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REASON IN ACTION

Reason in Action

HECTOR HAWTON

ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON

J. B. COATES

DONALD FORD

H. J. BLACKHAM

Edited by Hector Hawton

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PREFACE

HUMANISM is not a single, comprehensive system of philosophy which you must take or leave. It is an attempt to deal wth the situation in which no such a system and no religious revelation is conveniently available to resolve all our perplexities. If we are thrown on our own human resources, compelled to create our own standards of conduct, unable to count on some future existences in which mistakes and injustice will be redressed—what then?

The essays in this volume are personal statements by five humanist writers. They do not agree on all points, and this is to be expected of a philosophy that throws total responsibility on the individual for making his own judgments and deciding what kind of life he should lead. But the points of view expressed here belong to the same family of ideas. They have sufficient in common to bring all who think on these lines to desire an organization that will exert an influence on public opinion and affairs. Humanists and rationalists—the terms are regarded as synonymous—may differ about high theory but they will usually be found voting in the same lobby on questions of social welfare and reform.

The plan of the book is to show how humanism is related to other philosophies and religion—to state, for example, what the 'unbeliever' believes. Then the long, historical tradition out of which contemporary humanism emerged is described. The remaining essays deal, in effect, with morality without religion (at least in the usual sense), the relationship of the individual to the community, and the various organizations which have acted as vehicles of these ideas. It is to be hoped that these essays by writers prominently associated with various humanist organizations will satisfy some of the curiosity which is felt about

humanism itself and perhaps remove certain misconceptions from and clarify the minds of those who cannot accept the usual religious solutions and have not yet found a satisfying alternative.

H.H.

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First and Last Things

HECTOR HAWTON

MAN is a tool-making animal; but if we dwell too much on this characteristic we are in danger of overlooking something that has played just as significant a part in human history—the burning curiosity which has led to the creation of great systems of religion and philosophy. Man is a propounder of questions. He is tormented by riddles and enigmas. They afflict him like hunger and if he can find no answer his peace of mind suffers.

He begins to ask questions as a child—the everlasting *Why?* When he is older he realizes that some of these questions were foolish—though not, perhaps, more foolish than many of the answers. Later, instead of asking *Why?* he asks *How?* Much better answers can then be provided, but they do not entirely meet his needs. There is still a craving, half smothered as it may be, to ask questions that nobody can answer.

People ask, for example, 'What is the meaning of life?' or, 'Why am I here? What is the purpose of it all?' If they are told that there is no sense in asking such questions, and that they had better see either a psycho-analyst or a logical analyst, they may be silenced, but they are not always convinced. The itch may remain—the desire to eat of a tree of knowledge that is forbidden. They may spend their lives in

a vain search for its fruit, or perhaps come to believe that at last they have found it. This, I think, is one of the reasons for the revival of primitive forms of religious belief at a time when the main trend is in the opposite direction.

However deeply the acids of modern criticism bite into the original documents of Christianity there will still be Fundamentalists. Liberal Christianity, which seemed on the upgrade until fifty years ago, met with an unexpected reverse, and today what is called 'demythologizing' is a new and subtle compromise, attractive because it serves as an escape-hatch. But the richest harvest is reaped by the Roman Catholic Church. No compromises are offered here. A clear and firm answer is given to just those questions that linger in the interstices of the mind; and to many people of the highest attainments—let us make no mistake about that—they prove resistant to all the disinfectants of philosophy and science.

Why is it, the rationalist and humanist may ask, that men of powerful intellect, eminent in science and literature, believe in the twentieth century doctrines which were dismissed with contempt as Asiatic superstitions by an educated Roman? It would be too easy—and in my view a discreditable evasion—to impugn their sincerity. We can, of course, appeal to the ever-accommodating hypothesis of the Unconscious, but it is apt to prove too much. It can be turned against ourselves all too readily. There are pathological rationalists just as there are pathological Christians. If the child of a rationalist father indicates his unconscious rebellion by entering the church, may not the opposite also be true? This does not take us very far.

THE HUMAN PREDICAMENT

It is more profitable, I suggest, to consider in all humility whether anything vital is lacking in the humanist outlook,

and if so whether the defect can be remedied. Are the psychological needs which religion seems to satisfy in some (though not all) people merely infantile cravings for impossible assurance, or are they genuine demands which can be met in a better way? Can the plain man's question 'What is the purpose of life?' be re-phrased and sensibly answered, or must it be brushed aside as merely silly, like the child's question, 'Why is grass green?'

I do not think we should treat the plain man too cavalierly. He is puzzled, as well he may be, by the position in which he finds himself. He did not ask to be born and he does not want to die, but there is no escape. If we are right he appears to be journeying to the Dawn of Nothing. How is he to make the best use of this brief interlude of conscious life? 'Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die'—that is one formula. 'Prepare to meet thy God' is another. Is there a third alternative, and if so what are the reasons for preferring it?

It is surely obvious that if we remove the defective signposts which traditional beliefs supply for this journey through life we must try to furnish better ones. All human beings need some sort of working philosophy—a guide to action, a design for living. In the past this was provided by religion. A man did not gradually come to believe in gods and spirits, he was born into their company, so to speak. He no more thought of questioning their existence than he did that of the King whom he possibly never saw. The answers to any perplexities were given to him by priests and oracles, and they were not doubted. There were laws and codes governing conduct already laid down and he did not have to worry about what ought to be done.

We passed from this early stage of homogeneity long ago. The priests and oracles and the laws and moral codes persist, but the complexities of civilization have deprived the community of its unquestioned 'ideology'. There are still believers,

but they often have to make a conscious effort, which we call faith, because they are now aware of the presence of doubters and unbelievers. The latter are intellectually displaced persons who have lost the mythological scaffolding which, false as it was, nevertheless gave a sense of security in a dangerous world. Until they find new bearings the outlook may seem bleak—a well-lighted road in the desert, as T. S. Eliot describes it.

The existentialists have pin-pointed this anxiety of the man who has suddenly gained his individuality but lost the warmth and comfort of submergence in the mass. He can no longer shift the responsibility for his decisions to God or Fate or the custom of the country; once he ceases to march in step he has to choose his own direction instead of obeying the drill sergeant. In the jargon of existentialism he may feel that he is 'thrown into the world', 'shipwrecked' and 'forsaken'. If he remains in that frame of mind only the most heroic effort will save him from acute mental discomfort. To regain a sense of security by accepting a system of beliefs is scorned by some existentialists as a cowardly evasion. The predicament of man is regarded as like that of a prisoner in a condemned cell, and even a stiff brandy to steady the nerves must be stoically refused.

LOGIC AND LANGUAGE

The solace of a substitute for religion is also denied by the dominant school of philosophy in this country. The prisoner discovers that he was mistaken if he ever thought that he could call in a professor instead of a priest to help him to make sense of his plight. Logical positivism—and all its derivatives—does not attempt to answer his questions. By highly ingenious and technical methods it tries to show that they are meaningless. Indeed, the really up-to-date philosopher is filled with a strange zeal to demonstrate that

there is no such subject as philosophy, that it can offer no guidance at all. The professional philosopher's dignity is offended if he is regarded as running an advice bureau—like such amateurs as Socrates, for example.

I do not under-estimate the importance and the value of the contribution to clearer thinking made by both these schools of thought. They have brought new or neglected problems into the forefront and effectively disposed of a number of hoary conundrums. We must be grateful, too, to the existentialists for reminding us so vividly that we are not mere spectators of life but active participants, and that there is more in experience than the sensing of coloured patches, that we do not merely contemplate the world; we act upon it and change it (and ourselves) by the decisions we make. To be able to choose, within limits, a style of life is to be free—for what else can the word mean? But freedom, as logical analysis has shown, does not exclude determinism. The opposite of freedom is compulsion; and an analysis of the meaning of cause and effect shows that causes do not compel.

There are plenty of other examples of old problems dissolving as a result of a rigorous reformulation. The Ionians started western civilization on the adventure of ideas by asking: What is the world made of? The issue between idealists who contend that all is mind, and materialists who argue that all is matter, now belongs as much to the past as the disputes between metaphysicians who maintained that the stuff of the world was water or air or fire. Modern logic has evolved a powerful technique for distinguishing between real and pseudo-questions and we can understand the excitement of the specialist in applying the new tools. But a less happy result has been that this sort of philosophical activity has become a province for specialists only. It makes great play with its preoccupation with everyday language, but the so-called common man would hardly recognize the so-called

common speech. He must be forgiven for complaining that the logical analysts seem rather like scientists who became so lost in admiration of their tools that they devoted all their time to improving them—as though tools were an end in themselves.

Until recently most analytical philosophers accepted a metaphysical doctrine, in spite of their abhorrence of metaphysics. This doctrine is called logical atomism. The gist of it, very roughly, is that all statements about facts are compounds made up of simple, basic or atomic facts, just as all material substances can be broken down into simple, irreducible units or atoms. Language obscures this, but a perfect language would enable us to construct sentences in which each word represented a component of the fact expressed, the relationship being shown so that the sentences were like a picture of reality.

The dream of such an ideal language has haunted philosophy since the time of Leibniz, and its attractiveness is sufficiently obvious. But it involves a notion which I find hard to swallow: namely that these ultimate bricks of which the world is made (or by means of which it is pictured) are completely independent of each other. Any one of these atomic facts could be different without affecting the others.

One consequence of regarding the world in this way is that the acquisition of knowledge must proceed piecemeal. There is no necessary order in nature, or unity between the various branches of knowledge. The 'block-universe' against which William James railed is ruled out. We cannot validly talk about the universe as a whole in the manner of Spinoza and Hegel. Indeed, even scientific laws, couched as they are in the form of absolutely general statements about *all* material bodies, etc., would somehow have to be restated.

ORDER OR CHAOS?

The emphasis on pure contingency—i.e. that any atomic fact could be otherwise—was reached along a different route by the existentialists. To them it had a tragic significance. It meant that man could no longer feel at home in the universe. He has escaped the fate of being an adjective of the Supreme Noun, but only at the cost of utter alienation. Sartre has brilliantly described this feeling of being out of relationship in a world of isolated objects with no necessary connection or interpenetration. It is the nightmarish vision from which Hume once averted his eyes—a world without causality, without order, in which even the observer himself has no substantial being. It may be that we can become hardened to such a view, just as the first repulsion in the dissecting room is soon overcome. But as a *weltanschauung* for humanism it will attract only the very tough-minded.

If we are convinced that this is the truth at last we must, of course, accept it, granting a certain licence for those with weak nerves. But logical atomism has been largely abandoned. The hopes of constructing a perfect language have receded and the quest has been practically given up. The new line is to tolerate different modes of expression. For example, whether we prefer to speak of 'things' or of 'sense-data' or of 'events' need not give rise on this view to any heated argument. It is not a question of one kind of language being right and the other wrong. Gone are the happy days when it seemed possible to assign all statements neatly to a few prepared pigeon-holes—sense, nonsense or tautology.

The new and more tolerant method of analysis has been hailed as a Copernican revolution. We must await its results, but the many changes of front since philosophers turned their attention from the real world to language and grammar should make us cautious. There have been Coper-

nican revolutions before. It is difficult to see how contemporary philosophy, analytical or existential, does more than clear some of the rubbish from the path of the ordinary traveller who is searching for what is commonly called a philosophy of life. It may give him a few new bricks to build with but he will look in vain for cement.

FILLING THE VOID

The metaphysicians of the past provided a cement of a sort to bind the world together—or, if you prefer, to unify experience—in the form of such concepts as Being, Substance, the Order of Nature, God. Even such an empiricist as Berkeley needed God to support the idea of a table when it was no longer in his own consciousness. The rationalist cannot be expected to resort to such a device; nor, I think, should he sit on the fence.

No doubt a great variety of meanings have been given to 'God' but the plain, straightforward and almost universal meaning is that of Omnipotent Creator of the Universe. For reasons too lengthy to be discussed now, the rationalist does not feel that this concept serves the purpose for which it was designed. When it is offered as an explanation of why the world came to exist, it explains nothing; it merely shifts the problem a step farther back. Alternatively, it may be put forward as a foundation of morality: unless there is a God to whose will we can conform, how can there be a moral law? But as we do not know what the will of God is (and people who believe they do differ widely in their views) this does not help very much.

Here, surely, is the starting point for the rationalist. Religion teaches that man was created by God and his proper destiny is to be united with God. That is one answer to the questions that we cannot help asking; but it is not an answer that we can accept. Existentialists like Sartre, and probably

the majority of analytical philosophers, do not accept it either. So far we are on common ground, but what is the next step? How are we to fill the blank that is left when the religious framework is removed? What kind of knowledge remains?

Synoptic views are as much out of fashion as the grand manner. The large generalizations of Marx, Comte, Spencer, Frazer, are also frowned upon. The age of giants is over and we have instead an army of clever, industrious, niggling minds working competently on highly specialized problems like termites—but unable to see. The price we have to pay for such over-specialization is the absence of creative daring and imaginative leaps. No doubt the great creative minds of the past made bad mistakes, but at least they were men of vision and they were not afraid of being wrong.

SCIENCE AND PHILOSOPHY

Another cause for regret is the wholly unnecessary separation of science from philosophy. The result has been a continuous narrowing of the ledge on which philosophers are perched until there is no longer standing room. It would make more than a mere verbal difference if we were once more to look upon science as *natural* or *experimental philosophy*—thus restoring its original name. Science would then be seen as the branch of philosophy that has been most successful. And its successes would do a great deal to fill the gap in our knowledge that seems to be created by the closing down of religious avenues of information.

I am quite aware that the craving to which I have referred in the beginning is not only for information; nevertheless, positive beliefs about the origin and nature of the universe, and man's place in it, play a leading part in most religious schemes. A humanist philosophy would replace the two-world model—the natural and supernatural order—by a

one-world model representing the best scientific knowledge of the time and fully recognizing that this is not final. The supernatural would be totally eliminated, and instead of a twofold division of theology and philosophy we would have a single body of provisional knowledge, science or *natural philosophy*.

This makes a drastic change in conventional habits of thought. For my part I find the scientific picture more deeply stirring to the imagination than the painted dropscreen of religious cosmogony. The latter seems trivial and commonplace in comparison with the vistas opened up by the telescope at one end and the microscope at the other—man himself midway between the infinitely large and the infinitely small.

It may be objected that strictly speaking science does not as yet give a unified picture, and may never succeed in doing so. But need we speak quite so strictly when we are trying to meet the psychological demand for a world-view to take the place of the religious model? We are not cheating in offering a provisional synoptic view because we do not pretend that in one hundred years from now—perhaps very much less—the model will not have undergone drastic modifications.

THE MATERIALIST ANSWER

Many such attempts have been made in the past. Reductive materialism was successful up to a point. It did show that man was a moving piece of our planet, that the earth itself was part of the same substance as all the rest of the universe—that the cosmos really was *one*. But it is simply not the case that everything that happens can be described in the language of physics. The terms in which you describe the fall of a stone down a well are not adequate to describe the movement of a fly to a jampot. The in-

adequacy is still more glaring when you try to describe human feelings and behaviour in terms of matter in motion.

The experience gained by the analysis of language is helpful in this respect. A verbal muddle occurs when we take a word from a context in which it is appropriate and apply it in a wholly different context. Reductive, or mechanical materialism is guilty of this sort of confusion. It declares that all material bodies are composed of material atoms. But whether we call these units particles or oscillations or events, in order to give an up-to-date appearance, does not save us from blundering if we go on to conclude that *all* living behaviour can be predicted from a full knowledge of physical atoms. What is left out of the calculation is the difference made by a patterning of atoms into living cells.

There is a very big difference for the biologist between a corpse and a living creature; but it is of no concern to the physicist. So, too, there is a difference for the anthropologist between a human being and a chimpanzee, but it may be blurred by calling them both primates, useful as the classification may be for other purposes. Some philosophers have stressed this point by distinguishing between *things* and *persons*, or more picturesquely between the use of *It* and of *Thou* in speaking. We do not fall in love with a bundle of electrons but with a *person*. To say that a human being is merely a *thing*, like a machine, is to employ the wrong category, and there may even be deplorable consequences in practice. For to regard a man as a machine may lead to his being treated as a machine.

These mistakes can be avoided by introducing the concept of *levels* of existence. They form a hierarchy, with the material level at the base. Thus to start with we have matter—and the language of physics is adequate. Then we have life, and a new language has to be used containing such words as cells, chromosomes, genes, reproduction, etc. Next we have consciousness, which is a still higher level and we have

to employ terms that are of no interest either to the biologist or physicist.

There is, however, no single comprehensive language in which the activities at all levels can be fully described, although all known levels can be found together in a human being. A man is composed of physical atoms and of biological cells; but he is also a person, capable of love and hate, able to think and plan and dream, free to choose between alternatives. The various levels are not insulated but integrated in an organic unity; the various languages proper to each level are distinct, but they should not in any way conflict.

There are other examples of integrative levels which do not correspond to the languages of the various branches of science. Nowadays, when statistics are such an important element in knowledge, we have to be especially careful not to apply language about groups to the activity of individuals. This means that group-behaviour is different from individual behaviour—a plain fact of experience, though it is often overlooked. The sociologist works at the group-level, the psychiatrist deals with an individual. They require different concepts. Again, the extent to which the ideological superstructure (a group concept) is conditioned by economic factors is a matter of controversy; but even if we were to accept the Marxist view on this point we would not have to suppose that it applies necessarily on the level of the beliefs and ideals of a particular individual.

THE SEARCH FOR WISDOM

This rapid, bird's eye view of some of the more significant trends in modern philosophy is an attempt to display a few of the ideas with which the humanist or rationalist in the mid-twentieth century must somehow come to terms. Obviously he cannot, like 'the complete man' of the Renais-

sance, master the whole of human knowledge. And no individual, however learned, can now hope to create a synthesis in the ambitious manner of Herbert Spencer. Yet the outlines of a picture emerge, however patchily, from the welter of detail, and some of the questions which continue to be asked can receive tentative answers. Humanism does not pretend to give the equivalent of a religious creed, nor can it identify itself wholly with a particular philosophical school; but it can dissociate itself from all creeds and many philosophical schools. And it would be excessive caution to refuse to deal at all with the quite reasonable inquiry, so often heard: What do you put in the place of religion?

