higher religion and that defence of material interests which they are forced to undertake? In their case, the contrast was particularly flagrant. However, their clear-sightedness could only weaken their scruples. We have shown at length in our *South American Meditations* that all politics have their vital roots in the human nether-world, which knows of no moral or spiritual ideals. Politics are not and will never be anything else than the means of increasing or of maintaining a given position of power; this being the primary object, other considerations can only come into question as parts of a possible or preferable technique. One can very well, to give an instance, lead a people to battle for Faith, but only on the condition of Faith's being that people's leading interest — as it was in the time of the Crusades, but as it no longer is to-day. Politics are always Macchiavellic in their essence, because as soon as we set our hearts upon attaining power, all means only serve to increase this power and lose their own proper sense. This explains why each nation, in a case of conflicting interests, has always judged its adversaries to be immoral and criminal. It has always been perfectly right on this

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point. It has only been wrong in believing that its own case was different. From the moral and spiritual point of view, good politics are always wrong. „Only, it is better here to be wrong than right. Every nation which, through love of ideals, has given up fighting for its own interests — and there is here no difference of principle between defence and attack — has put the continued existence of its citizens in danger, and posterity has always judged its leaders to be cowards and not morally superior. From the point of view of earthly life, the *defaitist* never is worth anything, and the life of nations is a purely earthly business. He who does not admit the principles of conquest and of the replacing of an old law by a new, thereby renounces possible progress. From which it, very unfortunately, follows that it will be ever impossible to abolish war as an eventual *ultima ratio*, for there always will arise an emergency where only the use of force pure and simple will succeed in breaking down static states which are actually obsolete or are considered to be such, or which seem contrary to the vital instinct of a given nation. But war is not a noble thing; it is horrible in its essence. And the more humanity progresses, the more inhuman will war become, for inhumanity is its very principle. Let us not delude ourselves concerning this fundamental truth, and allow ourselves to be blinded by the splendour of the noble feelings and the heroisms that war arouses and makes manifest: in its essence, war is an eruption of the lowest depths of hell. Whoever is not cursed with intellectual blindness tantamount to

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the 'invincible ignorance' the Catholic Church speaks of, or of a lack of moral sense revealing a physiological infirmity, has no longer the right to-day to see in war a moral or a spiritual good. Humanity ever lives on words rather than on inner realizations. Greek philosophy was to a considerable extent what we to-day call grammar. In the same way, nowadays, the enormous majority of our contemporaries lives upon definitions and not upon personal experiences. And the current definitions of the meaning of war, of politics, of economic activity, of property and of laws are essentially false.

IS cynicism, under the circumstances, to be the last moral consequence to which a clear understanding of the facts of life leads? Certainly not. That which may appear new and surprising to modern readers has been clearness itself in the eyes of all peoples and all periods whose conscience mirrored the deeps of life. True Christianity has never claimed this life to be ideal; neither Brahminism nor Buddhism, nor Greek philosophy, nor original Nordic religion either. And if, within the frame of all great religions, there have been sects that professed thoroughgoing pessimism, never has the ruling spirit of an age and, above all, never has life been truly pessimistic, even where there was no belief in a better life beyond death. The fathers of modern optimism, the Jews, did not believe, for instance, in individual immortality, and their strange God seemed even to feel a special aversion for His chosen people. But the Buddhist world is more

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significant than any other if a proof is needed of the fact that pessimism and cynicism are not the necessary result of seeing life as it really is. Nobody before the modern era has had as few illusions about our world as Buddha. He even exaggerated its non-ideal quality because, for him, even the higher life, as long as it did not redeem itself through renunciation, was an expression of Original Hunger. What is more, he did not believe in individual survival, and there was in his eyes only one salvation: the final extinction of life. Only this extinction was, for him, a positive thing, and the conquest of this ideal was only possible, according to his teaching, through a conscious practice of spiritual ideals. Moreover, for him, this practice as such created peace, and the more a disciple persevered in it, the more did such peace approach true blessedness. Therefore, the theoretical pessimism of Buddha implied neither cynicism nor despair. He himself had attained perfect peace. And even to-day, among true Buddhists there are more who are truly blessed in the sense of celestial joy — as far as it is possible so to be in this world of ours — than in any other creed I am acquainted with.

We Europeans are not and, save in cases of eccentricity, cannot sincerely be Buddhists, for reasons which I have explained in my *Travel Diary*. But I have lain stress here on the religion that, according to all appearances, is the most pessimistic of all, in order to make perfectly clear through this striking example, that a grasp of the facts of earthly life as they really

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are does not necessarily lead to despair. That is because this 'horrible' side of life which, made objective by thought, appears foreign to us, is *an integral part of ourselves*. Unless we sincerely do *not* wish to live, we do not wish life to be different from what it is; for if it were different, it would not be life as we understand it. Nothing is more significant in this connection than the myth of Paradise Lost. This paradise is that of childhood, not as it really is, but as it is reconstructed by the imagination of adults. In growing out of childhood, where imagination, irrespective of facts, prevails, the human being 'loses' this primary paradise. But true life begins, nevertheless, when the young man or the young woman has left the Eden of family surroundings. The first years of independence always are years of temptations, and even of falls. But every healthy being has the feeling that these experiences have to be made. There is no life worth living which has not stepped beyond the stage of primitive innocence. All those difficulties which mothers — and sometimes ill-advised fathers too — take so seriously, and from which they would even wish to preserve their children, mean for the latter the very start of real life. Christianity was right when it said, in its particular language, which is no longer ours, that man is born a sinner and sinful in his essence. This means that without 'sin' there can be no humanity. It is not for nothing that Christ Himself preferred the sinner to the just man. — I here wish to limit myself to allusions and suggestions. The essential

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facts are that man does not *wish* himself other than he is, and that if he aspires to the Ideal, he can only hope to reach it by starting from the basis of his whole self and entirely accepting it. Otherwise he will be caught in the trap of illusions which are lies towards his own true self and which act as such, deforming the inner man and, through inevitable irradiation, the world around him too. All history is but one great proof of this truth.

But from what we have said it also follows that the acceptance of living reality does not, in principle, jeopardize any idealism worthy of the name. Such an idealism *starts* from the *acceptance* of reality as a whole. Here is the most general but also the highest formula of that most Christian ideal of accepted sacrifice, or rather 'consented sacrifice' as the French call it, whose deepest meaning very few in our days understand. *We must begin by sacrificing our prejudices born of cowardice towards the facts of nature: then only* can we hope to reach a higher level. We must admit that whatever ideals may signify on the plane of pure spirit, it is the whole man who possesses them, and man as a whole comprises all the strata of reality. I have shown in my *South American Meditations* that man is at the same time mineral, reptile, cold blooded, warm-blooded, a sensitive, emotional, intellectual and spiritual being. We have to accept this truth; we have to consent to it; it is the very destiny of man. He who refuses to do so, assumes as sacrilegious an attitude as is the attitude of that so-called idealism of women which denies the realities of love for the sake of illusions drawn from

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story-books for young girls. Those 'ideals' that one really should repudiate, are the illusions of a false idealism. We ought to cease believing in 'sacred' rights, and particularly in the sacred right of property; we ought to cease believing in the possible high morality of good politics, and in the possibility of idealistic business. We must admit once and for all that the lower depths of man are an expression of Evil, when viewed from the vantage-ground of Spirit, however innocent they may be according to their own standard.

But once this inner attitude has been attained, nothing prevents our building up a better world from the materials of this lower one. The only obstacle in our way, up to the present, has not been a lack of idealism — all youth at least has always been idealistic — but a lack of *understanding* and of the moral courage necessary to see life in its stark reality. As long as we believe in the 'sacred' rights of property, we will never reach even a semblance of social justice. As long as we believe, on the one hand, that war is an ideal thing, and on the other, that it can be avoided — war meaning something like a 'misunderstanding' — there will always be wars which will take humanity by surprise as did the war of 1914; and they will necessarily become more terrible the more wide-awake human intelligence gets to be. As long as we believe in the sacred quality of law, as such, that fetish which is the worst survival of barbarous times, so long will the strongest will in the world be powerless to create

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the best state of things which seems possible at a given moment. As long as we continue to feel surprised at the wiles of politics, will we fail to understand what politics are in their essence: a filthy business. And it will only be when the good people who meddle in such matters get to know what they are meddling with, that they will consciously strive to place Original Evil at the service of Good. We must indeed, once for all, get over these elementary illusions. It is such illusions and not good or evil passions which fetter the march towards true progress — such progress as would lead us towards a truly better future and not a future which is merely called better. The author of these lines has witnessed and lived through no less than six revolutions. He has lost all his worldly goods several times. He has shared in all war and post-war illusions and disillusiones. And yet to-day he does not hesitate to say: the most profound error and the worst sin in the Christian sense has ever been the inner consent to illusion. Let but the prejudices that we have tried to denounce in these pages cease to exist, or at least lose their power, and the greater part of the *impasses* of the period in which we live will automatically become open avenues.

WHICH is therefore the possible road towards a better future? *The key, the only key to it is deep understanding of the true relations between things and values.* Elementary life has a static and a dynamic side to it, and they are in constant struggle with each other. This struggle is the very motor of life. In a state of per-

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petual instability between these static and dynamic poles, it must needs move and keep balance between them by accentuating now one and now the other. It is impossible to exist without struggling for the situation one has conquered, the symbol of which is Law. It is impossible to progress without wishing to change that which is, and therefore playing the criminal. He who sees an ideal in peace 'through respect of treaties' is both right and wrong precisely in the same degree and in the same sense as he who places his personal ideal in the suppression of all acquired rights. Therefore, morally and spiritually, neither the one nor the other has anything to reproach his opponent with. However, taken as a whole, life is essentially an adventure. In every moment we must both take precautions and assume risks. At every moment the final result is unpredictable; accordingly, the 'dangerous' side necessarily wins in the long run. The static periods of history are those in which Original Fear sets the pace; the progressive periods those in which Original Hunger predominates. These two instincts have absolutely nothing ideal in themselves. But without them there would be no life on earth.

On the plane on which the reflections of this study move, the problem of life can only be solved if humanity, centred in Spirit, rises inwardly *above* the level of elementary life, which is the level of all economic activity, of all law and of all politics. Let us recognize once and for all that economic, legal,

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political and military necessities are to the ideal aspirations of Spirit what the kind of life proper for the bowels is for the thinking brain. From that moment, illusions will disappear. But we will no longer, either, be exposed to disillusion leading to catastrophes. We will accept to do what is necessary and inevitable, in acquiring riches, in maintaining, in conquering, in fighting; but we will never lose sight of this truth, that these ends can only be attained by means of those primary instincts which are mostly contrary to the ideals of spiritual life. Such was the inner attitude of all Saints, who for that very reason never enjoyed good consciences. Such acceptance will neither prevent nor impede in any way the aspiration towards the ideal. *On the contrary*; from the moment in which we have understood once and for all which are the things refractory to all spiritualization, we will no longer ask apple-trees for oranges, as Flaubert used to say. The law of the belly, as long as its aspirations are maintained within their normal limits, has never prevented any man from philosophizing. On the contrary, the philosopher can, thanks to his better understanding, invent and keep up a 'regime' so framed that the belly will never interfere in an inconvenient fashion. We can provide against illnesses; we can limit the lower functions to what is strictly necessary. We can so firmly ground our vital centre in Spirit, which is superior to Nature, that natural needs will play no greater part than that of rain or fine weather. Such a state of superiority has been attained at all

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times by the Sage. But it can become general to such an extent that the most momentous economic and social problems will become easy to solve. For difficulties automatically cease to exist from the moment in which we rise inwardly above their particular plane. Many people agree in saying nowadays that if Europe were ruled by absolute monarchs, they would surely have found by now an arrangement guaranteeing a better state than the pre-war one. The fact is that very highly-placed personages have less difficulties of *amour-propre* to vanquish when they feel obliged to yield up untenable positions. They are, on the other hand, more independent of public opinion, which is always, if not stupid, at least morally inferior. A high position necessitates, by its very essence, a certain sum of generosity which is alone more important than all the cunning of lawyers, for generous people are unacquainted with the difficulties that beset crooks. But absolute monarchs are unlikely to return. The dictators of our time are all tribunes of the people much more dependent on public opinion than the weakest among traditional kings. For long periods yet to come it will be necessary to count in all matters of the earthly order with Mr. Omnes, as Emerson called him, that is to say, with Mr. Everybody. This fact being granted, there is only one solution to the problem: to act in such a way that each and all will come to acknowledge that property, law, politics and business embody no ideal and no possibility of any ideal whatsoever. Then, the spiritual

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energy which lives in each and all of us, stripped of all disguise, of all illusion, free from all fixation in things not susceptible of idealization, will soar with a free impulse. Then each and all will grant their proper due to the needs of earthly existence, but without trying to infuse any ideal into them.

And it is precisely that which will liberate human idealism to an unequalled degree and with an unequalled force. Man will at last come to incarnate justice — of the true sort — the ideals of human brotherhood, of spiritual harmony, of absolute Good, within the body of telluric contingencies. For this true and deep understanding — as against that which is merely illusory — of human life in its reality will create in man's conscience that very same real distance which separates Spirit from Nature. Spirit is to Nature as the meaning of a thought is to the letters of the alphabet which express it. Or rather, to use another metaphor better adapted to the subject we are treating of: man's idealism is to the conflicts of earthly life as music is to the taut strings of the violin. Without taut strings there is no music. But it is not the tension of the strings which makes the music, and it is not the strings themselves either. Surely, from the string's point of view, their tautness spells conflict and perhaps tragedy. Yet the natural centre of a man awakened to spirituality is situated precisely on the plane of music and not of strings. Therefore, the conflicts of the accidents which affect the strings do not touch him in the core of his being. With the in-break of Spirit — as I term the process in

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the *South American Meditations*—a new principle, foreign to primitive life, has constituted itself as the vital centre of man. Instinctively, we all live on the basis of this spiritual principle, however great may be its contradictions to the laws of the Earth. If things were differently ordained for each one of us, the meaning of life would not be its vitally most important side, and we would not hold the ideal to be realized as being vitally more important than the facts of life. The great mistake of the last few centuries has been that of striving to reduce to terms of Spirit what does not belong to Spirit; to explain music through the laws of the strings, or to refer these latter laws to those of music. To-day, we are able to understand the true relationship. We are equally able to accept it just as it is, however difficult such a thing may appear at first sight. And once this understanding is consolidated, then, but not before, will a splendid future open for that advance-guard of mankind which will first become aware of the true relations between all things. Let it, therefore, go forward fearlessly, ceaselessly. *Noblesse Oblige*.

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KANT has said that the first sign of sane reason consists in knowing which questions one can and should ask. Nothing shows more clearly the disorganization of public opinion in our modern world than the frantic disorder of its questionings. It is true that the blind belief in the possibility of scientific research without an underlying hypothesis seems dead; that immense part of mankind which gets its inspirations from Soviet Russia recognizes none but Marxist science, which means science based on a dogmatism more rigid than that of Catholic doctrine ever was; that other, hardly less numerous, which finds its ideals in the United States, admits but pragmatic science, that is, a science subordinate to a previously-established system of human ends. Present-day humanity boasts of being advanced; none the less does it fanatically cling to the prejudice that all things in life can be transformed and corrected by intellect, and that there are no limits to possible progress.

We have already dealt with this problem in treating of Health and Property. It is infinitely more grave and portentous still where the relations of man to man are concerned. Here it is — or should be — obvious to each and all that the results and effects of progressive life are contrary to the very idea of progress. Unfortunately, very few people are willing

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to admit that it is here a question of cause and effect. It is true that Kropotkin, that noblest soul of the Nineteenth Century, died of a broken heart when he saw in Bolshevism the practical results of his ideals — but he did not understand. It is also true that in red Russia more and more women aspire towards an atmosphere of warmth and intimacy which is now forbidden in that country — but they do not aspire with a clear conscience. More and more Americans, informed and taught by the results of statistics, begin to recognize that in proportion to their external ‘progress’ the United States are suffering a setback of inner life; spiritual initiative wanes, the soul dwindles, vitality and fecundity decrease — yet Americans refuse to recognize that this is a matter of cause and effect. In specialized Germany, whose unrealistic spirit ever leans towards subjective experience rather than towards realization in an objective world, the age of progress has, for all practical purposes, wrought less damage than is generally believed, for there all movements almost always sink into the sand once they have afforded their partisans all the vital experience they needed at a given moment; then, traditional routine sets in again and continues its ancient course. This is the reason of that robust health which enables Germany, however easily it may catch infections, to survive even the worst of plagues. However, as a matter of compensation, German thought is all the more unruly and adventurous; rarely does one find in Germany that state of saneness which Kant demanded.

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To those Germans — and I here take them as the prototypes of problem-ridden modern humanity, for so they are — to those Germans who are constitutionally inclined to worry over problems, love, marriage and family life are problems in the same sense as mathematical equations, which any one may set up as he pleases. Now, even in mathematical construction, man is never free in the absolute sense; every equation must start from fixed hypothesis, from axioms or valuations created by the definition itself. When life is at stake, the margin of free initiative is extremely narrow. Life is, on all its planes or manifestations, both irrational and rational, both bound and free; and that is enough to set impassable barriers to freedom. It obviously is out of the question to treat what is essentially irrational according to the laws of Reason; it is contrary to sense to try and direct according to the norms of free-will what is inert as a heavy body. Such facts and processes can only be influenced according to the laws which govern them, just as chemical substances can only be acted upon within the frame of chemical laws. The domain of possible progress (in the modern sense) is strictly limited to that part of life which is governed by the laws of intellect, for there only is the particular really a function of the general, and there alone are further developments of a determinate kind implied in each given fact, so that they can be foreseen and predicted. As a matter of fact, the so-called era of progress has not at all been an era of general advance of the whole man: it simply

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was the period in which man has given all his attention and granted all importance to what belongs to the sphere of intellect. But on the major part of the human being, intellect cannot act in a direct way. 'Human nature has never changed and never will change, unless a zoological mutation were to take place. It is absurd to apply the notion of progress to what is essentially inert and unchangeable, as all the primitive and blind forces of life are. Neither will there ever be general and continuous progress in the regions of art, religion and morals. No 'progress' will ever lead mankind beyond a Michelangelo, a Saint Francis or a Socrates, for in their respective domains individual perfection is the crowning achievement, and between one kind of perfection and another there always is a solution of continuity. Therefore the radius of action of 'progress' is limited to the domain of science, both pure and applied.

Understanding of this truth is lacking, in an unbelievable degree, in the greater part of all modern reformers. Hence these phenomena of disintegration which cause so many of our contemporaries to condemn intellect wholesale. Indeed, if intellect tries to transform or to correct things outside its own special field, it unavoidably starts a destructive process. For if intellect can only act constructively within certain domains, it can destroy within all. It is from this general starting-point that we are going to treat of the problem of family life. Whoever should set himself the task of studying the question in all its details, to remedy

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its defects and to build up a state superior to the present one, should first clearly grasp the points at issue. Practically speaking, only such problems deserve their name whose solution lies within the reach of the intellect.

IN the new Spanish Civil Code, the divorce laws have been more or less copied on those of Uruguay. According to their canons, the man must provide extremely good reasons in order to obtain divorce; whilst the woman, to reach the same end, has but to state that she no longer loves her husband. This discrimination is founded on the argument that no woman will destroy her home without peremptory motives, while on man's side one may expect all kinds of folly. According to all appearances such arguments are justified for the greater part of Spanish humanity; women who would divorce there for slight reasons are extremely rare. One may say the same, though in varying degrees, for the whole Latin world. If Italy and most South American states do not admit divorce, the respective laws work cruelly only in rare and exceptional cases; the proof, as far as South America is concerned, is that the possibility of annulment is very seldom utilized, and that, when a liberal government wants to introduce divorce, it is always women who object. But the case of France — in spite of the extreme independence of woman, the very free conception of love, and the liberalism of its laws, — is in fact much more like the cases we have just been considering than like those presented by the Nordic or

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Germanic races. Now it is certain that the percentage of happy marriages is greater among Latin than among Germanic peoples. And this is still more true of family life in general: among Latins, divergences of feeling and of outlook between one generation and another hardly ever exert a disintegrating action; the family only goes to pieces in pathological cases. In Germany, André Gide's *Enfant prodigue* is admired by many as a revelation; in France, people see in it purely a literary accomplishment; it has called out no deep echo in the life of the country. The fact is that among normal Frenchmen there are no prodigal sons, and for that very reason, no elder sons either who glory in having remained at home. One can say the same, *mutatis mutandis*, of the Chinese, the Hindoos, and of the greater part of the Mohammedan world. In all these countries family life is happier than in the more advanced sets of the Nordic world.

And this applies not only to the question of happiness: the moral and physiological state of the last-mentioned peoples is better than that of Nordics. This seems to prove, as far as there can be a question of proofs in such matters, that if the spirit of those peoples is less 'progressive', it does not imply a disadvantage in this connection. It is not even a disadvantage from the point of view of the development of personality. It was in Italy — the first Latin country which I learnt to know thoroughly — that I first understood how mistaken is the idea that a strong family cohesion must needs hamper individual development and personal

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independence; the Italian, and even more so the Spaniard, however little external solitude he may enjoy, is no less individualistic than the German; he is indeed more so. The problem became entirely clear to me in South America. There, what is rational or capable of being made so practically plays hardly any part in life; the whole accent lies on what is non-rational, and consequently this non-rational side attains a level of development unknown in more rationalized countries. There, I was directly struck by what, in intellectualized Europe, I would only have been able to deduce through reasoning: *that originally, family links do not belong at all to that plane of existence where a question of possible progress can be raised.*

This explains why family links do not at all restrain, in principle, individual originality, and why lack of 'progress' in this domain by no means interferes with personal independence. But the problem of the family does not stand by itself: it is a part of that vast non-rational vital order which comprises both physical and psychical elements at the same time. It is this non-rational order, and by no means the rational order, which is the original order of life. Originally, it is the latter which gives to life its cohesion. Were free initiative the basis of life, chaos would be the normal state and only supreme understanding would create order in some rare privileged cases. But in reality, *everything* in life which is not subject to intellectual decisions is originally orderly and coherent. That physical life is indeed so constituted, no one will

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dispute; there, the question of liberty never enters into the scheme at all, and yet everything works in an orderly manner. The same is true of all those psychical domains which are not intellectual. It is in the nature of love that it cannot be commanded, but on the contrary, that it imposes its laws; it is in the nature of family feelings to be independent of all individual vagaries. But love and family feeling are but special and soul-pervaded parts of that non-rational cohesion of life, that original subjective cohesion which reaches down to the strata so deep as to lie beyond even the most penetrating thought. Down in the lowest depths, this non-rational and yet orderly cohesion stands for a sort of network of obscure instincts and tendencies whose furthest roots are not hunger and love, but what I have called, in my *South American Meditations*, Original Hunger and Original Fear. Its roots lie at greater depths than all those primordial things which psycho-analysis contrives to bring to the surface. It is from such primeval elements that the tough and unbreakable tissue of *Gana*, of blind necessity, is woven. It continues living in its original shape, independently of all intellectual development, even through the highest stages of evolution. Yet this sphere, which is that of animal life properly so called, is not that in which human consciousness proper has its focus. This centre is situated on the plane of feelings and emotions, of a subjective life living in its own right, where not external stimuli count in the last instance, as is the case with reflexes and sensations, but the echo these

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stimuli find in what we call the soul. Here is all the difference between love and sensual desire. So we are brought to accept in the case of man — and I can only summarize here what I have explained at length in the *South American Meditations* — the existence of an *original emotional order*. This emotional order is a higher plane, founded directly on Gana, but independent of all intellectual development.

