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PHILOSOPHIES MEN LIVE BY

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Preface

The rapid increase in programs of general education, designed to provide for all college and university students some common body of information and some common awareness of the underlying values upon which Western civilization depends, has made necessary a careful re-examination of our accepted educational practices and materials. This has been especially true in the field of philosophy. In almost every such general-education program, the importance of a practical philosophy of living, adequate to meet the needs of our day, has been recognized. But the traditional introductory courses in philosophy have, as a rule, been so organized and taught that their appeal has been limited to the more able and thoughtful students. In only a few cases has philosophy made the contribution that it should to all, or almost all, of the students in any one institution. By and large, philosophy has thus far failed to play the part it should in general education, mainly because materials which could be used successfully were not available.

The major purpose of the present volume is to meet this need. It undertakes, therefore, to make the insights of the great philosophers available to the beginner in terms which he can understand, and in a fashion which he will find appealing. An effort is made to relate the study of philosophy to the life and problems of the student, especially to his moral and religious problems, since these are the philosophical issues which he finds most immediately meaningful. Technical terms beyond the vocabulary of the student without previous training in philosophy have been avoided, and illustrations close to his own experience have been selected.

Instead of brief comments upon a large number of figures in the field of philosophy, which as a rule serve only to confuse the beginner, a selection has been made of fifteen or sixteen outstanding philosophers, and each is treated in enough detail to make his thought clear and significant. Enough biographical data are provided in each case to portray the philosopher as a real person and

to indicate the relation between the philosophy he professed and the philosophy by which he lived. Each figure is handled sympathetically in order to enable the student to appreciate the appeal of his position. The material in the volume is arranged topically rather than chronologically, and in such fashion as to make the important ethical systems (hedonism, rationalism, utilitarianism, naturalism, pragmatism, idealism) intelligible and appealing. In addition to one or two outstanding historical exponents of each position, a contemporary figure has also been selected to illustrate each, thus giving it desirable relevance to the problems of our day.

Any effort to present the thought of the great philosophers in a manner which the ordinary man and woman will find meaningful and appealing necessarily calls for simplification and popularization. And this, of course, is always fraught with danger. In order to avoid the dangers so far as possible and to achieve the purpose desired, the following procedures have been adopted: First, an endeavor is made to catch the essential spirit of each philosopher and to provide an interpretation that is true to this spirit. Secondly, large use is made of the actual writing of the philosopher being considered, so that the reader will feel that he has had direct contact and acquaintance with the man himself and not merely with a secondary source. Thirdly, attention is concentrated upon a few great works of each philosopher so that the student will come away with some sense of familiarity with these philosophical masterpieces and, in many cases at least, be led to read such books in their entirety. Wherever necessary, quotations have been condensed to eliminate material beyond the scope of the discussion. And finally, throughout the entire volume an effort is made to stimulate the student to think for himself rather than to accept ready-made the views of any philosopher, no matter how important his place in the history of thought.

That there is a point of view developed in the volume as a whole, any thoughtful reader will recognize at once. But the author hopes that this point of view has not interfered with an honest understanding and sympathetic appreciation of the other positions presented here. Certainly every effort has been made to avoid such an outcome.

It is a pleasure to be able to express my appreciation to those who have contributed in various ways to the preparation of this volume. To the members of the humanities staff at the University of Florida, I am much indebted for a constant and stimulating consideration of the problems involved in handling philosophy effectively with large groups of freshmen and sophomores. In particular, I am grateful to Professors J. H. Groth and T. A. E. Hart, who read the manuscript in its entirety and whose wise counsel has enabled me to improve appreciably the interpretation and presentation of my material; to Professors Wesley H. Tilley and Delton L. Scudder, who made helpful suggestions concerning chapters in which they had some special interest; to Mr. Stanley Burnshaw and his associates at the Dryden Press, whose unfailing thoughtfulness has

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Robert F. Davidson

University of Florida
March, 1952

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Philosophies Men Live By

To know the chief rival attitudes toward life as the history of thinking has developed them, and to have heard some of the reasons they can give for themselves ought to be considered an essential part of liberal education.

WILLIAM JAMES

1·THE SPIRIT OF PHILOSOPHY

The Sophists and Socrates

The very word *philosopher* is a frightening one to the uninitiated. In the minds of many today it still conjures up visions of white-bearded old gentlemen cut off by walls of books from contact with the world; scholars fond of words so obscure that no one really knows what they are talking about. Surely these weighty oldsters, closeted in an ivory tower, have nothing in common with most of mankind, nothing to say about the kind of life we today live or want to live—nothing, at least, that anyone can understand. So the philosopher is painted! But the picture is false. Philosophy is human. It is interesting. It is down to earth and practical. This surprising discovery has been made in recent years by countless students unversed in the field who have come upon books that translate the complexities of technical philosophy into everyday terms. As the great philosophers pass before us, offering a fascinating train of ideas, we begin to see the difference that philosophy can make to ordinary men and women like most of us. In such circumstances even the beginner cannot help feeling an eagerness and enthusiasm that carries him into deeper search.

Devotion to family, loyalty to country, the necessities of business, opportunities for advancement or for enjoyment, confront each of us with a multitude of conflicting demands. Which of these are right and which are wrong; which are good and which bad? Upon what basis are we to decide? Are there enduring principles other than our own urgent desires and interests by which conduct should be directed? In the midst of so much apparent conflict and destruction on every hand, what grounds are there for feeling that ours is a universe of purpose and order rather than one of chance and chaos? These questions the philosopher asks. And never in the history of our civilization has there been a time when

men needed more desperately a satisfying answer. "We have a job to do, the hardest that ever faced a generation," writes a discerning interpreter of the contemporary American scene. "Our job is to restore our own faith for living, and to lay the foundations of a world in which life—love, freedom, justice, truth—will once more be sacred."[1]*

PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

For a faith to give them direction in life and to sustain them in the time of need, men in every age have looked to religion and the church. Today many still turn to the faith of their fathers for an answer to age-old questions concerning the meaning of human life, questions made increasingly urgent by the present crisis in our civilization; and such interest in religion is both natural and desirable. But the outlook of religion is practical and inspirational. It is the task of the church to clarify our loyalty to the best that we know and to channel our high idealism along practical and constructive lines. Religion undertakes, however, to provide no carefully reasoned solution to the problems that face us in our more reflective moods. Its emphasis is upon faith and action rather than upon reflection or experimentation. The God of religion is not an intellectual hypothesis but a personal experience.

For the more thoughtful as well as the more perplexed people of our day, the faith of the church has not, therefore, proved entirely satisfying. Such men and women find it necessary eventually to turn to the philosopher for a reasoned consideration of the issues of life. In formulating a faith for living that is adequate for the needs of our age, it is the task of philosophy to carry forward the quest begun already by religion. The appeal of philosophy to the head should supplement, not supplant, the appeal of religion to the heart. Yet to one who is deeply religious the philosopher's attitude will often seem suspect, when not downright irreligious. The thoughtful and critical, indeed, at times the questioning and skeptical spirit of philosophy, may well appear a real danger to religious faith. As William Temple, recent and distinguished Archbishop of Canterbury, has pointed out, an almost inescapable tension does exist between the spirit of religion and that of philosophy. It is not easy for an individual to combine both attitudes successfully in his own experience. By the philosopher, the basic convictions of the religious life must necessarily be treated as questions for objective and impartial examination. Yet a man cannot usually examine with detachment the object of his own religious faith; he cannot easily worship with devotion on Sunday a being that on Monday he must treat as merely an intellectual hypothesis.[2]

Although no hard and fast line can be drawn between the domain of philosophy and that of religion, the aim and the spirit in each case is different. Where

* All footnotes which indicate the sources of quoted materials will be found on pages 457*ff*.

religion appeals to faith and to authority, philosophy insists upon an appeal to reason and to experience. Where religion is concerned with practical results and with loyalty to high ideals, philosophy demands a continued critical examination of the premises upon which one acts. Where religion desires certainty, philosophy provides conclusions that are only tentative and open always to revision. In those moments, however, when the faith or the inspiration engendered by high religion seems on the verge of being destroyed by doubts that inevitably assail us all, there is good reason to turn to philosophy. The discerning philosopher should furnish us with a more comprehensive and intellectually satisfying interpretation of life than religious faith alone can suggest or than a cold and dispassionate scientific account of existence can provide.

BUILDING A PHILOSOPHY OF LIVING

Actually the question is not whether we want a philosophy by which to live or are not particularly interested in the matter. It is a question rather, as someone has well pointed out, of adopting a vague, an inconsistent, a half-conscious, blindly accepted, and probably foolish philosophy or having one that is carefully thought out and based upon the best available information about ourselves and our world. Gradually, unconsciously, but surely, we all absorb from parents, from friends, from the texture of early life, those attitudes and convictions which provide the framework of our own working philosophy of living. What we accept uncritically as right or wrong, what we feel most deeply concerned about, what we spend time and effort in securing for ourselves—these values shape our view of life as naturally and inevitably as the things we have to eat and wear shape our preferences for food and clothing. A person from Mississippi will, of course, have a sense of values different from that of a person who has spent his life in New York. An American and a Russian can no more be expected today to have the same view of democracy than the same tastes in food and drink.