The short answer is that humanism is not a religion but a philosophy. I am not using the word philosophy in the restricted sense in vogue today, but in the older, wider sense to include both science (natural philosophy) and an attitude to life which was recommended in the past by those teachers who are often referred to as sages rather than philosophers. They were thought to possess wisdom as well as knowledge, and they were said to be in love with it.

Wisdom, unfortunately, is not an article that can be bought like a textbook, but the desire for it—or in the original warmth of language, the *love* of wisdom—can only be communicated by example. The lives of the sages as well as their actual insights are as much a part of the humanist tradition as the lives of the saints are of the Christian tradition. They communicate an attitude which inspires us and is as necessary as knowledge of facts, for it shows us what to do with facts. We may pick holes in the logic of Socrates, but who can read of his death and not feel that because of it death loses some of its sting?

It is idle to argue which should come first, an attitude to the world or knowledge of the world. They react upon one another in mutual interplay. Without a love of truth, a respect for sincerity, an ideal of intellectual integrity, we

are not likely to gain much knowledge; and without a desire for human welfare, a hatred of cruelty, a passion for justice, the knowledge we possess may be greatly misused. There are certain virtues that spring from the scientific quest itself —intellectual honesty and a refusal to indulge in wishful thinking. Other virtues are idealizations of instinctual strivings.

Without practice, theories are empty. Admittedly we cannot conduct our lives satisfactorily if we have a false idea of reality, but we think in order to act. The more correctly we think the more powerfully our actions can affect the conditions of life. It is because scientific thinking comes to grips with reality, and mythological thinking does not, that science has given us such control over the forces of nature. On the other hand, the way we exercise that control depends on an attitude to life which is only partly derived from the practice of science. The discipline of scientific method forces us to be honest, but it does not arouse any special concern about our fellow human beings. On the biological level mankind belongs to a single species, but when it is said that 'all men are brothers' or that 'we are members of one another' biological language is left behind. We need a new language when we deal with the relations between men as *persons*, as distinct from animals. It is for this reason that ethical statements cannot be deduced from the concepts appropriate to a lower level; or, as it is sometimes—and in my view rather unhappily expressed—value judgments cannot be deduced from facts. The difficulties encountered by the logical atomists should warn us that 'fact' is a slippery word.

WHAT HUMANISM MEANS

Humanists are to be found in very different schools of philosophy and it is not possible to speak of *the* philosophy of humanism. There are, however, certain common

characteristics. If I were asked by an inquirer who is not interested in the technical disputes of philosophers what are the distinctive marks of humanism I should reply as follows:

Humanism, as the name suggests, is a way of life centred on man, just as religion is a way of life centred on God. It involves an acceptance of the conditions of life which, as far as our reason can determine, prevail on this planet. There is no evidence that consciousness can survive the death of the body, and so we must plan our affairs accordingly. There is nothing to suggest the existence of a supernatural order —another sort of universe, invisible and intangible, behind the veil of appearance, peopled by spirits, created by God. Consequently humanists do not pray or resort to magical incantations.

The purpose of our lives is what we ourselves give to them. To ask if there is any purpose in an inanimate object is senseless. It is to make the mistake already mentioned of applying the language of the conscious level to the events of a lower level. The physical universe could only have a purpose if it were aware of itself; nevertheless as man is a part of the universe, *that* part of it at least has a purpose.

Even so, the search for a master-purpose has been unrewarding. Man strives for many different goals and they often conflict with one another. There is the relentless urge to reproduce the species, regardless of other aims and social obligations. There are the so-called instinct of self-preservation, the herd instinct, the life instinct, and possibly the death instinct. However we classify these driving forces, there are very many of them. They cannot be reduced to one principle—e.g. the quest for happiness—and they must be accepted in their multiplicity. They are like a team of wild horses, pulling us in different directions until they are tamed and some kind of order is restored.

INTEGRATING THE PERSONALITY

It is one function of reason to control these urges; or to express it more correctly, rational foresight enables us to look ahead, to estimate the consequences of our behaviour, to impose restraint in the interests of maximum satisfaction. It is entirely natural and right to seek such satisfaction. What else is there to do if there is no super-earthly destination? But in saying this we must bear in mind that we are referring to man as a whole. We are not treating the various drives in isolation.

The danger of 'atomism' is more than ever apparent when we deal with the problems of living. If we consider our different instincts in turn, it is impossible to say which has the prior claim and we can neither praise nor condemn them. But we can only study them in this way in thought. We mentally abstract aspects of an indivisible whole, but they are never experienced in isolation. The 'eat, drink, and be merry' formula ignores the satisfaction of instincts which aim beyond the immediate gratification of bodily appetites. Man is not a solitary but a social animal. His life is impoverished when he is cut off from the community. Co-operation and loyalty to the group have played as big a part in human development as conflict and competition.

Freud noticed that neurotics were anti-social. Self-absorption and pure individualism are symptoms of a malaise. Moreover, neurosis makes the emotions shallower, dims the enjoyment of life and is a sign of failure. No doubt Spinoza had the same experience in mind when he said that happiness—which was the harmony attained by the life of reason—increased vitality. However this is phrased, we have all observed the influx of energy and deepening of our powers of appreciation which comes when we are no longer at war with ourselves but only with an

external obstacle—and when we attack it and do not run away.

Humanism is in line with all the philosophies which have taught that people ought to be happy, and that a good government would do its best to bring this about. It is in the tradition of the Utilitarians, though few people nowadays would be content with Bentham's formulation of 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number'. We can see very well what he meant, but happiness cannot be won by a frontal assault. Happiness is not quite the right word. What we have to do is to integrate society and the individual so that they are in a creative relationship. Even such words as integration and equilibrium are not quite right because they suggest a static condition, a goal which, once attained, is final—the ideal human being living in a paradise on earth.

This is a myth. It may help us in our striving for a better kind of world, on the principle of hitching our wagon to a star, but it may also divert us by the implication that conflict is necessarily to be avoided. There will always be a conflict of impulses and the most we can hope for is a cold war. Man's highest achievements spring from his discontent. To withdraw in search of a private nirvana is to give up the real struggle and prefer death to life. It is just this kind of retreat that is advocated by Aldous Huxley when he praises the life of contemplation. It is to be found, of course, in many mystical varieties of religion, but to the humanist it is anathema.

When Buddha lived there was no known means of alleviating the miseries that afflicted the mass of the people and moved him to pity. All that could be done was to work out a technique for enabling suffering to be endured. To bow to the inevitable, or in extreme cases to act on the grim reminder of Epictetus—'The door is open'—is well enough provided we are sure that nothing else can be done. Today, however, there are means available of removing some

of the more obvious causes of distress; but other-worldiness holds up the saving process.

This does not mean that humanism holds that science alone can redeem the world, though the gibe is often repeated, and it must be acknowledged that some humanists have made extravagant claims. There are no panaceas, and there is no law of inevitable progress. Contemporary humanists are well aware that the era of comfortable liberal optimism came to an end in 1914. They learn from experience—that is the essence of an empirical philosophy. But if men fail to be rational—and what could be more difficult?—we shall not improve matters by making a virtue of human weakness. The cult of irrationalism which flourished immediately after the second World War reflected an understandable sense of bewilderment and helplessness and it is the task of a humanist philosophy to aid man to regain his lost confidence. Irrationalism breeds despair. It is a failure of nerve and a regression to a more primitive level of thinking.

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Critics of humanism declare that its trust in reason is superficial and neglects the hidden depths to which psychology has drawn attention. Freud is invoked to give scientific respectability to the ancient dogma of Original Sin. Necessity makes strange bedfellows, and it is odd, to say the least of it, that a man who believed that 'religion is the master-illusion of mankind' should be summoned as a witness in defence of religion.

Keynes is a better witness, and he too has been called from the grave, full use being made of a quotation from a posthumous essay *My Early Beliefs*. Referring to the coterie of Cambridge intellectuals known as the Bloomsbury Group he wrote: 'We repudiated all versions of the doctrine of

Original Sin, of there being insane and irrational springs of wickedness in most men. We were not aware that civilization was a thin and precarious crust erected by the personality and the will of a very few, and only maintained by rules and conventions skilfully put across and guilefully preserved.'

He was speaking, of course, of an attitude that was fashionable before the first World War. 'As the years wore on towards 1914, the thinness and superficiality, as well as the falsity, of our view of man's heart became, as it now seems to me, more obvious.' But the modern humanist does not see in this confession any fatal undermining of his own fundamental faith. He knows that what has been gained cannot be taken for granted and that without perpetual vigilance it may be swept away. He admits that rationality is not yet established in human behaviour, and since it developed so late in evolution he surely need not be surprised. He admits that civilization is only a thin crust, but to this Leonard Woolf, another member of the Bloomsbury Group, makes an adequate reply: 'The sordid and savage story of history has been written by man's irrationality, and the thin, precarious crust of civilization which has from time to time been built over the bloody mess has always been built by reason.'

The only alternative to strengthening the forces of reason is to surrender our lives to unreason and abandon hope. Humanists are not blind to the evil in the world. They recognize the possibility that evil may not be finally overcome, but they are determined to continue the struggle and are convinced that their own weapons are superior to any others. Not reason, with its spirit of compromise, but unreason, the attitude of all-or-nothing, and the bigotry and fanaticism to which this gives rise are the ever-present dangers—and never before have they thrown such a menacing shadow as today.

The humanist and the Christian give 'evil' a different connotation. When the humanist philosopher is challenged to explain evil he can make a *tu quoque* retort, because no adequate explanation is provided by theology. Morever, the main streams of Christian thought, issuing from Augustine, Luther, and Calvin, regard evil as a permanent ingredient in existence. Eastern religions teach that evil will one day disappear and the contradictions be resolved: not so Christianity in its main forms. How to reconcile the eternity of evil with a God who is omnipotent and infinitely good is a classic problem to which no satisfactory answer has been found.

That there are unsolved mysteries need not be denied by the humanist, but he does not multiply them unnecessarily. A naturalistic interpretation reveals contending forces at the heart of things. There is a route that leads to destruction and a route that opens the way to the creation of new and richer qualities of existence. Some species have followed the downward path and become extinct. This could happen also to *homo sapiens*—it could even happen before the present century is out. But unlike the dinosaurs, man can foresee the dangers ahead and he is free to halt the rush into the abyss.

A GUIDE TO LIFE

The humanist is not so blinkered and insensitive that he fails to notice the inescapable evil and the tragic element interwoven into personal life. There is suffering that no amount of knowledge can assuage—grief at the loss of those we love, frustration which nothing can prevent, the waste of unfulfilled promise. This is the inevitable lot of man upon earth, but the burden can be lightened. On a long-term view evil is ultimately self-defeating and that is the final ground of hope.

It is not a tragedy that an individual life should end when it has been fulfilled. As a practical philosophy humanism encourages us to accept the conditions of a temporal existence and to fulfil ourselves to the utmost within that setting. By doing so we give purpose to life—and we discover that self-realization is impossible without a reference *beyond* the Self.

Nature, considered below the human level, is non-moral. It is only when we reach the level of persons that we can properly speak of relationships as right and wrong. But at all levels there would seem to be, as Heracleitus expressed it, a way up and a way down. A rational choice, in the last analysis, is surely one which directs us towards the development of all the potential richness of experience of which man is capable. All the conditions which enable this to take place are not yet understood, and a discussion of them would take us beyond individual psychology to a consideration of the best type of environment in which man can make the most of himself.

To sum up, the aim of a philosophy of humanism today is to help those who have lost their religious inheritance to find new bearings. It serves as a map to guide man on his journey through life. Part of the map covers territory that is known, but part of it is surmise of an unexplored region. In constructing this map and conjecturing the probable outlines of the unknown, the function of reason may be likened to a compass. There are many old maps based on guesswork which are worth consulting in spite of their mixture of fact and fancy; and there are many travellers' tales, alarmist rumours of haunted valleys and magic mountains, which can be disregarded.

In this broad sense philosophy contains an element of faith—but it is a reasonable faith in certain stabilities, in a natural order that human intelligence can discover, and in a social order that can be created in which man can be

free and happy, his personality unfolding like a flower in the sun, and passing on the experience and wisdom gained to enrich the generations of the unborn. For the harvest of the past is gathered up in the present moment, giving it the quality of good or evil that it possesses, and no action is too small to contribute its quota to the future. This is the measure of our responsibility and the limit of our possibilities.

It is not true that life can have no significance unless it lasts for ever. Its significance is its natural fulfilment as part of a whole which is a society of individual lives—itself part of a vaster whole, a society of societies, comprising the inscrutable cosmic process in which ever new patterns are ceaselessly taking shape, ever new levels of organization emerging in the evolution of matter, life, and consciousness. Man is the highest level of which we have any knowledge, though it is hard to believe that he represents the summit of nature's achievement in the unimaginable vastness of the universe.

2

Humanism in History

ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON

THE historical basis of humanism is the fact of human interdependence. A co-operative way of life is not something imposed by the grace of God, or by the fear of hell, on a race of natural Ishmaelites whose existence, left to themselves, would be 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short'. On the contrary, it is only by co-operation that man has survived. Nature may be red in tooth and claw; but man's teeth and nails are very inadequate weapons in the struggle for existence. Even the primitive hunting-horde depends on co-operation, on the pooling of effort in a common adventure, on the exchange, however rudimentary, of words and ideas, and on the transmission by the old to the young of such social habits as are necessary to survival. Much more is this so in any kind of civilized society.

It is necessary to stress this at the start; for religious propaganda asserts the exact opposite. To the religious propagandist, man without the consciousness of God and of his responsibility to God is lost. Religion alone, on this view, makes decent human relations possible; and anyone who thinks otherwise is dishonestly living on the moral capital accumulated by his ancestors in the ages of faith. The simple answer is that, whereas without mutual aid man would not have become man, there is no evidence that

primitive man had anything which we could describe as religious belief. Magic preceded religion. Among the Australian primitives, says Frazer, 'all men are magicians, but not one is a priest.' In such societies the distinction between gods and men 'has scarcely emerged'. In the sense which we attach to the word, 'the savage has no god at all.'[1] Yet a savage society which did not practise co-operation would cease to exist.

THS DAWN OF RELIGION

When in course of time magic gave rise to religion, when the primitive magician or medicine-man had given place to a god made in his image and, like him, pictured as exerting power for the benefit of man, it was natural that the gods should be invoked to sanction traditional codes of behaviour, just as they were invoked to account for natural phenomena. In barbaric societies and in early civilizations people did not know why certain things happened or why certain things had to be done. To explain such things they told stories or myths.

No doubt, as Jane Harrison says, the first myths were the verbal accompaniment of something that had to be done —hunting, ploughing, sowing, or whatever it was. They keyed you up to do the job and told you, if you needed telling, why you had to do it. In later times, when knowledge had increased and the magicians or medicine-men—now evolved into full-blown priest-kings—had studied the apparent motions of the heavenly bodies and knew perfectly well why ploughing, sowing, and the rest of it had to be done at certain times and not at others, the myths were still kept up as a source of temple revenue and as a sanction for codes of law in which the prestige of the priesthood was the first consideration. Thus Hammurabi of Babylon

[1] *The Golden Bough*, abridged edition, chaps. IV, VII.

could ascribe his code of laws to the sun-god, Shamash, though none knew better than the king himself that, except as the giver of light by which the scribes did their job, the sun had played no part in the codification.

By such pious deceptions the illusion was perpetuated that the social order with its priests, peasants, merchants, and slaves was sanctioned by the natural order with its heaven above, earth beneath, and water under the earth, and that anyone omitting to pay his dues to the priest might justly be suspected of designs on his neighbour's house, wife, man-servant, maidservant, ox, ass, or anything else that was his. Thousands of years have passed; and men have changed their way of living and the names of their gods; but the illusion persists to this day.

The historic task of humanism is negative and positive—negatively, to combat the idea that human values (truth, beauty, and goodness) rest on a supernatural basis; and positively, to exhibit their real basis in human interdependence. The battle began when Greek philosophers, confronted by the conflicting myths of their own country and of Egypt and Babylonia, ceased to explain natural phenomena by stories of gods which no one could check, and began to explain them by theories based at least to some extent on facts of experience. Their attempts failed partly because they had not the experimental apparatus necessary to put their theories to the proof, and partly because, however credibly they might explain natural phenomena, a society made up of opposing classes of rich and poor, freemen and slaves, could not do without myth or face any serious analysis of itself.

Protagoras, for example, extending to society the reasoning which older philosophers had applied to the external world, advanced such propositions as that man was the measure of all things, that there were two sides to every question, that the soul was nothing apart from the senses,

and that the gods were unknowable. To modern humanists these are commonplaces. We know that feeling and thinking are ways in which we react to our environment, and we have no reason to think that our organs of thought could ever reveal to us such entities as soul (in any sense other than a sum of mental states) or God (in any sense distinct from the universe about us).

But these were dangerous thoughts to Greek citizens who had been brought up on Homer and Hesiod, who could see only one side of a question when their city's traditions or interests were concerned, and who believed the gods of Greece at any rate to be knowable and indispensable to public order. And they are still dangerous thoughts to Europeans and Americans brought up on the Bible and Catechism, who have been taught that it is their duty to see only one side of a question when the Christian faith or the authority of their spiritual pastors and masters is concerned, and who believe that, whatever may be the case with other religions, their own is as true and as indispensable to Western civilization as the multiplication table.

EPICUREANS AND STOICS

A century later Epicurus sought a basis for social obligation independent of supernatural sanctions. To do full justice to his formulation we must remember the time at which he wrote. The Greek experiment in freedom, vitiated from the start by its slave basis, had faltered and failed. Greek cities were now mere municipalities in Alexander's empire; and the dynastic wars of his successors were making life insecure from one end of the Greek world to the other.

Faced by this situation, Epicurus lays down that the end of all action is freedom from pain and fear, bodily or mental, and that social behaviour is necessary to this end. The only reason for seeking wealth and power, says Epicurus

—obviously thinking of the dynasts of his day—is to win security. But in fact greatness does not confer the security at which it aims; therefore it is self-defeating. Justice is relative to human society—a code, varying with time and place, devised for the prevention of mutual injury. Its ultimate sanction is the insecurity which dogs the delinquent through life. 'The just man enjoys the greatest peace of mind, while the unjust is full of the utmost disquietude.'[1] Friendship is the surest road to happiness and security. We should therefore make as many friends and as few enemies as possible, and not fight our enemies, but avoid them.