Now it is to this emotional order, whose roots are not ideas, but sensations, feelings and emotions, that family feeling and family life belong. However, this order comprises other bonds besides those of family: ‘friendship’ in the Spanish sense, that is to say a closed circle but without blood-relationship, — an intimate circle which Luther called by the name of ‘Freundschaft’, but which no longer plays any part amongst the present-day Nordic peoples — is also a primary element. Ethnology came to the same conclusion long ago. Every primitive social order is made up of groupings among relatives on one side and among friends on the other, and there is no connection between these two groupings. In some cases it is relationship which plays the predominating part, in others, it is friendship. As a general rule, we meet with the latter case in the majority of warrior tribes, as were the Spartans in Europe, and also in associations of young people. The groups of the latter type are never based upon relationship — on the contrary, they feel in opposition to family ties — which explains that re-birth of associations among men, in the sense of the

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medieval orders, which is taking shape in all those European countries where the spirit of youth is in the ascendant. It is from there that the fascist, national-socialist and even bolshevist movements draw their chief strength. There, too, is the root of all religious orders. It is not our business to insist here on these sociological and ethnological facts. We will limit ourselves to their bearing on the clear understanding of the family problem. Yet the brief reflections we have just made suffice, in my opinion, to prove the following: it is absurd to consider problems of relationship and of friendship from the angle of reason. It is not a question of theories or rights or institutions: the question is whether certain feelings exist and how far their development goes. In the case in which a man lacks the feelings in question, his organism is deprived of essential elements. If material interest alone links one human being with another, if friendship does not play a primary and independent part, we have the right to conclude that the nation or group in question has lost its primary cohesion; it is in imminent peril of disintegration. And if in some places or countries the family disintegrates, this does not mean in the first instance a demolition for the sake of better reconstruction: it means that feelings and emotions of primary vital necessity and importance are degenerating and wasting away.

BUT can the family not, in spite of all that has been said, mean an embryo stage of human evolution, which it might be better to leave behind? Among ants,

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termites and bees, a system of socialist-state reproduction and education functions with a degree of perfection never yet reached by any human social order; therefore it is logical that such insect States should embody the more or less conscious ideal of Soviet Russia. The United States, too, whose germinal spirit is the same, believe that a higher development of the human species can be reached by destroying family bonds. Is it not possible to suppose that within the process of spiritualization, some mutation or metamorphosis may emerge, calling forth what has never existed before? Experience proves the exact contrary. For wherever the family loses in importance, the soul weakens and wilts. The only exception to this rule is to be found where the feeling of friendship plays the same part hitherto played by family cohesion. But life does not reproduce itself through exclusively masculine congregations, orders and communities; on the other hand, these invariably mechanize in the course of time, which is never the case with family life. But above all the Eros of friendship touches too limited a part of man, and its horizon is too narrow to allow of the soul's complete development. This is the reason why all peoples hostile to family life have sooner or later suffered an impoverishment of their soul.

We here reach the capital point, already touched upon: *it is the soul which makes of man what he is*. By naming man *homo sapiens*, Linnaeus made a mistake of classification. Not that imbeciles form an over-

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whelming majority, but because man is in the first instance the *feeling animal*. The special organ of intellect is undoubtedly better developed in him than in other creatures, but mere prejudice would be necessary to maintain that an intellectual adaptation to reality is superior to an instinctive adaptation; as a matter of fact, if scientific knowledge were the best possible adaptation, our race would have perished long ago. Yet even outside of this consideration, our own inner sense of values forbids us to see in intellect and reason the essential part of human nature. For all myth and folklore, the intelligent being *par excellence* is – the Devil. All higher religions behold their ideal in a sentimental and emotional disposition. And modern man himself, however intellectualized he may be, originally gives a sentimental and not an intellectual value to the notion of humanity: it is not the imbecile who is called ‘inhuman’ or ‘dishumanized’, but the man or woman who is wanting in higher feelings. If we push them to their uttermost limit, these reflections lead us to the following truth: what has always been understood by the word ‘soul’, that soul with which every man identifies his innermost and deepest self, is no other but the organism of his feelings and of his emotions. This is the only reason why communities based on friendship, such as every good army, bestow a greater value on the sense of honour, of good comradeship, loyalty, and on the spirit of sacrifice than upon all imaginable technical capacity. This is the only reason why the teaching of

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Jesus could open a new era: by raising love to the rank of a cardinal virtue, and by basing the salvation of the soul on this virtue, Jesus was in very truth the first conscious pioneer of the humane feeling. If this is so, then it is *a priori* obvious that 'progress', in the current sense of the word, can lead, under certain conditions, to degeneration, to decay and to sterility. If man is an originally and an essentially feeling creature, all progress which weakens sentiment in man or deforms it is a false course which leads to dishumanization.

Let us here consider, incidentally, an important present-day phenomenon. It seems to me that the ideas we have just been developing shed a light on the deepest cause of bolshevist inhumanity, on the lack of soul among Americans, and on the growing demoralization or impoverishment of those Europeans in whose eyes all sentimental bonds are old-fashioned. However high a termite ideal may appear in theory, man cannot realize it, for the very simple reason that he is no termite. Whatever he may seem to gain in outward liberty by denying the bonds of sentiment, is more than compensated, inwardly, by organic losses. Indeed, man does not even become more independent, his individuality does not develop more freely, when he attains to sentimental isolation: on the contrary, so much does he lose that his soul dries up and suffers the loss of that psychologic substratum which underlies all spiritual initiative. *Hence comes the collectivist ideal, the ideal of the group in which the whole individual must merge; hence, too, the ideal of the biggest possible community.*

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Deprived of intimacy, man shivers with cold and tries to replace what is qualitative and differentiated by mere quantity. This side of modern collectivism, to which no one to my knowledge has hitherto paid due attention, is in my opinion the most important one. Logically, the stressing of the rational part of man, to the exclusion of all other values, should have brought about a corresponding exaltation of individualism. Reason is the privilege of the unique individual, all thought springs from the unique and is outside any organic link with the group; thus, indeed, did the emancipation of mind increase at first in proportion to the growth of individuality. But this development did not last long. In our days, individualism is dying out. The age of progress resolves itself into a mechanistic collectivism. And the latter gains no great wealth of soul when it becomes nationalistic: as far as nationalism is an authentic feeling, it is a question of that very primitive reaction, in which each man recognizes his own standards and his own belongings as the sole valuable and acceptable ones, and would gladly expel from the world, were such a thing but possible, all that is foreign to him. The fact that collectivism, which in theory was internationalist in its early days, should turn nationalistic, proves in the first instance the following fact: man is not, in the last analysis, an essentially thinking but an essentially feeling being. This is why, when the period he lives in does not allow the development of superior and refined sentiments, he falls back with excess on senti-

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ments which are primitive or primordial. Since the above was written in the French original of this book, I have developed my ideas on nationalism and internationalism in the second chapter, 'Humanité et Nations' of my book, *La Révolution mondiale et les responsabilités de l'Esprit* (Paris, 1934, Librairie Stock), to which I here refer for all further details.

BUT why is the culture of family feeling and family life the only one which can permanently guarantee a culture of the soul? Because sentiments and emotions are not long-range forces. Their vital space lies entirely within the circle of intimacy. One should never believe in the words of that man who pretends to love humanity while he dislikes his fellow-men. He may perhaps sincerely wish the good of mankind, that is to say, his conscious thoughts and projects may be given up to what he considers, on reflection, to be objective good. But the only certain thing is that he *feels* nothing at all; all the so-called lovers of mankind who have figured in history have been, without exception, hard and cold sorts of beings. On the other hand, the greatest genius of Love our Western world has known commanded us to love our *neighbour*. The fact is that it is only our neighbour whom we can love. Sentiments go no further. A more far-reaching love can only be born of a molecular cohesion which, by means of a metamorphosis by contact, spreads and widens from intimacy to intimacy.

Without a doubt, Jesus took a personal stand against the family. He was all for congregations. His doctrine

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of love of our neighbour practically resulted in a spiritualizing and animating of that of which a modern expression is South American 'friendship'. However, at the end of a short lapse of time, 'Christian love' also embraced the family which it spiritualized in the same sense as friendship. Granted these facts, it is but pure logic that we should to-day witness not only the degeneration of the family, but also of the Christian cosmos of friendship. The place of the 'neighbour' whom we can love has been taken by the unavoidable contemporary (as I termed him in *South American Meditations*) who molests and obsesses each and all of us, whom we cannot love sincerely because he belongs to the impersonal 'milieu' which surrounds us, and whom we cannot help detesting because of his impersonality.

Such is the deepest cause of that hardness of heart and of that unexampled cruelty of our times. Let us make no mistake about it: the community feeling of even the working classes at the present time is born of hate rather than of love. Did he not hate the bourgeois, the proletarian would be unable to maintain his bolshevist or marxist attitude. From the moment in which he ceases to hate, the traditional socialist loses this militant or destructive character. This state of things has been clear for a long time in France, where not only a man like Paul-Boncour, but even Poincaré could call himself socialist without being false to himself. The same explains why the socialist-democrats of Germany could offer no resistance to the

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aggressive spirit of national-socialism; they had become the least heroic and most selfish of all bourgeois. Generally speaking, the traditional type of socialist is the type of the man who has lost all the feelings he had. He has become fundamentally indifferent, which fact he expresses, very naturally, in a form which seems to show his superiority; he calls his indifference objectivity absolute.

The United States incarnate the prototype of this latter variety. We have shown, in our analysis of that continent, *America set Free*, that its inhabitants are socialists at heart. Yet although they are extremely benevolent by nature, and although it is an obligatory thing over there to keep smiling, they by no means love each other; nobody is what can be called *attached*; what is true of husband and wife is truer still of friends who forget each other from the moment in which they have no material interests in common. Natural cohesion is established on one side by interest, on the other by the unanimous fear of public opinion; the latter, sprung from that very same fear but inspired by courage through its consciousness of representing the masses, substitutes for the intimacy which characterizes the traditional order a general indiscretion and publicity which respects none of the barriers of private life. This universal publicity creates a cohesion of a special kind; a cohesion irrespective of feelings and without soul. The same state of things finds its caricature in Soviet Russia, where private life and exclusiveness are simply judged as being criminal, and

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where children are taught, as a moral obligation, to denounce their parents to the police. Nothing can be more logical than that sovietic doctrine according to which love is a middle-class prejudice; nothing can be more logical than the hatred and persecutions against everything which can be interpreted as sentiment. There, this dishumanization — already sufficiently manifest in Europe wherever class struggles are a primary preoccupation, — is pushed much further even than in America and reaches a state of perfection made of cold cruelty. The matter is clear enough: man being such as he is, it is impossible to force him out of his natural bent centred in intimacy without dishumanizing him at the same time. The mildest result is pathological deformation. This explains why the art and science of psycho-analysis came to be discovered precisely in our time; as far as it is a healing power, psycho-analysis succeeds in so being by drawing up to the surface of consciousness the irrational part of man, which had been repressed. Freud's method is directed, in the first place, towards the primary instincts, while Adler aims precisely at those community instincts we have here been discussing. Consequently, Adlerian cases are especially frequent, to-day, in Central and Northern Europe. This alone explains why psycho-analysis does not succeed in acquiring a considerable practical importance among Latin peoples: among them, the emotional sphere is less repressed and less regressive.

The profound significance of the family is therefore

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to be found in quite another place from that in which it is usually sought. It is possible to bring children into the world and also to bring them up outside of the family; the State can, in principle, do without it; it is not absolutely indispensable for intellectual and spiritual progress. But family culture and family culture alone can create that hatching warmth and that atmosphere favourable to growth which the soul needs. This is the reason why the nursery is so much more important than the school. This is why the soul of the home in whose midst a man has grown always pre-determines what he will, in the last instance, become. It is for that reason that a cultural tradition cannot be maintained except by means of a carefully tended family life. Indeed, only culture of the soul can create permanent fixations within the deep tendencies directed towards an inner state ruled by Spirit.

These last assertions of mine are proved true by the unanimous and unmistakable experience of the whole history of civilizations. Those American and Russian educators who expect progress through a diminution in the importance of the family, are the very blindest of the blind. If they were capable of seeing when their eyes are open, they would understand after a single look the monstrous and criminal ineptitude of their so-called advanced ideas. One single fact to which, by the way, we have already called attention, gives them the lie once and for all: in our days, the nations which are less developed in the modern sense, but

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among which the emotional order has preserved its primary strength, are undoubtedly the healthiest, the safest from social disintegration, and the most vital. Even as a biological being, man can only prosper when he is rightly adjusted within the emotional order. Personally, I am convinced that if the phenomenon of decadence is so strangely rare among Asiatics, whose authentic genealogy often goes back through millennia, and if family traits are transmitted among them with an even more astonishing persistence — we have but to remember the race of the Tagores which has produced eminent men for centuries, and the whole Hindoo system of castes considered under its better aspects — such a feat is intimately connected with a just conception of family life. To the same cause is also due the unique longevity of Chinese civilization, which I do not believe to be seriously threatened even by the disorders and the revolutions which it is living through now. It was the great merit of Confucius, a merit impossible to overestimate, that he orientated a country which even in his time was over-populated, which being gifted with a special sense of organization was consequently supremely exposed to the temptation to shape its life along mechanical lines, towards a culture of natural and intimate feelings. Thanks to Confucius, no revolution has succeeded in imperilling the molecular cohesion of the Chinese race. Something upon the same lines, though on a lower level, occurs in our days in South America. The things which really matter over there are relationship and

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friendship. One *pronunciamento* may succeed another, one dictator follow another without a break: at bottom, life's order is affected by no revolution there.

AFTER all that has been said, it does not seem to me difficult to determine in which direction true progress is to be found, as far as that question confronts us within the frame of this chapter. The idea of progress can have a meaning only on the plane of what is rational or can so become, for its vital starting-point lies in intellect's power to invent and decide freely. Now, the emotional sphere is subject to no decision of intellect or will. Let us now reflect on the general tendency of our time: it is undoubtedly dynamic and not static. Can such a tendency be absolutely false? Is it possible to conclude that all the aspirations of the emancipated individual are wrong, and that salvation can only be found in reaction and restoration? Certainly not. Salvation is never to be found in reaction and harking back, for the simple reason that such restoration is always illusory. The effects of great upheavals can never be wiped out. In all naturalness, and on every point of the globe, young people are the representatives of that unique situation which is the post-war period. And that situation forcibly exacts forms of life, or at least solutions, which are entirely new.

We must needs admit this and accept it. And this brings us back to the assertion of that elementary wisdom which demands as a fundamental virtue generosity towards oneself and one's neighbour.

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Jules de Gautier has founded a whole philosophy on the fact that man is capable of imagining himself as being different from what he actually is. This is, indeed, his elementary tendency, and consequently, the life of Spirit on earth began with lying and play-acting. Nevertheless, man can only reach a higher plane from that moment when he learns to see himself as he is and then to embody his ideals in what actually exists, instead of affirming the existence of what does not exist. To build illusions for oneself, at such a stage, is not a sign of idealism but of moral weakness. Let us then take it once and for all that the old equilibrium between the instinctive and the emotional part of the human being, unchangeable in essence, and his consciousness which has been modified by knowledge, has been destroyed. Henceforth, the aim to be pursued can only be the following: to re-incarnate the eternal values, in so far as they have been lost, within a life which has changed, and to create a new harmonious synthesis between soul and spirit.

Among the races with static tendencies, who are still in a state of equilibrium, there can be here no fateful problem. In this sense, the Latin races are not included, at least up to a certain point, within that vision of a better future which we have now to sketch; the French have shown since a very long time back that a mobile and progressive spirit can perfectly well harmonize with an extreme conservatism in all non-rational domains. All the more do all dynamic peoples — that is to say the Germanic peoples and a

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section of the Slavs — need to adopt a new attitude towards the problems of family and a new synthesis between soul and mind. And since we are passing now through a sort of twilight period, the 'symbolism of history' implies that the predestined leaders and the born representative types of our age are not to be found among static but among dynamic peoples. This is the reason why Americans, Germans and Russians lead the way ever more and more. The new equilibrium which will be attained by these essentially dynamic peoples will inevitably become, in the long run, by transformation through contact, the equilibrium of the whole new world. Let us therefore consider, by way of conclusion, the problems which arise from their point of view.

Obviously, even in the case of family life, there are no immutable forms of equilibrium. Just as the supremacy of man and of woman have alternated in the course of history, even so is it possible to imagine new forms which would provide for personal independence and individual liberty better than any former ones ever did; and this without changing what is eternal in the life-form of the family. One could conceive relations between parents and children which would take account, better than any traditional order ever did, of the strange connection, both centrifugal and centripetal, that binds one generation to another. I believe that this problem will become particularly acute and urgent precisely among those Latin races which still are ruled by norms of primeval patriarc-

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alism or matriarchalism. I cannot believe that the present state of things will last much longer. The more I see of French, Spanish and South American youth, the more Americanized do I find them, however little this may often be perceptible to a superficial glance. Sooner or later, the inward change which has already taken place will reveal itself on the surface as well, and this all the more rapidly as family fortunes will dwindle more quickly and be harder to build up: for the new generations are much keener on creating something entirely new than on inheriting or preserving. I will here mention a special point which seems to me to deserve the particular interest of Latin families. A great part of the conflicts between parents and children is due to the fact that, starting from a certain moment, children no longer seek warmth but coolness; they desire to fly away from the warmth of the nest and they will only hark back to the atmosphere of home later, when the urge to build their own nest awakes within them. Without a doubt, the peril which now threatens the family is due, to a considerable degree, to the fact that awakening intelligence stresses and emphasizes this tendency towards coolness, by persuading them that it is fundamentally right; hence the extreme hostility of this last generation towards all sentimentality, not only in Russia but also in England and Germany. The same holds good, in principle, among Latin peoples. And if there the problem is less acute, the constitution of the family is, on the other hand, so deeply founded on the whole-

ness of tradition that the least change might lead to nothing less than revolution. It is therefore better to prevent it. I cannot exhaust this subject in this little book; I have treated several aspects of it at full length in the chapter 'The over-rated child' of *America set Free*, and notably the following: that the father should beware of too much intimacy. I hardly know of a more fatal misconception than that theory according to which a father should play towards his sons the part of a comrade. In order that middle age may preserve its authority, which is always necessary to the development of the young, it must start, more than ever, from the realization that the character of youth is centrifugal in its essence. The less obstacles this tendency meets with, the more it weakens in favour of centripetal forces.

There is another change in the molecular constitution of all races which I feel to be imminent: the growing importance assumed by the associations of beings of the same sex. It is a known fact that primitive societies are characterized by the importance of such associations, and the new world in the making is essentially primitive. In Europe itself, these associations have played an enormous part in the Middle Ages. In primitive societies, such associations and such communities of beings of the same sex do not imperil the family, because the latter does not exist in the modern sense. During the Middle Ages, either, there was no such danger, for only those people entered holy orders who felt no vocation towards family life.

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Since then, men have forgotten that good family life actually needs a vocation. In our days, awakened consciousness, which has lost the greater part of its moral prejudices, is being born anew to this truth. In my opinion, it is therefore necessary to admit, once and for all, in order to meet insoluble difficulties, that everybody is not born to found a family, not only among men but equally so among women. It is necessary to make universal, as far as possible, that breadth of views and of heart which, for ages, has been the distinctive sign of all cultured souls and which admits, as exceptions which confirm the rules, the most varied forms of existence. It is through a differentiation of this kind that it will soonest be possible to destroy the opposition against family links, which is so frequent and almost general among certain races. A new and permanent order will only be born when men recognize as admissible and legitimate a great diversity of ways of living. Unfortunately, everything seems to point to a period in which official consciousness will become narrower, by way of a protest against the mistakes committed during the liberal era. Yet when looking towards the future, we should never take reaction too seriously; it never lasts for long. It is not in vain that Europe has behind it nearly five centuries of progressive inner liberation. And that aim towards which our continent has struggled during five centuries will inevitably prove to be more important and more pregnant with future significance than the aim pursued during a few brief decades. We

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can therefore, in spite of all that happens before our eyes affirm the following: the freer and more differentiated spirit becomes, the more varied should be the forms of life which the world recognizes and tolerates, unless we want destructive tendencies to gain the upper hand.

However, if we thus grant to the mind and to the moral tendencies all possible freedom, what is eternal and immutable will precisely then show all the more clearly the full unchangeableness and everlastingness of its nature. It is impossible to apply the idea of progress to life's non-rational part. The emotional order may reveal itself richer or poorer, stronger or weaker, as the case may be: its fundamental character will never change. Things will eternally remain so that the human soul, understood as the organism of the feelings and emotions, will constitute the true nucleus of the human being as an inhabitant of our earth; this is why no 'progress' which results in a narrowing of the soul will ever signify a true progression. It may afford to one part of man a superior development; as long as this advanced element has not attained to a condition of equilibrium with the immutable elements, the whole man will not have reached a lasting higher state.

We are here, in conclusion, brought back to the truth that feelings are not long-range forces, and that their proper sphere is intimacy. If man wishes to be truly human, he should cultivate intimacy above all things. The most complete and perfect atmosphere of

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intimacy lives and thrives within the family circle. It will always be so. Therefore, man should not attempt an escape from family life; he should, on the contrary, give it the most complete expansion, differentiation and the most perfect form possible. Among animals, there are monogamous and polygamous species; some live isolated, and others in herds. Man, as a zoological species, is characterized by the family spirit, which no animal possesses in the same way; among animals, the family dissassociates at the very latest when the young have reached adult age. But above all, family life is necessary to man in order that he may attain the full blossoming out of that characteristic of his which he alone possesses: the soul, understood as the organism of the higher feelings. Man literally dishumanizes when his emotional being withers. So must we oppose, to the imperative of these generations which shout: no sentiment! the contrary and better imperative: let us cultivate emotional and sentimental cohesion from man to man as no generation ever did before us.

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THE family belongs to the emotional order; it therefore exists through natural necessity, and its degeneration is a matter of perversion. Marriage, on the contrary, belongs to the spiritual order. That is why its existence depends on free-will. That is why, in all understanding periods, *consecration* was needed in order to create this special link.

For marriage is not identical with that monogamy which is also found among many animals. To begin with, neither man nor woman are monogamists through natural inclination. If they are both more often than not monogamous in fact, even when the ideal or the law of monogamy are not in force, this is due to economic reasons on the part of the man, and educational ones on that of the woman. The strength of the family link does not in any way depend upon monogamy. The emotional order may manifest itself with the greatest richness and intensity without there being any marriage in the sense in which we understand it.

In the second place, marriage does not constitute a necessary ideal from the point of view of happiness. The majority of men gifted with a critical sense who set personal happiness before themselves as the supreme aim, have no inclination at all for this particular bond.

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That majority generally sides with La Rochefoucauld who has said: 'Il y a de bons mariages; mais il n'y en a point de délicieux', or of that Princess Lichnowsky who, playing on the German word *Ehe* (marriage), calls it the union of two vowels through a sigh. For those who lack the critical spirit, if they have married blindly in the hope of finding happiness, they are generally disappointed. It seems to be very difficult, in fact, to found an institution precisely on love, on which Carmen has truly said the last word in calling it a gipsy child which has never known law. What an absurd idea it is to wish to maintain through a chain of norms invented by intelligence, that which depends essentially on *Gana*, that elementary, obscure and profound force, which is inaccessible to the hold of reason and of will, and which follows its blind course without being influenced by any exterior motive! And if, from within and from within only, love chains absolutely, if subjection is its specific effect, it can flourish in no other atmosphere than that of the illusion of liberty. Directly a lover fancies himself so sure of the object of his vows, that he no longer fears to lose it through some lack of delicacy, more often than not he ceases to love. If therefore the realization of happiness, in the sense in which a lover understands it, were the object of marriage, one would probably have invented it, for all love projects its intensity into the belief in everlastingness — but a long time ago the accumulated disillusion would have discredited it.