It is of such deeply rooted, unreasoned convictions and values as these that our working philosophy consists, even as we begin to examine life more critically and objectively for ourselves. Indeed, the very process of reasoning, by which we conduct a more mature self-examination, is itself shaped by these underlying convictions of ours. There is no such thing as complete objectivity in philosophy. We cannot build a philosophy of living for ourselves as we might plan to erect a new home and occupy it at our convenience. All we can hope to do is to reexamine in some larger and more mature perspective the actual convictions to which we give allegiance, seeking to identify obvious limitations in our outlook and inconsistencies in our conduct. Gradually, if we are determined, we may perhaps reshape our underlying attitudes and convictions into a fairly consistent whole somewhat more nearly in line with the facts of experience and the enduring values of life. Our task, then, is comparable not to the building of a new house but to the reconstruction of the home in which we are living and in which

we must continue to live while the rebuilding is going on. The final structure is seldom radically different from the original foundation upon which it is laid. If this seems somewhat disappointing to the more eager and hopeful, it should offer comfort to any who might otherwise hesitate to embark upon such a venture.

INVITATION TO PHILOSOPHY: *The Sophists*

It is not without good reason that consideration of the meaning and spirit of philosophy has traditionally begun with the Greeks. Throughout much of the ancient Greek world, but especially in Athens during the Age of Pericles, there were social and intellectual tendencies at work which made philosophical inquiry and reflection almost inevitable. By 450 B.C. the old economic and political order in Athens was falling to pieces; the privileges of the established aristocracy were being sharply challenged by a rising democratic movement; the traditional religious mythology and worship of the Olympian deities no longer exercised authority over the minds of the more thoughtful. Men were forced again to think for themselves about the major issues of human life and destiny; they felt the need to fashion a new and better society. There existed, likewise, the leisure, the freedom of thought, and the interchange of opinion that men must have in order to think at all.

After the unsuccessful attempt of the Persian kings, at the beginning of the fifth century B.C., to expand their empire westward into the Greek peninsula, the Athenians converted their powerful navy into a merchant fleet and soon established Athens as the center of a prosperous commercial society. For a generation Pericles dominated the government of the city and became the generous patron of literature, philosophy, and the arts. From all parts of the Mediterranean world men were attracted to Athens by its growing cultural and economic opportunities. In its intellectual and political ferment and its economic prosperity, the Athens of Pericles resembled somewhat our own American scene today. In its cultural creativity and achievement Athens of that time may be likened perhaps to the Paris of a generation or two ago. Both cities were centers to which the brilliant and aspiring men of the age were drawn and in which there developed an atmosphere particularly stimulating to creative thought and endeavor.

Numerous men of unusual insight and ability are to be found among the Athenians of that age. But there was no one who so remarkably exemplified the spirit of philosophy as did Socrates, and none who raised in so provocative a fashion the ethical problems that confront every student of philosophy as did the Sophists. These men asked the same questions about life, about morals, and about religion that we are now asking, and surprisingly enough we find them suggesting answers that are being proposed in many quarters today as the last

word in modernity. It is revealing to see that these problems are not new but perennial. It is instructive to examine the situations that produced such views of life as well as the difficulties to which they led. Indeed, a more tempting invitation to the study of philosophy can hardly be imagined than that provided in the thought of the Sophists and Socrates.

It is always easier, moreover, to understand and deal effectively with an issue when our own interests and emotions are not deeply involved. As Americans it was not difficult for us to see during the late 1930's that the British were seriously at fault in not resisting the aggression of Hitler long before they did. We did not see nearly so clearly that this was equally true of our own attitude toward the imperialism of Japan in Asia. In like manner, persons who live in Michigan or Minnesota can examine problems of race discrimination in Atlanta or Birmingham much more dispassionately than can the citizens of Alabama and Georgia; yet these same individuals in the mid-West usually have great difficulty in dealing objectively with much less serious social problems in their own communities. We may well be able, therefore, to understand better the conflicting philosophies by which men live today if we first examine these same philosophies at work in situations comparable to our own but nevertheless not our own. And we may also be able in the light of such a historical perspective to refashion our own personal philosophy of living with clearer insight and understanding. Let us not forget at the outset, however, that it is with our own problems and our own philosophy that we are primarily concerned. Unless this is the case, we are not dealing realistically with philosophy but are engaged at best in historical reflection. Yet until we do broaden our understanding and sharpen our insight, what we like to call thinking may well be merely a matter of reshuffling old prejudices.

THE SOPHISTS

The earliest philosophers of Greece, able men such as Pythagoras, Parmenides, and Heraclitus, who lived during the century before the age of Socrates and the Sophists, were concerned largely with the nature of the physical universe. The forces at work in the world about them, and the principles by which the universe was governed, held their attention and stirred them to philosophical reflection. But by the middle of the fifth century B.C. the concern of Greek philosophy had shifted from such broadly scientific speculation to an interest in morals and politics. Especially was this true in Athens. Among the able foreigners drawn to that city by its unique cultural and intellectual life were many wandering teachers, known simply as "men of wisdom" (*Sophists*), who focused attention with a new directness and clarity upon the enduring issues of human life.

These Sophists did not form a closely knit school. They came and went as individuals, attracted to Athens from Asia Minor and Italy by the greater freedom and opportunity of the Athenian society. As a group, however, they did

have much in common. They were interested not in speculation about the physical universe but in practical problems of successful living. Their major conviction might well be stated in the words of Alexander Pope: "The proper study of mankind is man." Wisdom as they saw it did not mean abstract scientific knowledge; it meant an understanding of human beings and of the skills necessary to get along successfully in one's relationships with his fellow men. At their best the Sophists were widely traveled, observant, and discerning. They brought to Athens a new appreciation of the culture of other lands and stimulated among the Athenian youth a greater interest in logic and rhetoric, in law, and in social institutions.

Many of the Sophists were men who would stand out in any society; they were interested primarily in a successful career for themselves, to be sure, but they were able to arouse a wide popular following. Their lectures on grammar and rhetoric were both appealing and practical. Some measure of their success can be found in the fees they were able to charge. It has been estimated that the more gifted collected as much as $1000 for an important lecture or two, $10,000 for a complete course of instruction. *How to Get on in the World, How to Win an Argument, On Improving your Mind*—these and similar topics were discussed by the Sophists. One is reminded of the wide popularity in recent years of such books as *Life Begins at Forty* or *How to Win Friends and Influence People.* The interests of mankind seem remarkably constant.

Only the sons of the wealthier families, of course, could afford the high fees charged by the more able Sophists, but to such young Athenians these Sophists had much to offer. The growth of democracy in Athens, as in our own country, meant "a long and bitter struggle by the poor, on the one hand, to bleed the rich either by force or by law, and, on the other, by the rich to resist by force or law such bleeding," writes B. A. G. Fuller in his very readable *History of Greek Philosophy.* In these circumstances

> a young man who wanted to get on and make a success of his career need not be overscrupulous about right and wrong, truth and falsehood, or even common sense and hard facts. All that he needed was a bit of blarney and a flair for playing upon the weak spots in his audience. Votes were to be caught and influence obtained in the Assembly, not by a display of sound statesmanship, but by the clever use of catch phrases and oratorical appeals to passion and prejudice. In questions of domestic legislation the most efficient prejudice to arouse was naturally class hatred and local jealousies. No promise, however hollow economically, seemed so fair or bribed so many votes as that of dispossessing the rich. And anyone who wished to make his mark in matters of foreign policy doubtless had at his command helpful devices like the old American invention of twisting the British lion's tail.[3]

Those who were wealthy and prominent could hardly sit passive and silent in such circumstances. Their money, and at times even their lives, depended upon their learning how to meet the charges of these demagogues in the law courts or upon launching a bold counterattack in the Assembly which might discredit them, temporarily at least, with the people of the city. But in order to do this the sons of the aristocracy had to be no less well armed than were their opponents with the arts of persuasion, no less quick of wit and tongue, no less able to grasp and to control the temper of their audience. Even able and patriotic men, who put the welfare of the state above class prejudice or partisan interests, also needed to learn the tricks of the politician's trade. The most obvious policy, the soundest justice, the simplest truth, might have to be presented with skill and tact in order to receive the popular support it needed to be enacted into law.