The Epicurean school has been well described as a 'Society of Friends with a system of natural philosophy as its intellectual core.'[2] From a practical point of view its gospel of contentment with little, of detachment and withdrawal from the struggle for wealth and power, has more affinity with Christianity than most Christians are willing to acknowledge, and is warranted to waken a responsive chord in all who at any time are at the mercy of social and political forces which they are unable to control.

Yet Epicureanism has one grave practical weakness. It appeals in the last resort only to those who prefer peace of mind to storm and stress. It has nothing to say to the born gambler or the born fighter, and can only turn its back on the turmoil of the time. It ignores the objective fact of human interdependence, which could have provided Epicurus with a ground for his preference of friendship to enmity. And it is easy to see a reason for the omission. True interdependence exists only among those engaged in co-operative activity. Now the Greeks to whom Epicurus addressed his philosophy were not engaged in co-operative activity, nor necessarily in any activity at all. Productive work was more and more relegated to slaves; and though

[1] Diogenes Laertius X, 144.

[2] Farrington, *Science and Politics in the Ancient World*, chap. XII.

slaves were admitted to the Epicurean school, they were not typical members. Writing for people most of whom were one-sidedly dependent on slave labour, Epicurus could not give his ethic its real basis in human interdependence, and was reduced to a subjective preference of a quiet to an adventurous life.

The Stoics, up to a point, can be reckoned as humanists. Like the Epicureans, they sought a basis for conduct not in the supernatural, but in the nature of things. All living things seek self-preservation; man's special means of self-preservation is reason; therefore, for man, life according to reason is life according to nature. The rational man, or he who perceives things as they are, is alone free and capable of the good life; all others are foredoomed to mutual enmity and slavery.

So much could have been said by any Epicurean; the divergence between the two systems is mainly one of emphasis. But the Stoics differed crucially from the Epicureans in the ease with which they accommodated their philosophy to the established religion. By a few verbal compromises, by identifying reason with nature and calling it God or Zeus or Fate, the Stoic could go through all the motions of a pious pagan without believing a word of the official myths —just as many moderns contrive to be comfortable in the Established Church of their country without taking literally any of the historic creeds. Consequently, while the Stoics under the Roman Empire can claim credit for many humane reforms, as propagandists of humanism they were a failure.

THE TRIUMPH OF CHRISTIANITY

In fact, in a society based on slavery it is impossible to popularize humanism. Institutions for which there is no rational justification cannot live without myth. Christianity

conquered because in the circumstances of the declining Roman Empire it was the myth fittest to survive.

Gibbon's analysis of the reasons in his famous fifteenth chapter, if we make due allowance for his eighteenth-century limitations and neglect of the economic background, is still surprisingly valid. He rightly points out that the Christians, like the Jews before them, were animated by an intolerant zeal against paganism, which they held to be not only false, but diabolic; and that from that zeal they drew a strength which carried them to victory. But (and this Gibbon does not see) their zeal would have profited them nothing if it had not answered to a widespread hatred among the Mediterranean masses for the Empire which enslaved and exploited them, and of which paganism was the official religion.

It is significant that the least zealous, and the readiest to absorb pagan mythology and to compromise with pagan practice, were the Gnostics, 'the most polite, the most learned and the most wealthy of the Christian name.'[1] Again, Gibbon rightly points out that belief in the imminent end of the present world and in the advent of a miraculous millennium, which finds expression in the canonical Apocalypse and in many other writings of the kind, must have won many converts to Christianity. What he omits to add is that such beliefs (and the related belief in the fiery doom of pagan civilization, with which he makes malicious play) could have taken root only among people driven to millennial dreams by the appalling misery incidental to empire-building in the ancient world—so appalling that apocalyptic writers could find no fitter emblem for their conquerors than a succession of carnivorous beasts, each more terrible than the last.

Gibbon justly stresses the universality of belief in miracles among the early Christians, in contrast to the 'latent and

[1] *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chap. XV.

even involuntary scepticism' with which even the most pious of his contemporaries would meet similar stories.[1] This, as he sees, is merely to say that the ancient world was less informed about the order of nature and more 'prepared to sustain the visible action of the Deity' than the scientific eighteenth century.[1]

Gibbon next refers to the ascetic morals of the early Church—a natural reaction, he might have added, against the licence inevitable in a slave society. Finally he correctly emphasizes the Church's activity as a friendly society disbursing benefits with which the Empire after the second century could no longer compete, electing its officers by popular vote long after democracy had vanished elsewhere in the Graeco-Roman world, and enforcing its rules by a discipline which made it a formidable State within the State. With it the Empire had either to fight to a finish or to come to terms.

The rule is for Christian preachers and writers to stress the supernatural basis of ethics. True, their teaching is not uniform. They are human; and humanity keeps breaking through. Even in the Pauline Epistles, the fountain-head of the doctrine of salvation by faith, we read of 'Gentiles who have no law' doing 'by nature the things of the law,'[2] and of *agapé*—'charity,' 'love,' or as I should like to render it, 'comradeship'—being a greater virtue than faith or hope.[3] In the Johannine Epistles we get one flash of pure humanism: 'He that loves not his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.'[4] But such texts are not the rock on which the Church is built. From the day when the Empire became Christian, General Council after General Council was convened for the purpose, not

[1] *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chap. XV.
[2] Rom. ii, 14-15.
[3] 1 Cor. xiii.
[4] 1 John iv, 20.

of applying such teaching as this, but of deciding the exact relation between the Father and the Son, and between the divine and human natures in Jesus Christ.

Whatever the Epistles or even the Gospels might say, it was infinitely more important to hold the Catholic faith whole and undefiled, neither confounding the Persons nor dividing the Substance, than to feed the hungry, house the homeless, clothe the naked, or visit the sick. The Church had become an instrument of government, indeed a partner in it, and had no further need of the millennial dreams which had carried her to power.

THE HUMANIST REVIVAL

Nothing that can be called humanism emerges until the end of the Middle Ages. We cannot dignify by that name the religious indifference of the emperor Frederick II, who, while quarrelling with the Pope and believing no more in Christianity than in Judaism or Islam, nevertheless did the dirty work of the Church and replenished his own coffers by sending heretics to the stake. As to the heretical sects themselves, recruited as they were from the poor and unlearned, they could only point out—what was perfectly true —that the Catholic Church had been false to its principles, and fight the official mythology by a counter-myth based on the only text-book they had, the reputedly infallible Bible.

The revival of humanism was a by-product of the opening up of eastern trade which began with the Crusades. Western Europe, and above all the cities of Italy, were thereby brought into direct contact with the Greek as well as the Moslem East. The mariner's compass seems to have found its way to Europe at that time. Later on, as the Osmanli Turks mastered what was left of the Byzantine Empire, two results followed. Western merchants had to recoup themselves for

the loss of the caravan trade by finding maritime routes to further Asia: this ushered in the age of discovery.

Greek scholars, even before the fall of Constantinople in 1453, began to migrate to Italy and to make the classics of their country known in the West: this led to a new study of the human past. The discovery of the world and the discovery of man (in Burckhardt's immortal phrase) are the two factors which made up what we call the Renaissance, and which in different ways suggested the possibility of a full human life independent of religious belief.

The word 'humanism' in connection with the Renaissance connotes primarily an interest in ancient literature and art, and does not necessarily exclude belief in the supernatural. Nevertheless the Italian humanists were forerunners of humanism in the wider and deeper sense. To hold up to admiration the achievements of pagan antiquity was to admit that men who did not glorify the true God had something to show for themselves other than the vile passions, reprobate mind, and other vices imputed to them by the apostle, and thereby to abandon an important part of the traditional case for Christianity. To treat Homer and Plato as worthier of study than the lives of the saints, and the deities of Olympus as no less fit subjects for the artist than Madonnas and martyrs, was to say that truth, beauty, and goodness had existed outside the Church, and to make it difficult to maintain the dogma of exclusive salvation.

The religious Reformation was a direct result of the revival of learning. It was essentially a revolt of the laity of Western Europe and above all of the middle class—enriched by trade and enlightened by the printing-press—against the exactions of a Catholic hierarchy whose pretensions were not noticeably supported by superior holiness or superior learning, and especially against a Papacy which had become a mere Italian racket. Naturally the revolt went further in northern countries, whose slender resources made clerical

impositions less bearable, than in countries further south, where life was easier and the burden less felt. Thus Scandinavia, Scotland, and Holland threw out popery neck and crop. England compromised by setting up a Church which professed and still professes (not very plausibly) to be both Catholic and Protestant. Germany was split between the Lutheran north and the Catholic south. France remained Catholic only after a fiercely fought struggle, which left behind an undercurrent of scepticism that was to have its revenge later on. In Italy, where the Papacy was a home-made institution and every rich family hoped to see one of its sons in the papal chair, and in Spain, where Catholicism was linked with memories of a great national struggle, the Reformation had no chance, and any feeble revolt was soon crushed by the Inquisition.

But whether the Reformation took a Lutheran, a Calvinist, or an Anglican form, whether the prince led his people or the people pushed their prince, it could not directly promote humanism, and that for a very simple reason. To fight Rome the Reformers, like the earlier medieval heretics, drew their ammunition from the only arsenal they had—the Bible. It was therefore tactically dangerous for them to allow criticism of the Bible or of the supernatural view of the world which it presupposes.

THE BIRTH OF MODERN SCIENCE

The other great factor in the genesis of modern humanism, the discovery of the world, led directly to the beginnings of modern science. Ocean navigation gave a new impetus to the study of astronomy and drew attention to the flaws in the accepted Ptolemaic system. The cautious revival by Copernicus of the ancient Greek hypothesis of the motion of the earth was not regarded by him or by his immediate contemporaries as incompatible with the established religion.

His work *On the Revolution of the Heavenly Bodies* was in fact published with the encouragement of the Vatican and dedicated to Pope Paul III. It was the use made of the Copernican theory by others, particularly by Giordano Bruno, which convinced Rome of its danger.

Bruno saw that the abandonment of geocentric astronomy discredited once for all any cosmology based on the authority of Church or Bible. Hailing Copernicus as greater than the discoverers of new continents, he revives the old Epicurean doctrine of a plurality of worlds in infinite space, combines with it the Stoic identification of God and nature, develops a pantheism anticipatory of Spinoza and Hegel, and even forecasts the Darwinian theory of natural selection. But Bruno makes it clear that these are doctrines for the few. He favours religion as a moral discipline for the many, if only theologians will grant freedom to philosophers—which was just what neither Rome nor Geneva would allow.[1]

The Roman cardinals were no fools. They knew what sort of an egg Luther had hatched from Erasmus' laying, and they guessed what sort of a crop would grow from Bruno's sowing. 'Perhaps it is with more fear that you pass sentence on me than I receive it', he told the inquisitors who sent him to the stake. He had taken their measure.

These different streams—the discovery of the world and the discovery of man, religious Reformation and renascent science—converged in Elizabethan England. Her mariners fought Spain for the freedom of the ocean highways; her poets created a literature that outdid the Greek and Latin classics; and her thinkers looked forward to a new age of power and plenty. Bruno was in England from 1583 to 1585, knew Sir Philip Sidney and other eminent Elizabethans, and dedicated one of his works to him. Through Sidney he

[1] See the two essays on Giordano Bruno by Thomas Whittaker, *The Metaphysics of Evolution.*

influenced Edmund Spenser—there are echoes of Bruno in the *Faery Queen*—and perhaps Sir Walter Raleigh and Francis Bacon. Common hatred of Spain and the Papacy made these men receptive of Bruno's ideas. Despite official conformity to the established religion, the whole interest of the great Elizabethans is in human life here and now; indeed Protestantism tended at its left edge to pass by a natural process into a rejection of authority which detractors called 'atheism', but which probably went no further than deism.

PIONEERS OF HUMANISM

The 'atheism' imputed to Raleigh (for which he was never indicted) probably amounted to no more than this. No doubt his steady advocacy in Parliament of toleration for ultra-Protestant sects persecuted by the government added to his ill odour: to sixteenth-century rulers tolerance spelt indifference. There is true humanism in that passage in *A History of the World* where Raleigh apostrophises death as the leveller who makes kings and princes, the rich and great of the earth, equal with beggars.

'It is he that puts into man all the wisdom of the world without speaking a word; which *God* with all the words of his Law, promises or threats, doth not infuse. . .

'O eloquent, just, and mighty Death! whom none could advise, thou hast persuaded; . . . thou hast drawn together all the far-stretched greatness, all the pride, cruelty, and ambition of man, and covered it all over with these two narrow words, *Hic jacet.*'

But unless the lines written before his execution were wholly insincere, he must have believed in personal immortality.[1]

[1] 'But from this earth, this grave, this dust,
My God shall raise me up, I trust.'

Raleigh's friend, Christopher Marlowe, was more aggressive. Not only had he too the reputation of an atheist in his lifetime, but a warrant was out for him when he met his violent end in 1593. He uses his 'mighty line' wholly to hymn secular achievement, above all when its authors —like Marlowe himself and like Elizabethan England— start from small beginnings and defy fearful odds. Tamburlaine, a shepherd, proves himself a lord by deeds. Faustus, a poor student (mythical embodiment of the new learning which was shattering the old orthodoxy) wins by forbidden knowledge

> 'a world of profit and delight,
> Of power, of honour, of omnipotence.'

God is introduced only as an odious tyrant who—like the Church in Marlowe's day—treats the quest for knowledge as meriting eternal damnation. The last speech of Faustus, in form the lament of a lost soul, is in fact a searing indictment of orthodox theology. The devils who carry him off are stage machinery to tickle the ears of the groundlings. In the glorification of knowledge and power, and in the lines on the beauty of Helen, the true Marlowe speaks.

There has been endless debate about the religion of Shakespeare, as about everything else connected with him.[1] Nothing is gained by trying to read the poet's sentiments in those of his men and women who merely speak in character. Shakespeare is not to be judged a Christian because Richard II in self-pity compares his betrayal to that of Christ (and makes his own the harder case!); or because Hamlet, a prince religiously brought up, believes in heaven and hell and has scruples about suicide. Still less is Shakespeare to be judged a Catholic because the Ghost alludes to purgatory.

[1] I pass over as a literary curiosity the theory that Marlowe was not killed, but survived to write the plays of Shakespeare.

But when he puts into the mouth of a character words quite unnecessary in the context, we may fairly ask why. Such are Prospero's words in *The Tempest*:

> 'We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on; and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep.'

There is no dramatic reason for Prospero to say this. His speech is complete without the words. Indeed, the whole passage delays the action which he has just remembered he has to take soon against Caliban's conspiracy to kill him. The natural explanation is that Shakespeare through Prospero here expresses himself. On religion, then, he is more sceptical than Raleigh, though not so fierce as Marlowe.

Still more evidently is Bacon a pioneer of modern humanism. He did as much as in that age he safely could to free science from the fetters of theology—arguing that to seek other than natural causes for natural phenomena was 'nothing else but to offer to the Author of truth the unclean sacrifice of a lie'.[1] If he refuses to believe 'that this universal frame is without a mind',[2] he nevertheless takes the first step towards reducing God to a constitutional monarch who reigns, but does not govern. By mastering the laws of matter in motion Bacon hopes to 'produce worthy effects, and endow the life of man with infinite commodities.'[3] Marx and Engels call him 'the real progenitor of English materialism', though his doctrine 'pullulates with inconsistencies imported from theology'.[4] These need surprise no one who considers his timid nature and the delicacy of his position at the courts of Elizabeth I and James I. The great-

[1] *Advancement of Learning*, book I.
[2] Essay on *Atheism*.
[3] Letters i, 123.
[4] *The Holy Family*.

est stain on his reputation is his abject truckling to James in the matter of the burning of Bartholomew Legate in 1611.

The men of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were hampered on the road to humanism by living under governments which treated attacks on religion as dangerous to order. Even in the relatively tolerant Dutch Republic, Spinoza had to wrap up his essential materialism in the language of theism; and even so his major works saw the light only after his death. His contemporaries were not deceived: in his lifetime and for a century later Spinoza was reputed an atheist. It was left for the muddled romantic Novalis to be taken in by the trappings and to dub Spinoza a 'God-intoxicated man'—an opinion much sillier than that of the Dutch Calvinists who had banned his books.

THE FAILURE OF DEISM

The emergence of humanism as a militant ideology was a consequence of the struggle waged in the eighteenth century by the French bourgeoisie against the clergy and nobility who, behind a façade of absolute monarchy, stood between them and political power. The established order rested theoretically on two doctrines—that kings ruled by the grace of God, and that bishops (with the Pope at their head) were the divinely commissioned successors of the apostles.

These doctrines could be refuted in two alternative ways. One—that taken by the English and Scottish Puritans of the seventeenth century—was to prove from the Bible that kings and bishops had not the divine right claimed for them. This was easy, since the Bible is a mass of contradictory writings—revolutionary poems and pamphlets among the rest—and by selective quotation can be made to prove anything. But it was inconclusive, since texts about binding kings with chains and nobles with fetters of iron could always be balanced by warnings that the powers that be are

ordained of God and that they who resist shall receive to themselves damnation. The other way—that taken by the French *philosophes* of the eighteenth century—was to prove that no right was divine, for the simple reason that there was no God, or that if there was, he had revealed nothing to man about rights or anything else.

And that was the conclusion to which the evidence pointed. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries physical science went from strength to strength—verifying and completing the Copernican astronomy by the discoveries of Galileo and the gravitational theory of Newton, adding to its mathematical arsenal the weapons of analytical geometry and the calculus, explaining the tides, accounting for planetary irregularities, and determining the figure of the earth. All the phenomena of matter in motion suggested the reign of law and excluded the idea of miracle. Even if God must be assumed as the First Cause—as most thinkers were still disposed to do—what reason was there to believe that the First Cause took any special interest in the doings of man, or had commissioned kings to bear the sword or Popes to bind and loose?

Indeed, critical philosophy soon demolished the reasons for belief in a First Cause. If, as John Locke showed, our knowledge is derived wholly from experience, we can know nothing beyond the natural world in which we live and move and have our being. Jean Jacques Rousseau might argue in popular language, and Immanuel Kant in learned language, that belief in God and in a life to come, though indemonstrable, was a moral necessity; but this ghost of a God was a survival not of the fittest. People were not visibly more moral for believing in a Supreme Being. After serving, in the otherwise beneficent French Revolution, the dubious purpose of convincing Robespierre that atheists were better headless, deism ceased to be a living force, and the two

protagonists, Christianity and atheistic humanism, were left face to face.