And the institution of marriage is not either —this

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is the third point — indispensable to the education of children, a matter which is ever more clearly understood, to-day, by the states that believe themselves to be most advanced, the United States and Soviet Russia. We have seen, in our study upon the family, that only the atmosphere of intimacy creates richly developed souls. Yet, as an ever more general experience proves, no one is forced to accept inner development as an ideal.

Why, then, does the marriage which we call Christian — but which exists in the same sense among all men who have reached an equivalent level of inner culture — why then does marriage remain the ideal form of union between the sexes? One sees it more clearly than anywhere else in Soviet Russia, where absolute liberty in the relations between the sexes has developed on one side a kind of asceticism, and on the other an ever growing bent towards living maritally in the traditional sense. The reason is precisely that marriage does not belong to the natural order, but to the spiritual. And the real centre of the human constitution, which is so complex, is not to be found in Nature, but in Spirit.

MARRIAGE is not institutionalized love; it is not, as Roman law defines it, a convention which insures the bringing into the world of legitimate children; it is even less an economic co-operative society or a social contract: marriage is a spiritual link freely accepted and granted. That is why many tongues possess but one word for betrothal and

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promise; in deciding to marry, one binds oneself as one does when giving one's word. That is why, instinctively, young girls become serious in their attitude towards life, as soon as the question of marriage comes before them: the first idea it evokes in them, is that of responsibility — an idea which belongs to the same spiritual plane as the word of honour. And if the young man often expresses his wish to get married by saying that he has decided to 'settle down', he means the same thing; he wants to settle down into an order which is new and serious in its essence. Evidently, each young person instinctively hopes to realize in marriage his or her ideal of perfect happiness. But here also, women — so much more profound than the average of men in vital questions of an intimate kind — are warned by instinct that the fact of yielding to a simple amorous inclination is not a guarantee of happiness. It is rare that they should not be ready to sacrifice even a passionate state of 'being in love' to the probability of a happiness which they judge to be more solid. And in so acting — the experience of millennia proves it — they are almost always right. The happiness that marriage gives is not a function of love alone. And on the other hand there have been marriages of love and marriages for money and marriages of convention and marriages from religious motives which have all finally led to the *same* kind of happiness. That is because marriage constitutes a spiritual bond which completes in a higher and autonomous synthesis if not all, at least a great part,

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of the tendencies which drive the sexes to unite. And in one way or in another, it is to an integration of what is multiple and contradictory that every human being aspires; for unity, the expression of inner peace, is the only state which creates a happiness that is at once complete and lasting.

Now, which is the special virtue of married life which gives it such a power to integrate and blend into one? It is by borrowing the current language of the Renaissance that we will most easily arrive at a clear understanding. That period taught that there is a correspondence between the microcosm and the macrocosm; man was for it the mirror of the Universe. This is scientifically exact in the sense that nature and human destiny form integral parts of the universal order, and that a part necessarily shares the characteristics of the whole. Now in the state of marriage, and in the state of marriage alone, this whole and total participation is fully agreed to.

All higher organic life is bi-polar in its essence. But never do the male and female principles come to fuse as intimately as they desire it, save for brief instants. And never, either, does one of them succeed in escaping from the field of force of the other: the tension between the sexes remains ever the first and last premise of the dynamism of life. What is true of animals is also true of man, only in a much higher degree of intensity. For with him natural connections, beyond what they are in themselves, are means of expression for the needs and for the forces of the soul

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and the spirit. Consequently, all general destiny transforms itself in him into personal fate. Hence the ever 'fatal' character (in the Latin sense of the term) of human love. Now, on the plane of conscious spirit, that 'fatality' of the inescapable bi-polar tension, which links every human being with an opposing pole, finds its original expression in indissoluble monogamous marriage, and in such a marriage alone. The most passionate love does not necessarily correspond with total destiny: it is almost always eccentric with regard to it; that is why it spoils a life more often than it leads to fulfilment. In any way, love is never that integral fate, concentrated within the microcosm of a bi-polar field of force, for never does love as such give expression to all the active and passive functions which mark out a particular being from out of the sum total of creatures and of things. It is essentially not responsibility, for the definition which Buddhism gives of Life, namely that the capacity for ceasing to exist constitutes its essence, is certainly true of love. On the other hand, so-called polygamous 'marriage' cannot create that field of forces with bi-polar tensions which makes of monogamous marriage the mirror of universal Destiny; and the possibility of divorce, foreseen in contracting the union — to say nothing of that premeditated divorce which is the key of so many modern marriages — deprives the conjugal bond of its fatal quality. This is why marriage, where it exists as we understand it, has always been declared indissoluble in its essence, whether or not there were means

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or expedients for setting fate right through divorce or annulment.

Now, such indissolubility leads of itself to an identification of personal fate with universal Destiny. It is no longer the tendency of the moment which counts, either in the first or in the last instance; it is always the sum total of life. The typical expression of this fact is on the one hand the reciprocal faithfulness vowed by husband and wife through all passing interests, and on the other the responsibility accepted towards the children. But the same holds good for all the essential facts and all the successive stages of life: no sleight-of-hand solution is possible for them, once two are bound together. It is then no longer possible to live on the borderland of life, to reckon without the contingencies of position, of fortune, of the career to be followed. Each one must needs witness the flight of the other partner's youth and so, by reflection, of his own. Each one must needs focus his attention on what really matters in life, for from one moment to another the echo which a given state provokes in his partner forces him to it. Make-up is only a fit expedient for life as seen from a distance, and that wholesale make-up which is called society life, with its conventions which juggle with vital experience, with its full-time activity, so complete that it forbids all thought, never becomes the whole of life, not even of court-life itself.

Yet on the other hand this experience of the unavoidable universal Destiny lived out under the

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shape of a wholly personal fate renders such a destiny precious. Everything then acquires a personal meaning, as does an object lacking all value if it is offered for remembrance's sake by a loved one. And once he has thus assented to Destiny, man becomes a more profound being and gains an ever closer contact, ending in identification with his own deepest Self. This Self is a spiritual substance. Its proper domain is that of Meaning and not of facts. The more this spiritual principle rules over consciousness, the more does all life change its plane. Ever less do facts as such count, ever more exclusively the significance they have for the particular being in question. Then, what is hard or sad or unhappy in itself may become a condition for happiness; not only material goods but even sickness, even parting and even death then lose their intrinsic meaning. In one way or another, everything then takes on a sense *for you* and thus intensifies the consciousness of life. It is absolutely impossible to live a profound life and at the same time an empty one, for from its point of view exterior events are never the ultimate reality.

It is assuredly not indispensable to marry in order to realize the deepest meaning of life; there are such beings as the saint, the hero, and the solitary and detached philosopher. And I certainly hope no one has ever married with the preconceived intention of 'realizing Meaning'; for this intention alone, in its monstrous indelicacy, would have made of Meaning an odious absurdity. But the fact that for nature man would only be

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complete if he were androgynous — a natural truth about which all mystics affirm that it would also be true, though of course understood in a totally different way, on the spiritual plane — implies for the immense majority of us the need of a perpetual tension between the two organic poles, in order that life may realize its whole impulse; this fact implies that each sex only realizes itself by polar relationship with the opposite sex. And woman as well as man must understand that it should be impossible to escape from the double-poled field of forces in which they are placed, if this field of forces is to work out in them all its energies. It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of that tendency which all men have, not to face the true problems and the real difficulties of life; such a refusal to see them evidently makes existence easier. Ninety times out of a hundred, it is necessary for an *external* compulsion to *force* them to live out their whole life. In this sense, the accepted sacrifice of freedom alone gives to events which are indifferent in themselves their fateful character, and for the immense majority, only such a personal inward consent to the unavoidable nature of exterior fate raises the latter to the spiritual plane. Buddhists have best understood why unmarried man or woman is never a complete being, for they oppose them directly to monks. The ascetic who has renounced all is, according to Buddhists, the highest being on earth, for his whole life is responsibility and discipline aiming at supreme perfection. The unmarried man, on the contrary,

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avoids or denies responsibilities; this is why, in the eyes of Buddhists, he is spiritually much inferior to the married man and is, among all men, he who has the least chance of advancing along the way which leads to Nirvana.

WE have expressed the hope that no lover ever told the girl he wished to marry that he was doing it in the hope of 'realizing himself'. Nevertheless, if every woman in any case aspires in the last instance towards marriage and not towards love, if she sets her whole heart on this aspiration, and if once married she becomes normally serious (even when she has been very much the reverse before) it is due to the fact that in most cases it is married life alone which creates the conditions needed to give life all the fullness of personal meaning it is capable of bearing. And every being aspires so primarily towards such fullness that this is what he primarily understands by the name of love. This is why he believes that love by itself creates fullness. And so indeed have Nature and Providence willed it to happen. Love represents the normal *way of access* to the state of marriage. The young have few conscious sentiments and aspirations, and such as they have are little differentiated. Their soul is a sort of preliminary sketch; it is left to experience of life to make a finished picture of it. But one must perforce begin with whatever material is available; it is normal for love to stand foremost at the age in which young people get married. For this reason, every marriage between young people should start

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with love alone. The rest will develop later. But if young souls are but sketches, these show all the more clearly the general outlines of the coming picture. This is the reason why the young above all others speak of 'fate' when they marry. This is also why they are infinitely more in earnest in their choice than experienced men and women. It is young people too — this is true of all women without exception — who think foremost of the spiritual significance which their union will have.

Indeed, marriage is not at all, for man's and woman's deepest consciousness, a measure of economic or erotic security; it is, as the Church has so well understood by consecrating it, a 'state' spiritual in its essence. That is why it does not exist, for the universal consciousness, unless it has been thus consecrated. It is not necessary to believe in the exclusive validity of any particular formula of consecration, since all of them have produced the same salutary effect. It is not necessary either, in order to grasp the unique significance of marriage, to believe in any traditional religion. Only, in the eyes of those who will only admit of civic or lay institutions, the matter-of-fact functions of the registrar are automatically endowed with the ancestral prestige of the priest, a transformation which does not lack a certain comic side. The fact is that spiritual reality is never one with any earthly reality whatever. There is only one case in which it is possible to do without a specific incarnation of the spiritual principle: when a man understands the

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intrinsic meaning of things spiritual. In this case, and in this case only, does consciousness not need a specific embodiment of Spirit.

The moment has come in which we must explain what the spiritual principle is, in language as simple as the subject permits. I will here summarize what I have set out at length in the last chapters of my *America set Free*, and of my *South American Meditations*. In our preceding study, we have defined man as the *feeling* animal: that is indeed his true zoological definition. But man is not an animal in the last instance. Since the in-break of Spirit, a super-animal principle, which we call the spiritual principle, manifests itself more and more as the human essence itself. Less and less does man accept, as proper and belonging to him, what has not been incorporated in an organism governed by Spirit. Primitive woman feels herself to be possessed when she has been violated. Spiritualized woman only feels possessed if she has given herself, if she has inwardly consented to be taken. In the same way, primitive man accepts all that happens to him as if it were destiny; developed man only accepts as belonging to him that which corresponds to the tendencies of his own inmost Self. In him, meaning prevails over facts. Only what is endowed with a purely personal significance really matters in his life.

Spiritualized man, therefore, lives on a plane other than that of animal man. Spirit, which has become his personal vital centre, possesses a positive

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quality of its own. The exponents of this quality are, on the plane of phenomena, the so-called universal ideals and the so-called eternal values. These are at the same time the exponents of the specific laws which govern the growth of spiritual being, which, just like natural being, may or may not develop and progress. Now, let intellectuals doubt spiritual reality as much as they please: there has never, in fact, been any man who has universally been recognized as superior who has not tried to realize in himself Goodness, Beauty, Love and Sincerity, and who has not felt unhappy if he did not feel his activity to be at the service of spiritual ideals. In a like way each normally endowed human being feels as a matter of course that material success or failure neither prove nor disprove the validity of the eternal values. It is because they belong to an entirely different dimension. Summarizing the essential in one brief formula: man does what is right in order to become better; he aspires towards beauty in order to attain perfect self-expression; to Truth, in order to free his own inner reality from all that is unreal.

If we now oppose directly the reality of the spiritual plane to that of the material, we reach a conception which is clear enough for the objects of this study. Whilst on the material plane the laws of action and reaction and of correspondence between cause and effect reign without dispute, things move very differently among spiritual realities. Spirit is essentially radiation, effusion; it is here a matter of

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giving, of taking, never. And such giving does not impoverish, it makes richer. Each one of us can prove this truth from his own experience of love, where the more he gave, without thinking of what he might be receiving, the more fullness he reached. There exists a physical phenomenon which has a fleeting analogy: muscles grow in the measure in which they are exercised. But if we look at them closely, the laws of spirit defy all parallel. We might even believe it to be a matter of reversing all tested criterions. Here, the more a man spends, the richer he grows. It is the same phenomenon to which Christ alluded with reference to certain aims He specially pursued, when He said: whomsoever loseth his life for Me, shall find it.

IT was necessary to give these definitions and these elementary metaphysical explanations, for without them the proper and unique sense of marriage cannot be understood. We said, in the beginning, that the family belongs to the emotional order, but Marriage to the Spiritual order. The latter's essence is, indeed, the embodying of a special Meaning within the natural sequence of life, conceived over its full range, from Gana up to the emotional order. Love does not postulate marriage; marriage is indispensable neither for the perpetuation of the species nor for the cohesion of the family or the duration of Society and the State. As regards this latter point, Aldous Huxley in his Utopia, *Our Brave New World*, has carried out, with admirable logic, a 'development to the limit' (in the mathematical sense of the term) on the natural line

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followed by the Russo-American evolution. In the State he describes, young people, all produced through a special treatment of embryos extracted from the maternal womb in the first stages of their development, blush with shame at the bare idea that they might have a father or a mother. Yet on the other hand, the strict convention which governs that communistic State with more than Puritan rigidity and according to which each one belongs to everybody, obliges all citizens to live in unlimited sexual promiscuity; if he or she does not obey this categorical imperative, loss of all respectability is the inevitable result. Such a State is certainly the goal towards which all the Russo-American reforming ideas tend. And Aldous Huxley, in his *Utopia*, gives proof of a much more lucid and conscientious spirit than the Soviet State, which forbids all sexual unions not regularized through a notary's deed; the legalized union may last just long enough to allow of the loss of innocence, but stamped paper is obligatory. On the other hand, it is but strictly logical that the prestige of marriage should diminish in proportion to the decline of spirituality. For married life, with all the difficulties it drags in its wake, has no sense, and still less any justification, unless it satisfies *other* needs than the so-called natural ones.

Now, which are those needs which marriage alone can satisfy? Exactly those which we have already dealt with. We have but to add a brief development. The natural bond of marriage integrates almost all natural tendencies of man into a higher synthesis.

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Here it is not only a question of biological but also of social and economic tendencies, as well as of those which impel man to aspire to something beyond himself. A perfect marriage — and such a thing does exist — corresponds, in the plane of practice, more or less to what the ideal of a philosophic system where everything holds together in fundamental unity is in theory. But the unique happiness which married life can give is due to some of its inherent virtues, which we have not mentioned yet. Naturally, men and women marry at the normal age in order to be young together. Yet the happiness which marriage alone can give is based on the fact of growing old together. For a well-assorted couple, the flight of youth is no misfortune; everything, down to final decrepitude, assumes a positive meaning. Each stage of life has its predestined place, in agreement with its peculiar character. This is as true of sorrows as of joys, for sorrows and joys are correlative. We have said that, in marriage, universal Destiny becomes personal fate. But there is more: marriage raises inner destiny above natural fate. And thanks to that, love, the normal beginning of every bond between man and woman, does not remain the last word, as it is among lovers: love plays ever more and more, as life proceeds, the part of a simple component which may lose its importance in proportion to others without the union being any the worse for it. In the most beautiful case, which is that of the case of the most spiritualized conjugal love, the question of inner growth over-

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shadows every other for husband and wife. In that case, each of the two seeks and finds supreme joy in the other's progress.

The pairs who have attained such a level have truly risen above all outer destiny. They are profoundly happy, whatever occurs, for their life always has a full and perfect meaning. However, all married people who realize the true significance of marriage share in a greater or lesser degree in its essential virtues. One talks so much of the education which parents give their children: the inverse education, that which parents receive from them, seems to me ever so much more important. Children force them into an attitude suited to their state. They expect, among other things, that each should carry his or her true age and behave accordingly. How many daughters have surprised and even shocked their simple-minded mothers, by advising them to wear such and such a dress because it makes them look older! How many fathers have been embarrassed to observe that their son *wanted* to see a god in them and had no use for a mere comrade! And woman truly reaches perfection in the all-knowing mother who cannot be thought of as young, as does man reach his perfection in the Jupiter-type. I know of no better remedy to cure the regret for departing youth, than meditation upon these truths.

LET us now pass, once for all, to concrete problems. Why does every normal being know, whether he admits it or not, that the word *mésalliance* corresponds to a deep reality? It is because the state of marriage is

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in its essence a 'position', and anything which threatens it or wrecks it is dangerous for the very principle of marriage. Words, unfortunately, lose their first vigour with the lapse of time; that is why the word 'position' is now understood, in the majority of cases, in an entirely superficial sense. Its true meaning, almost lost in our days, still survives in the German term 'Standes-Ehe'. *Stand*, literally position, signifies a particular position, a starting-point in the human or cosmic order. To be a born king or a born peasant or a born man of genius implies a predetermined 'position'. And however democratic a human world may have become — which here means, however unstable the positions and however unlimited the changes of function and career may be — every man nevertheless embodies a fate predetermined by his nature, as did the Napoleonic trooper who was said to carry a marshal's staff in his knapsack; for never did the great Corsican make a marshal out of a fool. Consequently a marriage which does not help one to fill the present or the coming position is never in accord with the meaning proper to marriage, however ardent the love that impels to it may be.

Unfortunately, to-day the groups for which the word 'mésalliance' retains its ancient sense are precisely those which understand the word 'position' in the most superficial way. The idea of equality of birth, which is still obligatory to-day in the case of marriages between reigning princes, is profoundly true in itself: equality, if not existent, at least possible of

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attainment in the level of nature and of culture, is absolutely necessary in order that a conjugal union may be a true marriage — and just as much in order that this same level may be preserved in the descendants, which preservation depends on the family atmosphere even more than on heredity. Yet it is not genealogy as recorded on vellum which proves true equality, it is only *real* equality of vital and cultural level. And if this coincides with an equality of outward position which happens often, and even in the majority of cases, at the beginning of the ascending career achieved by a race — things are far otherwise as soon as degeneration sets in. And save for infusion of new blood, degeneration inevitably begins after a smaller or greater number of generations. In the same way, that special kind of equality which French conventions require is far from being that which guarantees the perpetuation of the race on a high level. Surely, the comparative lack of truly superior personalities in our day is due to a too numerous series of ill-assorted marriages. In Germany, too many men of genius have married their cooks, and in France too many distinguished men have married for money. For those who might wonder at my treating here of the badly married man only, and not of the badly married woman, I will add the following. The woman who is *truly* superior, be it on a vital level or on that of organic culture (culture in the sense that the word has become flesh), always wins the day — man representing, in intimate life, not the stronger but the weaker

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sex; she carries it, if not for herself, then certainly for her children. It is a historical fact which may to-day be considered scientifically proved that in the long run an ancient culture always turns out to be the strongest, however protracted may be the intervening period of incubation. In this sense, almost all new civilizations owed their birth to the fact that the superior women of the ancient vanquished races were obliged to contract 'mésalliances'. Would the Norman race, for instance, have been so soon not only civilized but capable of civilization, except for the ancestral custom of Scandinavian pirates, who abducted on principle the most beautiful maidens of the countries they pillaged and sacked? On the other hand, if a woman is not *truly* superior, if her culture is merely a shop-front affair, her decay often observable after a bad marriage is but a falling back to a true level.

Nevertheless, the idea of considering marriage as a pure business of personal caprice — such as Nordic individualism, since the days of romanticism, does ever more and more — is even more mistaken than the most conventional ideas about marriages of convenience. The whole of human experience is one vast proof of the fact that in principle the marriage of convenience yields better results than do pure love-matches. And this is not only true from the point of view of posterity and of the cultural level perpetuated by the family atmosphere: it is true above all from the point of view of personal happiness. For conjugal love is a complex thing, while passion is a passing state,

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seldom capable of true vision and of creating the conditions required for lasting happiness. Now, how is it possible to preserve what good there is in the traditional concept of marriage in a period in which all young people, if they do not tend towards a collectivism which annuls the very idea of marriage, grant themselves the right to marry whomsoever they choose? For this is the leading idea of the younger generations, even among Latin peoples. The problem of marriage appears more difficult of solution to-day than it ever was, and this suffices to explain why so many people prefer to sweep it aside at one blow. Life was indeed easy in ancient China — and still is so in China now — where marriage was, fundamentally, not a personal problem, but a problem of the whole family, and where a supreme culture of family feelings made the relations between husband and wife appear secondary. To-day still, in China, married life hardly ever brings tragedies in its wake, since through a generally-accepted convention the conflicts of marriage are not taken seriously. Even in modern India, in so far as it follows the old tradition, unhappiness in married life is almost unknown, because young girls are brought up to see in their husbands pure ideals upon which they meditate religiously from their earliest infancy. In such a case, 'facts' count for very little. Things happened in an identical way, though in a lesser degree, and only in the highest classes, in Europe, whilst the law of the marriage of convention in the sense of *Standes-Ehe* held good; in those days, few

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people granted themselves the right to feel unhappy in their marriage if it did not bring them perfect bliss. Nowadays, all this has changed; and there where change has not yet taken place, it will inevitably occur sooner or later. What can then be done to save the sacrament of marriage whose unique virtues have been proved by an experience of millennia? This is the problem we have to examine in the last pages of this study.

HISTORY often develops according to a law which resembles that of musical counterpoint. Thus, Baroness Leonie Ungern-Sternberg, in the *Book of Marriage*, has formulated in a masterly way the essential problem of a better future, by saying that the inevitable mechanization of exterior life must lead to a *personalization of inner life*, the only path which will not lead to a final decadence.

Institutions ever more and more lose their independent life; they fossilize ever more and more in set frameworks, with no possibility of immediate action on the individual, be it for good or for evil. Baroness von Ungern-Sternberg, in her essay, treats above all of the question of personal unhappiness; that is why she develops her idea by affirming, as a direct corollary to her general thesis, that institutions, by losing their peculiar life, represent ever less and less a 'destiny' capable of wrecking life. She even goes so far as to say: 'Even to-day, the misunderstood woman is already an obsolete species, for her passive suffering is in contradiction to the possibilities that modern life

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offers us. On the other hand, in our days, the idea of an unhappy marriage is still a usual thing: in the future, such a marriage will doubtless constitute a curiosity. For indeed, two paths are open to the active personality: either divorce, or patience towards the yoke of marriage with the sufferings that accompany it. In such a case, woman is not unhappy but a being capable of directing her own fate.'

Baroness von Ungern-Sternberg takes into consideration only the active type of modernized woman, and I very much doubt whether the majority of women will ever belong to that type; as far as I am concerned, I even hope that it will never so happen. Yet the general thesis is valid for every one: the mechanization of life, on the one hand, and the loss of prestige endured by all institutions, on the other, are henceforth acquired facts. In order to guard against the fossilization of life which corresponds to the hardening and setting of institutions, there is no other course open but to personalize inner life in opposition to the gradual increase of external mechanization.