It is easy to understand how, in a situation such as this, the Sophists quickly gained a large following. Their classes in rhetoric and logic became particularly popular with the youth of Athens, and mastery of these subjects came more and more to mean the skill in debate and oratory that would enable a man to present his own case effectively, no matter what the basic principle involved. As a matter of fact, the Sophists were prepared, like modern lawyers, to show men how to argue successfully for or against any opinion; they were not interested in defending convictions which they themselves believed to be true. For the price of admission to their classes, they would teach their pupils how to accomplish any end, no matter how questionable its nature. In the eyes of the masses, therefore, they soon began to appear as champions of the privileged classes. To use an analogy from our own society, they might well be likened to great corporation lawyers, whose cleverness and ability enabled the wealthy always to win their cases in the courts or to get desired legislation through the assembly. When Plato, a generation later, portrayed the Sophists in his dialogues, this seems to have become the popular estimate of their character and aim, and Plato's account of them has made it the generally accepted position ever since. Such an estimate, however, certainly fails to do justice to the critical insight and the stimulus to ethical thought provided by the earlier and abler representatives of the movement, especially by such men as Protagoras and Gorgias.

To some extent, perhaps, the odium which the Sophists incurred, not only with the general public but even with Plato, may well have been due, as Bertrand Russell suggests in his recent *History of Western Philosophy*, to their intellectual merit. "The pursuit of truth, when it is whole-hearted, must ignore moral considerations," Russell writes; "we cannot know in advance that the truth will turn out to be what is thought edifying in a given society. The Sophists were prepared to follow an argument wherever it might lead them. Often it led them to scepticism."[4] In any case, the views of the Sophists seem almost as modern and provocative today as when they were first presented twenty-five hundred years ago.

MORAL RELATIVISM

Protagoras, unquestionably the greatest of the Sophists, early gained fame as a teacher in Asia Minor. Drawn to Athens around the middle of the fifth century B.C., he became a friend of Pericles and a noted figure in the intellectual life of the city. Influential connections and high fees enabled him to gain wealth as well as fame, and he exerted great influence upon Athenian thought of the day. One of Plato's dialogues, known as *Protagoras*, is in itself a tribute to the influence of the "Great Sophist." It provides us with a revealing picture of his hold upon the youth of that age. Indeed, if Plato can be trusted, the news "Protagoras has come" was exciting enough to get these young men up at dawn to discuss philosophy in his courtyard—no mean feat in itself if one judges by present standards. Walking and talking in the cloister, our philosopher, as portrayed by Plato, is surrounded by a train of listeners, "the most of them foreigners, whom Protagoras had brought with him out of the various cities visited by him on his journeys, he, like Orpheus, attracting them by his voice and they following."

Protagoras traveled widely and became familiar with the customs of many lands and people. He wrote a constitution and set of laws for the Athenian colony founded at Thurii in lower Italy. An acute observer, he was much interested in social institutions and in human culture. He noted that although a great variety of moral and religious beliefs exist, the people in each country unquestioningly accept their own practices and standards as right, and condemn those views that differ from their own. Such observation led him to philosophy: What makes a thing good and what bad? Is there, then, anything that is really right or wrong? What do we mean when we say that a belief is true?* These were the questions Protagoras asked, and his answers sound surprisingly contemporary. In examining the institutions and customs of his age, he seems, indeed, to have anticipated the attitude of the modern sociologist. Morals, he concludes, are but the social traditions, the *mores* of the group. All moral standards are relative. What is right for the Egyptian is right simply because it enables him to live well in that civilization. It need not be right for the Greek. What is good for the Athenian is good because it works well in Athens. The task of the observer is to describe what he finds, and Protagoras can discover no universal ethical norms.

Had he lived in our own day and in our country instead of in Athens twenty-five hundred years ago, Protagoras would undoubtedly have found much to confirm the conclusions that he reached. In New England he would see Negroes accepted in social as well as in economic and political activities, and race discrimination condemned, in theory at least, as thoroughly unchristian. In Georgia and Mississippi, he would find just the opposite situation, the segregation of Negroes being taken for granted as necessary and right, and grave doubts expressed as to the moral character of anyone who was willing to associate with Negroes as social equals. Monogamy and marital fidelity he would see extolled

* See E. Zeller, *Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy* (13th rev. ed.), p. 26.

in the churches of the land, at the same time that a quite obvious polygamy was being practiced elsewhere. In Hollywood, in particular, he would find it accepted as quite all right to marry as many husbands or wives as one wanted (or could afford) as long as they were taken one after another instead of all at one time. And what more could any prudent polygamist ask?

Are some things, then, always right and others always wrong? Is there an enduring moral ideal which is everywhere valid and desirable, whether one be a Greek or an Egyptian, a Russian or an American, a resident of New York or of Tennessee? To such questions Protagoras finds himself compelled to give a negative answer. His *moral relativism* is expressed in the famous dictum: "Man is the measure of all things, of things that are that they are, and of things that are not that they are not." All our standards seem to him to be relative; they depend upon one's situation and training. We cannot get beyond our own experience and social environment. The measure of right and wrong, of good or evil, is actually the extent to which our interests and desires are furthered or hindered. A thing is good if it works. If it works well for the individual in the social group to which he belongs, there is no other criterion, moral or religious, by which it can legitimately be judged. Thus Protagoras reveals himself as an early pragmatist.* In the spirit of William James, noted American philosopher and exponent of modern pragmatism, Protagoras accepts the *good as the expedient in the way of conduct* and the *true as the expedient in the way of belief.*

In such moral relativism there are obviously seeds of radicalism and dangers to orthodox moral and religious belief. But in his own practical philosophy of living Protagoras tended to be a conservative. If all moral standards are relative and not absolute, how should one live? The intelligent thing to do, Protagoras maintains, is to accept the customs and beliefs of your own community and live in harmony with them. Recognize that these practices are right and good only in so far as they enable you to get the things that you want. But recognize also that openly to flout the accepted standards of the day will simply bring you strife and unhappiness. It is only when customs and conventions get in the way of your own interests that you have any reason to oppose them, and even then there is nothing to be gained by openly attacking the venerable traditions and institutions of a community. The wise man when in Rome will do as the Romans do and so promote his own happiness and success in life, which, after all, is "the only thing that really matters."

Somewhat to his own sorrow, Protagoras does not seem to have put this philosophy into practice consistently. According to a tradition, perhaps not too well authenticated, one night at the home of a friend he read an essay of his, entitled *On the Gods,* in which the relativism that he accepted in the field of

* See F. C. S. Schiller, *Studies in Humanism,* Part II—a vigorous defense of the Sophists, and especially of Protagoras, who is taken to be the first great humanist among the Greek philosophers. There is in his thought "a depth of moral insight with which nothing else in the orthodox Greek ethic can at all compare," Schiller writes (p. 36).

ethics was applied also to religious faith. An army officer among the guests was scandalized at this procedure and had Protagoras indicted for impiety. The authorities found the philosopher guilty of the charge, confiscated and burned all the copies of his essay they could lay their hands on, and were about to seize Protagoras himself. Confronted with the choice of death or exile, he managed to make his escape by way of a boat bound for Sicily. But the ship was wrecked on the voyage and Protagoras was drowned. His fate, as here portrayed, certainly confirms the practical wisdom of the more cautious policy which the philosopher himself had earlier advocated.

MORAL SKEPTICISM

A younger generation is, as a rule, impatient with what appears, in its eyes at least, to be the conservatism of its elders. It was not long, therefore, before the philosophy of Protagoras produced even less palatable results in the ideas of two younger Sophists, Gorgias and Thrasymachus. With devastating logic the relativism of Protagoras was in their hands developed into a thoroughgoing and politically dangerous skepticism. A native of Leontini in Sicily, Gorgias is depicted by tradition as a silver-tongued orator, more distinguished perhaps for brilliance and subtlety as a speaker than for profound insight, but able to attract disciples in abundance and to command generous fees. In 427 B.C. he was sent to Athens to seek assistance for his native city in its struggle with Syracuse. His eloquence at once won him fame, and the desired aid was dispatched to Leontini. It was, as it happened, greatly to the interest of Athens to curtail the growing power of Syracuse, and this fact undoubtedly served to reinforce Gorgias' persuasiveness. In any event Athenian society made such an impression upon the visitor from Sicily that he almost forgot the plight of his home town. He decided to stay, for the time being at least, in Greece, and there he spent most of the remaining years of his life, delivering the speeches that made him famous and teaching the new Sicilian style of logic and rhetoric with marked success. In his old age he retired to Thessaly, where he is reputed to have lived to be nearly one hundred years old.