THE UTILITARIAN

The classical formulation of humanism in the early nineteenth century was the Utilitarian philosophy of Jeremy Bentham and the two Mills. Utilitarianism, if not explicitly atheistic, is implicitly so. Bentham's formula, 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number', assumes human happiness as the sole criterion of conduct and ignores what the Church calls our 'duty towards God'. Bentham was a declared atheist. John Stuart Mill towards the end of his life admitted the theoretical possibility of a good, but not omnipotent God, but drew from it no practical consequences. Orthodox theism he uncompromisingly rejects. 'I will call no being good, who is not what I mean when I apply that epithet to my fellow-creatures; and if such a being can sentence me to hell for not so calling him, to hell I will go.'[1]

The weakness of the Utilitarians lay in their abstract treatment of happiness and in their assumption that different kinds were commensurable. The word 'happiness' is in fact a label which we affix to many sorts of satisfaction—food and drink, good health, the love of family and friends, the indulgence of luxury, creative activity, the contemplation of beauty and truth. What yardstick can measure the happiness which a hungry man gets from a meal; a sick man from recovery; friends, lovers, parents and children from one another; a moneyed man from a new car; an artist from painting; a musician from composing; a scientist from research; or the rest of us from the results of their work?

This impasse reveals the limitations under which the Utilitarians laboured. They dealt with people in the abstract

[1] *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*, chap. VII.

—with equal citizens each counting for one and none for more than one. In the concrete, people are not like that. At the very time when the Utilitarians sought to reduce ethics and politics to one simple formula the Industrial Revolution, first in Britain, then in France and other countries, was herding masses of underfed and precariously employed men, women and children into the new factories and creating problems of which antiquity and the Middle Ages had never dreamt. To the factory-owners and most intellectuals of that time 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number' meant *laissez-faire*—the freedom of every man to seek his own advantage with no more external interference than was necessary to protect life and property. But to the workers, who after all were 'the greatest number', it meant (once they awoke to their situation) the formation of trade unions to protect their interests, and of political parties to force State interference in their favour. Mill, the greatest of the Utilitarians, was aware of this and showed it in the progressive abandonment of *laissez-faire* in his later writings.

Marx and Engels begin where the Utilitarians leave off. For man in the abstract, seeking abstract happiness, they substitute man in the concrete—'freemen and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman',[1] or in modern society capitalist and worker (including in the last the black-coated professions)—each seeking from labour, his own or that of others, the income by which he must live. They held that need of the workers for a living wage and the need of the capitalists for a level of income customary in their class are necessities not to be measured by a common yardstick. On this view life settles the matter by a ceaseless struggle manifesting itself in strikes, lock-outs, and political battles, first national, then international, to end only with the conquest of political power by the

[1] *Communist Manifesto.*

workers, the expropriation of the capitalists, and the building of a society in which all are workers and 'the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.'[1]

RECOIL FROM THE CONSEQUENCES

That such conclusions could be drawn from Utilitarian premises led many to reject the premises altogether. The reaction had already begun before Marx and Engels appeared on the scene. Half a century before, during the French Revolution, Edmund Burke had bewailed the extinction of 'the glory of Europe' by the meddling of 'sophisters, economists, and calculators'[2] in political affairs, and had denounced as public enemies those whose 'plans for the relief of the *"Labouring Poor"*' dissatisfied them with the condition which they must endure if the world were to exist.[3] A similar recoil from the practical consequences of humanism inspired the idealization of the Catholic past which took shape in the Oxford Movement, led Newman into the Church of Rome, and continues to this day to make Roman converts of enough literary distinction to have news value.

But the reaction against Utilitarianism and its progeny, Socialism, did not always take a religious form. Many (though fewer as time went on) saw in the Darwinian theory of natural selection a scientific justification of individualism. The argument was weak; for though struggle is a law of life, it is not of one kind only, and in the case of man cannot in the nature of the case be a war of all against all. Had it been so, man would not have survived to tell the tale. Combination is itself a weapon in the struggle; and if the workers improve their chances of survival by

[1] *Communist Manifesto.*

[2] *Reflections on the Revolution in France.*

[3] *Letters on a Regicide Peace.*

forming unions and political parties, they no more break the rules of the game than do the capitalists by supporting armies, navies, air forces and police.

Friedrich Nietzsche was at least more logical when he attacked the basic assumption of Utilitarianism that happiness was good. For him not happiness, but strength is the supreme value: life is 'will to power'. That a few may achieve power, the many must be enslaved. That, says Nietzsche, was the secret of ancient civilization. Since then every step taken by man has been downward. Christianity began the rake's progress which ends in modern democracy and Socialism. To prevent the realization of this 'universal, green-meadow happiness of the herd'[1]—to avert the fatal day when 'earth will have become small, and on it the last man will be hopping who makes everything small'[2]—Nietzsche calls on 'free spirits' to assert their will to power.

Religion—even the Christian religion, much as Nietzsche despises it—is to be put to its proper use, which is to keep the majority contented with their condition, while a 'new caste', aiming 'thousands of years ahead', launch a 'struggle for the dominion of the world.'[3] As the struggle for existence among animals evolved man, so the struggle for power among men will evolve 'superman'.

No logical refutation of Nietzsche is possible. We can only say to such as he: If you hate the idea of universal happiness so much as to project a crusade against it, in the name of common sense keep your project secret. By blazoning it abroad you forewarn us; and forewarned is forearmed. An admirer of Nietzsche named Benito Mussolini boasted that it was better to be a lion for a day than a sheep for a thousand years. He and another admirer of Nietzsche, Adolf Hitler, were lions for a day to a good

[1] *Beyond Good and Evil*, chap. II.
[2] *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, part I.
[3] *Beyond Good and Evil*, chap. VI.

many people. Both are dead; and the plough has passed over their work. A live dog, or even a live sheep, is better than a dead lion.

Seventy years have passed since Nietzsche wrote *Beyond Good and Evil.* In those seventy years the issues have clarified. At the beginning of the period humanists hoped for a peaceful solution of world-problems. The intolerable evils of the first age of industrialism had been mitigated by legislation. Working men in Western countries had won the vote; and social reforms were broadening down from precedent to precedent. Economists told us that the prophecies of Marx had been falsified in every particular; and Socialists, shedding their militancy, planned to carry out an operation on capitalism with the consent of the patient under an anæsthetic of Fabian permeation.

THE LOGIC OF HISTORY

As few of us studied foreign affairs, few of us—among the few was J. A. Hobson, the economist and South Place lecturer—saw the significance of the scramble for overseas concessions and colonies which accompanied, and indeed made possible, this improvement in the condition of the people at home. When the scramble and the armaments race to which it gave rise ended in world war, most of us put it down to the wickedness of the Germans—as if the average German had been consulted about it any more than we had. As a result, the statesmen who had led us into a war to end war followed it up with what proved to be a peace to end peace.

A more important result was that the weakest link in the capitalist chain—backward Russia—snapped under the strain of modern war, and that a Marxist party (whose leader, Lenin, had read Hobson to some purpose) seized power and to everybody's surprise, including their own,

were able to hold it. More surprising still, when the peace to end peace had duly ended in a second world war, and the Russians after trying to contract out were forced in, not only did they confound the military experts by fighting back for four years, but in the end half Europe and the whole of China acceded to the Communist camp.

Humanists are driven, not by the logic of the schools, but by that of history, to take their stand on the concrete needs of the human species. Mankind is interdependent in no mystical sense, but in the material sense that today the co-operation of every able-bodied inhabitant of the planet is necessary to the existence of the race on tolerable terms. To any who at this time of day protest against the subordination of higher values to material welfare, the short answer is that without material welfare there would be no higher values. To adopt a simile used by Belfort Bax in the early days of the Socialist movement, but still valid, the higher values are like the odd trick in a game of cards, which cannot be taken until six tricks have been scored. For humanists material needs—the six tricks—are basic.

The greatest of these material needs is peace, not only for the obvious reason that if we are wiped out in nuclear war there will be no future to talk about, but for the further reason that the diversion of millions of men and women from productive work to preparation for war handicaps us all in the battle against brute nature on which our survival and that of our children depend. Humanists, therefore, cannot be satisfied with a peace preserved only by the uneasy awareness of politicians that the 'great deterrent' which will blow the enemy to bits will blow them to bits as well, nor with a statesmanship which brags of its ability to lead its people again and again to the brink of war without going over. Humanism unequivocally demands, not only peaceful coexistence among nations regardless of ideology, but the progressive dismantling of the means of destruction and the

transfer of the labour wasted on them to tasks of construction.

Peace once assured, the question whether this or that economic and political system is the fittest to supply our needs can be left to the test of practice. Of one thing we can be sure: the satisfaction of man's material needs will lead to no atrophy of the higher faculties. Success in the battle for life depends on our ability to work together, on the efficiency of our tools, on our education in the why and wherefore, and on a cultured use of leisure to keep us in physical and mental health. It calls, therefore, for the utmost output of whatever moral, intellectual, and artistic activity we can mobilize. The Utilitarian world, which haunted Nietzsche like a nightmare, needs for its building, and maintenance when built, just the heroic qualities which he feared that it would extinguish. To evoke those qualities and to combat, tooth and nail, every false fear, every false loyalty, and every false religion which inhibits their exercise is the job of atheistic humanism.

3

The Re-making of Man

J. B. COATES

IN his notable work, *The Rebel*, Albert Camus distinguishes between what he calls 'the sacrosanct world', in which 'truth is mediated to man by grace, and by religious authorities claiming to be the instrument of grace, and the world of 'personal existence', which in his view only becomes a historical possibility through the rebel. Rebellion, he adds, has its own values, in the first place of self respect, of integrity, of courage, of reason, but to these he adds love and solidarity, for he holds that the man who rebels against his own suffering and his own slavery cannot in reason help claiming the liberation he seeks for himself for everyone. The distinction Camus draws between the ethics of grace and the ethics of personal existence is in essence the distinction between traditional theological ethics and the ethics of humanism.

Karl Popper makes a similar distinction in his *The Open Society and its Enemies* where he describes the ethics of grace as ethics based on 'authoritarian and conservative principles'. They are, he adds, essentially an expression of 'ethical nihilism', of 'an extreme moral scepticism, a distrust of man and his abilities'. The authoritarian fears the freedom and reason of man and seeks to keep him under tutelage. Humanism, on the other hand, holds that man can

achieve self respect and a full human stature only through freedom and reason.

The authoritarian view has been expressed with great explicitness by representative modern theologians both Catholic and Protestant. Thus Maritain, in his *True Humanism*, argues that the 'extreme debasement' from which man is now suffering is the culmination of a process beginning at the Renaissance through which man, by an excessive reliance on the natural reason, has been cut off from grace and 'supernatural knowledge'. Barthianism is a more extreme expression of a distrust, indeed contempt, of man and his powers. Barth insists that the entire initiative in the field of truth belongs to God, that man's reason is of no avail, that 'in man there dwelleth no good thing', that 'human religion' is inescapably corrupt.

Humanism, on the other hand, holds that all knowledge and value are man-made, that it is an illusion to believe that values are divinely revealed, that the values mediated to man by traditional religions are themselves man-made. Thus in general to rely on grace means to rely on traditional religious authority. This dependence on 'supernatural' knowledge, Dr. Popper remarks, is based on the fear of admitting that the responsibility of ethical decisions is entirely ours, that no one can take the burden from us, that if in fact we accept some authority, it is we who accept it.

It is true that certain modern Christian thinkers deny that the belief in grace means reliance on tradition, arguing that men personally encounter God, and this view has seemed to find a certain confirmation in depth psychology of the Jungian variety. That men may give the name 'God' to what Freud calls an introjected father-image, and Jung a 'psychological reality' or 'archetypal experience', is indeed true; yet Jung himself recognizes that psychological experiences give no warrant for metaphysical conclusions.

The 'inner God' speaks with different voices in different

societies and to men of different religious persuasions, and can claim no particular authority. Nor can the creative inspirations which come to men, sometimes with irresistible force, claim to be the voice of God. There are bad as well as good inspirations. Hitler had his 'voices' as well as St. Joan. Humanism has no need to deny that what man calls a relationship to an 'inner God' may be a means of personal integration. But such experiences do not take away from man the responsibility for choosing his own values as, indeed, for estimating rationally the value of doctrines that claim to come from God. The revolutionary change of morals with which humanism is concerned consists precisely in man's full and conscious acceptance of this responsibility.

THE SEARCH FOR A COMMON FAITH

Christian critics of humanism, like Heim and Maritain, have argued that the relativism of humanist ethics deprives men of any stable foundation for belief and morals. Yet leading contemporary humanists hold that society needs agreement on a way of life and that humanism can provide it. Thus Corliss Lamont, in his *Humanism as a Philosophy* holds that a consensus consistent with science can be achieved on the values needed to guide and inspire individual lives and social effort, that amid all the varied doctrines that have come from the past a vital core of philosophic wisdom has been accumulating which the humanist can make generally available.

Julian Huxley offers his 'Evolutionary Humanism' as a common faith for contemporary society. Humanism, as Huxley understands it, is a 'developed religion', coordinating all the factors making for the enrichment of personality and a harmonious relation between man and society, capable of remedying the lack of meaning in the lives of so many persons, enabling them to find a place in an enduring com-

munity of thought and purpose. It is 'evolutionary' because based on a conception of man's destiny which, in Huxley's view, is to participate consciously in the process of evolution. It seems clear to Huxley that widespread agreement on values is possible, that humanism, as he understands it, has a manifest truth to those who understand it.

Dewey has advanced a case for a 'common faith' based on humanism in more philosophical terms. Truth depends, in his view, on pragmatic verification. This indeed is taken for granted in the case of scientific knowledge, but it is no less true, in Dewey's view, in the case of ethical values. Thus the values of science itself, reason, respect for truth and fact, undeviating intellectual honesty, freedom from prejudice and preconception, patience and perseverance in the testing of hypotheses, are verified in scientific practice because good scientific work is impossible without them.

We have had some centuries of advance in the physical sciences, but only in the modern period have men realized that it is possible to use scientific method for the solution of the problems of social relations. It seems clear to Dewey that another significant group of values, the values of community and communication, of tolerance, of respect for personality and creativeness, are inescapably involved in any successful attempt to make a cooperative use of science.

Values are what men prize. They increasingly prize the values of science because of its triumphs, but, in Dewey's view, as men are increasingly seized by the vision of what he calls The Great Society, which of set purpose makes the maximum use of science for the satisfaction of needs and the fulfilment of personalities, they will inevitably prize the values on which such a society depends. Thus values need no supernatural help or sanction but arise out of social practice.

The social control of the new energies which science is

putting at men's disposal must involve new necessities and possibilities for the controlled transformation of belief and behaviour, taking shape partly in new values and partly in changes in the detailed content of traditional values. The new patterns can to some extent be seen today wherever the new trends are emerging in the bosom of the old. We can find them, in Dewey's view, wherever individuals are trained rather to be partners in an enquiry than instruments of some religious or social hierarchy, wherever there is effective democratic participation by individuals in the life of social institutions aimed at satisfying the needs of all, wherever the rules needed to adjust relations are arrived at cooperatively and related to the concrete situation in hand. What is of fundamental importance in Dewey's doctrine is the conception that a new 'common faith' must be arrived at pragmatically through social policies aimed at using science for the release of potentialities and the satisfaction of needs.

ETHICS AND MODERN PHILOSOPHY

The conception that the new humanism must be founded on an ethical consensus concerned with the direction of social policies as well as of personal life is one of crucial importance. H. J. Blackham, speaking as one primarily concerned with the development of a humanist movement, deals ably with this problem in *The Human Tradition*. He refers to St. Augustine's picture of the powerlessness of the humanists of his time, blown here and there by the winds of doctrine. 'Winds', Mr. Blackham remarks, 'can make a desert.'

If humanists are to count for anything today, they must learn the techniques for the inspiration and control of a civilization through a body of accepted and developing ideas, and must establish a substantial and disciplined movement.

Yet it has to be recognized that humanists have not found either the will or capacity to establish a consensus in the past, except in the most general terms, for example the belief in reason, in science, in freedom of thought. They have certainly not been agreed on ethical issues and have been even more deeply divided on social questions.

The issue that has to be faced is whether the assumption that a consensus can be attained is in accordance with the recent findings of science and philosophy. On a first view of the philosophical situation, it would seem that this is not the case. Leading figures of the modern philosophical movement, for example Russell and Ayer, have denied that ethical statements can claim the status of truth. Russell remarks that he cannot discover any property analogous to truth that belongs or does not belong to an ethical statement. This involves, in Russell's view, the corollary that neither science nor logic can settle ethical differences. Ayer's description of ethical statements as Nonsense is a way of saying that, unlike scientific statements, they are not capable of verification. Ayer says in his recent *Philosophical Essays* that it is silly, as well as presumptuous, for any one philosopher to pose as the champion of virtue.

What modern analytical philosophy has shown is that ethical statements are unlike scientific statements in that they are not descriptive statements to be verified by observation of some state of affairs so that the kind of consensus based on verification attained in scientific enquiries is not possible in ethics. Yet a closer examination of the position reveals that logical analysis, far from proving that an ethical consensus is unattainable, shows how in practice it may be achieved. Dr. Chas. Stevenson remarks, in his famous *Ethics and Language*, that if positivism implied a sort of docile omni-tolerance instead of an active participation in disagreement in order to resolve it, there would be cause for alarm, as widespread agreement on ethical attitudes is of

great social importance. But, he convincingly shows, modern logic works in quite the opposite direction. By recognizing ethical beliefs as the expression of sociologically conditioned attitudes, it prepares the way for investigation into the causes of attitudes and of differences of attitude. Also the very methods of analysis which have revealed the logical character of ethical statements can be used for the discovery of logical methods for the removal of disagreements.