It is here doubtless that is to be found the underlying intention of that excessive and exaggerated individualism which in our days threatens to sap the very bases of the institution of marriage. A Swedish woman answered the other day, as someone congratulated her on her marriage: 'Oh, it is such a very unstable business!' One might, going a bit further, paraphrase Bichat's *mot*, *La vie c'est la mort*, by saying: 'Marriage is divorce'. Things have nearly come to

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such a pass in the United States. And marriage is no less in danger there where the attraction of love — whose supreme form is the *coup de foudre* — decides in the last instance. In such a case, either the chill consequent on every enthusiasm brings thoughts of divorce from the very moment in which a new interest springs up, or else husband and wife drift so far apart from each other that marriage comes to represent a mere economic and social co-operative association. In both cases, marriage ceases to be that which makes its greatness and its beauty. For legalized free love is precisely not marriage, and it has a less fruitful influence than illegitimate love, since the obligatory character which it preserves in spite of everything strips pure love of that which after all is its essence and its beauty: its freedom. In the extreme case, which is frequent above all in America — where sexual attraction has the first and often the last word — one can say without exaggerating: of all courtesans, those women who re-marry for an indefinite number of times are the least respectable. But do they choose a better way, those so-called individualists, men or women, who — while they keep up the appearance of perfect conjugal harmony, and on the pretext that their union does not bring them the special happiness they expected from it — evade the consummation of a spiritual marriage such as we have defined it, and seek for fulfilment, without more ado, outside their home? Certainly not, for their individualism is by no means that kind of personalism which is henceforth necessary

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in order to compensate the mechanization of external life. The personalism in question means the expression of a personality centred in the deepest layers of the spiritual Self. But this very Self, which corresponds to the 'Atman' of Hindoos, is precisely not the 'I' of the egotist. The latter 'I' is the most superficial thing in existence. It is man's prison, not the tabernacle of his freedom. This 'I' is but the sheaf of man's instincts of power and of lust; though it is born of the in-break of Spirit in the *Gana*-organism, which cuts the individual soul off from collective existence — an isolation which is indeed the first condition of all consciousness of spiritual uniqueness — this 'I' is in itself but a fetter and a chain. It must break up or disintegrate, it must die, as Christ put it, in order that the true Self may be realized. It is, indeed, this which all religions and all higher codes of morals have always taught. Traditional doctrines err only in opposing altruism to egoism. The former is worth little more than the latter. In practice, its preponderance established as a law brings about merely a weakening of personality. The United States form the classical illustration of this fact. There it is always the neighbour, the 'other fellow', who is in the right, and this confers such a supremacy to the opinion of the masses — for the name of 'the other fellow' is Legion, like that of the demon in the New Testament — that the independent individual, to say nothing of the superior personality, can only survive if he hides himself as the early Christians buried themselves in the Catacombs. The

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true opposite of the 'I' is not the 'You', which is situated exactly on the same plane, but man's spiritual Self.

Now, the individualism of people who marry in obedience to their mere amorous inclination or with the firm intention of divorcing directly things become different from what they expected, is nothing but selfishness. This explains why such couples never taste the special joys of marriage; they only know those joys which the satisfaction of sexual and amorous instincts can give. It is plain logic that they should invariably end by being miserable, because for the satisfaction of mere amorous needs, nothing is less adequate than marriage. And with the freedom of customs and morals which reigns in our days and which will doubtless continue to reign, a bad marriage has no longer the excuse, current and acceptable in earlier days, of having been made because it was the only way of satisfying erotic needs. These trends of thought explain, as far as I can think, the whole of the present crisis of marriage. This crisis by no means depends on a so-called advanced state no longer able to bear the chains of convention. The irrefutable proof of this is that where conventional tradition is still alive, that is to say amongst most Latin peoples, the crisis of marriage is less acute than it is elsewhere, if it does exist at all. This crisis springs from the *superficiality* of current individualism.

THE final formula we were in search of is now within our reach. The postulate of inner personal development, which alone can save marriage, is

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equivalent to the postulate of personal integration to individual completeness, which is exactly what the perfect marriage of past ages brought about as its normal consequence. There is but this difference, that what was once a result often brought about by the influence of others or through impersonal forces, must to-day be the starting-point or at least the aim of a personally willed evolution. And here — since concrete examples are always worth more than the clearest abstract deduction — I cannot help singing the praises of young France. Why, in that country, is marriage less at a discount than anywhere else? Why is there taking place, on the other hand, an ever more general upsetting of traditional customs? It is probably in France that the greatest number of love-matches are made nowadays. It is in France that people marry earliest. It is in France that young people least hesitate to marry without riches and without an assured position. One may note here an apparent convergence with the United States. In reality, precisely opposite things happen in those two countries. In America we witness an autocracy of superficial individualism. In France, the young people themselves assume the same responsibility which parents heretofore took on their behalf. They therefore 'arrange' their own marriages. With this difference that no man ever arranges for himself, save some rarely pleasant exceptions, a marriage which is not a love-match. This is true, at any rate, of most well-bred young girls.

Is this not a case of absolute progress? We have said

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at the beginning of our study that love does not of itself need the conjugal bond. On the other hand, it is rare that a marriage should have become fixed in the right way, if during the first years love has not predominated. The synthesis of these two antithesis is only possible on a higher plane. This synthesis can automatically come into existence in the long run; such was the effect of traditional consecrated marriage. But it is also possible to anticipate future phenomena. No human being ever is, at the normal age of marriage, an integrated personality, and accordingly superior to the superficial accidents pertaining to inner life. But it is possible to marry on one's own initiative taking as one's guide from the very beginning the directing image of ideal marriage. In this case, one chooses wisely for oneself. One is not the dupe of partial or superficial inclinations. And in this case there is less risk of a mistake than there was formerly in the judgment of even the most sensible of parents — who, nevertheless, had a clearer perception of things than most of the young people who marry in these days in Nordic countries.

We can sum up the meaning of the progress that has been made in two words: *to-day, for the first time in history, the marriage for love has become the normal and advisable form of marriage.* As never happened before, the conclusion of a marriage for love is a promise of happiness which has numerous chances of being kept. And this is due precisely to that greater liberty in modern customs, which causes old people to fear for

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the ideal of marriage itself. For since a woman is no longer obliged to marry in order to satisfy her physiological needs, the *superficial* reasons which so often induce her to marry the first man who asks her no longer play a part. Therefore, woman's original and innate prudence and circumspection in this question, the most fateful of all for her, can be exercised with greater freedom than ever before. But for the very same reason, young men will also marry less lightly. In all times, man has carried within him the images of two women, of whom one corresponds to the mother-type and represents his future wife, and the other the type of the friend. At the supreme level, the friend is the inspiring Muse, at the lowest, the courtesan who satisfies momentary needs. Now, man will always need women friends, and never will these two types of the wife and the friend coincide. Save for exceptions due to a very special nature or to a personal harmony which can only be found two or three times in a century — exceptions so rare that we can afford to neglect them here — a man will never find happiness in marriage in taking for a wife a woman of the friend type. In these days, this constellation, eternal in its principle, will assert itself more than ever, since it is very much easier than before to find women friends in one's own circle. Hence, among other phenomena, the ever greater dislike of young men to marrying girl students, among whom they find, on the other hand, their 'friends'. And hence too, by force of contrast, the growing prestige of the predestined wife.

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That which is true of the two types of women pre-formed in man's soul is equally true, *mutatis mutandis*, of the feminine soul. With this difference that, thanks to her more differentiated sentimental and emotional nature, woman is capable of varying to a much greater degree the shades of her personal relations with men. But on the other hand, there is in woman an even clearer distinction than in man between the type she will accept as a husband, on the one hand, and the various styles of friends she may choose, on the other. Once that official prejudice has died which held that a woman could have only one man in her life, and that he who pleases her in one way or another must necessarily be the desirable and predestined husband, woman will be free to affirm better than ever before her natural tendency towards discrimination. In all countries, young men are already finding out, not without regret, that young women, whether married or not, are becoming much more exacting than they were during the first post-war decade, which was the most favourable period in centuries for professional lady-killers. The inherited instinct of women, which urges them to choose circumspectly, is regaining the upper hand. This naturally favours a better choice in marriage, for it is always woman who says the last word (which does not prevent her from being also, every time that circumstances allow of it, the one that spreads the first nets). And once woman, that serious being *par excellence* chooses her partner with all the seriousness which is

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in her, the ancient prestige of marriage will undoubtedly enjoy a renovation, for woman has always sought and found her ideal in it.

But the prestige of marriage increases in an equal degree in men's eyes wherever the Bolshevik-American influence does not predominate. Man becomes interested once again in the differential characteristics and virtues of women. For a long time, under the influence of the masculinized women whom he courted, he came to believe that he did not think of them, though the general decadence of the masculine erotic sense, from passion down to plain sexual power, must have made it clear to those who had eyes to see that there must be a psychological reason underneath it. To-day, man fully realizes what he should always have known, namely, that a being of the other sex who resembles him is unable to interest him really. The amazon, the herculean woman — she who is herculean not only by reason of her muscular strength, but also of her capacity to undertake a dozen superhuman labours per day — may well be for him a dangerous rival, but never a compensating influence nor an object of worship. And what shall we say of the woman capable of giving points to Falstaff in the consumption of strong drink, and above all of the woman-ascetic, who has made a vow of perpetual fasting? The latter aberration is indeed one of the most perverse which have ever ravaged humanity. In all periods, men have believed in the mortification of the flesh to the advantage of the soul's salvation;

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but no anchorite has ever accumulated torments in order to ensure the beauty of his body. The contrary is more likely to be the final result of a life of fasting; it is therefore probable that a particularly repellent old age lies in wait for those young women who hope to remain beautiful for ever thanks to the practice of emaciation. All these perversities are fast growing unfashionable. Women are in good earnest striving to re-feminize themselves. It is because they are at last losing that inferiority complex which formerly drove them to feminism, and which is still its soul. Women are once more proud of being women. It is not necessary to be a prophet in order to predict that the period of levelling of the sexes will be succeeded by a period of supreme differentiation. Which differentiation is the foremost and essential condition, if men and women are to attract each other and to seek in each other their own compensation and fulfilment.

The positions captured through the feminist attack are surely in their greater part conquered for evermore. Henceforth, every human being will have and preserve the right (it is a characteristic fact that the French Revolution should only have spoken of the rights of *man*!) of earning his or her living in any possible way; there will exist, so to speak, a right of man independently of sex, a right of the neutral human being. But very soon everybody will understand that this right does not incarnate the ideal; it is but the basis which no one discusses. And in the long run this neutral basis will help to accentuate the difference

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between the sexes, even though it has itself brought about the levelling process. If the woman who works in offices or in factories stresses her femininity as much as she did so in the eighteenth-century salons, the neutral background will show up the differences with matchless clearness. Everything, therefore, works in favour of an increase and not of a diminution of the prestige of true marriage.

I HAVE expressly spoken of true marriage, for on the contrary those marriages which are such only in name are losing more and more of their prestige. I do not thereby believe that many changes will take place in future in outward institutions: these have altered mighty little since the days of Adam and Eve. In any case, those exterior transformations which may take place, and which people ignorant of history consider extraordinary, will have relatively little importance in comparison with that which remains as it was. There will surely be, for example, far less innovations of a legal kind than is expected by advanced circles. This appears to me to be a foregone conclusion for the chief reason that, the more consciousness comes to be illuminated by the light of understanding, the more it will realize that it is impossible to found a perfect order; life is too complex and too contradictory to admit of that. The profound changes which will occur will be rather changes of point of view, or of judgment. Public opinion will acquire more and more of that breadth and that elevation of views which were ever the privilege of the

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great gentlemen and great ladies. The great have ever lived, for the most part, above and outside the frameworks laid out by the laws; and they have never thought of legalizing their behaviour or of creating special laws adapted to their own cases. In the same way, I very much doubt whether the future will legalize many a way of living which has heretofore been considered illegitimate. Just as in the eighteenth century a great gentleman could sometimes publicly leave his fortune to a woman of position who was unmarried and had been his mistress, without the latter having to suffer from such publicity, so in future the world will probably tolerate more unmarried mothers than has hitherto been the case. But such things will not be insisted upon, and there is no worse kind of insistence than legalization. How could it be possible to abolish the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate children, between a marriage and a 'liaison', without allowing general interests of the very first order to suffer? The very fact that marriage represents a spiritual link, and not a natural one, proves the lack of sense of such so-called advanced ideas. I believe that here, exactly as in the cases of Property and of Law that we have examined, the solution according to principle will be the following one: Law *in itself* will lose all 'sacred' character. There must always be laws. But a judicial system will be less and less apt to do justice to reality, the more the latter becomes differentiated. All statistics allow the unique case to slip through them, and the more humanity

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evolves, the more will it be precisely the uniqueness of each individual and of each special case which matters.

Possible progress does, then, certainly consist in a progressive 'personalization' of life. When I now read those Utopias, mostly of American origin, which all propose to themselves as an ideal the development of man along lines proper to insects, I feel truly plunged into the night of time: into that distant period when Creative Impulse had not yet decided if it would choose the path leading to man or to the future termite. Nothing is in truth more backward, more retrograde, more reactionary than such American progressiveness. During my lecture-tour to the United States I had constantly, indefinitely, perpetually, to speak about marriage. But I never noticed a truly personal interest in this problem which can only be, by its very essence, intimate in nature. If a woman consulted me about her own problem, it was always as if she were interviewing me for a newspaper. It is impossible for de-personalization to go further. But it is also impossible to take up a more fundamentally false position with regard to marriage. This was always *the* essentially personal question. It will become ever more personal. But it will cease to be personal in the sense of superficial caprice. The restoration of the prestige of true marriage, which one observes in every country among the best of the young, is due to a deepening of their consciousness. And we here gain at the same time a new perspective on this strange phenomenon, that precisely the most

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collectivistic peoples hold the most individualistic views upon marriage. Just as obstinacy does not show strength of will, but is on the contrary the sure sign of its great weakness, so those beings who are hardly individualized, since after all they *are* individuals, throw their miserable uniqueness into relief by magnifying in a way contrary to sense the importance of their surface likings and antipathies. However, the bond of marriage has no meaning and no reality unless it links the deeps together.

PROGRESS

P R O G R E S S

AMONG all the epochs which have succeeded each other on earth, the present day West proves in the most striking manner that man, so sharp at material gain, is always ready, when all is said and done, to delude himself with words. All the prestige of the idea of progress, as the term was understood during the last half-century, is there. That a Christian martyr or that a Mohammedan warrior should offer up his life is but natural, his faith being granted. All self-sacrifice for the love of one's nearest and dearest, of one's country or of an ideal representing man's spiritual essence is natural too. But what sense can there possibly be in sacrificing one's personal life in order that beings yet unborn and of no personal interest to those who live to-day may dispose of two telephones and five motor cars each? The progressiveness of the United States and of Soviet Russia, those twin enemies, means nothing else. And things are by no means different in the case of such people as conceive the notion of progress in political rather than in economical terms; for in the last instance modern politics always serve economic interests. This even applies, in principle, to progress which can be defined without prejudice in terms of pure, not of applied and — since we have agreed so to call it — of disinterested science. The individual scientific investigator cer-

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tainly finds his happiness in pure and disinterested research, and, as always happens, he attributes to the ever unattained end virtues which, in reality, belong to the road to be travelled. But very few spirits are so organized. For the immense majority of men, truth is by no means a vital interest. It is mere curiosity, in the most trivial sense of the term, which drives the masses to busy themselves with new discoveries and inventions, when it is not the wish to kill time. This is why every effort to vulgarize science only succeeds in making those who attempt it vulgar; for inevitably, in order to obtain the wider appeal, they transform that which resulted from a noble passion for knowledge into sensational news. The fact is that, for every consciousness, the supreme fact and the first and last resort is life as it is lived out. Life never has an objective aim, unless we so name death; every real and true aim is subjective. It may be situated at any one point between the two limits of superficial satisfaction for the body or deep spiritual joy. Whoever seeks to believe that an objective state is in itself an ideal, deludes himself and others with words.

And of all so-called objective ideals, that of the greatest comfort for the greatest number is certainly the most absurd. What is true of health is much more true of general prosperity. Let us begin by abolishing sickness and death; *then* only will the conquest of external well-being signify an issue worthy of examination. That meanwhile each man should strive to attain the maximum of safety for himself and his, is

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only natural: such an effort tends in the first place to neutralize original fear, and therefore to an inner aim. But there is no impulsion sprung from within, which can possibly find satisfaction in the thought of unknown beings living in more favourable material conditions. And the more vital a being is, in the physical as in the spiritual sense, the less he clings to well-being, even for himself. Youth likes the strenuous life. If that part of present-day youth which has borne and vanquished the greatest material difficulties, is the most optimistic and joyous that has been known within the memory of man (whence the unequalled prestige it enjoys since the war) it is due to the particular intensity of life which it owes precisely to surmounted difficulties. Everything points to the probability that those young people, when they come to be forty years old, will not believe in comfort being an ideal any more than they do to-day. This ideal amounts, when all is said and done, to that of a bondholder, for whom safety is the supreme good. The American ideal in particular, if it were universally applied, would by no means realize heaven on earth, but it would transform our planet into one single vast temple of boredom.

But outside of all these considerations — is it even likely that 'Progress' will continue without a break, in such a way that Utopias like those which American editors manufacture every day to satisfy the demands of their mechanized public have any chance of materializing? Nothing is less certain. Comfort has been the last word of many peoples before this:

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Egyptians, Cretans, Romans of the Later Empire. In the Kingdom of Ur, civilization was already so refined in Abraham's time that I am inclined to believe that the legend of his simple and patriarchal life has been transmitted or invented for the same reasons which induced the marquises of the eighteenth-century France to go into ecstasies before shepherds and shepherdesses. Since Millennia there has been in some centres of civilization, running hot and cold water in the rooms of all decent people. All these frenchified or americanized civilizations have passed away without leaving traces. In the beginning of the Middle Ages in Rome, people were convinced that there had never been a Roman empire, and the Coliseum was admired with horror and dread as the expression of Satan's very soul. The end of the ancient grandeur of that city may very well become a pattern some day for the United States: we know that in the space of a few years, Rome lost for long centuries after nineteenth of its population, because a king of the Goths had destroyed her aqueducts; very soon afterwards, there were no longer any Romans left who were capable of rebuilding that which had been demolished. It is not impossible that we may soon see in Russia the magnificent ruins of gigantic factories which will never have been worked, but which will provide a poor kind of living for a peasant population through the 'tourist industry'. There is nothing improbable in such prospects. If the economic crisis which began in 1929 lasts a little longer, more than half the tools and

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implements which serve for mass production will unavoidably be abandoned. And in the same way through the lack of children — as it has so often happened, and can now happen with unthinkable rapidity, thanks to the most advanced industry of our time, which is the contraceptive industry — whole races may disappear or else their civilization die for lack of first-class men. This last danger also, which, up to now, has always precipitated the end, is to-day graver than ever before. Albert Einstein affirms that a solution of continuity lasting for two generations only in the line of first-class brains specially gifted for physical science would suffice to demolish all the constructions built upon that science. Let us add to this the obvious barbarization of all young generations, their lack of interest in spiritual problems and their enthusiasm for whatever is primitive and primordial: decidedly the chances of seeing the ideal of progress realized in the near future seem rather slim.

OBVIOUSLY, those great men of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who were the pioneers of progress did not attribute to this idea the meaning which is usual in our days; however, in history, it is only effects and results which count. Moreover, we know to-day that such effects have always been premeditated by the subconscious. And if we now try to deduce them from unconscious impulses, we will come to envisage the significance of the era of progress quite differently from the way in which public opinion sees it.

In the first place, this era is not the expression of a

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greater total illumination of human consciousness, but only of an extraordinary development of the vital organ called intellect, a development which has been so sudden that all available energy has concentrated in it to the detriment of other organs. This development was a good thing in itself, but its one-sided character could only lead, for a certain time, to one-sided attitudes and to those exaggerations which are patent to-day and with which we have dealt at length elsewhere.

In the second place, the era of progress by no means represents a more advanced stage from the view-point of Spirit, but only a higher degree of animal evolution. This explains at the same time all that appears best in present day material civilization, and why its progress culminates in that world-revolution which threatens to destroy everything. I will here summarize in a few sentences what I have explained at length in the chapter, 'The Animal Ideal' in *America set Free*. In Paradise, man received the title of honour of the Lord of Creation; very prematurely, we may now affirm. Yet this promise sprang from a right intuition. Man belongs to that type of beings who can only show all their power in a privileged position. Most animals live in complete insecurity; their life is hard, good food is scarce. Nevertheless, nobody dreams of calling them miserable and poverty-stricken. This is because they are perfectly fitted into the surroundings necessary to their life. Man, whose instincts are unreliable, possesses neither the lion's strength, nor the crocodile's

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armour, nor the fleetness of the deer, nor the technical organization which the spider harbours in its viscera; he only attains that equilibrium within the whole of Nature, which is the birthright of all animals, at the moment in which his brain succeeds in making up for his congenital imperfections. This is why the technical age has given, or is about to give, his normal position to man for the first time. The technical era therefore represents the first period of vital maturity for animal-man, which suffices to explain the tremendous impulse that drives all humans towards technical progress, and the unheard of animal force which has been liberated to feed that impulse. But this normal position within the totality of beings and of things is indeed that of a lord; granted his singular natural disposition which prevents that immediate adaptation of which all beings possessing a more inventive body are capable, man can only live by maintaining a great distance between himself and the world of things; this is why, since the dawn of prehistory, the King has always embodied the ideal human prototype. If in the early days such distance was maintained only through armed force, and to-day by means of technique which seems a peaceful thing, fundamentally it all means the same: for from the point of view of nature, technique is a much more dangerous thing than any army which after all can only kill.

Man thus needs to be privileged in order to live normally. This is why the evolution which can properly be called human set in with individuals and

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castes and later classes that were privileged. But to-day *everybody* aspires to that same privileged situation, for, thanks to the progress of science, it seems possible in principle to reach it. Hence the formidable pressure of the masses in all countries. In our days, the most important historical phenomenon is the attack which all coloured peoples direct against the privileged white man: these peoples want, very naturally, to acquire the same prerogatives. In the West it has been, for a long time already, the vital, true and deepest meaning of the aspiration towards democracy on the one hand, and of the ever more aggressive and invading part played by technical progress on the other. A land where everybody is privileged must necessarily be organized on a different model from a land where only the king or the nobility count. In order to attain that same liberty which the Greeks and the Romans enjoyed thanks to the institution of slavery, and to dole it out at the same time to everybody, there is but one means: to replace handwork by machinery wherever the free initiative of the individual is not indispensable.

However, the present state of things, with its strange ideals, has still a third cause; this cause resides in the depths of life. A sure instinct drives men to increase their capital of heredity. A eugénist recently be-thought himself of looking up all the branches of my genealogical tree. I knew very well that every member of that European nobility whose caste spirit is so narrow carries in his veins the blood of relatively very

few ancestors. But the eugenist in question opened up new horizons to me by bringing to my notice the following fact: Through my great-grandfather, Count Cancrine, Finance minister to Tsar Nicholas I, I descend from the Hessian bourgeoisie. Now, thanks to that single branch, I have ancestors in common not only with almost all the remarkable men who were born in these parts, from Merck to Lichtenberg and Goethe, but even with most of the women who Goethe loved in his youth! This single instance, here quoted because of its representative character, proves that, up to the present, only an infinitesimal part of existing human blood had played a historical part. Nothing is more natural than the wish, in the great majority of men, to play a part in their turn. But nothing is more necessary, either, than to enrich in this way the patrimony of biological heredity. Races and families which 'yield' the most, are also those which spend the most, and when they do not degenerate they end by losing in any case their best qualities; it is thus that Günther Gründel, one of the best representatives of the new generation in Germany, has shown that since the last hundred and fifty years the greatest spirits in Germany have belonged only by exception to the Nordic type. And as far as Europe is concerned, the loss of biological capital shows itself with special clearness, because during the whole of the Middle Ages the most gifted spirits, by entering holy orders, renounced self-propagation. If the Jews had adopted a similar system, anti-semitism would have no reason

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for existing . . . Yet on the other hand the possibility of increasing biological capital can be proved in a conclusive way — whatever may be thought by people who blindly believe that certain races are originally and finally superior — through this one very simple consideration: in the period in which that social stratification was being formed, which, speaking generally, still rules in our days, the climb up the social ladder depended even more than to-day — and it is saying a great deal! — not on superior spirit or human level, but on brute force or greater astuteness. True superiority has always been due to chances and accidents in blood mixtures of whose laws we are entirely ignorant; hence the absolute surprise which true genius always means; hence the scarcity of families and races of lasting superiority. All this pleads for democratization and *not* for eugenics as at least the first forward step to be taken. And according to me, such democratization will take place irresistibly. In his blood, man carries all the wisdom of animals. Except that the voice of that wisdom only makes itself heard in times of great crisis.