With understandable discretion Gorgias seems to have confined himself to a rather technical discussion of the issues raised by Protagoras. He is said to have advanced three justly famous propositions, however, which throw into sharp focus the implications of Protagoras' moral relativism, and later Sophists did not hesitate to point out their meaning in concrete and disturbing fashion.* The

* See, for example, the views of Callicles as described by Plato in the *Gorgias*. There is some difference of opinion among scholars concerning Gorgias' philosophy. An attempt is made here to present the skeptical spirit later associated with his teaching. The three propositions advanced in his essay *On Being* (or *On Nature*), of which a fragment has been preserved, are as follows: I. Nothing exists. II. If anything exists, it is incomprehensible. III. If it is comprehensible, it is incommunicable. (See K. Freeman, *The Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, pp. 359-361.)

first proposition makes it clear that for one who accepts the relativism of Protagoras there actually is no such thing as right or wrong. If a course of action were *really* right, then it ought always and everywhere to be followed. If we do things merely because of social convention or to further our own ends, then such acts are not right but only expedient. As soon as one becomes emancipated from the bonds of tradition and custom, and sees with Protagoras that all moral standards are relative and changing, he must admit, if he is intellectually honest, that right and wrong have no enduring significance. There is only that which promotes one's own interest and that which obstructs it. To pretend that such is not the case is mere hypocrisy.

Perhaps, however, this is too extreme. Let us suppose for the purpose of argument that there actually is a universal standard of right or truth. Gorgias is ready for that eventuality. According to his second proposition we can never *know* what that universal truth is. Our thinking as well as our conduct is determined by the circumstances of our own lives and, in his opinion, we have no way of rising above these limitations. Experience is our only teacher, and, as our experiences differ, so will our concepts of morality and religion. If we grow up in America, we normally accept the moral customs and religious ideas of this country. If we grow up in Russia, we accept the views prevalent there. We believe these to be right because we have no other standards of right or wrong by which to judge. We are creatures of our environment and our experience, Gorgias maintains; we have no divine faculty of reasoning that enables us to escape such limitations. Were he alive in our own day, Gorgias would undoubtedly point out that the Russian with his background accepts communism just as naturally as we accept the democratic way of life. The facts we use to prove our case convince us only because we believe already. They do not reveal what is right or true universally, but rather they reveal the quality of our own experience; and our argument will carry as little weight with the Russian communist as his argument does with us. Indeed one has merely to talk with a communist for half an hour to find out for himself how correct Gorgias is on this point.

But is it not possible that there may be an occasional genius, gifted or intelligent enough to rise above these limitations of circumstance and experience? Perhaps so, Gorgias admits; but his third proposition maintains that such an individual, if by chance there were one, could never *communicate* this new insight into truth successfully to anyone else. The overwhelming majority of men, he points out, necessarily accept their own customs and convictions in preference to any new doctrine; they will always be bound by the limits of their own experience and their own age. Anyone who claims a new insight into religion or morality will not be welcomed with open arms or even given an unprejudiced hearing. Rather he will be condemned, even by the best-intentioned people, as a dangerous radical. Neither the fate of Socrates nor that of Christ was then at hand for use as illustration, but from our point of vantage today one finds in

Jesus' crucifixion as well as in Socrates' execution rather disturbing confirmation of Gorgias' third proposition.

MORAL REALISM

If Protagoras may with some justice be treated as the ablest exponent of pragmatism among the Sophists, then Gorgias as here interpreted is the radical empiricist. And, as the empiricism of John Dewey in our own day has revealed more clearly the implications of the pragmatism of William James, so the skepticism of Gorgias makes plain the difficulties in the relativism of Protagoras. A third Sophist, Thrasymachus, takes the matter one step further and shows what such relativism and skepticism mean when adopted as a practical philosophy of living. Noted for his vigorous style in debate and also for his sharp tongue, Thrasymachus was likewise much interested in politics and social philosophy.* It is here that his chief interest for us is to be found.

The position taken by Thrasymachus is portrayed with a good deal of force, if not with much sympathy, in the first book of Plato's *Republic*. All attempts to find in the idea of justice a moral standard equally valid for rich and poor, strong and weak, are here sarcastically rejected. When one looks realistically at life, he sees clearly, according to this Sophist, that only might is right. The interests that prevail in the hard world about us, in politics, in economics, in the relation of race to race, are the interests of the strong. They prevail not because they are right in any universal or absolute sense but because they are powerful. We commonly accept what is legal as right; but the laws of every land turn out, upon examination, to be in the interests of those in power. The rest of us obey the laws, not because these laws are right in any ideal sense, Thrasymachus argues, nor because our best interests are served thereby, but simply because we have to obey. Laws are enforced as well as made by those who have power and in both cases for their own interests.

Should we object to this assertion that might makes right, Thrasymachus could certainly cite many contemporary economic and political developments in defence of his thesis. The right of the British in India, for example, he would undoubtedly point out, was based solely upon the power of the British to maintain themselves there. This was clear enough to Gandhi, if not to Winston Churchill. Look also, Thrasymachus might say, at what has happened in Russia as political power passed into the hands of the working classes there. Prior to the Revolution, the laws in Russia established the privileges of the Czar and the aristocracy. As soon as the working classes became powerful enough, however, new laws were passed to safeguard their interests and privileges. Now, to the majority of Russians at least, these new laws are the laws that are right, not the old ones which no longer command the necessary power to be enforced. Nor would Thrasymachus admit that the situation in our country is basically different. Our

* See K. Freeman, *The Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, pp. 375, 381.

own laws, he would insist, clearly reflect the interests of the middle class, the owners of industry and the investors of capital, who were powerful enough to control the legislatures that passed the laws and the courts that enforce them. If political power should pass into the hands of the working class in America, new laws more nearly in accord with their interests would surely be enacted here. Some among us, indeed, are insisting that this is already taking place to a rather alarming extent.

Thrasymachus' doctrine that might makes right is simply an early statement, however, of the moral theory later made famous by the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, a point of view adopted and tested on a large scale in our own day by the fascists and the Nazis. Its results are still too apparent in Europe to be easily forgotten. One does not understand, then, what moral relativism actually involves until he has examined with some care the radical empiricism of Gorgias and the cynical realism of Thrasymachus to which the doctrines of Protagoras led. Obviously the teaching of the Sophists was anything but an innocuous pastime; and there is little wonder that the good people of Athens were alarmed as these ideas spread rapidly among the youth of that city. At the very least, the Athenian youth were being led to reject the accepted moral standards of their elders and were becoming unduly critical of all authority and moral conviction. At worst, the disciples of the Sophists were promoting a narrow and selfish individualism, each seeking his own interests without regard to the welfare of his fellows and with no loyalty to any high ethical or religious ideal.

Yet the Sophists raised questions that could not simply be brushed aside—questions, indeed, that go to the very roots of the moral confusion of our own age and for which we are still seeking answers today. They began a devastating attack, likewise, upon the bondage of tradition and custom in every sphere of life, thus providing for us, as for the Athenian youth in the age of Pericles, an almost irresistible impetus to philosophical reflection. Once having gone this far, the inquiring mind cannot easily return to the security of unquestioned beliefs and convictions. Old dogmas in morality and religion no longer satisfy. One is forced either to develop a more consistent and carefully reasoned philosophy of living or else be content with the skepticism and individualism of the Sophists.

PHILOSOPHY AS A WAY OF LIVING: *Socrates*

Among those young men of Athens who were aroused from their dogmatic slumber by the teaching of the Sophists, there was no more picturesque a figure than Socrates. With bald head, great round face and protruding eyes, thick lips, and a snub nose, Socrates was anything but handsome. His personal appearance was soon forgotten, however, when one came under the influence of his

personality and his conversation. And of the conversation there seemed to have been no end; it was the main business of life for Socrates. Born an Athenian, the son of a sculptor or stonecutter, Socrates lived his life almost literally in the marketplace of his native city. His devotion to Athens, like that of the French to Paris, is comparable only to the devotion of a son to his parents. It served as a determining influence in Socrates' life and gave him an outlook quite different from that of wandering teachers of wisdom such as Protagoras or Gorgias, who came and went through the portals of Athens during Socrates' seventy years of residence there (469-399 B.C.).

Almost any day Socrates' ungainly figure could be seen in the marketplace of the city. Clad in the same threadbare tunic summer and winter, without shoes on his feet, walking leisurely and with little concern among the great and the near-great, undisturbed by the bedlam of politics about him, he spent his time discoursing upon the basic problems of morality and politics which the Sophists had raised. In these issues Socrates' interest seems never to have flagged. How he himself lived one can hardly tell. He early abandoned his father's profession for the pursuit of philosophy; but he scorned the practice of the Sophists, who charged ample fees for their teaching. To live by one's brains has always seemed degrading to the aristocratic mind—in Great Britain yesterday as in Athens centuries ago—and Socrates shared the feeling of his age on this point. He ate when his friends invited him to join them, and he literally took no thought of the morrow. One can well understand that he was not quite so popular with his wife Xanthippe as with his fellow Athenians. Indeed his concern with philosophical inquiry almost completely replaced his interest not only in his own material welfare but in that of his family as well. From Xanthippe's point of view he undoubtedly seemed a confirmed idler, who provided notoriety for the family but hardly anything more substantial. The ties of matrimony are obviously not always designed to fit the needs and temperament of genius.