What logical analysis has done is to establish the logical character of ethical statements and in so doing to indicate the purpose which ethical beliefs and norms serve in personal living and social adjustment. Subjectively regarded, ethical statements express attitudes conditioned by social influences and varying from society to society; objectively regarded, they are statements of norms, of rules, of prescriptions, of recommendations, the purpose of which is to adjust relations within some social group. In the conception of the greatest compossible satisfaction of needs and desires, Russell has indicated a rational criterion for the norms needed to adjust relations, a criterion which is in fact applied in democratic communities wherever, as in framing a highway code, men proceed by rational and common-sense methods instead of by relying on traditional authority. Perhaps the primary task of humanism is to help to ensure that such a criterion is applied to the entire range of ethical and social problems.

ACHIEVEMENT OF LOGICAL ANALYSIS

Logical analysis has, in fact, played an invaluable part in the elucidation of ethical questions in two main respects. Firstly, on the negative side of the question, it has discredited a variety of ethical doctrines which, until the present age, have stood in the way of an ethical advance, and in so doing, has brought order into the confusion of

ethical concepts. It is hardly possible for anyone familiar with modern critical philosophy to hold any longer that man possesses an intuitive knowledge of a realm of the good, or to believe that some objectively valid system of ethics has been divinely revealed, or that we can found a system of ethics on a 'natural law' which is apparent to reason.

Logical analysis has led no less to an almost universal rejection of the 'naturalistic fallacy', the belief that a moral problem is a scientific problem, a problem of finding out what in fact men like and approve of. What an ethical statement says is that men *ought* to do certain things; a statement of what in fact they do will never solve the problem of what they *ought* to do.

Modern logic has shown also the emptiness of the dispute between the subjectivists and the objectivists which for centuries has divided philosophers into rival camps, the former holding that a thing is called 'good' when people desire it, the latter saying that to call a thing 'good' is to say that it possesses some objective quality deserving of the name. Analysis shows that no difference of substance divides these schools, that the subjectivist is emphasizing one aspect of the situation when man makes an ethical choice, the objectivist the other half, the subjectivist stressing the relation of choices to needs and desires, the objectivist the objective factors which influence choice. Clearly if we attempt to reach a moral consensus we must take into account both psychological and environmental factors.

But logical analysis also helps us to see what is the purpose served by ethical norms and obligations so that we can work with more understanding on the problems of moral adjustment. Both logic and sociology have made useful contributions to solving the problem of the removal of disagreements and tensions within groups, while psychology has helped us to understand both the problems of personal

integration, on the one hand, and, on the other, those involved in an adjustment of the individual to society which is rational and creative instead of merely repressive.

Analysis has further shown that statements of what *ought* to be done involve a concealed hypothetical. Men *ought* not to drive past a warning traffic light *if* they wish to prevent unnecessary slaughter on the roads. Thus a humanist ethic in its most comprehensive sense is a statement of what men and societies *ought* to do *if* they wish to ensure peace and the fullest satisfaction of the needs of citizens throughout the world. When a rational ethical criterion of this kind has been understood and accepted, there is a good chance that the details of the norms and rules involved can be reached.

THE ETHICS OF HUMANISM

We have seen that ethical beliefs always state what men *ought* to do if they are deeply concerned with a certain way of life. But the mere affirmation of an ethical principle does not ensure its acceptance; rather may it arouse a violent negative reaction if it is opposed to generally accepted assumptions and desires. Thus humanist ethics can only be 'in widest commonalty spread' through first appearing as a dynamic in a relatively small number of people and, at a later stage, leading to the transformation of educational and social institutions so that the new beliefs and attitudes come to be taken for granted as expressing a widely accepted way of life.

What are these beliefs and obligations which need to be accepted at the present stage by a creative minority of humanists? In the first place, it is important to stress the values of responsible independence, of integrity, of courage, of reason, which are the theme of Camus's book, *The Rebel*. A humanist must not be a conformist. He will subject the

rules and traditions of any social group to which he belongs to a continual critical assessment, careful indeed to preserve what is of value yet always ready to make rational adjustments and always on the look out for new creative possibilities. His beliefs will be authentically his own, the fruit of his own thought and decisions. He will not swallow any system or doctrine whole, not even humanism, as if to save himself the trouble of further thought. His philosophy, if he arrives at a coordinated body of belief, will be a genuinely personal creation, expressing his own uniqueness, his own independent efforts.

Traditionally, morality has meant *mores* or social custom, and men have felt an obligation (if not an irrational compulsion) to accept the customary beliefs of their society. In choosing for himself, the humanist will deny that society has the right to impose on him any code or belief. But freedom implies responsibility. A humanist can claim freedom from social determination only if he himself accepts responsibility for his relationship to society. The very fact indeed that humanism implies commitment to a chosen way of life is a remedy against a host of besetting sins, laziness, heedlessness, capriciousness, a life of trivial indulgence.

Man is inescapably involved with other men. It is a false sense of independence, ending sooner or later in servitude, which leads men to believe that they can do anything perfectly for themselves without other people or even against them. Man needs the freedom of other men, as he is inescapably responsible for other men. The humanist should accept this responsibility, not only by respecting the independence of other men, and doing something significant in cooperation with other men, but by loving them and identifying himself with their good.

The truth is that man's title to freedom, and also his capacity genuinely to attain it, depends on his accepting responsibility for his total human situation, not only his

relationship to himself (for he may readily enough enslave himself), but his relationship to other persons, to political society and, indeed, to the whole world. If men do not accept responsibility for creating a world order, sooner or later the world will destroy them. But a man who has taken his destiny on himself will find, founded on that rock of an integrated and socially adjusted personality, a world of measureless freedom open to him.

One might say indeed that the basic choice of the humanist is freedom itself, the capacity for the free choice of ends and values which is open to him when he has achieved a mastery of self and situation. He will practise a continual openness and flexibility, continually re-making and re-adjusting himself, assessing and re-assessing the situation in which he finds himself. His life will be a series of projects, endlessly leading to fresh projects. He will know how to release and express the creative upsurge that is inherent in himself as in every man. Failure in a particular aim will never be regarded as true failure, for the true end is free life itself. The qualities needed for such a philosophy are especially vitality, sensitivity, intelligence and a certain living warmth and joy, while the ultimate value is not any particular personal or social end, seeing that final ends can never be known, but the living joy of the free person.

THE PROBLEM OF LIBERTY

If a humanist ethic is founded on the conception of the free person, it is, at the same time, that of the person who accepts responsibility for his relationship to society. Humanism will recognize the dependence of desired personal ends on the organized social structures. The powerful conditioning effect of society is an inescapable fact. While an individual here and there will gain spiritual independence in a society which is hostile to freedom, the majority of men

can achieve it only in a society which helps them to be free. Where social institutions tend to depersonalize, genuine personal autonomy will be rare.

Marx's criticism of capitalism, that it 'alienated' men, depriving them of true humanity by turning them into mere instruments of an impersonal system concerned only with profit, was largely justified. The lesson of *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty Four* is that the social institutions of the modern world, helped as they are by powerful new techniques, may effectively eliminate the independence and integrity of the person. Humanism then is concerned with creating a society which will help men to achieve full humanity, which will help them to be responsible and free.

The full exploration of this problem belongs to an essay on the political implications of humanism, but as humanist politics should have an ethical foundation its principles should be indicated here. The negative aspect of a humanist sociology is concerned with removing the obstacles which have traditionally hampered (and still do so to a large extent even in liberal societies) the free exercise of reason and creativeness.

Clearly, in the first place, the tradition of civil liberties of democratic societies must be preserved, Habeas Corpus, the freedom of speech and assembly, the right to establish organizations that work for social change. But there are many fields in which new liberties need to be secured. There is no department of life in which liberation is more needed than in that of sex, even if recent decades have already seen striking changes in attitude. The law of obscene libel in Britain is a stupid archaism which bears hardly on both publisher and author. It is an affront to liberty that the right of divorce should be denied in cases where a marriage has plainly broken down. That men and women should be subject to legal persecution and cruel sentences for sexual deviations is an inhuman and intolerable anomaly. Human-

ism will be concerned to abolish all non-utilitarian restrictions on sexual liberty, if it will be concerned no less with the conditions making for that stable family life which is so necessary for the well-being of children.

Bernard Shaw argued with reason that the last section of the community to have their legitimate liberties in any measure recognized have been children, and that there is urgent need for a Magna Carta for children. If school order is still maintained by systems of coercion and browbeating or even violence, it is because no attempt is made to introduce government by consent. There is no reason why the traditional framework of school order should not be continually adjusted through free discussion between staff and children or their representatives.

There are, indeed, natural limits to school democracy. Many matters affecting the school are questions of public policy with respect to which neither staff nor pupils have any choice. Questions bearing on the science and art of teaching are matters of skill or scientific expertise which are not appropriate for decision by democratic methods. There may be good reasons why on some issues the head teacher should have a veto. Nevertheless it is important that as many issues as possible should be settled democratically, that the school should be a cooperative commonwealth so that the child will identify himself with a system of order plainly designed for the common good in relation to which he can make his voice heard.

If much instruction is carried on in face of the active or passive resistance of pupils, if most of the knowledge gained in school is 'inert', it is because children are given little or no choice in their studies, which perhaps seldom express the felt needs of the growing personality. Yet adults themselves would violently resent any coercion in matters of learning. One of the chief arguments for the comprehensive school is that it can offer children the choice of a

variety of courses as well as readily transfer them if their programme proves to be ill adapted to their interests, capacities and needs. Humanism will seek to establish an educational framework which will enable the needs and desires of each individual child to be considered, just as it will strenuously oppose the attempts still made by the state to impose an 'official' religion on the child.

Humanism recognizes that freedom needs a foundation of law. Law indeed should be regarded as protective rather than repressive. Laws are needed to defend citizens against violence and injustice and to ensure the peaceful settlement of disputes which might otherwise lead to violence. But new legislation is called for in our age to protect the community against the excessive power of individuals and corporations in both the industrial and cultural spheres.

Socialism sought to protect society from the power of the capitalist by the nationalization of industry, but this may merely transfer power from a board of directors to one consisting of nominees of the state. Humanism should seek to establish a pluralist society in which industries will be independent, democratically governed communities, autonomous in matters not specifically reserved to the state as questions of public policy. In such industrial guilds workers will be members of the guild possessing the rights attaching to membership of a democratic body.

It has to be recognized that there are natural limits to democracy in the factory as in the school. Not only, as we have seen, are many industrial questions questions of public policy, but problems of managerial and technical expertise are not appropriate for democratic decision, however desirable it may be for managers to function in a framework of rights and liberties. It remains true that humanism will be concerned to defend the democratic principle in industry and to put a check on excessive concentrations of power.

There is even greater need in our time to protect society

against excessive power in the cultural field exercised by commercial agencies controlling literature, art and the instruments of popular culture and entertainment for motives of profit. A condition may arise, and over the main body of culture and entertainment has indeed already arisen, in which literature and art are debased by being made subservient to commercial considerations, while the smaller agencies producing work of high quality are unable to pay their way and either disappear or are taken over. The gravity of the situation thus created through the degradation of public taste and morals is seldom realized. Humanism will recognize that culture and entertainment are debased precisely to the extent that they are made a mere instrument of profit, and will seek increasingly to transfer their control to non-profit-making bodies (like those at present assisted by the Arts Council) concerned only with maintaining high standards.

WORLD ORDER

On the positive side of its social programme humanism seeks agreement on the principles and rules through which world order can be safeguarded and the maximum satisfaction of the cultural and material needs of all peoples ensured.

We have seen that liberty in society is not the right to do as one pleases, but the right to those *liberties* which are the foundation of a good life in society. This principle, while largely accepted *within* the advanced democracies is still not recognized in the international field, in which liberty is identified with absolute national sovereignty. The liberty of states, good international relations, peace and security, will only be safeguarded when the liberties of states, like the liberties of individuals and corporations within states, are limited and defined, when certain powers, in the edu-

cational and cultural as well as in the political and economic spheres, are reserved to federal authorities administering a body of international law and able to enforce it through a monopoly of the more serious weapons, while the autonomy of nation states is guaranteed in non-reserved matters. Civilization will be destroyed if a remedy is not found for war, and states ought not to have the right or the power to make war, yet they can be expected to give up that right only if their safety and liberty are effectively guaranteed by a higher power.

Federalism as a remedy for the international anarchy is usually dismissed as utopian. It is utopian at the present stage only because of a failure of general opinion to recognize that liberty and security must be founded on law in the international as in other spheres. Humanism must seek to establish a body of opinion in the advanced societies which recognizes their obligation to take the initiative in this matter by declaring their willingness to enter into a federal union, given agreement on the principles through which the machinery for international order can be combined with cooperative international action for the guaranteeing of liberties and the satisfaction of material and cultural needs.

A federal authority needs the following powers: (1) power to maintain peace through a monopoly of the more serious weapons; (2) powers of economic planning, including the power to initiate action designed to raise the standard of living of retarded communities as rapidly as possible to that of the more developed economies; (3) powers to guarantee basic liberties; (4) powers to develop educational facilities so as to bring about the fullest satisfaction of cultural needs and the fullest development of individual capacities; (5) powers to initiate population policies.

The functional principle in international relations is valuable in that, when opinion is not ripe for federalism, co-

operation in particular tasks may be practicable and may lay the foundation for union at a later stage. For the same reason, every use should be made of UNO and its functional agencies. Also the principle of peaceful coexistence is valuable as long as fundamental differences of principle between East and West make any kind of close political union between them out of the question. But these considerations do not exempt the advanced democracies from proceeding to more fundamental remedies based on the federal principle at the earliest possible stage, or exempt pioneer opinion from the obligation to press urgently the need for radical solutions.

What stands in the way is not any essential impracticability in such remedies but the backward state of opinion, and it is with changing opinion that humanism should be primarily concerned. Through the powerful modern media of mass communication the climate of opinion might be changed in a relatively short time. A recognition by the Communist states that Western international policy was concerned primarily with constructive social ends might well diminish international tension by destroying Russian phobias, so hastening the liberalization of the East and bringing nearer the day when one may speak of the feasibility of a federal world order.

PLANNING FOR FREEDOM

While humanism believes in the need for a common faith, it rejects compulsory indoctrination in some officially approved orthodoxy. At the same time, while it is concerned with democratic patterns of relations aimed at releasing the reason and creativeness of persons, it regards as an illusion the liberal belief that a 'natural harmony' in society can be established by freedom alone. Humanism then must seek

a solution of the problem of a common faith in what Mannheim called *Planning for Freedom.*

The key to the problem, I believe, must be found in a recognition that the complex and difficult task of adjusting individuals to a world society demands a universal system of education which includes certain obligatory elements, however much its main concern is to provide new opportunities and liberties and develop individual gifts and capacities. These compulsory elements must include, not only training in certain basic skills, but civic and ethical training at every educational level aimed at making all citizens heirs to the entire human tradition, familiar with the best that has been thought and done in the world, and at training them each to play a creative part, in cooperation with others, in framing an authentic personal philosophy which takes into account both traditional wisdom and recent advances in thought and in science. This is a tremendous task, but humanism must insist that it should be seriously undertaken and must regard it as a first priority in its teaching and propaganda.

The aim of such ethical and civic training is not only to help citizens to become free and responsible but to bring them into organic relationship with national and world society, so that they feel that they have a creative part to play in it. As young children cannot properly understand large philosophical, ethical and social issues, the training should be continued in advanced courses and at universities, as it should be richly developed (though without any compulsory element) through the great instruments of adult education and mass communication, these having been freed, as we have earlier suggested, from the control of commercial agencies.

In this connection, because of its immense power as an instrument of mass communication, broadcasting is of fundamental importance. Humanism must demand that broad-

casting policy shall be honest in facing the present crisis of culture, including the radical difference of outlook that separates Christian from non-Christian opinion. The problem of a new common faith can only be solved by establishing effective relationship between representative thinkers from all sections of opinion who are genuinely concerned to find a basis of agreement and to elucidate controversial issues.

A final consideration of crucial importance remains. I have said earlier that the immense and revolutionary changes with which humanism is concerned must depend, in the first place, on the efforts of a creative minority of humanists prepared to accept responsibility both for making and re-making themselves and for confronting their total human situation and taking the action which is relevant to it. This requires a religious dynamic and the question may legitimately be raised whether humanism is capable of providing it.

It can be said at once that it will be unable to do so if it continues to express that mainly negative and critical attitude, based primarily on an attack on the historical religions, that has at times characterized it. It is true indeed, as we have seen, that humanism rejects the morality of grace insofar as that means merely a reliance on traditional authority. But in general the attitude of humanism to Christianity and other religions should not be one of total opposition but of appropriating whatever is valuable in them in some larger synthesis.

In particular there are embodied in the finer elements of the religious tradition, as indeed in the thought of certain contemporary Christian thinkers, such men as Berdyaev and Schweitzer, not only highly significant ethical conceptions, but an understanding of certain techniques for the integration of personalities and the release of creative energies which humanism must understand and appropriate if it is to realize its great purpose. It follows that humanist associ-

ations should be willing to cooperate with pioneer Christian bodies, not only in the elucidation of the differences that divide them, but in taking action in the social field.

One further word should be added. We have seen that humanism seeks to establish a pluralist society in which not only the creativeness of persons is safeguarded and encouraged but the various social groups of every kind and at every level are given the greatest measure of autonomy. This means that humanism is anxious to avoid any monolithic control of society such as was exercised by the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages and is exercised by totalitarian systems today. Thus a humanist movement will be only one of a large variety of bodies which will be seeking from their various approaches to influence opinion. If humanism, then, is to play a directing role, it must not be through the exercise of power but through the quality of the insight and leadership it is able to offer. This fundamental consideration offers the movement a great challenge. The greatest hope I cherish in writing this essay is that I may have made some small contribution to helping the movement to make an adequate response to it.

4

The Individual and Society

DONALD FORD

IT is not easy in the space at my disposal to deal with the relationship of the individual and society without appearing dogmatic, although my intention is to explore the subject in a tentative manner. There is not room for a fully documented and detailed development of the whole range of topics which ought to be discussed and I have had to concentrate, quite arbitrarily, on a limited number of points which are of most importance to me though they may seem relatively unimportant to others.

The statement, very frequently made, that the individual and the state are inevitably in conflict is regarded almost as a truism today. It is fashionable to suppose that the individual and the state are necessarily in opposition. The state is seen as always threatening the rights of the individual, and it is assumed that any development of its powers is inimical to the development of the individual. It is important to realize that such an account is not a true one necessarily before we proceed at all.