I HAD to write this apology for progress out of fairness. Let us now take up once more the trend of our anti-progress reflections. We have seen that ‘objective progress’ cannot constitute a true and sincere ideal. An ideal which is false in itself can doubtless act as a mask for a true ideal; this is the case with all those young idealists of whom Russia now offers the most moving examples: they are so deeply

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religious in soul that even materialism, atheism, industrialization and the five-year plan do duty as icons to them. However, words being incarnations of a meaning which is proper to them exert an automatic action in correspondence to it. This explains why even a sincere religion of progress (in the modern sense of the term) soon renders a people superficial: it creates superficiality by detaching the consciousness from the vital roots of life and turning it solely outwards. An atrophy of inner life ensues, which phenomenon we have already studied with relation to family problems. In Man's nature everything does not belong to the plane on which the notion of progress can be applied. Therefore, if consciousness busies itself exclusively with what is capable of progress, all that which cannot and should not progress remains outside its horizon. This explains the progressive and ever quicker and growing decrease of the part which the human factor plays in the march towards 'progress'. In the eighteenth century, the great enthusiasts of progress certainly did not have empty lives: those men were rich with a traditional life in full bloom; in addition, they were passionately bent on the opening up of so many new possibilities thanks to the emancipation of thought, which process increased their vital impulse. That is why they talked so very much about 'humaneness'. And if they brought forth into the world the idea which has now been refuted by events — namely, that good institutions form accomplished men of their own accord — they

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always took for granted as a matter of course a vital state similar to their own. To-day, solely institutions or formulas count before public opinion. Now, 'institutionalism' itself is a species of verbalism; it implies, indeed, the belief that outward means are everything, whoever he who uses them may be and whatever may be the aims he may pursue; the quality of the living being is considered a negligible quantity. This amounts to the belief that words are everything and what we say with them, matters nothing. And in truth the 'thought' of the present-day masses lives almost exclusively on slogans, independently of their meaning.

It is instructive enough to compare from this point of view the modern state of things with Greek and Roman antiquity. The Greeks, also, were verbalists in their own way. When Socrates concluded that if a thing was true it must 'consequently' be good and beautiful too, according to our standards, he was deluding himself with words. And the Romans themselves were verbalists to a very great degree, since all their civilization had formal law as a basis: hence unavoidably came the primacy of definitions over living realities. But to-day we are witnessing an almost total verbalization of social life. It is the first fruit of the acquisition of reading and writing by everyone. In order to understand abstractions, one needs a capacity for concentration in which young brains are deficient in proportion to their cultural callowness, save in cases of extraordinary individual talents; in

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this sense, all masses are young, for the reasons we have just stated; they do not bear in their blood the experience of former centuries. We know how soon intellectual effort tires otherwise intelligent negroes. But the same fact can be observed among the whites of the United States too; they found not only their national but even their inner and intimate life on statistics; the reason of it is that a far lesser effort is needed to set millions of facts side by side than to understand a single general formula condensing complex data in the dimension of depth. And if the Russian bolshevists live on grandiose projects and insist as little as possible on carrying them out — the Potemkin villages are the historical prototype of this tendency — the underlying reason is the same. We do not, therefore exaggerate if we affirm that the universal diffusion of reading and writing and of learning has yielded as its first result a social state in which one need not think in order to read, or understand in order to learn. Hence the importance of political programmes which on the one hand are supposed to be sacred, but whose carrying out in practice, on the other hand, is seldom insisted upon. When the bolshevists reached power in Russia, and began their great propaganda for peace without annexations or contributions (in Russia *annexia* and *contriboutsia*), all the women of the people supported the movement with enthusiasm. ‘Why should we need those two ladies?’ I believe that the success of most programmes in Europe and even more in America is

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to-day founded on equally solid grounds. That which is true of programmes is equally so of newspaper headlines, through which the press of our day exerts almost the whole of its influence. And the prestige of the cinema hero, much greater than that of the real hero, still hangs on the same reasons: what can be quickly seen by the eye without having to think about it, in other words, the first appearance, is the only one that counts.

It is easy to see that 'progress' ends in a void. And to this void, inevitably, the dark and evil forces of the lower depths rush in, so much so that the finest programmes serve ever more as vehicles of the worst instincts. We have already reached or almost reached a point where the so-called humane civilization is only an outer scaffolding in no relation with the building under construction. Men continue to talk of progress, but in practice they plan poison-gas warfare, they murder, torture, rob and exploit as in the worst periods of slavery; they persecute religion and no longer admit freedom of thought. Our study on family life has taught us that the decay of the emotional order forcibly brings about a relapse into a sub-human state. Indeed, since the 'neighbour' of Christ's words is everywhere making room for the 'unavoidable contemporary', so the organization inspired by the idea of progress comes to be ever more the skeleton or scaffolding of an antediluvian mode of life.

But there, where the forces of the lower depths have not burst forth, the void is almost complete. There,

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almost no inner life is to be found. Machines, whether made of iron or flesh and blood, do all that is necessary; and spirit, losing all its initiative, just simply reacts. The masses I am writing about here are endowed with a truly sub-human passiveness. Hence comes that docility to suggestion which seems supernatural and which alone explains the equally supernatural successes of intelligent advertising in the countries in question. If nothing stops this line of development, the final result will inevitably be as follows: a mass, possibly completely happy, but certainly completely stupid, will live on slogans broadcast by a few hypnotizers by means of long-distance loud-speakers. And this mass will be liable to be enslaved without difficulty by a few stalwart barbarians who succeed in capturing the leaders. The precedent of the Inca empire is there. Pizarro succeeded in his enterprise, because a collective civilization of the Russo-American type, only much more refined, more logical, and more self-consistent had there attained such a degree of perfection that the masses had lost all spirit of initiative.

ARMED with concrete images of what is and what may be, let us now return to our first question. Has the ideal of progress, in the current sense of the word, a meaning capable of satisfying the needs of soul and spirit? *It has none of the kind.*

It is certainly not a matter of struggling against technical development, which from the exterior point of view certainly allows animal-man to attain to a

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better future. And man *is* an animal in all his earthly foundations. Nations, however civilized they may otherwise be, that refuse to move with the times will come to grief; in the most harmless of cases, they will unavoidably be pushed into third places by younger races. An imaginary flight into the past is only fruitful of results for highly-gifted romantic poets. It is equally contrary to sense to struggle against the shortcomings of the temporal in the name of the eternal. That was the great error of De Maistre, of Bonald and of their school. Joseph de Maistre had certainly keener sight than his optimistic contemporaries, but as the eternal can only be incarnated on earth within the temporal, and as he was unable to anticipate the future, he became stagnant in past; he came to be, so to speak, a reactionary in spite of himself. That is why he remained without influence. Whoever wishes to hasten the coming of a better future, should always start from the axiom that temporal conditions should be accepted as they are and that one should embody *in them* the higher values one wishes to realize; every 'idealist' who refuses to do so has wrong vision: he imagines that he can achieve success by using non-existent means. Here again, the first virtue to be practised is generosity towards oneself; for every man is the child of his time, and if he protests, he is at bottom protesting against his own self. What we must do, what salvation consists in, is in principle independent of all outer life-form: it is a matter of *becoming once again conscious of the true meaning of life*. The age of

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progress has sought this meaning in the outer machinery of existence. To-day, by compensation, the dark and blind forces of the lower depths concentrate within themselves the major part of the vital energy which humanity can command; hence the unequalled impetus which drives forward revolutionary youth. The special character of contemporary history has its roots in the strange phenomenon that externalized mental images — that is what the super-scaffolding which technical knowledge builds upon life really means — struggle to reach by direct synthesis, and with no intermediary, the lava within the lower depths. Hence proceeds all that antediluvian modernism whose various facets we have studied in many works. That synthesis is achieved at the expense of all that which may be called the core of life, that 'Centre' (as Chinese philosophy calls it) which is the point at which the higher and lower forces both meet and compensate each other; their plane is the soul's own.

We must not repudiate anything external; all growth, however external it may be, is an advantage. And if we must fight all that is negative or destructive, this must never lead us to a denial of nature or of history. The best way of formulating the historical problem is, I believe, the following: during these last decades, man has been waging war; during a campaign, no one thinks of inner realities. Yet no war can last for ever without the combatants ending by destroying each other. We are already very near to such

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destruction. We must therefore go back upon ourselves, and put the accent once more on the inner life, again learning to consider things in their right perspective.

Here, to begin with, we must throw overboard the whole idea of natural evolution. Such a thing does not exist. Nothing is less in agreement with facts and with meaning than Darwin's idea of life attaining a higher stage development by way of natural progress. To start with, whoever says 'natural' in science means 'necessary', and a natural evolution of the lower towards the higher is certainly not necessary; for the great majority of organisms has never taken part in it and does not take it yet. Moreover, nothing proves that, from the biological point of view, man is more advanced than microbes: on the contrary, granted that, if it were deprived of brains, the human species would be threatened with extinction, and that brains generally exist but in a feeble degree, it truly appears as though the so-called lower beings as species are better adapted to telluric life than man; and such a matter of fact view point is the only one that counts in biology. Nothing is less proved either than an evolution moving from the simple to the complex; in reality, a protozoon is a more ingenious creature than the man endowed with the most powerful brain; that which here gives us the illusion of progress is simply that a so-called higher organism seems more easily explainable according to the pattern of a machine — but what is mechanized or mechanical is precisely *not*

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the ideal of living beings; and anyway, a mechanistic explanation is always false in dealing with organisms; appearances are deceptive. Certainly, from the point of view of spiritual ideals, man is superior to animals; and without the least doubt, there is in the human species a possible development from the lower to the higher. Only that, there either, it never is a question of necessity. We are obliged to admit once again that the mythical periods have been more clear-sighted, precisely in the scientific sense, than our epoch which prides itself upon having left superstitions behind. From the point of view of possible explanations and understanding, the appearance of every new type of organism on our planet is a pure miracle, whether we admit the hypothesis of single creating acts (as the Bible and Cuvier understand them) or the hypothesis of brusque transforming mutations which make of a monkey incapable of spiritual development a superior man. Never will science 'explain' the succession of faunae. Personally, I am convinced that the theory put forward in the chapter 'The in-break of spirit' of my *South American Meditations* — a theory according to which the insertion within the natural order of a principle both foreign to nature and distinct from it is the cause of all development towards what we humans term superior — contains the most 'scientific' explanation of the miracle that we can find. There has been a solution of continuity each and every time that a being qualitatively different from its predecessors has made its appearance on earth — and in-

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telligence cannot accept such solutions of continuity. And wherever natural development becomes the means of expression or the incarnation of a spiritual ascent, this solution amounts to a veritable change of plane and of dimension.

Now, to bridge over the chasm that separates the Saint from the ape, the hypothesis of progress affords the least satisfactory explanation that can well be imagined. From the summit we have now reached, we can frame a final judgment about the boundaries between which the modern notion of progress can really work. This notion comprises nothing, absolutely nothing, of the upward evolution towards Spirit. It is only valuable for the purpose of interpreting such elements as are rational and can be explained by mere reason, in the telluric part of the human type such as we find to be to-day.

In spite of this, the idea symbolized by the word progress must needs have a meaning corresponding to some deep reality. Were it not so, we would not find this word in all tongues, and the idea it expresses would not appear a manifest ideal in the eyes of each and all. What is then the truth? It is as follows: *the original idea of progress, that which lives in the bottom of each human soul, is bent towards the interior and not towards the exterior.* This original idea of progress has nothing to do either with technical improvements nor with those 'mutations' which are sheer miracles from the point of view of intellect and which entirely evade the latter's grasp. In very truth, the original idea of progress *applies*

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solely to that which depends on the spiritual initiative of man — initiative that is spiritual in opposition to what is intellectual and natural. We must therefore move to another dimension in order to bring this study to a satisfactory ending.

LIFE, in its essence, is not progressive, and the happy end is not its normal close: Life is tragic. We call a destiny tragic when a man cannot be sincere towards himself or show his goodwill without starting a conflict with norms which he otherwise recognizes; when he is right in doing what he does and yet he fails, beaten by adversaries who are not in the wrong, but just as much in the right. All life, be it individual or collective, finds its image in music. All melody flows in time, from the past to the future. Not only is every melody, considered as a whole, a finite entity, but it passes from one moment to another through successive deaths, and this passage from death to death is its very essence, as well as its only possible way. Bichat was right in giving the definition 'Life is death', for every vital instant has two sides; one meaning growth or building up, the other destruction or death. And each death is final like that of a sound that dies out; for if, objectively, the same sound rises again, that is never a case of identity. But on the other hand, it is precisely this series of death which constitutes the existence proper to melody. It is exactly the same in life where each 'yesterday' must die, and die for ever, in order that 'to-day' may be born. Only that in life, directly a consciousness capable of remembering

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awakes, what in music is but form becomes a terrible and tragic reality. For there is no satisfactory solution for this dilemma: every value in life is bound to what is concrete and unique, but all that which is concrete and unique is beforehand condemned to die. There can be no satisfactory solution, since here objective considerations are of no use at all. In the domain of life as well as in that of music, the subjective, that is: the life which is lived, which is experienced inwardly, alone counts, and this amounts to a final refutation of the value conferred on progress in the current sense of the word. Just as in the world of sound an unplayed melody does not exist, so a life which had only objective existence, like a score, would not be Life. It is not for nothing that grammar itself refers every vital element to a 'subject'.

Now, this music-like character of life is the first motive, the formal or functional cause, of the belief in progress. Melody necessarily flows towards the future, and it only attains perfection in reaching its end. It is therefore impossible not to accept this forward march once one accepts life. It is equally impossible not to see by instinct in its consummation an end to be desired, since the melody only finds its perfect form at the close. And nothing is more natural than to materialize in this way the irresistible striving sprung from inside into the image of a better future which beckons to you from outside. This well-meaning stratagem of nature has ever juggled away death till the moment when it was irrevocably there. Yet what

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we have just said is not the last word on the deepest meaning of the idea of progress. Reflection would fatally bring every thinking being to conclude that life is the mere postponement, most cruelly refined, of capital punishment to an uncertain date — if the 'facts' of life themselves, or (to return to the musical image, which is clearer to understand) if the sounds which die out one after another were indeed the last instance. That which everyone grasps first instinctively and intuitively in listening to a sonata, is the undivided *unity* of the work of art. Now, this unity is a unity of *Meaning*, and therefore situated on another plane than that of the means which serve to express it. It is exactly thus that each one of us understands his life: not like a sum of passing events, but like a unity which has its own existence on its own plane, and which even pre-exists in the form of fate like the sonata in the form of a score. Intellect cannot grasp this unity better than by calling it the Meaning of life. *Now, the original and deepest idea of progress, that which each of us carries in the depths of his soul, applies to this Meaning.*

If this is so, then facts and events themselves matter but little; what matters is the significance they have for a given individual. We have here reached, by another path, the truths we learnt in fathoming the idea of marriage. All that which has a personal meaning, represents a positive value from the point of view of life, whether it is a matter of joy or pain, of things that are good or bad in themselves. Whatever has no personal sense is inimical to life. The fact is that all

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that has no personal meaning, falls short of the frame of concrete life. If personal significance is lacking, one of two things will occur: either life will have to bend and will bend to a law which is not its own, which will make man feel a slave or in prison, or else life is absolutely void of content, and the resulting feeling of emptiness is what we call boredom. But permanent boredom is probably the most awful of all tortures. Now, whether a man's personal life is a slavery or a void: one way or another, it is miserable. But on the other hand, that sort of life is the only one which is necessarily miserable. Man can be happy in prison when suffering for his convictions. He may find bliss in martyrdom. But let us leave martyrs and heroes alone: even in the humblest and least heroic of lives, facts as such are never essential, once the accent is laid on significance. From that moment, the flow of life itself—however tragic it may seem to him who places all his attention on the sounds that perish and not on the melody which this series of deaths serve to create—from that moment, even infirm old age and even death no longer means a misfortune; this flow then is accepted as the normal and necessary frame of human existence, and the whole accent will fall on the meaning which the facts of life have. Thus the death of a hero, which gives to his life its meaning before Eternity, is instinctively considered as a true blessing by each and all.

What does, then, the postulate of progress mean? There is no doubt left concerning the answer. The

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postulate of a progress to be accomplished has a bearing, before all else, on the particular destiny of a given life. *And in the second instance on the realization of the deepest meaning the being in question can attain.* For even as the same letters have served to write the *Divine Comedy* and thousands of pages full of rubbish, even so the very same gestures and deeds, the same vital experience can be used to express any kind of meaning. Hence, in all great founders of religions, that tendency to express eternal truths by means of scenes of daily life: they felt that, precisely, the tension between the meaning proper to everyday events and the Meaning which they served to interpret, conferred upon the latter a more moving and more impressive character.

This realization of intrinsic meaning, as deep as possible but ever personal, is the only aim of all individual life. It is to this realization that every hope of progress, every ideal of a perfection to be reached is, at bottom, related. From the moment in which the whole attention becomes fixed upon the question of significance, life's character and aspect change. From that moment, every existence, even the humblest, even the fate which appears least happy, acquires an intrinsic value. Then, success and well-being no longer seem indispensable, however desirable they may ever be. And in all times, what we here set forth has been put into practice by all profound men; above all by all women who have surrendered themselves willingly to fate. If things were otherwise, could others except unusually gifted individuals who attain

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to great successes ever see any good in life? If things were otherwise, would not envy reign on earth with a force a thousand times greater than it actually does? The fact is that by instinct every normal being understands what life is and what gives it a value. Only superficial periods, like ours — in which humanity has lost its consciousness of the deeps of Reality and places all its hopes in the realization of ideals built up by mistaken judgment — can affirm that life has no value outside of the conquest of definite material ends.

Yet, even in the life of the man most exclusively guided by his instinct, Meaning is never realized of its own accord, through natural necessity. Spiritual initiative must in-build itself into living reality, in order that Meaning may there realize itself. Such spiritual initiative acts blindly, yet it acts, in profound and at the same time unintellectual human beings, in the form of an inner impulse which incarnates in the means of expression it finds within its reach. In women, who rarely — and hardly ever when they are mothers — fail to understand the meaning of life, it is generally love for a man or for children, or family-feeling, which serves as the vessel for spiritual initiative. But the more intellectual humanity becomes, the more does intellect lead a life that is detached from the wholeness of life, and all the more is a rational understanding of meaning necessary in order that life may realize its whole significance; all the more, too, does conscious spiritual initiative become necessary, and does it need to act, so to speak, in

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a pure and free state. This is the explanation of most of those inner regressions which go on a par, as experience has well proved, with outer and intellectual progress. From the moment in which Spirit can no longer act as a blind Seer, it withdraws itself entirely until a new synthesis of Soul and Spirit can take place. In principle, spiritual initiative is always possible, for Spirit is ever there, as the vital centre in man. Doubtless the loss of that instinctive harmony possessed by women who are deep and at the same time akin to nature, may close certain paths which lead to the fullness of life; but such a loss is compensated, on the other hand, by all the advantages implied in greater liberty. A being that stagnates as part of a certain given order, however great its depth, cannot progress. To him in whom freedom predominates, all horizons, all fields of activity are open. We have indeed seen it on the exterior plane, in which for a century and with ever increasing speed one discovery or invention has followed another. On the plane of meaning, where progress takes place from the inside outwards, even more important advances are possible in the direction of spiritualization.

And this last kind of progress is the only one which can truly interest us, for it alone is the expression of inner needs. When all is said and done, the problem of progress is therefore not a general problem, but an intimate one, like love.

IT is of this truth that western humanity must once more become conscious. The only difference with

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past times, in which the very same problem, both personal and eternal, was set for everybody's solution is this: the solution to be found, which will ever be a unique one, will be expressed in the form of a collective life with progressive tendencies in the modern sense of the term. Only that this tendency will no longer be held to be the essence or the aim of life. Men will see in it, on the contrary, a contingency, an accidental happening as it were, the expression of a particular spirit of the time, which might well pass away without bringing about any essential change. Even to-day, there are such things as static peoples who share very little or not at all in the general march towards what we have called the animal ideal, and who are yet in many respects superior to the more dynamic peoples. But even for them, a radical change in modes of thinking is imperative, for thought pre-judges in a manner which is really obstructive for experience. Humanity has acquired, during the age of progress, a truly detestable habit: that of concluding ever from the general to the particular, or else of generalizing. Now, whatever generalization is possible applies only to the surface of life. The 'general', as philosophy calls it, is never substantial; a general notion or idea does but gather up in the form of a verbal abstraction that which is common to many phenomena. And such an abstraction is never a more profound thing than are concrete facts: it is, on the contrary, a more superficial thing. In this sense one may say that humanity does not exist: there are only living individuals, and

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whoever fancies that he can neglect individuals to the advantage of humanity is ponderously mistaken. Hence, too, springs that 'dishumanization' which is so characteristic of our time, and to which we already referred more than once. That which is deeper, more substantial than the individual is never the 'general', but the '*universal*': and the 'universal' expresses itself precisely through the individual, and the latter becomes more universal in the measure in which he becomes deeper. Abstract man, as invented by the eighteenth century, simply does not exist.

The true progress that we must henceforth achieve will therefore begin by admitting, as its starting-point, that the age of general ideas is past. No further progress can take place under its sign. The impotence of Geneva, the reluctance of almost all peoples to admitting constructive plans on 'general' lines, the world-wide awakening of national selfishness prove it beyond any possible mistake. The more conscious of its deeps humanity becomes, the more it will realize the following fact: it is through the abuse of generalizing and of seeking or placing all values in what is general, that western humanity has lost all sense of the value of the unique and consequently of individual life. Hence the enormous danger presented by collectivism, whether understood in the Russian or the American way. Hence the monstrous ease with which whole peoples are ready to plunge into a war with full understanding of its horrors: it is because they ask for nothing better than death. Life such as it now is has actually lost all

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meaning for them. These modern phenomena seem to me to be the final illustration of this truth: it is to the meaning of life, and not to its objective elements, that man refers all values. Now, the 'general' never incarnates Meaning. The era of progress is therefore inevitably dying, because progressive life itself has lost all profound significance for man.

That essential progress, directed towards the deeps of life, whose achievement is the historical task of present and coming generations, therefore consists, to say it in two words, in a concentration which will refer back the general to the personal. There is no doubt that we are richer than our ancestors in knowledge and in potential activity. But through lack of an adjustment and of an orientation in agreement with meaning, we have not yet known how to exploit this capital. In the vital sense our life is, but for exceptions, much less rich than that of past centuries. Our great task is therefore a new vitalization of life. Hence the primacy of the personal and intimate problems of life before all others. Hence the choice of subjects I have made for this little book. Let us therefore end this study by treating along its broadest lines the personal problem which is set before each and all by his own life which flows through the successive death of present states, from youth to old age and to the grave.