Drawn by his skill and insight in argument, his boldness in challenging all pretense and in debunking the stuffed shirts of his day, and withal by his rare humility of spirit, the youth of Athens flocked about Socrates. All the problems of life were illumined in the clear light of reason by this master craftsman, who felt so deeply that "the unexamined life is not worthy of a man." But the enthusiasm of Socrates for his philosophical mission stirred up enmity quite as frequently as it made disciples. He insisted upon a critical examination of every belief and fearlessly unmasked ignorance and pretense wherever they existed, even in the outlook of the more prominent public figures among his contemporaries. Few people can bear without malice the public exposure of their own limitations. Instead of being angry with themselves at their shortcomings, these Athenians "are angry with me," Socrates observes. "This confounded Socrates, they say; this villainous misleader of youth!"[5] Yet the subject of their abuse seemed completely unconcerned about the hard feelings he aroused. He went his way, doing what he believed to be right, and his hold upon his disciples was so

great that one can hardly disentangle today the simple truth from the product of imagination in the accounts of the master that have come down to us.

THE HISTORICAL SOURCES

Plato, the greatest of the group of disciples about Socrates, has made him the hero of his dialogues and by his own artistic genius has undoubtedly complicated the matter still further. In the earlier of these dialogues, however, such as the *Apology, Crito* and *Euthyphro*, there seems good reason to believe that the figure of Socrates is portrayed with a large degree of historical accuracy. In the *Republic* and other later dialogues, on the other hand, Plato seems more and more to have used Socrates as the mouthpiece of his own philosophy, a philosophy true to the spirit of the master perhaps, but the expression in particular of Plato's own mature insight. The *Gorgias*, *Protagoras*, *Symposium*, and *Phaedo* stand in a somewhat intermediate position, reflecting the outlook of Socrates to some extent but much of Plato as well.*

Xenophon, also a contemporary, has given us, in his *Memorabilia*, a markedly different picture of Socrates. Here we find a man of good intentions, loyal to the commonplaces of prudential morality, and in general something of a bore. One can hardly imagine such a teacher stirring up either intellectual or moral turmoil. If the genius of Plato enhances somewhat the charm of Socrates even in the earlier dialogues, it is obvious that Xenophon's own limitations are largely reflected in the figure of Socrates portrayed in the *Memorabilia*. As a matter of fact, the dramatist Aristophanes, certainly a much more gifted writer than Xenophon, in his comedy the *Clouds*, depicts Socrates as a typical Sophist, proprietor of a "thinking shop," where the regard of youth for their elders is destroyed and a selfish individualism made man's one avowed aim in life. And Socrates was actually condemned to death for much the same skeptical and irreligious attitude that characterized the teaching of the Sophists. Philosophy had already come into disrepute in Athens at the hands of the Sophists, and it is not strange that Socrates, who adopted many of their more effective techniques, was soon classed among them by the general public. Yet, beneath the apparent similarities in their outlook, it is not difficult to see an essential difference between the philosophy of Socrates and that of the Sophists. Aristophanes was writing to amuse—perhaps also by innuendo and caricature to defend the established order of his day. He was not concerned with careful distinctions that seemed irrelevant to his own purposes.

SOCRATES AND THE SOPHISTS

Socrates' critical approach to life did, of course, have much in common with that of the Sophists. He felt as strongly as they did that no progress could be made in morals or in politics without a searching examination of old beliefs and

* For those interested in pursuing this question further a judicious and able discussion is available in A. K. Rogers' *The Socratic Problem.*

customs. What is meant by virtue, by piety, by courage, by patriotism? These were the problems that interested Socrates, and these questions he put insistently to friend and adversary alike. Most people cannot think clearly simply because they do not know what they are talking about. We must begin, then, by defining our terms. This principle is basic to the Socratic philosophy. In the early dialogues of Plato, Socrates is constantly at work pushing his search for an exact, logical definition of terms. Again and again he lures an unwary opponent into suggesting a definition of piety, of courage, of justice; then by skillful questions he shows the logical inconsistencies in the proposed definition and the need for clearer thinking. So successful, indeed, was he in using this procedure that in later ages it came to be known as the Socratic *dialectic*. Socrates believed, as did the Sophists, that one never discovers the meaning of right and wrong, of good and evil, simply by accepting uncritically or following blindly the moral conventions and traditions of the day. The beginning of wisdom lies in an intelligent and critical examination of all our generally accepted beliefs.

His practice of cross-examining others, of forcing them to define their terms more precisely and by this method revealing their ignorance or incompetence, Socrates justifies by an interesting device. The oracle at Delphi had told his friend Chaerephon that no one in Athens was wiser than Socrates, so the philosopher declares in the *Apology*. Certain that the oracle must have made a mistake, Socrates set out to discover someone wiser than himself. But talking with one man after another, he found that all of them, even those most renowned for their wisdom, were dealing only in words. A little skillful questioning quickly revealed their complete lack of understanding of those enduring issues of right and wrong that so interested Socrates. Whereas all the others supposed themselves to be wise, however, he alone realized his own ignorance. Where they were complacent in their acceptance of superficiality and pretense, he at least recognized that he did not know. The oracle, then, was right after all in pronouncing him the wisest of men. "The truth is, O men of Athens, that God only is wise," Socrates concluded; "and by his answer he intends to show that the wisdom of men is worth little or nothing. He is not speaking of Socrates; he is only using my name by way of illustration, as if he said, He, O men, is the wisest, who like Socrates knows that his wisdom is in truth worth nothing."[6]

None, moreover, were so clearly at fault in such self-deception as the Sophists themselves, Socrates declared. Not only did they pretend to a wisdom that they did not have; even worse, they charged high fees for teaching this pseudo-knowledge to others. To the task of unmasking their pretense and pointing the way to a moral ideal more substantial and enduring than the relativism of Protagoras or the skepticism of Gorgias, Socrates therefore set himself unremittingly. But his method of going about this was characteristically unorthodox. The first step in building a sound philosophy of living, he maintained, is getting rid of the confused mass of social convention and opinion that passes for knowledge—that

is, a critical re-examination of one's accepted habits of thought and conduct. But beyond this the Socrates of the early dialogues does not go. Rather he continues time after time to insist in tantalizing fashion upon his own ignorance. Just when he has shown beyond any further question the confusion and contradiction in a conventional idea of piety or courage or goodness, and one awaits with interest his own convincing account of what is true or right, the dialogue abruptly ends.

It may have been that Socrates' insistence upon his own ignorance was genuine—that at all costs he wished to avoid unwarranted dogmatism or unsound generalization in his own philosophy of living. It is not impossible, however, that he had very definite convictions of his own which he refrained from stating for pedagogical reasons. It is a poor teacher, as Socrates so ably demonstrates, who does all the thinking for his pupils. The first condition of genuine understanding is the effort to do one's own thinking, to depend no longer upon someone else to provide the "right answer." Socrates' insistence upon his own ignorance and his continued refusal to define such basic moral principles as courage, friendship, piety, and justice may in large measure be seen, then, as an effective device for forcing his followers to think for themselves rather than merely to depend upon him for a ready-made philosophy. Small wonder that Socrates stands among the great teachers of all time.

Every teacher of philosophy might well heed the Socratic example at this point. Yet it is an example that has its dangers. Any such stimulus to independent thinking means that the conclusions reached by one's students can no longer be controlled. They will inevitably follow their own bent, departing at times from the path most acceptable to those in places of authority, and for this the teacher himself may ultimately receive the blame. Thus Plato, the greatest of the disciples of Socrates, shared none of the master's regard for the Athenian public of his own day but remained an unrepentant aristocrat; other young men in the group that Socrates gathered about him went even further in openly attacking the political and moral conventions of the day. It is not difficult to understand why the political and religious leaders of Athens began to fear the influence of Socrates upon the youth of the city and finally decided that affairs would go more smoothly if he were got rid of.

To encourage men to think for themselves undoubtedly is dangerous; it is not a practice adopted by those who want to control public opinion. Indeed, no one will do so designedly unless he has a large measure of confidence in human reason. But it is just such a confidence that distinguishes the outlook of Socrates. In one sense, he may perhaps justly be called an agnostic. He professed himself ignorant as to what specifically constituted the right course of action, the true view of life; he insisted that his own claim to wisdom lay only in the fact that he had the good sense and intellectual integrity to admit that he did not know all the answers. But this moral agnosticism, whether genuine or con-

sciously adopted, was far different from the moral relativism and skepticism of the Sophists. For no philosopher has ever been more convinced than was Socrates that there is a universally valid standard of right and wrong, of good and evil, and that knowledge of the right and the good is attainable by the human mind. Deep down in every mind, covered by a litter of superficial opinion or ignorant prejudice, there are, according to Socrates, enduring moral standards to which all men agree or can be led to agree. As he went about uncovering prejudice, questioning old certainties, stimulating men to think for themselves, his purpose was not to destroy the authority and strength of moral conviction. Rather it was to provide what seemed to him the sound rational basis upon which alone moral certainty and true religion were possible. If in method he seemed akin to the Sophists, in purpose and in underlying principle his philosophy of living was directly opposed to theirs.