The other fact, which in some measure redresses the balance, has tended to be ignored or overlooked: man needs man, and the full development of man's potential means that he must live in association with his kind. A man

who lived his whole life in isolation—even if such a thing were possible—would be something less than human.

The humanist desires the free development of human personality in all men and women. This implies a recognition on the part of others of a similar aspiration. On the basis of common humanity and with a full regard for human dignity a reconciliation becomes possible.

We must never let our ideas of the relationship of human individuals and the societies in which they find themselves be imprisoned by the particular sort of society which has developed in modern industrial communities; those communities are not finally shaped and are capable of re-shaping. It would, however, be foolish to ignore that there are points of conflict between individual desires and social ends, and I wish to direct some attention to those conflicts which seem to me most important.

THE LEGACY OF THE PAST

Man makes the institutions which shape his society; he cannot be menaced by society as long as he maintains that the institutions belong to him and not he to the institutions. He should give his loyalty to those institutions which serve him individually, and him and his fellows collectively, but he should never allow himself to become the captive of those institutions, or be expected to refrain from exercising his critical faculties upon them, or cease to review their function and their usefulness.

At all times he is entitled to seek responsiveness in the institutions he has created; he should see to it that the institutions have the capacity to evolve and develop in response to the evolving needs and developments of his own humanity. And, as man finds a new potential in himself it is to be expected that he will discover the need for new and different institutions; he must not give more allegiance to the

past—and the institutions of the past—than to the future although, in the nature of things, he will use his experience of the past to inform the present and so help to shape the future.

The existence of such institutions will be concrete evidence of the worth and utility of certain values and attitudes inherited from the past. In bringing himself critically into relationship with this legacy of history he passes judgment on its relevance to his own life and the lives of those who come after him. The need to maintain individual human dignity in face of such institutions is ever-present and calls for sensibility, insight and continual vigilance. The needs, the patterns of behaviour and attitude, and the values which brought those institutions into being must be under constant review.

Many of those institutions were designed to further the development of the individual and to safeguard his rights and they should not be lightly discarded. But it should never be lost sight of that institutions as such tend to take on a life of their own and their development becomes, in some measure and to a varying degree, independent of the life of the community in which they exist.

When an institution, no matter of what sort, has achieved success it is in the interests of many individuals to perpetuate it even though it no longer serves the needs of the majority of the people in a changing society. It is significant, however, that the most successful institutions have also shown the greatest capacity to adapt themselves to new conditions. It is important to emphasize that it should be the institution that must be adapted to human needs, and not the human individual who should adapt himself to the institution. There comes a time when the ability, and, in certain institutions, the will, to adapt are absent, and it is then that man must be ready to discard the old and create

new institutions which more nearly meet the new needs and his new values.

TRUE AND FALSE DEMOCRACY

All of this can be achieved so long as there is a wide-ranging tolerance within the community. Today it is necessary to point the difference between tolerance and acquiescence. Tolerance is distinct from, and far more vital than, acquiescence. Tolerance contains within it the possibility of a free exchange of ideas; and, arising from this, the possibility of the release of new creative insight and the likelihood of action. Acquiescence is sterile; there is no opposition of ideas and no action can result. The advocacy of tolerance should never be confused with any form of quietism.

The humanist is in the world and of the world; his commitment is social. He must be alert to his duties and ready to accept his obligations as a citizen. By a responsive awareness of his duties and obligations he safeguards something of his individuality and that of his fellow men and women. *'L'Etat c'est moi'* was never true of any man in the sense in which it was spoken—certainly not of the Louis whose saying it is reputed to be. Yet there is a sense in which such a statement should be true of every adult living in a community which is dedicated to the democratic ideal.

The humanist, above all others, is dedicated to the democratic concept. He should, however, realize that he has never yet heard of, nor seen, a true democracy. The democracy of Greece was a democracy of privilege resting on a servile class; the modern attempts at democracy are valuable and viable, though none of them can claim to approach true democracy as yet. Whether it will ever be possible to achieve democracy in the fullest ideal measure is impossible to say, but the attempt is being made, and humanism has

a task in supporting that attempt and helping it to develop towards the final goal.

In order to clarify what is meant by democracy we should ask ourselves what we seek in it. Its prime importance to the humanist—and, of course, to many others —is that it seems to offer the greatest opportunity for individual development. It holds out the hope of enhancing human dignity and preserving human individual worth. Politically its motto is still government of the people, for the people, by the people.

This still remains an ideal because the size of most modern states imposes some form of compromise. Not every man can have a direct voice in the government of his society. He has the right, however, to choose those who will govern him; and in our own system they are both his servants and his masters. We must, however, face the fact of the compromise while maintaining the validity of the ideal.

It is important to remember that in the tentative movement forward of mankind, exploratory, practical and in a real situation, compromise is always necessary at some level and we must avoid sacrificing the practical better for the ideal best. History shows that to refuse to take a step forward because it is not a leap can lead to inertia, stagnation, a retreat from the world, a giving up of responsibility and, on occasion, a regression into chaos. In a particular individual this uncompromising quality is very often a source of new insight, but it may also lead to dangerous fanaticism.

THE FANATIC AND INNOVATOR

In my view the fanatic, of whatever kind, is one of the greatest menaces to social progress. The fanatic is compelled to deny the right of others to exercise their own

judgment and he seeks to impose his views arbitrarily upon them. His very fanaticism is the source of his corruption. But it is necessary to distinguish between the fanatic and what, for present purposes I will call the innovator. New ideas, new attitudes, new values, all of which originate in individuals of particular sensibility and with special insight, are necessary if a society is not to stagnate; and some of those who advance ideas may well be both fanatical and extreme. But the distinction between the fanatic and the innovator is shown in the way each originates his ideas and seeks to develop them.

The innovator tries to give current worth to his views in a way which differs from that of the fanatic. The fanatic detracts from the individual worth of others by the imposition of his ideas—the ultimate truth of which, to him at least, is self-evident—and he would deny the exercise of critical insight to others. On the other hand the innovator, who may be equally fervent, is more likely to pay attention to the views of others, and he admits the possibility of challenge, modification and refinement. He therefore advances within democratic lines of action.

There can be progressive or conservative fanatics. The genuine innovator is always a progressive, though not necessarily a whole-hearted gradualist. This is inevitably a crudely drawn distinction, but within the scope of the present essay it is not possible to refine upon it to any great extent. I am concerned to make the point of the distinction, even if I have not the means to develop it as fully as I would wish.

In considering the problem of the emergence of new ideas and the battle of propaganda which must ensue two things stand out: the worth of tolerance and the importance of an awareness of personal worth and human dignity. No man should hand over the exercise of his moral and ethical discrimination to any other person, and that is what, ultimately, the fanatic demands. The humanist contends that

democracy, without personal responsibility, is impossible. He assumes responsibility in full measure for all of his actions.

Whatever code of behaviour, system of ideas or standard of ethics a man gives public allegiance to, his life is largely shaped by the decisions he takes. His practical morality is determined, for good or ill, by his choice and conduct at certain crucial times in his personal life. The contrast in modern life between public avowal and private behaviour is too obvious to require emphasis from me. And yet, whether we like it or not, the greatest consequences more frequently flow from behaviour, and not from avowals. This is one of the aspects of duality to which the humanist must direct his attention, especially as for many people this phenomenon is now such a commonplace that their sensitivity has been calloused over.

VALUES IN THE MAKING

It is necessary, if a society is to cohere, for it to propound certain values and seek to maintain certain attitudes as desirable. It is necessary also, in the long-term interests of all individuals forming that society, for it to take to itself sanctions for the discouragement of certain types of behaviour and the maintenance of certain values and attitudes. It does this crudely through the law and the law's agencies, and much more subtly (and effectively) in a wider sphere of conduct, by the ways in which it bestows esteem on some activities and withholds it from others.

The need to be esteemed by society, or groups within society, is common to most of us. We require society to enable us to develop those particular capacities we discover in ourselves in a way which meets with the approval of those whose opinion we value. We look for such approval in those we love—the members of our family and our immedi-

ate circle of friends—and, in a wider sphere, from our acquaintances and from others with whom we make contact; finally we seek it from society as a whole. Every man is continually relating his life and actions to the life of society around him.

For each of us, however, society is not a consistent whole. Our view of it is determined by our family, friends, the people we work with, the people we meet and, only more remotely and far less personally, by our contact with and knowledge of certain formal institutions and generalized attitudes. The reality of this social contact lies for most men in that circle of people known to him personally. A man's life is bounded by a number of horizons, some close, some remote; and society is a remote horizon.

Much is made today of the need for integration with society. It is true that most men and women feel the need to 'belong'—that need is not met, however, by worship of the state or by conformism. A man can 'belong'—in the sense in which I wish to use the word in this context—to those things only which, in a sense, belong to him, and which command his loyalty. I 'belong' in my family and in various groups of friends and with those I seek to join in association with for various purposes important to myself; I am not, however, the possession of any of those groups.

It is important that I should not find my right to discriminate impaired by such associations; I should be able, if I wish, to dissociate myself from any of them. But, on the other hand, I owe some loyalty to the groups which give me sustenance, refreshment and support. That is merely to say that I enjoy association with others of my kind, but that there might come a time of decisions when it would be necessary for me to evaluate the benefits bestowed by such an association along with the disadvantages and then to proceed to choose between them.

A man makes himself in his contact with other men and

women. But such contacts are limited for all men. He comes into association with the larger part of humanity and draws on their shared experience in ways which are less immediate.

His aspirations and loyalties will reach out to certain other groupings which are more remote, some formal, some less formal. Beyond the immediate circle of family, friends and acquaintances he will have a sense of solidarity with those who work alongside him and, more remotely still, with those who work on similar jobs, who follow similar interests, and those whose political and ethical beliefs accord with his own. He will also feel some sense of identity with those who live in the same village, town or city, the same county or region or country, or who are of the same race. These are just a few of the ways in which man establishes some form of identity with others.

The humanist, however, goes on beyond those points of identity to a conscious identification of himself with all humanity. Important consequences flow from such an identification; state worship, which is a limited form of identification, rigidly applied, becomes impossible, and nationalist and racialist beliefs of any sort become untenable. To work for the preservation of peace becomes a vital duty.

Having accepted such an identification the quality and condition of human existence in many parts of the world becomes an immediate challenge. The humanist does not see mankind as inevitably flawed and incapable of acting to improve its condition; he cannot contemplate the human degradation, squalor, poverty and crying misery in the world without being aware of the challenge to action that such conditions present him with. He must know that the denial by any man of his human stature impoverishes all mankind and menaces each one of us.

For too long mankind has acquiesced in the degradation of many of its members as if this were inevitable and formed

part of the essential working of the universe. Today we are becoming more sensible of our obligations but we still do not see those obligations clearly. Within some countries and within some states we have come to recognize our responsibility to other members of those states and countries; we have failed, in practice, to face our total human obligation.

Today the concept of the state and of limited state responsibility stands partially in the way of action over the wider sphere of our obligation to humanity as a whole. For the first time, in this century, we have seen the emergence of global organizations which address themselves to those problems on a world-wide basis. The development of these organizations is, so far, tentative, exploratory and experimental, but their importance is that they make us aware, for the first time, of the problem which confronts us. Such evidence has not awakened our sense of duty in the way that it might have done because of the limited horizons imposed upon us by nationalist feeling, but the existence of these world-organizations is a happy portent and has done something to quicken our conscience and conceivably will do more.

It is important, however, not to lose sight of the ways in which we are still inhibited by the past. We read, day after day, of analyses of the human situation in terms of war, of power blocs, of weight of metal and armaments; every day the need for security is impressed upon us and we see attempts being made to achieve that security internationally not on a co-operative, but on a competitive, basis. We squander our resources in attempts to buy security for individual states and groups of nations. These analyses are supposed to provide us with a picture of a new world situation and are designed to reassure us with an account of how we are to meet new threats to our security. Such threats, such suspicions and such fears are as old as man-

kind itself; the new thing is the emergence as a practical consideration of the responsibility of all men towards all their fellows as citizens of the world. In this, in fact, lies true hope for the future.

For the first time we see the practical possibility of the transcending of states and racialism by the creation of world organizations: the fact that we have some rudimentary world organizations is a concrete testimony of our advance. For the future it will be necessary to discover and give more value to the things which unite us—on the basis of our common humanity—rather than to those things which divide us with which we have been too long obsessed.

Such a development in the international sphere has importance in more than one way. Primarily there is the possibility of the extension of the areas of assured peace and of active measures to safeguard peace when it is threatened. There is also a glimpse, for the first time, of the possibility of the right of appeal by an individual within a state to some authority beyond the state. It is of interest to note that after the war there has been evidence of a growing coldness towards this extension of human rights; a number of the member nations of the United Nations have been guarded in their recognition of this right and a number of others have declared that it is impractical. If human dignity and personal freedom are to be safeguarded and enhanced it will be necessary to press for the recognition and ratification of such a right.

The humanist turns to science for the refinement of his insight and the furthering of his knowledge and understanding. Psychological and sociological studies have begun to provide us with new rational instruments with which to investigate society and the role of the individual in it. We have learnt more of the nature of man and man's institutions as a result of this work.

Man is capable of great generosity of spirit and of an

equal meanness and poverty; he knows both love and hate; he is possessed of unrivalled capacities for co-operative effort and yet finds coupled with them aggressive urges which can nullify his capacity for co-operation if he fails to control them. Today we have begun to win new insight into these apparent contradictions of human personality; we have come to see that man is the heir of conflicting drives, both psychological and sociological. The fact of the conflict has been the commonplace of observers for countless generations but some account of the conflict in rational terms has been of comparatively recent origin.

It would seem likely that from the time when man was a relatively new species and few in numbers he has survived because of his capacity—and conceivably, because of his psychological need—to live in association with his own kind. This association has led to his development individually and to his success as a species. His capacity to co-operate has been of prime importance at all stages of development. But co-operation, and all those qualities which flow from it, were developed within the scope of his own group and with those individuals with whom he felt some sense of identity. Towards other groups, particularly in early times, he reacted with suspicion and hostility when he came into contact with them. It is conceivable that the survival of a group often depended upon pugnacity and aggressiveness. So it came about that two sets of attitudes won estimation within the group and were valued differently, depending upon whether the manifestations of these attitudes were directed to those who formed the group and were part of it or to those outside the group who were strangers.

Tolerance, honesty, frankness, love, a desire for co-operation were most highly valued in the relationships between individuals within the group; suspicion, hatred, aggression, duplicity were qualities needed to safeguard the

group against outsiders and so were valued by it when it came into conflict with others. This is an over-simplified account of social development, and I am aware that there are other psychological interpretations, but psychology and sociology are complementary rather than conflicting in this respect.

Much of the conflict in the world—on many levels—has its origins in this duality. Much of what would seem to be the contradictions of human behaviour become more comprehensible when the difference between the in-group and the out-group attitude has been realized. If the variety of individual responses capable of manifesting themselves in different situations is taken into account the seemingly incomprehensible juxtaposition of tendencies towards good and evil in the same individual no longer seem quite so bewildering.

Men are highly responsive socially and although they can engage in mutual hostilities they value more, and tend to seek more readily, the friendly co-operation of others. What they value most is the feeling that they can carry on their own particular activities in a congenial context which gives them the sense of being approved by others whom they value and of whose activities they approve. The fact of a change in our attitude towards hostility is to be seen in the complicated manœuvring which modern states undertake to give themselves a morally justifiable position before going to war.

But when all that is said there still remains the problem of human pugnacity. The institutionalization of pugnacity in war creates a terrifying prospect for all mankind today, and brings in its train great moral, social and psychological problems. We have made war a high adventure, and the period of war a time of heroism. We have tended to discount the greater heroism of peace. There is a need to alter

the qualities to which we give esteem and that depends on the propagation of new standards of value.

Some thinkers take the view that all forms of human pugnacity are equally to be deplored: they would make the development of our capacities for social responsiveness and co-operation the supreme good. But even if that were accepted as an ideal—and I do not advocate the making of any quality into a supreme good—there might well come a time, conceivably, when that good had to be safeguarded, and it might be at that moment there would be a need of some form of combativeness or pugnacity. That is, of course, one of the moments when we face the dilemma of the conflict within ourselves and our own natures, and we must make a moral choice.

All that our specific psychological insight can tell us about such a time is that insofar as we have developed our social consciousness any display of pugnacity towards others is bound to create a conflict within ourselves—or heighten the conflict that already exists—and we should be convinced that the purpose for which we violate our social consciousness merits the inevitable disturbance and that it will serve, in some measure, to sustain us through the unsettling period which will follow. Once more we come back to the need for individual insight and individual responsibility.

To imply that such a choice in moments of crisis is taken rationally would be to falsify human personality as we know it. Decisions taken at moments of stress are not arrived at coolly, scientifically and on a rational basis, except in very rare instances. Every human being is capable of behaving rationally—it is the distinguishing mark of humanity—but a great part of the personality is not so much irrational as non-rational. It is in this area that social organization—the process of esteem and non-esteem—have a proper influence and can, in very great measure, reinforce the rational element.

The fact that we have developed certain rational instruments which give us knowledge of certain areas of conflict does not mean that we have removed the causes of conflict; however, since we have been given means of defining the conflict and evaluating its causes it does give us the prospect of controlling such conflicts more than has been possible in the past.

At many levels of human relationships—within the family, within the community, between states—we have come to see that superior physical force can achieve little in the long term. We know from bitter experience that there are no victors or vanquished in war. We have lost confidence to an increasing degree in the use of physical force in dealing with the individual. We have come to realize that physical measures are too clumsy—to put it no higher—in dealing with most human situations and that the use of force usually creates greater problems than the problem it was intended to solve. It is a mark of the refinement of human moral sensitivity that right no longer marches quite so readily in step with might.

This is a reflection of a change being brought about partly by experience and the use of certain rational instruments which have been brought to bear upon experience and have served to create new attitudes in the light of new insight. One of the prime tasks facing us is to extend the range of our instruments to create deeper and more sensitive insight in the belief that new attitudes will emerge and find wider acceptance as a result.

The scientist is not alone in this task; indeed he comes late on the scene although his influence has been profound because of the system within which he works. Though they may seem to work in a different way the artist and philosopher are as important in the sphere of the investigation of human behaviour as is the scientist. Usually they play the role of explorer; but the scientist comes as colonizer.