A complete human being whose harmony is maintained by instinct, fears neither old age nor death. He lives from one moment to another, from one practical task to the next; from each period he retains above all

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else whatever is new and better in it; and as regards the end, he is of the opinion of Epicurus, who said 'Death does not concern us, whether we are living or dead: dead, because we are no more; living, because we are.' The collective wisdom of all periods endowed with a deep vital feeling has conferred upon the successive stages of existence the meaning of an ascending hierarchy: for man's imagination this hierarchy realizes as a materialized system each man's intimate feeling of an inner progress to be accomplished; through an increase of prestige and influence it compensates at the same time the weakening of physical strength which inevitably takes place after the prime of life. Superficial periods only have refused to recognize the validity of such a hierarchy. And it is but logical that none of them should ever have gone further in such a refusal than the age of progress, the most superficial of all; it has ended by demolishing all values. Youth is the one state of life that really counts since the end of the world war till the time in which I am writing. Externally, this fact has brought about a predominance of artifice over nature. Though it is no longer fashionable, in 1933, that octogenarians should spend all their spare time capering around, very few dare to avow more than thirty-five years of age. In the interior of consciousness, the same spirit of the age causes an unheard-of impoverishment of life. For youth is the age of scanty impulses, which are strong, simple, radical and not differentiated by adaptation to ever moving reality. If on the one hand,

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it is the age of the finest idealisms, it is, on the other, that of unsatisfied desires and of black melancholy, which the exuberance of animal instincts makes efforts to cover as best it may. The whole positive value of youth lies in the richness of its animal impulses and its reckless idealism. But when this potential has ceased to exist truly, then the artificial maintenance of its effects leads to the same picture which the senile dwarf presents as compared with the child. And the positive gain which the accumulated years might have brought with them, remains unrealized. Certainly, that kind of patriarchalism which granted a value to old age only (as is still the case in China, where one pays a veritable compliment to a young woman by telling her that she looks sixty) was not in the right either. If the post-war fashion narrowed the recognized limits of life within the lapse of time contained between the eighteenth and the thirty-fifth year, patriarchalism, on the other hand, brought about a corresponding narrowing. And one can say the same of the intermediate point of view, which held good in my youth, when only middle age counted for anything; in that period, all men affected from their eighteenth year to look forty, and every married woman did all she could to lose her charms as quickly as possible.

True understanding teaches that we must recognize and grant to every stage of life all the value it can possibly have. Nothing is lovelier than a genuine childhood, as long as it lasts. Nothing is more charm-

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ing than youth pursuing its proper ends within a fitting frame. But those spiritual experiences which lead to the realization of the Meaning of life (the only thing capable of fully satisfying our deeps) begin as a rule only with middle age. And old age alone creates that inner distance between the accidents and the inmost meaning of life, which makes it possible to understand it thoroughly and to master it. Hence the wisdom attributed to old age, independently of all individual talents. Now, the very idea of a full complete and integral life evidently exacts from each and all the acceptance of that motto of Saint Theresa's: 'To live all one's life, to love all one's love, to die all one's death'. It demands that each and all should see in their personal life a sonata which must be properly played from beginning to end; whose every tempo, every phrase has its own special quality, where yet all phrases, in their diversity, are necessary for the complete realization of the meaning inherent in the composition, and whose end signifies both achievement, accomplishment and perfection. Once a man has understood this, he no longer claims that the scherzo is worth more than the adagio: *in principle, he recognizes in all tempos an equal value*. The difference of value depends only upon the degree of realization of meaning which has been attained in each case. But then the idea of perfection implies at the same time that of progress, of true progress. For precisely the succession of tempos, the alternation of themes and the shading of melodies which nevertheless form a unified whole,

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make possible a progressive realization of the integral meaning of life. That series of phenomena which, looked at from outside, is only a flowing along within time, from birth to death — a movement which, once the summit of physical life has been reached, slides down an ever sharper incline towards the abyss — then becomes, for a deepened consciousness, a progressive deepening which has but *one* meaning, a purely positive meaning which makes for progressive enrichment.

The man who has attained this degree of understanding no longer suffers through the flight of youth. Neither will he make himself ridiculous by striving to seem what he is not. He will naturally adopt the style appropriate to each stage of life: fashion suits youth, which is mobile and ever changing, and whose plane of existence is on the surface of events; a hieratic style is proper to those whose guiding stars are or should be eternal values. But above all, the natural progression of years will thus become for man a means, appropriate to his nature, of realizing himself — so much so that his joy of life will increase from year to year. He will neither deny nor repress any of the natural forces and powers which are set in him. Let youth *exhaust* all the possibilities it alone possesses; then, quite naturally, from the death of one sound the next stage of the melody will be born, as the promise of a better future. Let adults be as active as possible, in order that thirst for action may be slaked at its proper time. Then the contemplative attitude which

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is natural to age will seem the perfect accomplishment of the whole of life. Since, through its very nature, old age lives more by mental images than in activity, and in the past more than in the future, it normally attains, when built up on the basis of previous and fully completed states of being, to an inner richness which often excites the envy of those who have not yet reached the final stage of life.

This acceptance of Nature's rhythm, the first step towards the realization of spiritual significance, is the condition which has to be fulfilled by all men who wish to make of life the expression of a continual inner progress — the only kind of progress which really counts and truly satisfies. And for whoever has reached it, arrest in natural development will also lose its menace. Physiologically, everyone is predetermined by heredity. To this fixation is added the spirit of the age into which one has been born and has developed, which spirit ever predetermines what will later be and fixes its boundaries and limits beforehand. But, every new experience, and even every new initiative also sooner or later leads to a fixation which will be left behind by some later evolution. From a given moment onwards the same individual will be unable to develop any further. In that sense, we all stop perforce sooner or later. But there is nothing tragic there, unless for a man so superficial and ungenerous towards nature as to wish to remain for ever as he is, and at the same time adapted to all times; from a certain moment on, every human being must needs modify his trend. We

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must not try to achieve the impossible in striving to continue evolution within time; our orientation must now be directed towards the unchangeable. Old age is the age of eternity become conscious. And since eternity means the fulfilment of all time, old age well understood and perfectly realized, which is not really nearer to death than is childhood, for death can come at any moment — old age can then mean the very crowning of life.

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EVER since men have learnt to theorize, they continue repeating that the common denominator of all human aspirations is the search for happiness. I think it is, because in this particular case, as a matter of exception, it is not men but women who have stated the problem. They have stated it as mothers, they have solved it as mothers, and the suggestion of childish years, which always acts powerfully ever since, has influenced even the most abstract of philosophical treatises. Was there ever a man, perfectly sincere towards himself, who could have invented on his own initiative that definition of Stendhal's, according to which beauty is a promise of happiness? It is thus that women consider their own beauty; it is thus that they like men to see it. For man, Beauty is an end in itself; he neither sees nor wishes further; and the legend of Pygmalion is in man's eyes the very prototype of an obscene tale, as is in the eyes of women that of Sushannah in the bath. Happiness only exists as a function of the emotional order, the order in which women normally live. But the active life of men, which is specifically theirs, does not move within the framework of the emotional order. In order to understand, it is enough to meditate on the fact of age-long experience that family-life for an active man has never bounded the horizon of his interests and that his urge

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towards the future does not find its concrete aim in the child, as woman's does, but in the ideal attained, the accomplished vocation and mission, in the function fulfilled, in the task carried out, or even in the 'thing achieved' or 'business settled', which is the last word of mechanized masculine spirit.

The word 'happiness', indeed, has no meaning except as a function of the emotional order. And as far as men also live in that order, the ideal of happiness attained is certainly a universally human ideal. This is true to such an extent that, as soon as the swing towards the future reaches its limit — which leads, from the dynamism of duration within time, to the superior statism of Eternity — the ideal of a final and permanent beatitude is consecrated even by those religions which possess the weakest emotional content, like that of the Hindoos. But this last reflection precisely enables us to understand why and in what sense Happiness cannot serve as a common denominator of all human aspirations. Happiness is a static state; without the implied wish of perpetual duration, the idea has no meaning. Now life, as long as it lasts, is ever advancing; if it stops, this means that it has ceased to exist. This is why there can be truly vital ideals only as functions of its movement. Since things are so, the common denominator of human aspiration cannot be happiness attained (is it ever attained?) but only the way which leads to it, the kind of activity which renders us happy. Now, this only possible and existing common denominator is *Creativeness*.

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THIS is the reason why, involuntarily, each and all associate the idea of love with that of happiness, although at bottom all love is unhappy, and, vice versa, the idea of happiness with that of love, even though every other kind of happiness is very much easier of attainment and above all, once attained, so much more lasting. The fact is that man aspires to live the life of love in itself, whatever its results. Now, love means creativeness. It is impossible to imagine a love whose supreme expression should not have the meaning of voluptuous joy. And there is no such joy, on any plane whatever, which is not the subjective response to a creative act. Here, that polar correspondence between activity and passivity which characterizes all life, asserts itself in the clearest way. The feeling of voluptuous joy is always of a passing kind, but it is not passivity which gives it birth. And there, where passivity predominates at a given stage, it transforms itself immediately into a creative activity correspondingly more intense: such is the gestation of the child by the woman. In the same way, the sentimental life of woman, of whom it has been agreed to say that she does not create but suffers life, is in reality a continuous series of creative acts. Sentiments are born in her; hence the joy they give her. And if they, generally, are evoked from without, it is not otherwise with woman's physical creativeness and also with man's creativeness on the psychic plane: when the artist creates, he does not fecundate, he gives birth.

Accordingly, the experience of love is the very

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prototype of all creativeness. And if we go further and say: love *is* creativeness, we simplify matters slightly, but essentially we do not falsify them. Hence comes the theory of Plato, according to which it was Eros who created the world. Hence, also, the primacy of love in the Christian conception of the Godhead. But the view of the Hindoos has been profounder than that of the Christians or Platonists. Their God is always creative and destructive at the same time. We have, indeed, found in our study upon Progress, in considering life through the symbolic image of music, that each vital instant always is simultaneously constructive and destructive, birth and death. Things being so, all joy of living is at the same time joy of dying. If man goes towards the future with an ever quickened urge, if he wishes to go ever quicker and quicker as his joy of living becomes ever deeper and more intense, it is because the joy of life consists in a forward march, without stops or fetters, from one creation to another. But this ever accelerated march forces at the same time the death of successive instants and states; and the more abundant is the creation of new life, the more capital executions occur to correspond. Hence those primitive forms — which are for that very reason the most common ones — of the joy of living, which we call entertainment or amusement. Hence the involuntary envy or hatred which the creative artist and the hero inspire in all those who do not identify themselves with him through love or through admiration: hatred and attack also are forms

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of participation. Hence above all that immortal joy of the warrior, in which women share in the sense that there is no type of man whom they love more passionately; this is true to the extent that without being a prophet, one can affirm that it is women, however much they may love peace otherwise, who will prevent the world from ever being permanently pacified.

In life, indeed, there is no construction without destruction, no birth without death. Hence that sinister and tragic comradeship of love and death, which one finds horribly illustrated among so many animals, but which also has been ever foreshadowed in the deepest consciousness of humans who love each other; so much so that the more intense their passion is, the more they are haunted by the idea of dying together. Hence, too, the clearly destructive tendency of all creative spirits. If they are statesmen, they are basically fond of war, and they feel a strange voluptuousness in destroying, in order to be able to rebuild from rock bottom; the amazing constructive power of Soviet Russia, which is truly re-creating the type of Russian man, is in direct ratio to its insane destructiveness. Creative artists, who are so harmless in appearance, pass remorselessly from one woman to another, or from one friend or one country to another, following merely the dictates of their creative work. And, at bottom, no one really wishes for a 'happy end'. If the major part of the present-day public likes a happy termination to any entertainment, whilst the Greeks

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preferred it to be tragic, it is because this is a period of extremely short vital melodies, which are soon forgotten and if possible never repeated; which is the exact equivalent of immediate and final death. In looking at American films, there rises in my memory, each time, the image of that Merovingian queen who, the day after an enchanting night of love, herself smilingly gave her lovers up to the executioner. We can, indeed, very well realize the tragic basis of life by meditating on those modern phenomena which seem entirely superficial. If the great public of to-day gorges itself on the one hand with sentimental novellettes which 'end well', and on the other hand with ghastly criminal tales, it is all an expression of the unconscious knowledge corresponding to a machine age that life ever is simultaneously creation and annihilation. There is no superficial thing which is not capable of revealing a deep truth to him who can read the signs. In his most witty study on the history of the cinema, René Fülöp-Miller¹ remarks that all of the American films-industry pioneers without exception began their career as old-clothes merchants or as ready-made tailors: these two trades rest, indeed, on pure repetition, to the exclusion of all individual adaptation or initiative.

Creativeness has, therefore, ever two sides: one is destructive, the other constructive. Nothing is falser than to set these two tendencies against each other as a matter of principle: they hold together and go hand

¹ *Die Phantasiemaschine*, Vienna 1931, Paul Zsolnay Verlag.

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in hand. If everyone feels, on the other hand, that the constructive spirit is superior to the destructive, if most religions oppose the Devil to God, it is evidently because every life-unit, as long as it lasts, is on the whole constructive. But it is not on that obvious side that we must lay the stress in our superficial period. A cowardly and silly optimism has so hypnotized public opinion in all countries, that an immense number of men and women believe themselves ready to renounce every deep joy, if only nothing is allowed to happen which may give the lie to that optimism. If in this way, human beings give up or renounce creativeness, they must needs idealize routine. Hence again that ideal of a completely mechanized life where everything seems to go on wheels; if we are to believe Aldous Huxley's prophecy, it will finally be forbidden to a woman not to give herself to a man in the very instant in which he expresses a wish for her, and vice versa, lest a delay imposed on desire and its satisfaction may cause residues of sensations and emotions harmful for the regular clockwork of the machine.

But, at bottom, routine life never brings happiness; without the feeling, or at least the illusion, of creativeness, there is no possible happiness. Hence those withered old maids, those cross-grained telephone women, those testy magistrates, those office-holders envious of every life which is freer than theirs, and quarrelsome in consequence. Hence the deep unconscious pessimism of the United States, which I have elsewhere analyzed. Optimism is there but a

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shop-front, and it becomes wilder, noisier, and more provoking in the measure in which events put it more decidedly in the wrong. Yet the same considerations of principle also reveal one of the reasons of that profound melancholy which pervades the atmosphere of South America. There, life is not mechanized at all. But spirit has not yet acquired there a sufficient power of initiative to allow to consciousness any feeling of creativeness but of the physical kind; hence the sexual obsession which reigns on that continent. Human beings, over there, suffer life rather than live it of their own accord. That is why South American women so seldom feel the novelty of an experience however rich their emotional life may be. As regards men, the major share of the telluric element in their constitution causes the majority of them, at the mere age of thirty, to become set and fixed in some one established order, so that a fifty-year old European can well feel like a boy among the young men over there.

BEFORE tackling the problem of creativeness proper, whose feeling is the only one that can give us true happiness, let us define the exact relationship which should and does exist between creativeness and routine. For it is clear that in its major part, from the view-point of duration, life *is* routine, just like sleep; nor is it less evident that the great majority aspires, in one way or another, to the statism of routine life. This aspiration is easily explained: it is a function of the desire for security, as a protection against original

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fear. However free and creative he may otherwise be, each man, unless he belongs to the devil-may-care type, which is not at all superior to the others, but simply lacking in the sense of responsibility, needs a secure framework for his life, if not an unchangeable one, which will allow him to forbear thinking of those things which do not interest him. In this sense, almost all men who have no personal property, instinctively take refuge in a career which assures to them an income and a pension; and even superior women resign themselves to making any sort of marriage rather than to not marrying at all. But all the good contained in routine is limited to the framework of life. It is easy to define the ideal relation which may exist between the frame and the picture, and it is women who set the good example here. If, generally speaking, they submit much more easily than men to any kind of a routine, it is because as physical and emotional beings the majority of them are much more creative than men. They bring children into the world, which is not at all the equivalent for fecundation, but of the creation of a work by an artist; in bringing up their children they rise, at every moment to new vital emergencies, for they never limit themselves, like most fathers, to a mere provision for needs in the generally admitted sense. Finally, they are experiencing novel sensations and emotions, which are born within and not outside of them. Each new love, each new sentimental friendship, each new affection is for them a unique and incomparable experience. That an inner

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life subject to so much stress and strain should need a fixed and permanent outer frame, is easy enough to understand. Now, exactly in the same sense the more creative a man is, the more he is given up to routine in the smaller details of life; he only demands of them one thing: that they should not require his attention. This is indeed the ideal relation between routine and creative life; it is valid for absolutely everyone. There is, unfortunately no exclusively or totally creative life. Even of the Divine Creator no race has framed such a sublime image. But we can succeed in so ordering matters, that the routine of existence may hardly occupy our attention at all, just as organic functions tend to become automatic in proportion to their regularity, and so preserve free energy for the vital adaptation to the unforeseen. This explains the truly monstrous part which habit has played precisely in the life of the greatest geniuses. Two examples: Beethoven was in the habit of eating roast veal in a certain inn on a certain day in the week. As he came there one evening, with his imagination haunted by the half-created Pastoral Symphony, he was told that there was no roast veal. Beethoven felt the ground shake under him; like a madman, he flung himself out into the street roaring with fury. The example of Kant is even more picturesque. When his sister died, he discovered that, although he was very fond of her, he had not seen her for twenty-five years. Brother and sister lived quite near each other; they took a walk at the same hour every day; but they always took it, first by chance

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and then through habit, in opposite directions, with the result that they never met.

Such anecdotes are not only entertaining, they are highly significant. For the great moments of life ever stand out against a background of routine; and for the consciousness of every human being who is really alive, only the great moments count. If Beethoven and Kant were such slaves of routine in those things that lacked true importance, it is because they only identified themselves with their own creativeness. Creativeness alone, indeed, gives one the feeling of a life worth living. Hence that primitive and primary idealization of fecundity and of sexual potency. Hence all that sexual symbolism, which one finds at the back of all images that are representative of deep vital forces, whether it is a matter of primitive ritualism, of artistic expression, or of religious mysticism. But in our era of almost entirely mechanized life, the cult of creativeness is more imperative than it ever was before; and this time it is a question of pure or essential creativeness, not of one of its special expressions, such as art or religious experience. For present-day humanity has almost reached the state of a Kant who had only been capable of taking walks. Our study of Progress brought us to the conclusion that the problem of progress is no longer in any way a general problem, but a problem of personal and intimate life. In recognizing that *Creativeness* is the central problem of the whole crisis which humanity at this moment traverses, we determine in a precise and concrete way the thing

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whose boundaries only we were then able to trace. The contrary of creativeness is barrenness. Now, it is precisely barrenness which ever more and more characterizes mechanized humanity. In all times there have been periods of mechanization: they correspond to the last stages of each civilization; a normal stage of senility, in which routine triumphs permanently over inventiveness, in which the tree has ceased growing, and rigid wood replaces most of the pliable tissue which predominated in youth. But as long as the emotional order occupied the first rank, this mechanization was by no means dangerous: it was a mere matter of generations; the coming of younger individuals or races sufficed to solve the problem. For the soul can never become mechanized. The prejudice of 'progress' has induced that part of humanity which fell under its spell to place all vital accent upon the rational and intellectual side. In that case, it is physiologically possible that mechanization should permeate the whole human being. This fatal evolution heralds itself already with terrible clarity in the United States. There, out of all possible creativeness, the mode of technical invention alone still enjoys some prestige. Consequently, the spirit of initiative is ever more quickly fading out, original ideas become ever rarer; the soul shrinks, the heart hardens. And already the same loss of creative power shows itself in the form of physical impotence in men and of barrenness among women. That this is the inevitable result of mechanization, and not the effect of the American

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climate, is proved by similar phenomena in Europe. Ever more often are physicians consulted by patients struck with impotence; in their great majority, it is a question of men who live in the American fashion. It looks almost as though excessive mechanical work lead to the creation of a neutral type, such as exists among bees and ants. But these ingenious insects have not been duped by the idea of progress; instinctively they have understood that mechanical work has the meaning we have explained in our preceding study. They have therefore not idealized work; they have not made of it a 'sacred' duty for each and all, but the specialized function of barren beings who liberate the others from inferior occupations.

In truth, the invention of the machine will only assume a truly positive significance from the moment in which the ideal of work for its own sake will cease to exist and be replaced by that of creativeness. From that moment, men will quite naturally recognize that mechanical work plays the part of an indispensable automatic function, like that of the heart; it will therefore no longer be the object of any idealization, without its meaning that laziness will thereby acquire any prestige; and on the other hand, machinery will play the same part for consciousness which slaves played in ancient civilizations. There is no doubt that the type of the free Greek or Roman was higher than that of the free man of to-day — for at bottom no one to-day is really free, unless he be immensely rich, and this in its turn implies bondage to money; in our days, everyone

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is the slave of something, if not of somebody. Thanks to the machine, a liberty similar to that of antiquity may be born again. Similar, but not identical, for ideals have changed. After some two thousand years of that Judaeo-Christian tradition, whose three chief exponents are love of one's neighbour held up as an ideal, social consciousness and the consecration of work, the kind of liberty which would merely mean leisure can no longer be associated with the idea of an intrinsic value within that collective unconscious whose memory, embracing centuries and millenia, predetermines all new development. Yet leisure in itself — however much it may be exalted under the name of *otium cum dignitate* — never makes man happy: only the free play of energy creates the feeling of happiness. The excess of leisure which the free men of Antiquity enjoyed once the great period of their creativeness had finished, ended by breeding an atmosphere of such enormous boredom, of such incredible emptiness that only the most violent sensations such as the sight of martyrs devoured by wild beasts could stifle that feeling during a few hours — and it was only as a compensation to that horror of void that the ethos of work, which was then the ethos of the slaves, could come to predominate. But the slave is never the equal of the master. In order to reach that fullness of life which neither leisure nor work in themselves can give, there is only one means that holds good for each and all: *it is the stressing of creativeness, the recognition of creativeness as the supreme vital value*, and the ordering of life in such

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a way that all activities should be inspired by its spirit.

For more than a century already, the ideal of creativeness, which I consider superior to all the ideals which have ever been the lode-stars of mankind, has been proclaimed, under one form or another, by solitary thinkers and poets. William Blake, the great English painter and mystic, was, I believe the first who explicitly preached the 'ethics of fruitfulness'. It was the same thing, at bottom, that the romantic poets meant, when they praised profound experience or the activity of genius as opposed to the ideals of the classicists. All the importance of Nietzsche lies there too. Quite recently, Nicholas Berdiaieff, that great religious spirit to whom France has the honour to give refuge, has gone even further than the Christian tradition by affirming that the man of genius is a revelation of the divine as much as the Saint. However, all the conceptions and theories about creativeness which have been current until now have only embraced one particular side of the problem, or else they have sought salvation in this or that variety of the Superman. Now, how could one special virtue act as a norm for everybody, and above all how could an exceptional temperament, which is a gracious gift of Nature, ever embody a universal ideal? Such an ideal can only be represented by a higher state which *every* man can to some extent attain by his unaided effort. This is the reason why, according to me, the ideal of creativeness is the only one which can become the general ideal of future humanity either free or

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anxious to free itself from the material and moral fetters forged by mechanization.

Let us then examine, by way of conclusion, the problem of creativeness under those aspects of it which have the greatest vital importance for each and all. As far as I am aware, there are three such.