Right and wrong, good and evil, truth and error seem relative and dependent upon social convention only because we do not stop to examine our ideas carefully, analyze our facts, and then define clearly what we have in mind, Socrates was convinced. It is the task of philosophy to help us recognize the superficial and unessential, discard what is only relative or merely individual, and commit ourselves unreservedly to those universal and enduring moral principles which reason alone can reveal. Knowledge, then, is the key to virtue, and virtue is impossible without understanding.

KNOWLEDGE IS VIRTUE

Of all the doctrines that go back to Socrates, the concept that knowledge is virtue is perhaps the most characteristic. In the more trying periods of civilization, courage is the virtue men admire. This was the case in ancient Rome, and we ourselves are again living through an age in which courage is of paramount importance. An industrial society, on the other hand, has too frequently been willing to accept acquisitiveness as its cardinal virture. For virtue, when properly understood, is simply *that trait of character upon which the achievement of the good life depends.* Now, as seen by Socrates, it is upon knowledge more than anything else that the good life depends. Only the man who knows what he is doing can do what is right. Morality consists not in a thoughtless or blind obedience to conventional standards but in the intelligent direction of life. Reason is our unique human possession. Those who blindly follow instinctive drives are living as animals; only he who lives intelligently is living as a man. "The unexamined life," Socrates kept insisting in one situation after another, "is not worthy of a man."

If virtue and knowledge are to be identified, so also are sin and ignorance. Every man naturally seeks his own good, Socrates points out, and does what he believes to be to his own advantage. We may think that we often do what we know to be wrong, but actually no one voluntarily does a thing he considers to

be against his own best interest. He does wrong because he is ignorant, because he does not *know* what is best for him, what the consequences of his conduct will be. No youth embarks upon his first petty robbery with the clear recognition that it will lead ultimately to a life of crime or a prison sentence. Instead, where others have failed or been caught, he believes that he can beat the game. No one takes an occasional drink with his friends knowing that in the long run drinking will undermine his health or ruin his business. It is his ignorance, not his knowledge, that leads him into wrongdoing. We recognize clearly that for others the consequences of dishonesty and deceit will be disgrace and suffering, but for ourselves we constantly make exceptions. We lull ourselves into a fatal self-deception by believing that things will be different for us, that just this once, in these circumstances, we can get away with it. What we call sin, then, is for Socrates actually ignorance. One cannot really *know* the good, which means seeing why it is good, and then prefer the evil.

"KNOW THYSELF," the motto inscribed over the temple at Delphi, Socrates adopted as the cornerstone of his philosophy and sought to make the guiding principle of his life. No sound philosophy of living is possible, he insists, until we examine critically the underlying attitudes and beliefs by which our own conduct is shaped. No man can hope to attain wisdom until he has come to see clearly how superficial, ignorant, and prejudiced most of his thinking really is. He must admit how infrequently he has bothered to be honest and straightforward with himself. Dependable self-knowledge is impossible without an elimination of the sham and hypocrisy which for most of us serve as a protection against any honest searching of the soul and a barrier to any deep insight into human nature

Today, as Walter Lippmann has put it, "morality has become so stereotyped, so thin and verbal, so encrusted with pious fraud, it has been so much monopolized by the tender-minded and the sentimental, and made so odious by the outcries of foolish men and sour old women, that our generation has almost forgotten that virtue was not invented in Sunday Schools but derives originally from a profound realization of human life."[7] Socrates and the group of eager young men who gathered about him in Athens, however, had definitely not forgotten this fact. For them it was the intelligent, not the naïve and unsophisticated, who sought to understand and to do what was right. Morals, then, when rightly understood, are not undesirable restraints imposed upon us by some external authority but are rational principles of conduct designed to achieve the greatest satisfaction in human life, Socrates points out. The good is actually *that which men will want to do, if only they know what they are doing.*

THE PHILOSOPHER'S MISSION

The task of the philosopher, however, as Socrates interprets it, is not merely to suggest an intelligent way of life for the individual. In accord with the Greek view of his day, Socrates conceived of man as essentially social. For him, as for

his Athenian contemporaries, personal and social morality were but aspects of one larger whole. To live as a human being a man must live as a citizen of the state. Yet, as Socrates looked around him at the Athenian democracy of the day, he observed that nowhere were his fellow citizens more ignorant, more uncritical, more bound by outmoded tradition and custom than in politics. Time after time men gained important office in the state and exercised authority over the lives of others with no better qualification than a desire for power and prestige or an ability to flatter the multitude. The carpenter, the blacksmith, the physician, each had to know his own business in order to qualify for the job. In politics alone no special training was expected, no degree of proficiency required, to permit a man to hold office. Yet the responsibilities of the politician were far greater than those of the carpenter or blacksmith, of far wider social significance than those of the physician.

Socrates concludes, therefore, that the primary mission of the philosopher is a social one; it is his task to help in building a better society. With this mission in mind he depicts himself as the "gadfly of the State," constantly engaged in stinging the sluggish public into an awareness of the issues before it, much as the horsefly stings a sluggish mare into activity. Socrates' constant questioning of the leaders in public life was not designed, then, simply to reveal their ignorance or to secure prestige for himself. It was, rather, his way of forcing upon his fellow citizens a more thorough consideration of the basic issues of public morality—of justice, of patriotism, of good government. This task he considered his chief duty as an Athenian. It was, moreover, for Socrates fundamentally a religious as well as a political mission. When facing the possibility of death as a result of his insistent criticism of conventional ideas and practices, Socrates made this comment to his fellow Athenians: "Know that this is the command of God; and I believe that no greater good has ever happened in the State than my service to the God. For I do nothing but go about persuading you all, old and young alike, not to take thought for your persons or your properties, but first and chiefly to care about the greatest improvement of the soul." Even at this critical moment, moreover, it is not his own life in which Socrates is primarily interested but rather the good of the State. "And now, Athenians, I am not going to argue for my own sake, as you may think, but for yours," he declares, according to Plato. "For if you kill me you will not easily find a successor to me, who, if I may use such a ludicrous figure of speech, am a sort of gadfly, given to the State by God, and all day long and in all places, I am always fastening upon you, arousing and persuading and reproaching you. You will not easily find another like me, and therefore I would advise you to spare me."[8]

THE PHILOSOPHY SOCRATES LIVED BY

The general character of Socrates' philosophy of living is clearly indicated in the foregoing account of the meaning and task of philosophy as he saw it. His

greatness lies not so much in what he taught as in what he was. Indeed, Socrates stands with Jesus not merely among the greatest teachers of mankind but among the greatest of men. Our clearest insight into his philosophy is found in the way in which he lived, and Plato in the *Apology* has drawn for us a justly famous picture of the way in which Socrates lived—a picture in which the moral principles he accepted and acted upon are revealed with unmistakable clarity.

After the failure of an aristocratic revolution led by some of the young men who had been closest to Socrates, the democracy was reinstated in Athens in 404 B.C. Its leaders were in no mood to put up with the old man who had stirred up so much unrest, no matter how good his motives; Socrates was brought to trial for his life, accused of corrupting the youth of the city and of disbelief in the gods of the State. A slight compromise with conviction might well have brought him freedom; a refusal to compromise meant courting martyrdom. The working philosophy by which one's conduct is guided stands out nowhere so dramatically as in a situation such as this. Loyalty to inner conviction, to the voice of an enlightened conscience, no matter what the cost, runs through the speeches of the *Apology* like a golden thread. In words that are characteristic, Socrates expresses his position to his fellow Athenians:

> If you say to me, Socrates, this time you shall be let off, but upon one condition, that you are not to inquire and speculate in this way any more, and that if you are caught doing so again you shall die;—if this was the condition on which you let me go, I should reply: Men of Athens, I honor and love you, but I shall obey God rather than you, and while I have life and strength I shall never cease from the practice and teaching of philosophy, exhorting any one whom I meet and saying to him after my manner: You, my friend,—a citizen of the great and mighty and wise city of Athens, —are you not ashamed of heaping up . . . money and honor and reputation, and caring so little about wisdom and truth and the greatest improvement of the soul, which you never regard or heed at all?[9]

Having refused to make any compromise to prolong his life—indeed, having taken the occasion of his trial not for pleas of mercy but instead for a vigorous reaffirmation of the philosophy by which he had lived for seventy years, Socrates was condemned to death. To those of his judges who had voted for his acquittal he spoke these final words: "The difficulty, my friends, is not to avoid death but to avoid unrighteousness. . . . Wherefore, O judges, be of good cheer about death, and know of a certainty that no evil can happen to a good man either in life or after death." This was the cardinal conviction in accord with which life was lived and death unflinchingly faced by Socrates. *Know of a certainty that no evil can happen to a good man either in life or after death.*

Socrates' unswerving loyalty to what he believed to be right was based upon his faith that there is a moral order in the universe by which man's destiny both here and hereafter is determined. This was not a view of life which he undertook

to demonstrate by rational argument, but it was an enduring faith that gave his life nobility and great influence and made him the exemplar without parallel of the spirit of philosophy at its best, of philosophy as a way of living in accord with the dictates of wisdom. It is here, moreover, that Socrates' most convincing answer to the moral relativism and skepticism of the Sophists is to be found, an answer the deeper implications of which he left to be worked out by the long line of philosophers who followed him, from Plato and Aristotle to Spinoza and Kant.