In western societies man is still shy of himself; there has, of course, been great resistance in all ages to various of the discoveries made about humanity by artists, philosophers and scientists. And yet the creation of greater moral sensibility in the individual and more responsive institutions in society depends on a greater readiness to examine, discuss and evaluate those views of humanity as they are made evident. This is, in some degree, a problem of communication, but there is no doubt that over and above that there has been a great unwillingness to receive new facts, even when the facts were available and comprehensible. There are always, in every age, those who prefer a mystique of obscurity.

There is a form of institutionalized truth and an institutionalized public attitude which is defended in the name of tradition and traditional virtues, moral values and, in the last resort, of good public order and which, in the view of those who seek to defend it, is sacrosanct, not to be touched, examined or modified in any way. This is, ultimately, a totalitarian view; it denies the possibility of human advancement except within strictly defined limits and it denies man the right to formulate changing attitudes in response to a changing world. Such a view cuts off man from his rightful aspirations and would deny him the full opportunity for the development of his potentiality.

We live in a time, however, when such changes are manifest. The jeremiahs bewail the falling into disuse of certain social habits and the discrediting of social conventions; they deplore the disappearance of many traditional attitudes and they see this as a challenge to what they believe to be eternal truth. They characterize our time as one of decadence and hark back continually to the past. Our world is changing; and whether we like it or not, it will continue to change. Whether it changes for the better or the worse is largely a matter of the way in which we manage

the change and depends on what knowledge we can command to guide us through the complexities of the change. It is a time to be active, to be vigilant.

It is also true, of course, that the world has always been changing. What distinguishes one period from another is not the fact of change but the rate at which it proceeds. The rate of change has been accelerated in the immediate past centuries and has perceptibly quickened in the last century; it would seem likely to be even more rapid in the time to come.

The harnessing of new sources of energy coupled with new techniques will present human society with new opportunities and with new problems. For the first time it will become a practical possibility for mankind to tackle the poverty, squalor and physical and moral degradation of many men in many parts of the world. There will be changes of emphasis in our societies and new patterns of living will emerge. Our concept of work and the social organizations which flow from it will change. Education will have to respond to new conditions of life and new needs.

Our children will need to be educated in new ways to prepare them for a changing world. Already we are aware of the increasing need for scientists and we are told that we are faced with economic disaster if we do not produce them in sufficient numbers; we are just as likely to court disaster by over-specialization.

Science is a remarkably successful rational instrument and it can bring forward an increasingly wide-ranging and more detailed body of knowledge; but of itself it cannot create the æsthetic and moral sensibility which will be needed to evaluate in other terms than factual the results of its work, though it can inform such sensibility. There has been an observable advance in individual and social moral sensitivity, but it is in danger of being outstripped by

material advances which science has brought to us: that is not an argument for the slowing of scientific advance, it is a reminder of our failure in other directions.

There has been much talk of 'the problem of leisure'. I do not subscribe to the view that any such problem exists. Those who speak of leisure as a problem reflect the view that leisure is a privilege for the few. It is a fact that in the past leisure has been confined to a small, select number of groupings within society, but the arguments that make a problem out of increased leisure time for the majority of mankind are in line with the arguments that have been put forward against many other advances such as the abolition of slavery, the right of workers to organize, the extension of suffrage, the right of free enquiry, speculation and discussion, the emancipation of women. Leisure is too readily equated with pleasure, and pleasure identified with sin.

Leisure will be a commonplace of the future and could mark a new advance in the emancipation of mankind. Leisure is not, of itself, a problem—the uses of leisure, however, do confront us with a new challenge, or an old challenge in a new form.

If we do not succeed in policies which lead to a wider understanding of life and the possibilities of life, and if we do not, by such processes, release the great creative potential in so many individuals who have so far in our social development—unless possessed of well nigh heroic capacities—been frustrated, we will move forward not into an era of new human self-development but into a state of mass, universal servility on a scale which has never yet been conceived of in the history of man. The level of life in material terms may be far higher than anything we have yet dreamed of, and yet men will not be free as we understand freedom today. And many of the decisions which will have to be taken which will have to be taken in the first instance in

respect of children being born now and will concern the type of education, in its broadest sense, that we give them.

Unless they learn tolerance, the principles of freedom and the virtues of democratic institutions we shall regress. The developments which we can now envisage could place ever-increasing power, influence and authority in the hands of a chosen few which would endanger much of what mankind has striven for so long. Properly controlled, with an alert public opinion, these developments could, on the other hand, create conditions of life in which social justice and full democracy become for the first time real possibilities.

The so-called welfare state which we now see as the minimum requirements of a civilized community in a modern industrialized society will require extension. Society will need to safeguard the right of man to work though the work he does may not be what we think of as 'work' today. It will also have to safeguard his right to the enjoyment of sufficient resources to ensure a quality of life which meets the needs of his human dignity and enhances his individual worth. At the same time it will be necessary to preserve the vigour of our democracy and to foster democratic institutions in other communities.

State provision, no matter how generous, without a live, on-going democracy can lead to a form of paternalism which, however well-intentioned in its inception, could rapidly deteriorate into authoritarianism and totalitarianism. Such developments, if not watched, could as readily be fatal to individual freedom as an enhancement of it.

This, then, is the testing time. To believe only in the possibility of decadence and the collapse of moral values would make such decadence and collapse more probable. To pretend, on the other hand, that there is no problem would probably produce the same end-result. We need the courage to face the problem and to meet it with such knowledge, insight and capacity as we can command; we will

need courage, knowledge, insight and capacity in full measure. In the face of sweeping material changes whose quality we shall largely determine for ourselves, we must maintain our fundamental sense of human dignity and individual worth. Because of such values we have come as far as we have, but we shall need them all the more in the future.

We cannot afford to remain the captives of any form of dogmatism nor resign our destiny into the hands of any other than ourselves, individually and collectively. We will need to the full our human resiliency and we will need the support which emerges from a full sense of human solidarity. Humanism is the way by which man may prepare himself for the tasks which confront him, and it can give him the courage and resources to meet those tasks. Its traditions are as old as mankind; its aspirations, informed by the experience of the past, can meet the challenge of the future.

5

Organized Rationalism

H. J. BLACKHAM

THREE great, and related, associations of rationalists have contributed to the history and traditions of the West, namely, the followers of Epicurus in antiquity, and in modern times the *philosophes* associated with Diderot's *Encylopédie* and the Utilitarians organized around Bentham. If one takes also into account the English Fabians and the American Pragmatists, as two branches of Benthamite descendants, and includes also Saint-Simon and Comte and Marx and Engels and their followers, though in the one case without living issue and in the other estranged, the total influence of this family of movements in forming the intellectual and moral outlook of the West is beyond exaggeration great. Consideration in this chapter of the organizational side of rationalism begins with a look at that aspect of these historical movements.

THE 'FRIENDS OF EPICURUS'

The Epicureans, whose influence throughout the Roman world was more widespread and more deeply rooted than that of any other sect for three centuries before Christ and the greater part of three centuries after, called themselves

the Friends of Epicurus. When Epicurus settled in Athens, people came from all parts and shared the life with him in the Garden where he taught, women and slaves being equally welcome in the fellowship. Everyone who went away was expected to be a missionary. The colonies of disciples in places where he had formerly taught were kept in touch by letters and occasional visits. Groups of adherents were found all over the Greek-speaking world, and later their propaganda, Cicero says, took Italy by storm. The great poem of Lucretius is a culmination of more than a hundred years of propaganda in Italy.

The following closely related factors seem sufficient to account for the lasting popular success of the movement initiated by Epicurus. (1) The doctrine was attractive (it was compared to the voices of the Sirens) and addressed to felt needs, for it came as an immense liberation from oppressive fears of the gods in life and death, and provided shelter (the security of friends and of a modest manageable life) in an unstable society whose authorities were not dependable. (2) The doctrine was attractively presented; that is to say, it was easily intelligible, memorably phrased, reproduced in graded manuals of instruction, frequently revised. And it was dogmatic: forty Authorized Doctrines, meant to be memorized, epitomized the teaching. (3) The doctrine as presented was self-explanatory and independent of teachers and schools, a lay philosophy. The text-books were passed from hand to hand (for example, by merchants on their journeys), and the doctrine was disseminated from individual to individual and from family to family. Being graded, the text-books encouraged further reading, and once begun the course was expected to lead to full enlightenment and lasting conviction. The student introduced to the books was likened to a hound set on the trail, and he became self-dependent: 'Thus by your own efforts you will be able to spot one clue after another, and work your way into all

the dark recesses, and drag forth the truth to light.' (4) The 'Friends of Epicurus' were friends, attached in groups which met monthly for a meal together, the reading aloud of their books, and the commemoration of anniversaries. These groups were more or less independent and were expected to be devoted to tactful mutual instruction and encouragement. It was a principle of their association that each member should submit to correction without resentment. They had their own schools, in which their first purpose was to habituate the child to taking correction kindly—by making it kindly. (5) The doctrine had to be lived, and was not merely a body of knowledge or a certain view of the world. The 'Friends of Epicurus' were encouraged to live 'as if Epicurus were looking on'. They took a pledge: 'We will be obedient to Epicurus, according to whom we have made it our choice to live.' He remained a personal leader centuries after his death.

The rather obvious resemblances between these methods and practices, and even certain doctrines, of the Epicureans and similar ones of the early Christians are to be explained by the fact that St. Paul in addressing the Gentiles was consciously addressing himself to Epicureans, or people familiar with the Epicureans, for Paul was himself, if not in youth an Epicurean, closely familiar with them, and found in them a basis outside the Jewish religion on which to build the church and the faith, by selection, rejection, and transformation. Christianity established itself during the first century in controversy with a dominant rationalist movement, and sixteen centuries later rationalist movements began to re-establish themselves in controversy with the Church and the faith. In this connexion it is interesting to recall that Marx chose for his doctoral thesis a comparison between the natural philosophy of Democritus and that of Epicurus, and what drew him to Epicurus rather than to the more scientific and detached Democritus was the 'ener-

gizing principle' in Epicurus which made him treat his philosophy as an instrument of moral and social action.

THE 'PHILOSOPHES'

The spread of enlightenment and the practice of sociability were also the main themes and purposes of the *philosophes*. As a party in the second half of the 18th century, they were united by their faith in science and hatred of the Roman Catholic Church. Diderot described civil society as a divinity on earth to be honoured by regular attention to the duties it imposed and by being a pleasing, useful, unembarrassing member.

They had, then, the same apparent assumptions and aims as the Epicureans, but the organized conditions of their propaganda were altogether different. The brilliant weekly gatherings in the salons, in which the *philosophes* exercised their intellects and learned to please, were brought together by feminine ambition and social convention, not by affection and enthusiasm. The conditions of publication under an arbitrary and capricious censorship forced the Encyclopedists into becoming a bitter, conspiratorial, unscrupulous, intolerant sect. The best work of the day was done by escaping these conditions, by Voltaire at Ferney, by Rousseau in the wilderness, by Baron d'Holbach in his rich hospitable home. The Baron at his dinner parties and in his country house at Grandval afforded his friends an alternative to the salons, more favourable to their genius and to the serious purpose of the group, masculine, informal, genuinely affectionate, and immensely stimulating. He was himself a prolific and vigorous propagandist, with a systematic clear-cut doctrine which he disseminated in ceaseless popular versions.

The home of Condorcet in Paris was equally a centre of the movement, and there was there combined the brilliance

of his wife's salon with the dedicated seriousness of this gifted, attractive, versatile, unresting, perfect *philosophe*. His splendid testament, *Sketch for an historical picture of the progress of the human mind*, is Lucretian in intensity and surpasses Lucretius in originality, subtlety, and vision. Not only one of the most interesting productions of the humanist spirit, it remains also to this day one of the most inspiring.

The *philosophes* were propagandists, journalists, more comparable to the Sophists in 5th century Athens than to the 'Friends of Epicurus', taking the place of the Jesuits as educators of the nation and moulders of public opinion, engaged in the intellectual and moral renovation of a society suffering from the flagrant social incompetence of Church and State. The *Encyclopédie* itself (whose sustained production by Diderot's devoted labours under crushing difficulties is an heroic story) was the organized section and centre of a vast propaganda, an informal, transitory, provisional organization of the new spiritual power which was to supplant the Church, namely, the Press. Although aggressive and destructive, the *philosophes* were not negative: they looked forward, especially Condorcet, whose vision influenced Saint-Simon and Comte, to the scientific organization of all departments of human life. They were fulfilling Bacon's prophetic programme. The spectacular progress of the physical sciences in the 17th century was the clue to the future. Obsolete theories and institutions had to be destroyed so that the way was open for the popular spread of the sciences and their fruitful application to human welfare and happiness. Above all, the same successful principles had to be applied to man in society, so that government and laws informed by social science might be made the instruments of human progress and take the place of Providence and the Church. Thus the *philosophes* knew what they were trying to do; they made themselves by concerted intellectual action

the social war-head of the scientific movement which had then gained the momentum of two centuries of sensational progress.

THE UTILITARIANS

'Utilitarianism' was Bentham's own word for the movement which was formed about him, since 'to be sure a new religion would be an odd sort of thing without a name.' In 1790, Bentham defined himself to Lord Lansdowne as 'a sort of mongrel philosopher...something betwixt Epicurean and Cynic.'

The Philosophical Radicals, the party which developed from Bentham's group, considered themselves heirs of the tradition of the Encyclopedists. Bentham gave James Mill a doctrine, and Mill made Bentham popular chief of a party half philosophical, half political. In 1812, Bentham made the acquaintance of Francis Place. 'He contributed to Bentham's group his powers as an agitator and organizer, and became the political agent of the sect for thirty consecutive years.' 'The history of any definite "school" of philosophical or political opinion', wrote Graham Wallas in his *Life of Francis Place*, 'will generally show that its foundation was made possible by personal friendship. So few men devote themselves to continuous thought, that if several think on the same lines for many years it is almost always because they have encouraged each other to proceed. And varieties of opinion and temperament are so infinite, that those who accept a new party name, and thereby make themselves responsible for each other's utterances, are generally bound by personal loyalty as well as by intellectual agreement.' Wallas was writing about Bentham's sustained intimacy with a group of able men, chiefly James Mill and Francis Place, without which the Utilitarians as a school and a party would never have been born.

There are two definite phases in the development of their activities during two generations. Bentham, Mill, and Place are at the heart of the first. They were full of practical projects which they exerted themselves to get carried into effect, especially educational projects: the promotion of primary and secondary schools for all, the foundation of Birkbeck College and of University College, the Library for the Promotion of Useful Knowledge. Place successfully organized parliamentary elections in Westminster in the Radical interest, and political campaigns for parliamentary reform and for the repeal of the Combination Laws. His library in a big room at the back of his shop in Charing Cross was in this period the headquarters of English Radicalism, 'a sort of gossiping shop' frequented by all those engaged in public affairs, in the House or otherwise, 'who had the benefit of the people for their object'. His political passion, unremitting industry, and steady direction made it a political workshop and centre of information and publication, a power-house of political influence.

The demand at this time for certain reforms in the political, economic, and legal fields, persistent and mounting since the end of the 18th century, required systematic principles. Bentham had enunciated the principles, and James Mill, believing that 'the opinions and actions of a few eminent individuals are generally quite decisive', laboured to form the sect and to propagate the influence of Bentham. Thanks to him, a whole sphere of influence was created around Bentham. In this way Bentham himself was brought to give to the random popular agitation in the country for parliamentary reform the doctrinal solidity which it lacked.

John Stuart Mill and the second generation of Utilitarians established the sect. Their influence was not exerted in practical projects and political campaigns and newspaper articles, but on the intellectual part of the nation in books and in the *Westminster Review* and through the group of

Philosophical Radicals in the House—of whom the most active and promising died in early middle age.

The organizational influence of Place, although eclipsed by that of Cobden, to which it joins on, deserves special study. Only a few points can be mentioned here. 'As soon as he had formed an opinion, he looked round to find the definite persons whom it was important to convince on the particular point.' He would work patiently and persistently on key persons for years to keep them informed, convinced, and wound-up. He would do this not only intensively on certain persons but also extensively on committees and councils. He thought the future was with those, however few they might be, who would stand together in public resolutely and consistently for intelligible and rational principles. He worked without illusions, and had only long-term hopes dependent on patience and perseverance. 'A man must have a good many projects in hand to accomplish any': he toiled and contrived with untiring application in scores of schemes.

For the sake of continuity, it should be mentioned that John Morley, for fifteen years in the second half of the 19th century editor of the *Fortnightly Review*, which he made an influential organ of radical opinion, carried on the tradition in literature and in politics; and reinforced it, both by close association with leading Positivists and by popularizing in England the work of the *philosophes* in a series of studies in which he claimed: 'we see the movement initiated by the Encyclopedia is again in full progress. . . .The philosophical parenthesis is at an end. The interruption of eighty years counts for no more than the twinkling of an eye in the history of the transformation of the basis of thought. And the interruption has for the present come to a close.'

But the true heirs to the Philosophical Radicals were the Fabians in England, and to the Utilitarians the Pragmatists in the United States.

THE POSITIVISTS

As a plan of organization, Positivism is the most ambitious scheme ever devised. Like his early master Saint-Simon, but in detail, Auguste Comte envisaged nothing less than universal reorganization. The advanced nations of his day were, he thought, in a state of social chaos because of the social confusion produced by the disruptive ideas of 1789, because of the confusion of mind produced by the mixing up of theological, metaphysical, and scientific ideas, and because of the confusion of intellectual and moral authority with political power. Once knowledge was put upon a clear and incontestable foundation of positive principles, the way was open to a natural reform of manners and morals, and then of institutions.

Comte resembled, although he repudiated, Epicurus and the *philosophes* in his philosophy of man, in so far as he prescribed the remedy of enlightenment, derived from scientific studies and practised in warm sociality purged of imaginary hopes and fears. But he was very conscious that he was applying the remedy of synthesis to the crisis of an age suffering from prolonged destructive criticism and anarchy. His programme was the systematic organization of Humanity for the sake of Progress on the basis of Order, animated by Love and Knowledge—and the details were worked out to the last letter, not forgetting the salaries of the respective orders of his universal positivist priesthood.[1]

[1] '"In the name of the Past and of the Future, the servants of Humanity—theoreticians and practicians—come forward to claim as their due the general direction of this world, in order to construct at length the true Providence, moral, intellectual, and material; excluding once for all from political supremacy all the different servants of God—Catholic, Protestant, or Deist—as at once belated and a source of trouble." With this uncompromising announcement, on Sunday, 19th October, 1851, I ended my third *Course of Philosophical Lectures on the General History of Humanity*.'