IN the preceding studies, we have exalted the virtues of family feeling and of the marriage bond. But at the base of all virtues which find expression in the sphere of the emotional order, is love. And it is the force of love itself which is creative. It is not necessary to insist upon those sides of the question which first occur to the mind of every man when he hears that magic word. Since we are here dealing with creativeness in general, we must rise to that great and all-embracing conception which was that of the Greeks when they spoke of the cosmogonic Eros — a conception which has recently been re-born in the works of the German philosopher Ludwig Klages. We are not going to venture here upon cosmogonic speculations. But it is absolutely certain that all creativeness in man is the function of the polarization of two complementary forces. When we look at the question from this height, the phenomenon is the same, whether the polarization takes place between a man and a woman, or between two friends, between the master and his disciple or between the hero and the nation that admires him, between the artist and the subject which serves as his inspiration, or finally between the religious soul and the divinity which it worships and to

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which it desires to sacrifice itself. Since first Reason and then intellect came to dominate among psychic forces, Western humanity has ever more and more forgotten, or less and less understood, that all creativeness of a psychical and spiritual kind springs from what the seventeenth century called the 'passions of the soul'. Reason and intellect are not endowed with creativeness. The metaphysical spirit, whose primordial symbol bears the name of God, is creative on a higher plane than that of the telluric order; in that domain, there is creativeness on the physical and emotional planes only. Let us remember what we have said in treating of family life; what is commonly called the 'soul' is nothing else than the organism of the emotions. Now, nobody has ever created anything, unless he has been moved and stirred to the very bottom of his soul. And man can only be so moved and stirred according to the law of polarization, by means of that force which is that of love in its widest sense.

In few respects has 'enlightened' humanity proved itself blinder than on this, which is the most important of all. We have spoken on several occasions of the sterilizing effects produced by the exclusive development of the intellect. We are now probing their deepest cause. If sentimental and emotional forces become atrophied, man will inevitably lose his psychical creativeness, just as he loses his physical creative power by castration. But what are men taught in Russia, in the United States, in the 'advanced' circles of England and Germany? That they must strip

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themselves of all sentiment, that only cold reason should decide. And so even in the case of love: hence that sexual positivism in comparison with which the most exaggerated phallic cult takes on the appearance of a sublime liturgy. An Englishwoman said to me one day — I willingly quote Anglo-Saxons in such matters, because for the not-understanding of the unrational they always furnish classic examples — ‘Love is a very simple and uninteresting thing: it is only imagination that gives it a value.’ She was right in so far as she was stating facts (on this score, to be just, Anglo-Saxons are always strong); but she was mistaken in not seeing that it is precisely imagination which matters. Imagination alone creates all values in the psychic order. Now love is just what inflames imagination in that wide sense we have given to the term. Then, facts matter but little: that a Muse should be in reality a cook, a courted hero, a mountebank; an admired teacher but a vulgar pot-boiler, or the worshipped God a false God — if the polarization with the image represented by the beloved being draws forth creative forces, it bestows the highest gift which one being can make to another: self-revelation.

That is the reason why one cannot go too far in cultivating love. Let us hark back to the tradition of all great periods: there is not one in which the higher emotions have not played a decisive part. The whole of Greek civilization can be explained through the cult of heroes and of friendship. From there was born that unique culture of Beauty, for Beauty has all its

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vital roots in the emotional order and has absolutely nothing to do with the ideal of Truth. The whole of Roman civilization was born from the devotion to the *Res publica*, that is to say, the ideal which holds the whole of the nation to be superior to and at the same time identical with the individual. The whole of Christian culture is the offspring of man's loving aspiration as a creature towards his Creator. And, finally, the last European culture worthy of the name, which was that of 'good company' in the eighteenth century, was the child of the *passion* for untrammelled thought, for the recently discovered sovereignty of Reason. To-day's young generations feel this in a dim way; hence their blind faith in their leaders, their extravagant nationalism, their hankering after sacrifice. But the passions which possess them are of the most primitive kind. The cult of Blood does not develop the soul, the exclusive love of one's native land does not elevate the spirit, and blind obedience to dictators does not liberate personal initiative. Certainly, that Eros is worth more than a cold American intellectualism. But we need something better than that. It is not inevitable that Western humanity, with its millennial tradition, should hark back to the period of the Great Migrations. It is therefore an imperious duty for the cultured classes to give the example of an emotional life that is creative on a higher level.

And it can be a question here of a higher level, than was ever attained before. Once again, we can congratulate ourselves on the greater freedom of manners

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and morals. What an odious conception it was, that a man should be able to 'possess' a woman, or vice versa, as ancient man possessed slaves! That a buyer's right or legal bond should forbid a human being, under pain of misdemeanour, to have more than one interest in life! *On the contrary, each one of us should have as many as possible*, for each interest calls forth new powers and differentiates the soul. The family link is one of them, the marriage bond, another; even though they seldom agree together, these two interests are the only ones which are excepted by public opinion as compatible. But we should equally grant to every man and to every woman, however perfect their family life may be and however happy their home, the right to have friends. There are a thousand shades of possible feeling; women know it very well. And each shade is unique in its way. Not only is love a different thing from 'amitié amoureuse': love for Peter is a different thing from love for John. And each new interest brings forth new and special forces. If I insist so much on this aspect of the problem, it is over and above all because it applies to the greater section of humanity, secondly because the polarization between man and woman is, generally speaking, the most creative of positive values; but especially because it is here that the worst prejudices still reign. It is evidently hateful to deceive, but it is by no means necessary to do so. All that idea of 'deception' has its origin in the barbarous conception of a right of property. Each link is unique in itself. One can be absolutely loyal to one's

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husband or wife, while enjoying friendships of another order. Everything rests on the *idea* one forms of these matters. I certainly do not share the conception which is at the bottom of that *boutade* which was uttered by Montaigne on a day on which he was in a particularly rabelaisian humour: 'All great men were cuckolds — and knew it.' If one happens to be one, it is decidedly better not to know it; and a woman incapable of dissembling in that order of things is certainly the most brutal of sinners; I doubt whether God would forgive such a woman anything on the pretext that she has loved much. The lower depths of man are evil, tyrannical and blind. Never will it be possible to abolish that sinister force which is called jealousy, and should man succeed in abolishing it, precisely the sublimest kind of love would suffer by it, for jealousy is its 'corresponding' term (as one said during the Renaissance) in the lower depths. We can only manage abysmal forces by clearly understanding what they are. Thus, in the eighteenth century, the most clear-sighted of all centuries, the conventions of good society forbade a well-bred husband to linger in his wife's apartment, when she received the visit of another man. So was jealousy rendered harmless.

I do not think it necessary to insist further. But we shall never affirm with too much energy that it is impossible to love enough, to admire enough, to reverence enough. He who consents to the loss of his illusions is a mere fool. Never does a soul-image correspond, even approximately, with empirical reality.

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But it is not at all necessary that it *should* correspond! All its virtue and all its significance consist in evoking the creative forces proper to the man and the woman in question. Once this end is attained, the rest matters little.

THE second faculty to be cultivated at any cost in the name of Creativeness, is *understanding*, sprung from within, as opposed to the knowledge brought from without. Every act of understanding is a personal and creative act at the same time. It is just as impossible to leave to another the care of understanding for you as that of breathing for you. On the other hand, each act of understanding is a *bestowal* of Meaning; it is the expression of a spiritual activity working from within outwards. We never find a meaning in things unless we have put it into them; were things otherwise, lack of understanding would not be the general rule. Let beings, events and things have the most clearly defined significance of their own – it is impossible to find it unless we ourselves bring it with us; whoever reads a book without adding his personal understanding to it, will find in it but paper and printer's ink. This is due to the fact (explained at length in the chapter: 'The in-break of Spirit' in the *South-American Meditations*) that with this in-break an order *other* than that of Nature, and which exists in another dimension, begins to be informed into the ancient order of earthly existence. This principle is creative on the metaphysical plane, as soul and body are creative on the telluric plane.

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Now, in the domain of rational order, it is not knowledge or learning which express that spiritual principle; it is solely understanding. And, consequently, solely understanding is creative. This is why I have called my principal work of philosophy 'Creative Understanding'. In the domain of Spirit, significance creates the facts, as poetic inspiration creates the verses which correspond to it. Of course, understanding is not identical with creation, properly so called. But both belong to the same order in that sense that both these acts are purely personal, that we have to deal with *activity* in both cases, and that he who understands a truth discovered by another, by so doing makes it his own.

Hence this seemingly paradoxical situation, that one may know everything and yet understand nothing, or else understand everything without knowing anything. The characteristic of the mechanical era is precisely that it is pervaded by knowledge of unequalled breadth, and an even more unequalled lack of understanding. To-day, facts alone count in the eyes of an overwhelming majority; and, of course, it is a question of facts not understood. Now, if understanding is lacking, it is impossible for spiritual creativeness to exist; for understanding is the most elementary form of creativeness.

It will be sufficient for this evolution to continue for a short time more and an inevitable downward levelling will take place, on a more radical scale than was ever brought about by the most fanatical dema-

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gogues who put all privileged classes to death. Then, all spiritual initiative, all independence of judgment, all spiritual creativeness will pass away. This is why I can see only one way leading to salvation: with the greatest force imaginable, we must accentuate personal understanding *in opposition to knowledge which can become general*. But, on the other hand, this way of salvation, if we may call it so, is in principle within everybody's reach. It is one of the really good laws of Nature and of Spirit — and some of them are of the worst — that those contents of consciousness on which attention is directed, are being vitalized by that very fact. Thanks to this truly fortunate law, the age which knew everything and understood nothing can convert itself, in the space of one single generation, into a period of dominating understanding and, consequently, of creativeness.

The problem presents itself in the same way in all western countries. However its expression differs according to the peoples and their historical past. The problem of the French is perhaps the most interesting of all, for this nation has no tendency whatever to renounce its traditions, and among them the cult of Reason. But this Reason which yet governs France — is it an expression of understanding? Modern Frenchmen, like no other living human type, believe in the value of definitions. But man can only define what he already knows. It is only possible to define by referring new facts and experiences back to something that is already known. True understanding

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always means this: the grasping of new *premises*, of new starting points and developments that are new in the sense that they cannot be explained by what one knew of the past; it is the direct understanding of the *unique* case that has arisen: in a word, it is *the intuition of the undefinable*. Whoever thinks before everything else of the clearness of definition to be attained, will inevitably give all his attention to what he already has perceived. What is new will elude him, he closes his mind to every truly new experience. This explains the great difficulty which present-day France finds in admitting that the world has changed since the Great War, that pre-war premises have become obsolete. It explains France's rigidity in the matter of treaties; the tenacity with which it defends what it calls security, its financial policy modelled on that of king Midas. This France is a France with a shut-in spirit; this France is just as uncreative as America. . . .

THE third principal aspect of Creativeness is courage or, to put it otherwise, the joy of running risk. It is impossible to live a creative life, whatever it is, without incurring risks. A woman who flings herself into an adventure, especially if it is the most adventurous of all, that of marriage, leaves a large margin to chance. Creative man is essentially a gambler. This is obvious in the case of the warrior and the statesman. But in principle, with the artist, things are not otherwise: he must 'give' himself to whatever can stimulate him without knowing what is going to happen. Hence, as a corollary or as a special ex-

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pression, that life which artists typically lead, who destroy, now and again, under the sway of an unconscious but irresistible impulse, whatever may give a security which they nevertheless secretly desire. It is in fact the desire for security which is in most direct opposition to creativeness. On the plane of the lower depths, creativeness has Original Hunger for a corresponding state; it is the first ancestor of what will later become procreation, and this Hunger is the eternal enemy of Safety, the first-born daughter of Original Fear. Now, one expression of this Fear is the mania to find a definition from which nothing can escape. Creative spirit never knows whither it goes and where it will end; in this consists the very significance of its life. In this respect, creative Spirit is representative of Original Hunger. But in this primary matter is embodied, in the case of a man of awakened consciousness, the spiritual principle which is courage. We have explained at length, in the chapter 'Sorrow' of the *South-American Meditations* that courage, which is contrary to sense and even a perversity from the point of view of Nature, is the first expression of autonomous Spirit: I have to refer my readers to that chapter, for it is impossible to summarize its results here without exceeding the limits of this study. Suffice it to say this: courage is contrary to nature because it asserts itself by the triumph over Original Hunger as well as over Original Fear; the mastery of nature is its essence. And courage is the first condition needed to escape from the bounds set by Nature which knows of no

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spontaneous evolution — and accordingly of no progress in the profound sense of the word — for only courage finds the resolution to venture beyond the given circumstances.

Consequently, to show courage is to make up one's mind to give to life a meaning which it would otherwise lack; the man of courage lives from within outwards, and not inversely. The spiritual melody of life can only resound when man himself takes the initiative; that this melody may often reveal itself in the form of Fate to which one must submit passively, or as the result of a sacrifice, matters but little: the essential fact is that such passivity always means a voluntary renunciation, and such sacrifice, voluntarily accepted sacrifice. And courage is also the first expression of liberty, whose essence is the will to risk. Now, since specifically human creativeness has its roots in the soul penetrated by Spirit — how can it affirm itself without the help of courage? No coward has ever created anything. But courage is above all necessary in order to break the fossilized frameworks of the dying past, which frameworks were never more hard and resisting than during the mechanical era; that is why iron and reinforced concrete are its particular symbols.

And those frameworks have decidedly got to be broken. Otherwise no salvation is possible. This is why I behold with joy even the most barbarous among the new young militant groups: they are in any case gifted with an immense courage, they are full of faith;

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these young people are therefore the predestined pioneers of higher creativeness. Only it should not be the young ones who give the tone. Then we would collapse unavoidably into a long period of barbarism. Salvation will only come through the predominance of higher creativeness. And here, it is *understanding* alone which can serve as a guide for all, for understanding alone is every man's inheritance. In this sense, understanding is to-day certainly the most important aspect of creativeness. Hence comes the hope, the unshakable hope, which I place upon what I call creative understanding.

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IT is difficult to predict with certainty what humanity will think within a few centuries about the definition that the eighteenth century gave of itself: 'the century of enlightenment', a definition of which that of Paris as the *Ville Lumière* is the equivalent in terms of space. But since I do not care whether I am mistaken or not — *nil humani a me alienum puto* — I will hazard the following prediction: men will one day agree in saying that the eighteenth century was enlightened only in the following sense, that for the first time in post-antique Europe intelligence, become sure of itself, enlightened the traditional order. The eighteenth century was by no means the century in which intelligence alone reigned — such exclusiveness has found its historical champion only in our days, and not in Europe, but in Bolshevist Russia. The eighteenth century was the century of a completely blooming European life, which contained as yet living and vital elements the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Reformation, the impulse which drove explorers towards far-off discoveries, the baroque and finally the ferment of religious wars; crowning it all, emancipated intelligence illuminated this complex life. The eighteenth century was therefore, in truth, the century which brought to perfection that Europe which had been born towards the year 1000. Accordingly, the

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French Revolution was by no means the logical continuation of the *Grand Siècle* in its forward march: on the contrary, it sounded the knell of a cultural tradition which had lasted almost a thousand years, just as the revolution of 1917 buried the ancient aristocratic culture of Russia, whose roots were both Byzantine, European, Russian and Mongolian — a wealth of inheritance which alone explains the superb breadth of the best Russian type, a type which is to-day exterminated. Thus, the great spirits of the eighteenth century were not at all in opposition with the earlier tradition; as regards Voltaire, this fact has been acknowledged long ago.

Beginning with the French Revolution, that first great dividing line in our post-antique history, European consciousness has lost ever more from year to year all contact with its living past. The process has been slow; hence the possibility of a restoration after that revolution; hence, too, the episodic character of the Napoleonic adventure, which has almost faded from French memory. Hence also the possibility of that long-lasting Holy Alliance after the Corsican's defeat. And even to-day, it is France which has least forgotten, within its organic memory, what its life was before 1789. It is in the countries on which the Reformation conferred its distinctive character that the devitalization of tradition showed its first symptoms. Hence the progressive narrowing of the Prussian type, which was markedly 'eighteenth century' in the time of Frederick the Great, and above all the ever

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more narrow and rigid morality of Anglo-Saxons. In Wesley's time already (for he was the true creator of the modern English type) every Englishman who was 'decent' — in the English meaning of that ancient Latin adjective, in which the ingenuousness of that people is shown in a most picturesque fashion — would have beheld a man like Shakespeare with holy horror. In France, on the contrary — and, though in a lesser degree, also in other Latin countries — an ever wider split is taking place between traditional life, more and more buried in the unconscious, and a life almost exclusively guided by rational thought. For that reason, the majority of present-day Frenchmen do not seem to be aware of the fact, however obvious it may appear, that the French type is emotional in its essence. An intelligent man like Julien Benda, who is representative of many others, even goes so far as to congratulate his fellow-countrymen, in his *Histoire des Français dans leur volonté d'être une Nation*, for having raised themselves, in the course of their history, above primary feelings; their glory and their 'progress' consist, according to him, in their conversion to abstract ideals, to having advanced from patriotism to the abstract idea of the Nation, etc. Indeed, in that France which speaks and writes, the emotional depths are hardly at all illuminated by thinking consciousness. But that emotional treasure house is there; and when all is said and done, in all grave, critical and decisive moments, it is this factor that decides. The consequence of that strange state of things is that in

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France, more than anywhere else, consciousness and objective reality are in discord. On the surface, France lives on abstractions and definitions; at bottom, it is blindly hurled along to its destiny. So did it 'hold on' blindly during the Great War. And so was the stabilization of the franc not at all the premeditated work of clearsighted financiers, but that of collective France which carried it out or made its representatives do it, guided by obscure instinct. But too often, unfortunately, does superficial consciousness win the day. Hence the absurd spectacle which France gave to the world by organizing, right in the twentieth century, under the Combes' ministry, a religious persecution. Hence the extraordinary lack of understanding which it shows before the great new movements which are born and grow around her. It is only in the very special field of women's fashions that present-day France proves herself ever pliable enough to follow the changing needs of the present moment. Generally speaking, there reigns a frequently quarrelsome enmity between logic and intuition, between general theory and concrete vision, between a superficial intellectualism and a deep emotional life. But it is the latter which makes all the strength and all the prestige of France. It is for that alone that she is loved.

BUT, let us put aside these special questions and pursue our analysis of the true relation which exists between the eighteenth century and the following ones. If the eighteenth means something different from what men generally think, the same is the case

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with the nineteenth and the twentieth up to the World War. The nineteenth has not continued the tradition of its predecessors by passing under the triumphal arch which was the French Revolution: it has specialized with a violent exclusiveness in whatever was new in the findings of the eighteenth century, allowing those hereditary riches which lighted the eighteenth century from within to escape it ever more and more. It is by meditating upon the United States of America that one most easily succeeds in seizing the true significance of those facts. Over there, the tradition earlier than that of the eighteenth century broke off soon after the separation from England, but no new civilization was then born: there came about a monstrous inflation of certain eighteenth-century conceptions in the empty space of an uninhabited continent with its incalculable resources. There is not one single specifically North-American idea which is not a daughter of Rousseau's, and a very old-maidenish daughter at that; this daughter has brought no children into the world, yet she refuses to die. In Europe, reproduction has taken place, but only the new things brought by the eighteenth century have begot offspring and given to the succeeding centuries their distinctive traits. Hence the extraordinary poverty of conscious life in the nineteenth century, which has grown worse and worse down to our own days. Life has become progressively more of a bore from decade to decade, for those tendencies and impulses of the soul which have found means of expressing and of

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expanding themselves become ever less numerous. Now, the emptier of differentiated feelings and emotions consciousness grows, the more primitive the unconscious becomes. And as those forces lack all means of expression recognized by public opinion in the system of conscious life, a damming-up of them is taking place, and this accumulation continues growing till an explosion finally occurs, or till the primitive forces possess themselves cunningly but irresistibly of the products of consciousness. This last phenomenon is above all others characteristic of Europe's present state. The lapse of time which has passed between the French Revolution and the World War was a period of preparation. With the War, the barriers which held the demoniac forces of the unconscious broke, and ever since then these forces predominate. It is they who govern *de facto* almost the whole of that modern technical machinery with its marvellous perfection.

Since *things* have become as we describe them, one can say almost without exaggeration that reason plays no more part at all. The superstitious belief in the omnipotence of reason, which later degenerated into faith in the omnipotence of scientific and technical intelligence has led, through one of those topsy-turvy movements habitual in the history of humanity, to the bankruptcy of reason. The latter no longer rules anything, not even high finance. Almost everything, particularly in those great strokes of business which succeed, is a product of the interference of essentially blind forces. For the mania for speculation which

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drives the great profiteers of the world crisis — and without that mania for risk, they would never have made such huge profits — the criminality of an Ivar Kreuger and the ineptitude of the leaders of the great Powers, of whom several have been clever men, but not one has framed a policy profitable even for his own country — are all phenomena of the same order: they are dark forces born of the lower depths and they have directed, unperceived, all conscious efforts. Very soon all or almost all honest men will have lost their money, and all sensible men will have been given the lie by events. This, on the one hand, explains the ever more prevalent belief in pure prophecy by which so many shady lives prosper, and which feeds strange trades such as astrology, palmistry, etc. But it also explains why, in those circles which remain faithful to the old European tradition, men go ever more and more back from Kant to Saint Thomas Aquinas. What the latter called Reason, was, indeed, a deeper thing than that modern intelligence which notices nothing except external facts and which for that very reason makes such extraordinarily frequent mistakes; it knows nothing of the deepest motive forces. Saint Thomas, when speaking of reason, thereby understood the intimate significance of beings and of things, as far as reason succeeds in grasping and defining it. And above all he never believed that human reason was everything, or was capable of everything. His own starting-point was always and everywhere the whole of reality, which he conceived

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as being natural on the one side and supernatural on the other. His fundamental premise certainly was that all reality should agree with reason and that a sufficiently deep logic would succeed in proving the right to existence, as conceived in the sense of some kind of transcendental law, of all that exists. What is nevertheless mistaken in this postulate, is nothing in comparison with the mistakes committed by the so-called enlightened age, in whose eyes experience must need justify itself before reason in order to be accepted as such: Saint Thomas ever and everywhere admitted that above reason Reality, whole and intrinsic, sits enthroned. Consequently, Reason never quite broke loose, during the sincerely and fundamentally Catholic period, and even in the worst scholastic epochs, from the deepest roots of life.

Among modern rationalists, one only has not been superficial: that was Hegel. It is because he was in fact an extremely concrete sort of mind who, owing to a strange idiosyncrasy, expressed his visions under the shape and within the frame of logical connections. That which Hegel called Reason was in fact integral reality itself, which he considered to be reasonable. Since that time, Western enlightened man has ever more and more identified the Meaning of the Universe with a machine-inventing intelligence. The formidable upheaval of irrational forces which we are witnessing has refuted that error in the eyes of whoever possesses and is capable of using them. And at the same time, North-American pragmatism, the moralist

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equivalent of European intellectualism, has suffered a striking defeat, which yet awaits the great poet who might sketch out a final picture of it. I do not know what happened during the Flood; but since then, assuredly, man has never witnessed a more colossally laughable farce than that crash in the New York Stock Exchange in the year 1929, which caused the United States to lose peacefully as much money, or even more, than the whole of Europe spent in bleeding itself white during the War. And the sudden downfall of almost all millionaires on that continent, who passed brusquely from fabulous opulence to complete poverty, is a grandiosely grotesque companion picture to the fall of Adam. And surely, our first ancestor, even before he had become accustomed to work, felt less lost on an earth which was no longer a Paradise, than did American *ci-devants* in that city for impoverished millionaires which has been built expressly for them by one of the rare philanthropists who, beyond the Atlantic, are endowed with a sense of irony and of sly humour.