THE DEATH OF SOCRATES (399 B.C.)

Each year the Athenians sent a ship to the festival of Apollo at Delos, and during its absence the city was not to be polluted by the execution of any who might be under sentence of death. This ship had been made ready for departure on the day before Socrates' trial, and the death penalty imposed upon him was not carried out until its return thirty days later. During the month, Socrates might easily have escaped from prison. He was strongly urged to do so by his friends, who had already made the necessary arrangements with his jailer. But Socrates refused to accept their offers of help. The law ought to be obeyed just as surely when it was to a man's disadvantage as when it was advantageous, he maintained. At length the ship returned from Delos, and the next morning Socrates' friends came early to the prison, knowing that he soon must die. That last day has been described in unforgettable fashion by Plato. Socrates spent it discoursing with his companions on the immortality of the soul, urging them to be of good cheer, since no man who had adorned his soul "in her own proper jewels, which are temperance, and justice, and courage, and nobility, and truth," had anything to fear from death. Having said farewell to his wife and children early in the day, he bathed as sunset drew near and when the hemlock was brought him, he drank it without hesitation.

Phaedo, one of the small group with Socrates to the end, then says:

> Hitherto most of us had been able to control our sorrow; but now when we saw him drinking, and saw, too, that he had finished the draught, we could no longer forbear, and in spite of myself my own tears were flowing fast, so I covered my face and wept over myself; for certainly I was not weeping over him, but at the thought of my own calamity in having lost such a companion. Nor was I the first, for Crito, when he found himself unable to restrain his tears, had got up and moved away, and I followed; and at that moment Apollodorus, who had been weeping all the time, broke into a loud cry which made cowards of us all. Socrates alone retained his calmness. What is this strange outcry, he said. I sent away the women mainly in order that they might not offend in this way, for I have heard that a man should die in peace. Be quiet, then, and have patience. When we heard that, we were ashamed and refrained from our tears; and he walked

about until, as he said, his legs began to fail, and then he lay on his back, according to directions, and the man who gave him the poison now and then looked at his feet and legs; and after a while he pressed his foot hard and asked him if he could feel; and he said, No; and then his leg, and so upwards and upwards, and showed us that he was cold and stiff. And then Socrates felt them himself, and said: When the poison reaches the heart, that will be the end. He was beginning to grow cold about the groin, when he uncovered his face, for he had covered himself up, and said (they were his last words)—he said: Crito, I owe a cock to Asclepius; will you remember to pay the debt? The debt shall be paid, said Crito; is there anything else? There was no answer to his question; but in a minute or two a movement was heard, and the attendants uncovered him; his eyes were set, and Crito closed his eyes and mouth.

Such was the end of our friend, whom I may truly call the wisest, the justest, and best of men whom I have ever known.[10]

THE ENDURING QUEST

No single figure in the field of philosophy has been so creative and so provocative as Socrates. Despite the fact that he wrote nothing, he left upon the minds of those who heard him and who associated with him daily in the market place of Athens an indelible impression. Almost every new direction taken by the search for the good life during the century that followed his death drew its inspiration from him, and the exponents of each new point of view claimed him as their spiritual father. Throughout the ages men have turned back to him for intellectual stimulus, and even in our own day those who seek to bring about a radical reconstruction in philosophy cite, in support of their proposals, Socrates' devotion to critical inquiry.

Thus we find that Aristippus of Cyrene, one of the young men attracted to Athens by the fame of Socrates, in time became a confirmed hedonist and advocated the pursuit of pleasure as the only acceptable philosophy of living. But in so doing he considered himself still Socrates' disciple, finding in the master's willingness to enjoy the ordinary pleasures of life, in his spontaneous gaiety and lack of moral snobbery, the inspiration for his own hedonistic philosophy. On the other hand Antisthenes, also a well-known member of the group associated with Socrates, was so impressed by the master's careless poverty and unconcern for the things of this world that he made a religion of it. The Cynic school, which Antisthenes founded, openly flouted the social and moral conventions of the day and, for some recent interpreters at least, in its uncompromising effort to follow the life of reason came nearer than any other of his disciples to the heart of Socrates' philosophy.

It is Plato, however, who is generally regarded as the greatest of those drawn

to philosophy by the life and the teaching of Socrates. In his most influential work, the *Republic*, Plato undertakes to make clear what the quest of the good life involves when one is completely loyal to the rational ideal. And this for Plato is a direct outgrowth of what he took to be the major concern of Socrates—so much so, as a matter of fact, that scholars still debate about how much of Plato's dialogues are his own and how much are reliable accounts of what Socrates actually did and said.

In such fashion as this, then, the creative spirit of Socrates gave impetus to that enduring quest for the meaning and purpose of life which is still of paramount importance to our generation. As we seek today to build for ourselves a philosophy of living that is both intellectually tenable and sufficient for our spiritual needs, we find ourselves confronted with the same questions that Socrates raised so provocatively with his disciples. Is the pursuit of pleasure the sure and direct way to happiness? Or are the hedonists who take this position deceived and enslaved by passion and emotion? Does the life of reason afford the human spirit its only permanent satisfactions? Or is reason in itself incapable of providing the full realization of our human capacities? Are there in the very nature of things enduring ideals and values to which man must devote his life, if he is true to the best he knows? Or are we confronted with a universe that is indifferent or even hostile to all that we hold most dear in human life?

These are questions which the disciples of Socrates debated in Athens. They are questions with which the great philosophers of the ages have been concerned. And they are questions for which we ourselves must find an answer.

I

The Pursuit of Pleasure

A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou
  Beside me singing in the Wilderness—
Ah, Wilderness were Paradise enow!

OMAR KHAYYAM

Nature has placed man under the governance of two sovereign masters, *pain* and *pleasure*. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do.

JEREMY BENTHAM

2 · POPULAR HEDONISM

The Cyrenaics, Epicurus, and Lin Yutang

The philosophy which accepts the pursuit of pleasure as the chief and enduring business of life is called hedonism (a term derived from the Greek word for pleasure, *hedoné*). Most of the virtues in the catalogue of morals men must learn to desire or discipline themselves to attain, but pleasure is desired by all men naturally and without reflection. Pleasure seems, indeed, the normal and instinctive good established by Nature for all her creatures. The real problem for the philosopher, so the advocates of hedonism insist, is not to decide what constitutes the good life. That we all know well enough: it is a life which affords us maximum enjoyment. What we need to know is how to obtain the greatest pleasure in life and how to avoid the pain that seems inextricably woven into the very fabric of living, no matter where or in what circumstances our lot is cast. This the philosopher must help us determine, if he is to be of genuine assistance.

As hedonism is the natural philosophy of the ordinary, unsophisticated man and woman, according to those who adopt this position, so also it must be the view of life accepted by the philosopher if he is true to the facts of experience. But where the pursuit of pleasure by the majority of mankind is inconsistent, thoughtless, self-defeating, that of the philosopher should be intelligent, well reasoned, and sure of success. Whether we like to admit it or not, hedonism is an extremely popular philosophy, and there are times when we all feel its appeal. We shall do well, then, to examine it carefully for its elements of strength and enduring appeal as well as for its undoubted limitations.

ARISTIPPUS AND THE CYRENAIC PHILOSOPHY

To Aristippus, a wandering Sophist of Cyrene (*c.* 430-350 B.C.), we owe perhaps the earliest and the most forthright statement of hedonism. His philosophy reflects clearly the circumstances and the personality of its author. The town of Cyrene, founded on the coast of Africa by Greek colonists, lay on the edge of a plateau about ten miles from the Mediterranean. Screened from the hot sands of the desert by high mountains but open to the mild sea breezes, this territory abounded in all sorts of flowers and fruits. Vegetables could be cultivated abundantly eight months of the year, and every variety of foliage was near at hand, from luxuriant groves of date palms to forests of sturdy oaks. At the time of Aristippus' birth, Cyrene had grown into a rich and splendid city. The gleaming marble of its temples, the stately buildings and colonnades of its Acropolis, rivaled those in Athens. A prosperous Mediterranean trade brought wealth in abundance into the coffers of the city, and its strategic location enabled it to enjoy comparative peace and security during these years.