The conversion of the whole world could be satisfactorily effected, he thought, in three generations, leaving to our twentieth century the consolidation of uniformity. This would include a fusion of the races, under the systematic direction of the universal priesthood.

The sequel in France to the Revolution of 1789 had been an alternation of progressive and reactionary governments, resulting from the intrigue and agitation of rival politicians and factions. The political movement, Comte thought, must be resolved into a philosophical movement. The propaganda of the Positivists would effect this, mainly by winning the support of the proletariat, who would find in the teaching of the Positive School not only a doctrine that was intellectually and morally satisfying but also, for the first time, a policy of their own, which would bring to an end their being mere auxiliaries of classes whose interests they did not share. The workers were not really interested in the agitation for political rights, since they could hardly hope or desire to exercise power themselves; they were directly concerned only about political duties, how power should be employed for the welfare of the masses. Therefore they would learn to hold aloof from the rivalries of politicians, which made political power more unstable and put off the all-important transformation of the question, who shall have it, into the question, how shall it be used? This interest of the masses in the duties of their rulers would rally them to the teaching of the Positive School which would furnish the instrument of their irresistible moral power and lead to the satisfaction of their just interests. In sum, the intellectual revolution of the *philosophes*, followed by the bourgeois revolution of 1789, reinforced by the proletarian revolution, and completed by the emancipation of women, laid the foundations for a vast reconstruction which would put an end to anarchy and reaction alike. But what Comte meant by the proletarian revolution and the

emancipation of women was extremely conservative, and blind to realities.

THE MARXISTS

Comte founded his hopes on belief in the disinterestedness of the proletariat, who would take to his Positive Philosophy because they were not blinded by the self-interested views and schemes of the middle and upper classes. Marx also founded his hopes on belief in the uniform separation of the proletariat from the special interests of the capitalist class, that is to say, the unique readiness of the proletariat to use the economic machine to produce plenty for all. Both relied on the 'generality' of proletarian interest. But Comte, preoccupied with his notion of duties in a platonically organized functional society, thought of the proletariat as interested only in education and regular employment, moral requirements which they could be organized to demand on principle. Marx thought of the proletariat as forcibly excluded from control of the economic machine which they alone could operate in the interests of all. They had therefore to be organized for the seizure of political power. Time and chance as well as the original designs have played their parts in the subsequent fortunes of these two schemes for reorganizing the world.

The Communist League, the first definitely organized propagandist body, was formed in London in 1847 at a specially prepared congress of the League of the Just, an organization of active revolutionaries then dispersed in Zurich, Paris, and London. The London branch, in close relations with the revolutionary wing of the Chartists, accepted the ideas of Marx and Engels, persuaded them to join, and initiated the Congress of 1847. The constitution of the Communist League which was put before the Congress provided for communes of not less than three and not more than ten

members, circles, leading circles, the central authority, and the congress. Its aim was the establishment of the rule of the proletariat. The organization was to be democratic: the constitution was to be discussed by the communes, which would report to a second congress which would also discuss the League's programme.

The first work of the League was to found educational associations of German workers, from which to strengthen its own ranks. The procedure of these associations was the same everywhere: one day in the week was given to discussion and another to social intercourse (singing, recitation, etc.); libraries were founded everywhere in connexion with the associations, and classes organized to instruct the workers in the elementary principles of communism. Where and when the workers were able to form political parties, the League sent in leaders, and showed that it had been 'an excellent training school for the revolution'. In the end, Stephan Born wrote to Marx: 'The League has ceased to exist and yet it exists everywhere.'

SUMMARY

All these movements have strong family features. All are dogmatic and authoritarian, with the utmost confidence in science as their ground. Their doctrines are synthetic, compounded from indicable sources. For effective propaganda the doctrines are epitomized and reduced to dicta and slogans. All venerate certain philosophic founder figures: Epicurus, Voltaire, Bentham, Saint-Simon, Marx. They have depended largely on certain major secondary figures with conspicuous organizing ability: Diderot, Comte, Enfantin, James Mill, Francis Place, Engels. The movements are initiated by and depend upon the intimacy and close collaboration of a number of able minds formed upon the same basic assumptions and guided by the same principles. In each

case the principles are intended to appeal to and to give a lead to the masses. Not least, the propaganda and action in each case have been based on an appraisal of the situation.

The failure of the Positivists can be related to deficiency in several of these respects. Above all, their intense preoccupation with synthesis and organization—the systematization of knowledge and the organization of society—though it was deliberately addressed to the general needs of society and the particular needs of the masses in the post-revolutionary anarchy of 19th century France, and although it prefigured, and indeed influenced, the successful organization of Marxist communism in both these respects, was out of touch with the feelings of the masses and was abstract and unrealistic in tactics and strategy.

The Saint-Simon school which Enfantin and Bazard laboured to organize, although short-lived, produced boundless enthusiasm in its devotees and attracted or influenced many of the most vital personalities in France. Its story is an astounding mixture of the bizarre and the impressive, and is rich both in religious extravaganza and in practical achievements—which include the Suez Canal and the modern railroads of France. In spite of the failure of both Saint-Simon and Comte as founders of a rational modern religion, a Church, the diffused influence of both schools has been very great and truly productive. In the case of Saint-Simon this was due to the organization built up by his chief disciples; and in both cases the attraction of the ideas was their degree of appropriateness to the condition of post-revolutionary France, their attempt to meet a dire need for constructive principles that were modern and not reactionary.

The strong family features in these movements of course resemble those of all sects, including the great religions to which these movements were implacably opposed. But family features are human features, and the general likeness

is common to all human organizations based on doctrine with claims to universality.

In character and organization, the main difference lies between those movements which attempt to influence opinion at large and to secure specific reforms in society, and the movements which have a life and outlook of their own which they strive to maintain and into which they seek to bring others from the outside world. The difference is largely the difference between political and religious movements, between, say, the *philosophes* or the Utilitarians and the 'Friends of Epicurus'. But it is a distinction which cannot be fully and fairly pressed, because all these movements have been to some extent both extravert and introvert, both political and religious.

CONTEMPORARY MOVEMENTS

Morley in the passage quoted above seems to be prophesying, a hundred years later, the universal diffusion and definitive triumph of the ideas and ideals of 1789, but in Britain the rise of Labour organized on the industrial and political fronts gave a special identity to the progressive movement. The British Labour movement was far from being wholly secular and rationalist, for its idealism was drawn from Anglican and non-conformist Christian sources as well as from the Radical tradition. Even its purely ethical idealism, however, was not solely Christian. Twin-born with the Fabian Society was the London Ethical Society, which based itself on the independence of ethics, and gained the support of moral philosophers of Kantian, Hegelian, and Utilitarian schools because they thought the movement for social justice needed an independent universal moral basis. Two years later, South Place Religious Society changed its name to South Place Ethical Society, on the succession to its ministry of Stanton Coit, an American who had had a good deal to

do with promoting the London Ethical Society. South Place had an independent rationalist religious tradition going back to the 18th century, and had been in general a forum of progressive ideas and in particular had been closely associated with the Philosophical Radicals through its minister W. J. Fox, who was one of their conspicuous publicists. Other ethical societies were propagated, to the number of some seventy, and in general brought together on the basis of ethical idealism people supporting or working for the Labour interest in local and parliamentary government, the emancipation of women and of colonial peoples, progressive education, penal reform, and other such social causes and reform movements. Stanton Coit, an Emersonian American who had responded ardently to the lead of Felix Adler in New York (a Kantian Jew who turned away from the faith of his fathers and founded the first Ethical Society), when he settled in England was attracted by the Anglican tradition of Hooker and Coleridge who had regarded the Church as the nation on its ideal side, and the clergy as responsible for the moral organization of the nation as a pre-condition of their Christian mission. As things were going, he saw no reason why the Church, led by its modernist wing, should not throw out theology and bring in science and English literature and the new social gospel, and really devote itself to the moral renovation of the nation in a big organized modern way. In the Ethical Church, Bayswater, he pioneered a model of what was to be done, and supported by the current socialist enthusiasm and the talent of musicians, painters, and producers, he created 'one crowded hour of glorious life'.

At the turn of the century, Charles Albert Watts, as a further step in promoting the cause of freethought which his father and he had devotedly served by platform and press for more than thirty years, formed the Rationalist Press Association, which initiated and developed the wide dissemination of scientific knowledge, especially in relation to

every aspect of man, first in a pioneer book-club, then through cheap reprints, and notably later on in the Thinker's Library. This propaganda, which reached the millions, played a useful and recognized part in the conversion of England to rational thinking and in the promotion of intelligent reform.

The general steep decline in church attendance in England and the decay of church membership as a social habit struck the Ethical Societies equally with the Churches. In the United States this has not happened, and the Ethical Societies have maintained their own and increased. On the basis of the independence of ethics and 'a shared quest for the good life', they function organizationally as religious congregations, with a complement of social activities oriented to the community, the New York Society in particular having a distinguished civic record, including the foundation of one of the earliest progressive schools and of the first university settlements (of which Coit was the pioneer, taking the model of Toynbee Hall).

In Amsterdam in 1952, the American and English ethical societies, together with the Dutch Humanist League, the Belgian Humanist League, the American Humanist Association, and the Indian Radical Humanist Movement, formed the International Humanist and Ethical Union. The associates of the older ethical societies in this Union were all post-war humanist movements, each with a different background.

In Holland most national institutions and social activities are organized on confessional fronts, and since some eighty per cent of the people belong to one or other of the Churches, there was a need for the moral organization of non-believers. This need came home during the war, under the sufferings brought by the occupation and with the moral awakening roused by the resistance movement. The Dutch humanists have organized their practical social work

effectively and have fought for and gained national recognition for their movement as entitled to equality of status with the Churches.

The Belgian humanists, in the Flemish-speaking part of Belgium, have also formed themselves together to offer the advantages of moral organization to non-believers, and especially to organize courses of ethical instruction without religion at all levels of public education.

The American Humanist Association developed out of liberal trends in the Churches under the impact of pragmatist, naturalist, and materialist philosophical teaching in the universities, and also of humanistic interpretations of religion by professors of the psychology of religion and of comparative religion. But it is not an association of liberal Christians, for there is room for these in American Churches, since the Unitarians will accept even non-theist members; its policy and organization are shaped to find and attract secular humanists. This it does through the publication of a journal, the establishment of groups, the arrangement of conferences, participation in the campaign of resistance to encroachments on the American constitutional policy of separation of Church and State, and the cultivation of relations with technically trained intellectual workers, especially in the social sciences, whom it regards as the 'main stream' forces of modern humanism. The A.H.A. describes itself as 'a philosophic and religious movement established on a naturalistic basis, but extending its influence through adult education techniques'. It relies principally on an increasing number of volunteer key men working in different capacities in the total organization, whose efforts are guided, coordinated, and to some extent trained.

The Indian movement, inspired and organized by M. N. Roy, one of the outstanding political minds of modern Asia, stands through him in conscious continuity with the rational humanism of the European Renaissance and the French

Revolution. A Marxist and former communist (at one time Asian representative on the Comintern), Roy turned from political party methods and resolved his party into a humanist movement, in the conviction that only by methods of education and propaganda, dissociated from organized bids for political power, could the individual be rescued from submergence and regimentation in the mass and enabled to work in co-operation with like-minded fellows for a universal civilization of free men. The movement is loosely organized and depends on a cultural centre at Dehradun, the Indian Renaissance Institute (which arranges study courses and conferences), a weekly newspaper, *The Radical Humanist*, and a publishing house.

CONCLUSIONS

Even this ragged sketch of some rationalist movements and some features of their organization may indicate certain tentative conclusions worth consideration. Apparently, a propagandist movement is equipped to succeed if it has a body of clear-cut authoritative doctrine associated with a compelling figure and reduced to epitomes, formulas, and slogans. The case of Positivism, however, shows that the doctrine must be of a kind that comes home to felt needs and is related to a correct realistic appraisal of the situation. The beginning of *Animal Farm* throws these features on the screen in boldest outline; the sequel may or may not follow.

A conclusion of this kind faces at once the intense disapprobation of the genuine humanist mind, which because of its universal intellectual sympathies, its tolerance, its scientific caution, and democratic convictions is as much opposed to rationalist dogmas and authoritarian personalities as to religious ones: there is perhaps nothing to choose between them. How indeed organize at all something as personal and sensitive as the humanist temper? To which the answer

that the Church organizes love is not particularly convincing to rationalists who read history.

What may be called the big black features of successful propagandist organization are, then, specially repulsive to most humanists. Several other difficulties have to be added to this one. Rationalists are naturally carried away by rational views of the world and rational solutions of the world's problems, and they therefore tend to be either superficial people who think that only religion stands in the way of simple scientific solutions, or else megalomaniacs who lust after brave new worlds which total scientific reorganization can so certainly produce. This lack of touch with the stubborn nature of real problems and of sympathy with ordinary inveterate mental untidiness helps to make rationalists either absurd or frightening to many very reasonable people. On the other hand, any ordinary statement of rationalist principles sounds so much like nothing else than plain common sense that there is neither resistance nor fervour in the response; the brew is honest and insipid, and as unsaleable as water. Then also, the worst features in Church and State, which could be counted on to provoke organized opposition, have disappeared or been modified out of recognition; where intellectual freedom and social justice are basically established and normally relied on, even a movement like socialism, with an ideology and an ideal linked to a class interest, loses momentum.

On the one hand, then, rationalism is an article which certainly does not sell itself. On the other hand, the methods by which articles are successfully sold are made obnoxious to rationalists by the very principles they want to sell.

These difficulties are not without substance, but, since as a matter of fact there have been rationalist movements which have been positive and productive and immensely successful, the dilemma in so far as it is true is new. The sense of difficulties of this kind which modern rationalists

do feel is an indication of changes in the climate of opinion and in the character of the social situation, which rationalists have to take account of in organizing their propaganda and their movements.

The shouting confidence resounding down the corridors of the future which unanswerable science once seemed to give to rationalists, and nerved them against the powers-that-be bolstered by derided authority and bankrupt tradition, loses its ring when science is heard itself to speak with more than one voice, and is not heard at all upon some of the most important questions. But if the doctrine is less magisterial and the tone less dogmatic, and the rationalist less proof-happy, conviction is still possible, still rational, still justifiable; and rationalists or humanists can come together and stand together on certain assumptions, affirmations, and decisions about human existence which they are prepared to justify and to live by and to recommend, and which may be as clear-cut and adaptable to propaganda as ever were any of the doctrinaire positions of the historical rationalist movements. Moreover, since it is recognized that such general propositions are not proved and can never be proved, but are judgements taken in the light of experience for the sake of guiding experience and subject to further experience, it is to be expected they will be modified in the course of making use of them. Thus rationalists can still give definite answers to the questions which trouble people, and are not compelled merely to recommend them to think for themselves, or to go by the evidence, or to rely on reason, or to cultivate the spirit of inquiry, or to seek the truth.

Rationalists, then, may be perfectly definite without being doctrinaire or even dogmatic, and may, and should, organize their teaching on these lines, in order to give a lead and help people to live in the light of answers to the questions that do vex and frustrate them. These questions are not

quite the same as they used to be: they are not the questions which in antiquity got a moral answer and in modern times have been promised a scientific answer, a political answer, an economic answer. None of these answers was a dusty answer; all have been honest and practical, an indispensable contribution; the goods have been delivered and have been perfectly sound: what is wanted now is some attempt to put them together, and some education in the use and enjoyment of them. If organized rationalism means organizing the vision of a universal civilization and of a worth while personal life, and promotion of the means by which they are to be attained and enjoyed, it has a lasting task, a permanent task, in continuity with the rationalist movements of the past, and addressed to real needs, the need of men and women to live lives of their own without being submerged in a regimented mass, and yet to have available to them the means which only highly organized society can provide.

Organized rationalists engaged in spreading round the world certain ideas, attitudes, techniques, aims, policies, are best served if they can point to results—if indeed the results are attractive in the exemplars. The proof of the pudding is here; the recipe can't be proved. Unless organized rationalism can make friends of its adherents and breed social enthusiasm as intense as patriotism, it will not propagate. 'Friendship', says Epicurus, describing his mission, 'goes dancing round the world awakening people to the pleasures of the Blessed Life.' Unless organized rationalism succeeds again in doing that, it will only flicker and illumine feebly the lives of a few.

Rationalists, if they want their outlook to be widely adopted, must take seriously a principle which was implicit in the rationalist movements described and which Comte explicitly insisted upon: *To destroy you must replace.* This requires organization, and in the first place organized teach-

ing which is definite, decisive, and illuminating. It is not enough to preach science, or democracy, or secular morality, or socialism, or freedom, or equality, because what is wanted now is something more concrete and complete, a vision of personal life in a world order, and so far as is possible the practice of it, and the active support and promotion of policies and agencies making for it and the denunciation of and resistance to policies and agencies making against it. A movement like this, general and active, justified by liberal living and showing how to live in the modern world, not striving to be better than humanity but to be humanity at its best, can afford great diversity in its constituents, to suit the great differences of temperament, of local situation, and of special tasks. And organizational links which build up a federation of rationalist movements throughout the world will provide an adequate structure if they are reinforced by personal contacts and friendships of the moving spirits which will carry the contagion of convictions and produce a fertility of differences. A movement like this which has the root of the matter in its answer to human needs and can demonstrate its virtue and justify its claims in the vital attractiveness of its members and groups, can be trusted to practise and develop suitable key techniques of organization which are not less requisite to success than truth itself: the regular meetings and occasional conferences and summer schools, the journals and books, the institutes, the cadre of key workers, the training of volunteer personnel, the campaigns, all this in its actuality makes a movement; and when the animating ideas worked out in these ways are the most reliable that can be entertained and therefore also the most fruitful, the movement embodies an alternative which will never die out, which the world will have reason always to respect and will sometimes also heed.

THE END