I HAVE once more traced the general outlines of the picture of our time looking at it under a slightly different angle, in order that no doubt may remain about the general framework within which every intimate and personal problem must henceforth posit itself. Now, in this last study, we will endeavour — not to summarize: nothing is more absurd than to believe that one can ‘summarize’ living thoughts without killing them outright! Let us leave ‘summaries’ to

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schoolboys doing their tasks or to critics without intelligence — in this last study, we will try to seize the whole meaning of all the particular problems which we have examined; 'whole' in the sense which the term integration has in mathematics as distinct from differentiation.

Nevertheless, we should take up once more the thread of the preceding general considerations, because they will help us to tackle the capital question with no further digressions. For Western humanity, salvation cannot consist in a return to Aquinas, since it is impossible ever to reascend the downward road of history. It is not in vain that Kant's critique represents a truly critical point, in the physicist's sense, within psychological evolution: that true synthesis of the forces of soul and spirit, which was so powerful that even its reflection, the 'Summa' of Aquinas, was a vital force, no longer exists anywhere among those men who are representative of their age; it has disintegrated psychologically owing to the emancipation and the autonomous development of thought. Kant therefore set the problem in the right way, when he undertook to trace the limits of reason: it was in his eyes the only way to restore non-rational values to their proper place within consciousness. But Kant was unable to grasp the problem in its whole extent, or even to see it as it sets itself in principle. Apart from Reason, he only admitted Religion; even the aesthetic and moral domains were for him provinces of reason. He knew nothing of those deep forces in man which

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are telluric in their origin. Now, we have shown, in our successive studies, what the true state of things is. We have seen that the norms of the body have nothing to do with those of Spirit; hence the need of a new attitude towards Health. We have seen that moral questions are not of spiritual nature either. The sense of property has all its roots in the human lower depths, in original Fear; the same is true of Law. But if family feeling does not belong to the 'gana' order, it does not belong to the rational order either; it is consequently absurd to posit the problem of progress within the domain of family-life. On the other hand, the problem of marriage is not what men generally think it is: it is neither a sexual problem, nor a moral problem, but one that is profoundly spiritual. The whole idea of Progress which is the axis of thought of almost all 'intellectuals' is false; for whoever would break the fetters created by mechanization, Creativeness is the only possible true ideal. Now, all these questions we have just examined are not in the last instance general problems, which might be solved by means of external measures, but personal and intimate problems whose only general solution would consist in adding together all personal efforts, efforts which should be directed by each and all not towards the general good, but towards *the perfection of personal uniqueness*.

Now, the ultimate problem which sets itself before each one of us all the more imperiously as he advances in age and becomes more conscious of the whole complexity of his own structure, is the religious problem.

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Man is linked to earth by his 'gana'. Everything in him, even his soul, a synonymous term of what I call the 'emotional order', is of an earthly essence. All those orders did not originally participate in the spiritual principle; it is therefore absurd to see in Health a spiritual imperative, or in morals an expression of the Divine, or in the 'soul' as such an immortal entity. *Now the rational order also is in itself of earthly and not of spiritual essence.* Intelligence — Bergson has been, I believe, the first to say it clearly — reveals itself as all the more apt to understand Nature, the less the latter is penetrated by the life-principle; logical and mathematical norms apply foremost to dead matter. But life as such has not got its roots in Spirit either, though there is no life which does not participate of it in some measure. By far the greater part of life, even in man himself, cannot be reduced to terms of Spirit and does not originally recognize its norms. We have shown what is the matter with those particular norms in one paragraph of our study on Marriage. There are lives which are profoundly human and rich in soul, even though spirit has never descended upon them. But above all, the knowledge and even the understanding of those norms starting from which the concept of Reason has developed, belong originally to the vital and not to the spiritual order. In its origin, Reason is but one of the multiple forms of adaptation which characterize all life, in the same sense and on the same plane as the reactions of the body, as the sensitive reactions within the order of psychical susceptibility,

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and those emotional reactions whose 'understanding' is shown by a direct perception of existing compatibility or incompatibility. It is therefore but natural that 'Reason' should have revealed itself as more anti-metaphysical and anti-spiritual, the further it detached itself from the religious Spirituality of original and of medieval Christianity. And, eventually, it had perforce to find its final expression in the purely materialistic rationalism of Soviet-Russia, and in the purely 'vitalist' (as opposed to spiritual) pragmatism of the United States. Meanwhile, European science made it a point either to replace or to refute religion. Every such so-called 'Progress' could but end in the terrible chaos that characterizes the period in which I write, because it took for its starting-point a false conception of human nature. The first element of experience is not matter: on the contrary, we need a very well developed capacity for abstraction to liberate this concept; that is why not only all primitive peoples have no idea of matter, but there has been no materialism in the modern sense, in the whole world, except in Europe after the eighteenth century. The first element, or, to put it technically, 'givenness' of all experience is of a psychic and not of a material order. And in original psychic experience, it is not on external facts, but on inner reality that the weight is placed. Among animals, assuredly, surroundings play the major part; their organisms hardly act, they do but react. That is because 'gana' is inert in its essence. But on the other hand, in animals, which are inextricably involved

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within nature, there can be no clear distinction — putting aside all questions of consciousness — between that which is of external or of internal origin: for these two elements constitute a single primary synthesis. In man, inner life is self-governing and something apart for consciousness, from that which is exterior; it is because in him *soul* forms the centre of organic life. Whence the monstrous error of pragmatism, which fatally leads, wherever it predominates, to the supremacy of the ‘animal ideal’: to make all values depend upon outer success, or to merge both in one, is tantamount to a sub-human concept of human nature. And since thought acts upon its living object, the inevitable result of theoretical error is here practical deterioration. But there is yet more: in that man upon whom Spirit has descended, it is not soul, it is Spirit and consequently a principle superior to life, which constitutes its true centre. From that moment, Significance rules over facts. Things being so, as soon as man develops a wrong idea of spiritual structure, life loses its significance for him, for, once again, every theoretical error in man disfigures the vital reality to which it applies.

Let us tackle from this angle the religious problem proper. If man is tied to the earth by the emotional order, by *gana* and by the body, he is originally linked to Spirit by religious feeling. Hence comes the profound mistake of the lay spirit in the French sense of the term. Here, first revolutionary France, and then ‘radical’ France, bears before humanity a heavy

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burden of guilt. The day on which the Goddess Reason was hoisted upon the throne of ancestral God was a symbolical and as fatal a day in the history of mankind as that on which the Israelites set themselves to worshipping the Golden Calf. It is true that this new religion, like every religion of arbitrary creation, soon disappeared as such. But it still survives to-day in the typically Latin opposition of the lay spirit to clericalism, as well as in the indifference or the agnosticism of intellectuals before the 'un-modern' faith of those who are still believing and practising Christians. Now, true spirit is never 'lay', for in its essence it does not belong to the natural order such as science conceives it; its prototype is and will always be that which Christian tradition calls 'Holy Spirit', the Holy Ghost. For Spirit is identical neither with intelligence nor even with so-called pure reason; these two faculties, as we have already said, are modes of vital adaptation among others; and if in the eyes of Hindoos, of Greeks and of Christians from Saint John to Aquinas, the principle called 'Logos' (and which is consequently 'logical') has meant a truly spiritual principle, it was because in those periods metaphysical Spirit had embodied itself in the rational telluric order as it can embody itself in any order; it is thus that Christian love has sometimes succeeded in transfiguring earthly love, and that aspiration towards absolute Good has been able to permeate even politics, which in themselves are the most odious projection of the lower depths in man. Unless inspired by a higher

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principle, intellect and reason certainly are what bolshevists and Americans see in them. And by a logical and unavoidable succession, the ideas of the French Revolution, born of the Goddess of Reason, have ended in the matter-of-fact pragmatisms, either economic or political, which are all-powerful to-day; both pragmatisms are equally un-spiritual and in-human.

Nevertheless, we are now in a position to understand *why* all this 'progress' has revealed itself as a race towards an abyss. In denying Spirit, man has denied his own deepest nature. All those negative phenomena which we have pointed out and described in our different studies are a vast proof of the fact. And once humanity has really understood this, the pseudo-problem which has served as the principle theme for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries *will cease to exist*; the mere fact of its being understood will have eliminated it from life, just as the solution of his riddle sufficed to precipitate the Sphinx into the abyss. For that is the true way followed by the evolution of the lower towards the higher, and of error towards truth: inferior or badly formulated problems are not solved, but eliminated. For vital problems there is no solution, properly speaking, for life is neither a mathematical equation nor a logical chain. Moreover, life, in perpetual instability, maintains itself by means of tensions which are of themselves insoluble. However, thanks to the attainment of a higher level, a given problem may lose its vital importance. From that moment,

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it no longer sets itself before consciousness, either because it sinks down into the region of inferior automatism, or because it ceases to exist due to having been proved false. The capital truth to realize for us now is this: no 'proof' of a natural kind ever pre-judges rightly about Spirit. The solution of a telluric problem is never at the same time a solution of a spiritual one. No scientific discovery will ever refute a religion which is a true expression of spiritual being — whether that expression in itself happens to be felicitous and defensible or not — for science, due to its specific bent, is exclusively directed outwards. In this sense, all progress which claims to have 'gone beyond old superstitions' has simply not taken place.

Here, not only has Christianity had more profound vision — but even its idea of the existing connection between Spirit and Earth was more exact than that of the period ruled by science. There are only some corrections to be made to its vision of things, and it is that which we have set out to do in the final chapter 'Divina Commedia', of *South-American Meditations*. The demands of Spirit are often in flagrant contradiction with those of Earth, and they are always paradoxical from the point of view of the latter. Having expressed whatever I had to say upon the subject in the meditation just mentioned with all the terseness of which I am capable, I must here limit myself to referring to it. Within the framework of this study, the following reflection which concerns a special domain should suffice. Obviously, what belongs to the spiritual order,

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by that very fact belongs also to the personal and intimate order; the more the spiritual principle asserts itself, the more stress comes to be laid upon intimate and exclusive characteristics, for the more a phenomenon belongs to the inner order, the less are outer norms applicable to it. It is therefore impossible to generalize within the spiritual order. There may well be religious theories which are universally valid, but we must never forget, on the other hand, the necessary corollary to such a universal quality: that is to say, that the corresponding term to the Universal within the domain of earthly life is not the general, but the Unique. It is in principle impossible to disregard that connection. That was the fatal error of the great dogmatic religions which have up to now governed humanity; and no 'protestantism' has up to now remedied it, for all protestantism has but narrowed the field of what is universally valid, without suppressing the fundamental error. Only the most ancient Christian church, the Greek Orthodox Church, has guarded the original tradition of spiritual understanding: indeed, it teaches still to-day that personal experience is the only *canonical* means of learning the truth of dogmas. I cannot here develop my views on this capital problem. Instead of long explanations, I prefer to give one single concrete image which, nevertheless, embraces the whole truth. Among orthodox Hindoos, the family priest gives to each newborn child a special and secret name, *which only the child and God are supposed to know*; this name gives the

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weak new-born creature a direct mode of communication, which it alone can use, with the centre of the Universe.

BUT this is not all that we have to say about the relations between Reason and Religion. Not only has natural science attempted the impossible in trying to settle from its own view-point the question of religious reality: the same is true of philosophy. I think the day is near at hand on which men will think it one of the most absurd errors of human history to have claimed that a *thinker* as such can solve ontological problems or those of existence. The problem and legitimate radius of action of the 'thinker' comprises but the formal side of thought, that is to say, logic and mathematical abstraction. There is still epistemology, but this, handled by 'pure' thinkers, easily goes astray, for after all true understanding concerns concrete experiences and not the formal conditions which lead to them; and the 'thinker' type is essentially lacking in all sense of reality. A friend of Bertrand Russell, one of the thinkers whom I most appreciate as long as he does not go beyond the radius of his capacity, told me the following anecdote: they were taking a bicycle ride together; Russell said: 'I have at last solved the problem of the Infinite.' The other, who had a more concrete mind, replied: 'You mean that you have found a new definition of the Infinite?' and Russell, astounded, retorted: 'But can it possibly be a question of anything else?' A modern German metaphysician who enjoys great prestige has

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proved at length that there can logically be no God, because it would hurt the dignity of human personality . . . Rodin, in giving to his famous *Thinker* the attitude and expression we know, has seen right: of reality, the 'thinker' as such understands absolutely nothing. I do not believe that a single human being who has understood anything at all that is of essential value has ever achieved it by means of reflection. Goethe has put it thus: 'Thought is useless for thinking.' Those thoughts which give true expression to an inner or an outer reality on their own plane, 'occur'; they are every time the fruit or the product of an *intimate vital experience*. We can from here realize with absolute clearness, as it seems to me, why definitions are never true means of understanding: every definition is situated on the unreal plane of abstract thought, while understanding is an immediate experience of reality. Now, what exactly does this intimate experience which is at the bottom of all consciousness amount to? Exactly to what is meant by the ancient term of *Revelation*.

Only that to-day we can and must broaden the traditional conception of Revelation. It is but natural that in those times which followed the first in-break of Spirit, human consciousness should have remained so profoundly upset, seized and possessed by this new Reality belonging to a different order from that of Nature, that it help^d it alone to be absolutely real. This reality could not help striking consciousness and appearing to it more real than even the most massive

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of external facts; for the plane proper to Spirit is imagination: it is the latter's inner images, and not exterior facts, which man primarily feels as his own. And thanks to this psychological constellation he recognizes as intrinsically real only the world of images. This is why the term Revelation was first applied to that which Religion brings with it. Even to-day not only all children, but the greater number of adults live primarily on myths and not on scientific facts. And this ultimate inner reality will ever remain what most nearly moves and concerns man, because it is what constitutes the very foundation of normal and instinctive life. Nevertheless, that Reality is not the only existing one. Exterior Reality is just as real as interior. It was not only natural, but even necessary that for some time humanity should fix its attention exclusively upon that reality which it had neglected during thousands of years. The West was the first to make the attempt; the Oriental peoples will follow its example, and most probably in a more radical way than was ever done by us. Soviet Russia has well proved that it is precisely primarily religious peoples who, once they adopt materialism, are the most consistent in putting it in practice. But to-day, the West has in principle gone beyond this stage of the compensating one-sided attitude. It is ripe to rise to the conception of an *integral Revelation*. Man is Spirit in his inmost depth; but he is also matter, mineral, cold blood, warm blood; he is a being of gana, sensitive, emotional, intellectual; all these strata and all these

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parts are equally *his*; only they are so on different planes, and man lives on all these planes at the same time. Under such circumstances, once consciousness has awakened to full understanding, those partial revelations which have been authoritative in the past can no longer mean the last word. Neither the exclusive revelation of spiritual reality, nor the exclusive revelation of material and natural reality will reveal everything.

Now, which is the integral revelation for which man is ripe to-day? The answer is obvious. *It is that which reveals the true and just relations between the diverse layers of his total being.*

This new revelation has already been granted to us. Not by an individual Saviour, but by the united efforts of thousands of upright and sincere human beings who are in search of it. In principle, we have no longer any reason to have false ideas on the relations between Spirit, Soul, body and the earth which nourishes it. From Roger Bacon's time, slowly at first, and then with quickening progression, man has trained himself to observe and to experiment with scientific exactness. In thousands of special cases, situated on the most diverse planes, the true states of being and the true relations between facts of different kinds have been 'revealed'. What has been lacking up to the present is the synthesis which can encompass and co-ordinate the whole of Revelation, attributing to each particular revelation its appropriate place. It is this synthesis — the modern equivalent of Aquinas' 'Sum-

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ma' — which humanity must now reach through an effort and a process of integration.

This goal can be attained. And once humanity has attained it, it will behold the smoothing away of every conflict other or more than the state of tension which is characteristic of eternal human nature. Reason will then no longer attempt to explain or to subdue life in its totality, for there exists the immense and unmeasurable domain of irrational reality over which it has no hold. Then the type of the 'thinker' who believes himself able to decree what is and what is not in agreement with the laws of abstract thought will appear ridiculous; only he will be reckoned capable of imparting knowledge whose thought is the expression of a true revelation. Then, the 'intellectual' for whom definition takes the place of understanding will be despised. But on the other hand, religion will no longer undertake to dogmatize in other than its own domains. There will no longer be any spiritualism or materialism, and above all no idealism capable of enjoying the least prestige: what will then reign, will be what I call Radical Realism. A Realism which will accept all that is and exists in the proper place due to it, and which will suppress and will hide nothing.

Such Radical Realism alone can lead to that fullness and wholeness to which each and all of us aspire since the Night of time. The supreme bliss we can attain here below resides, as we have seen, in Creativeness. But supreme happiness is and will always be the rare

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privilege of great moments, which are not even met out to all of us. On the other hand, it is possible to reach in a lasting way to that inner peace which is the expression of a perfect flowering of one's whole being. And once this inner peace has been reached, no exterior conflict can ever again assume an adverse significance.

Which is the way which leads to such peace? As always, it is the most ancient idea which contains the greatest sum of eternal truth. Have many peoples been found to meditate on this strange formula, that man can 'offend' the God of Catholic Christianity? The formula is true to fact. For how does one offend? Always through lack of attention. Now, not to notice God, if He exists, is to give a proof of supreme lack of attention. The word 'attention', through a profound double meaning, signifies at the same time a condition of exact perception and courtesy; which is to say that it is valid as much for the emotional as for the rational order. It is therefore *attention* which we must cultivate — and nothing is more characteristic of our superficial age and of the narrowness of its horizons than its very great lack of attention, in both senses of the word. It is a matter, in the first place, of observing everything, in oneself as well as outside oneself. The problem is to give all our energies the occasion to open for themselves all the channels they require for their action. And this again is a personal problem, a problem of personal and intimate life. The more a man is attentive to everything, the more realities

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will reveal themselves to him, both within and without, and will therefore develop in him. But the joy which that fullness of life lived with ever growing powers gives, is the most intimate, the most exclusive and the most untransferable thing that each one of us has.

THERE remains only one aspect more of the problem for us to examine, and we will then have completed the circle which we set out to trace. We have said, in terminating our reflections on Creativeness, that the first expression of Spirit is not knowledge, but courage. But courage in itself is, so to speak, but the gesture of accepted risk. If it has a spiritual content, courage becomes Faith. Therefore, Faith ever is the primary thing with respect to knowledge. Here, again, traditional religion has been more clear-sighted than modern science. For, since Spirit expresses itself — we have explained it in treating of the problem of Creativeness — from within outwards, by *giving* significance and not by finding one, its typical expression is evidently religious faith which gives to the things of this world a Significance which on their own plane they lack. Only that in the Faith of to-morrow, it will no longer be a matter of blind belief in opposition to consciousness illuminated by intelligence: thanks to the new and total integration which is henceforward possible, *Faith itself will become clear-sighted*. And then the creative quality in Life will be able to assert itself as it never did before. When it comes to believing, men will no longer frame the question: 'What I here affirm, is it really true?' Men will know that Faith

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creates truth; that of itself it creates a new reality. Man will then no longer, on principle, trust other people after they have proved that they are trustworthy: they will know — as ancient Chinese wisdom has so well expressed it — that trust *creates* trust and the state which is worthy of it. People will no longer believe that conferring significance means in the first place interpreting that which is already there — what a miserable manifestation of spiritual impotence is that notion, so current to-day! People will know that to confer significance means to superpose a new and a better world upon the pre-existing one. And thanks to this attitude, finally attained and consolidated as the inherited right of all men — an attitude which is at the same time the attitude proper to spiritualized man, just as the normal state of animal man is the attainment of scientific and technical perfection — Spirit will finally rule earthly life. It will no longer play the despot, as it did in the time of dogmatic religions, of which the last born is the most dogmatic of all, the religion of Bolshevik materialism; it will accept, it will reckon with, the whole of reality. But it is precisely in renouncing all despotism, that it will be able to carry off the victory. Then, at last, it will effectively guide the whole of that extremely complex being that is called man. Then, all life will become one single act of faith. But then will also be realized that ancient adage which says that faith can move mountains: in opposition to the closed circle of intellectualism, which strives to define everything once and for all, and to

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that of religious dogmatism according to which all values, if not all facts, are predetermined for all time, *there will be no last word*. Ever, and every moment, will new tasks arise; ever, and at every instant, will it be possible in principle to superpose on the pre-existing world a new and a better world. So, in fact, has it always been. Since the dawn of history, the great benefactors of humanity, the founders of religions, the sages, philosophers, statesmen, have done nothing else. Every new religion, every new world-conception, each better organization of life, 'overlays' so to speak, the pre-existing reality. But that which has always been, will henceforward be the immediate, accepted and approved starting-point of understanding consciousness. The latter will no longer cling to its errors, it will no longer regret what, in truth, is not worthy of regret. Consciousness and the reality of life will agree and coincide. Then, all vital energies will have full and free scope. Then, spiritual aspirations will find no more inner fetters. Then, even that natural fact, so tragic at first sight — and truly tragic for whoever has not reached the state of integration — that natural fact of life being a flow towards the future from one death to another, a flow whose motto is 'once, and never again', will become the condition of fulfilment itself. For, man at bottom only *wants* to progress; he, at bottom only *wants* but to create something new, to create his own personal and original life.

And then will begin — not that Golden Age of melancholy memory, for never has there been an age

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more boring and less calculated to satisfy man's true aspirations, but the age of fulfilment; the age of *personal* fulfilment. I ever return to this adjective. The dreadful era of predominant general ideas, of general aims imposed by force on every man, will be definitely over. Each life is unique; all its value lies in its uniqueness. Let us all then have the courage to be and to declare ourselves unique! Let us have the courage of placing all our available energies at the service of our uniqueness. Then, every life, even the humblest, even the least happy one, from the external point of view, will have a profound and intrinsic significance. Let us cultivate the courage and the Faith needed to lead a profoundly personal existence! That which makes our epoch so odious, is its impersonal character and its lack of Faith. It would be impossible for collectivism to rule, if human personality were not so weakened or decayed, that brute mass and the abstract law of numbers have unprecedented chances to assert themselves. The only thing which explains that apparent incapacity to emerge from the many blind alleys into which false politics and false economic principles have thrust the majority of men, is the mania for security, for 'once for all', even if only in the form of a hankering for the eternal final definition. As long as such lack of courage prevails, mankind will never move towards a better future. Creative Faith must take the upper hand as it did in all great ages in history. The dark and barbarous masses already understand it; they understand it better than cultured

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people do. Hence the fact that these barbarians invade the first rank of history ever more and more. But if *they* achieve the final victory, we will unavoidably enter into a new age of darkness as was that of the first Middle Ages which opened with the great Invasions. It is up to us, who still represent ancient culture, to anticipate the future, and to deflect this possible fate. And we can accomplish this historical task; for in principle a single seer is stronger than millions of blind men. *Only, we must then show even more courage, more faith than the revolutionized masses.* Let us therefore cultivate that faith, that courage! Let us cultivate Creativeness! Let us cultivate them on the basis of all those eternal human values which the masses that have reverted to barbarism no longer understand, but whose realization alone gives to life the roots in the deeps which promise a rich flowering! Let us raise, against that horrible poverty and sterility of man decayed into collectivism, a human richness the like of which has never before been known in history! Instead of playing at opposition, let us outrun our opponents! Then, inevitably, however weak our numbers are, we will triumph.

I have entitled this little book 'Problems of personal life'. But nothing is more personal and intimate than Universal Spirit. If, therefore, our epoch is a collectivistic one, if it does not admit the fact or value of intimacy and exclusiveness, it is because it has lost all contact with the vital Spirit. By going back into ourselves, by cultivating personal and intimate life, as

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was never done before, we work for Universal Spirit. But in so becoming personalists and proximists — terms which each representative of traditional culture will understand without commentary — we also affirm ourselves as the only true democrats. For true Democracy is not that which levels everything, but that which makes possible for each man his complete development. It is not a question of political, but of spiritual democracy. Our message is therefore really and truly meant for each and all. It is in very truth a εὐαγγέλιον, Good news, for it promises every man the fullness of his personal life.