In a people accustomed by nature and good fortune to so easy and privileged a life, one does not expect a stern or harsh moral outlook. The citizens of Cyrene were reputed to be both pleasure-loving and indulgent. Born of a wealthy family at a time when Cyrene was enjoying its greatest prosperity, Aristippus had all the advantages and the disadvantages that circumstances such as these can afford. A genial and clever youth, he was fond of worldly pleasures but was also intelligent and resourceful and seems to have got along well with all sorts of people. If chance had not brought him under the charm of Socrates and thus led him to philosophy, he might well have distinguished himself in politics or achieved prestige in the social life of the day.

During a visit to the Olympic games, however, Aristippus heard from a friend a glowing description of Socrates. He was so intrigued that he could scarcely wait to get to Athens and meet this delightful and interesting person. Soon he was numbered among Socrates' most devoted followers, a member of the little circle of intimate companions drawn together about the master. He even seems to have done some teaching on his own during this period for which he is reputed to have charged fees, as the Sophists did, thus antagonizing his former comrades. Not long after the death of Socrates, Aristippus adopted the typical mode of life of the Sophists. He traveled from place to place, teaching as he went and collecting high fees from his pupils. Coming back in time to Cyrene and falling under the seductive appeal of his native city, Aristippus decided to remain and establish there a school of philosophy. The hedonism he expounded has taken its name from the city in which he lived and taught.

THE CYRENAIC VIEW OF LIFE

It is not easy at first to recognize the influence of Socrates in the direct and uncompromising pursuit of pleasure which Aristippus advocates. One sees more

clearly, perhaps, a reflection of the ease and luxury of Cyrene or of the early life which Aristippus himself lived as a man of the world who liked to enjoy himself and knew how to do so. But Socrates, despite his independence of mind and depth of conviction, enjoyed life thoroughly. He dined and wined gladly with his friends and, as depicted in Plato's *Symposium*, discoursed on love with as much insight and ardor as any of his contemporaries. It was upon Socrates' enthusiasm for the simple joy of living, his lack of any pretense or snobbery, his careless gaiety that Aristippus seized as the key to life and to philosophy. Socrates was a living example of how to be happy though good. His serenity and content were won not by shunning pleasures but by being interested in everything that went on, by finding something enjoyable in whatever happened, by refusing to be overserious even in the face of death itself.*

So, at least, Aristippus reasoned, and he set out to clarify in a way in which all could understand these suggestions, vague, tentative, and incomplete, which he had gathered from his contacts with Socrates. Socrates had insisted, commendably, that the better you were, the better time you were having. Aristippus insists—with less commendable logic, perhaps—that the better time you are having, the better you are. It does not take a wise man, reflecting upon the meaning of life, to see that all men, consciously or unconsciously, are seeking pleasure, Aristippus points out. The pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain are the two driving forces in the behavior of all creatures. What, then, could be more simple, more normal, more healthy, than to obey this imperative dictate of Nature and frankly seek enjoyment in life without affecting a sour or Puritanical attitude. In the opinion of the Cyrenaic philosopher, such Puritanism only prevents our enjoying the good things that life has to offer us and makes those around us uncomfortable. Pleasure is our goal in life; let us, therefore, have as much and as intense pleasure as we can get.

Since pleasures of the senses are the most intense of all, they should be sought in preference to other types. They alone provide the kind of thrill, the intoxication of spirit, that makes life really enjoyable. For the Cyrenaic, moreover, the pleasures of the moment are more desirable than those that may perhaps be obtained in the future. Of the present alone we are certain. The future may never come (for us); even if it does, it will undoubtedly be quite different from what we anticipate. If we are wise, however, we must control our pursuit of pleasure, not be controlled by it, Aristippus warns us; this is undoubtedly the most significant as well as the most difficult of his working principles.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE RUBAIYAT

Nowhere has the Cyrenaic hedonism been expressed with such haunting beauty as in the familiar lines of Edward Fitzgerald's nineteenth-century translation of the *Rubaiyat*. This poem, originally the work of Omar Khayyam,

* A lively and readable account of Aristippus is given by B. A. G. Fuller, *History of Greek Philosophy*, Vol. II, pp. 115-136.

Persian astronomer and poet of the twelfth century, stands among the classic portrayals of life devoted to the pursuit of pleasure. There are moments when the appeal of the *Rubaiyat* is undeniable, although much of the appeal lies, no doubt, in the beauty of the poetry rather than in the soundness of its philosophy. Certainly, however, Omar Khayyam clothes the hedonism of Aristippus in its most alluring garb. The Cyrenaic philosopher could ask no better presentation of his view of life.

For Omar Khayyam, as for Aristippus, the road to happiness lies in a direct and uninhibited enjoyment of pleasure. Life is short, the future uncertain, and the present itself fast slipping by. Pleasures are to be seized while there is time. Pleasures of the senses are to be preferred, for in them we find immediate and undeniable appeal. He who hesitates has no one to blame but himself. So, at least, the author of the *Rubaiyat* assures us:

Before the Phantom of False Morning died
Methought a Voice within the Tavern cried,
  "When all the Temple is prepared within,
Why nods the drowsy Worshipper outside?"

Come, fill the cup, and in the fire of Spring
Your Winter-garment of Repentance fling:
  The Bird of Time has but a little way
To flutter—and the Bird is on the Wing.

A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,
A jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou
  Beside me singing in the Wilderness—
Ah, Wilderness were Paradise enow!

Some for the Glories of this World; and some
Sigh for the Prophet's Paradise to come.
  Ah, take the Cash, and let the Credit go,
Nor heed the rumble of a distant Drum!

The Worldly Hope men set their Hearts upon
Turns Ashes—or it prospers; and anon,
  Like Snow upon the desert's dusty Face,
Lighting a little hour or two—is gone.

Ah, my Beloved, fill the cup that clears
Today of past Regrets and future Fears:
  Tomorrow!—Why, Tomorrow I may be
Myself with Yesterday's Sev'n thousand Years.

Ah, make the most of what we yet may spend,
Before we too into the Dust descend;
  Dust into Dust, and under Dust to lie,
Sans Wine, sans Song, sans Singer, and—sans End.

This world, the hedonist insists, is the only one we can count on. It is in this life that we must find the happiness which so appeals to us, if we are to find it at all. Heaven and Hell are not future states, but qualities of experience here and now.

> Oh, threats of Hell and Hopes of Paradise!
> One thing at least is certain,—*This* Life flies;
> One thing is certain and the rest is Lies;
> The Flower that once has blown forever dies.
>
> Strange, is it not? that of the myriads who
> Before us passed the door of Darkness through,
> Not one returns to tell us of the Road,
> Which to discover we must travel too.
>
> I sent my Soul through the Invisible
> Some letter of that After-life to spell:
> And by and by my Soul returned to me,
> And answered, "I Myself am Heav'n and Hell."
>
> Heav'n but the Vision of fulfilled Desire,
> And Hell the Shadow of a Soul on fire,
> Cast on the Darkness into which Ourselves,
> So late emerged from, shall so soon expire.

Not only is life uncertain and fleeting; our destiny is shaped by a power far greater than our own puny desires and ambitions. Man is only a pawn in the hands of fate. He has no real freedom, and it is futile as well as foolish to strive against the forces that move us on. God, if god there be, is not troubled by human hopes and fears.

> We are no other than a moving row
> Of Magic Shadow-shapes that come and go
> Round with this Sun-illumined Lantern held
> In Midnight by the Master of the Show;
>
> Impotent Pieces of the Game He plays
> Upon his Chequer-board of Nights and Days;
> Hither and thither moves, and checks, and slays.
> And one by one back in the Closet lays.
>
> The Ball no question makes of Ayes and Noes
> But Here or There as strikes the Player goes:
> And He that tossed you down into the Field,
> *He* knows about it all—HE knows—HE knows!
>
> The Moving Finger writes; and having writ,
> Moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit
> Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
> Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.

In such a world there can be no such thing as moral responsibility. The things man does he has to do. The God who created him as he is can certainly not blame man for enjoying the pleasures which by nature he is led to desire. Such a doctrine would be unthinkable!

What! out of senseless Nothing to provoke
A conscious Something to resent the yoke
  Of unpermitted Pleasure, under pain
Of Everlasting Penalties, if broke!

What! from his helpless Creature be repaid
Pure Gold for what he lent him dross-allayed—
  Sue for a Debt he never did contract,
And cannot answer—Oh, the sorry trade!

Oh Thou, who didst with pitfall and with gin
Beset the Road I was to wander in,
  Thou wilt not with Predestined Evil round
Enmesh, and then impute my Fall to Sin!

Oh Thou, who Man of baser Earth didst make,
And ev'n with Paradise devise the Snake:
  For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
Is blackened—Man's Forgiveness give—and take!

As he nears the end of life, however, doubts do seem to trouble even so confirmed and irresponsible a hedonist as the author of the *Rubaiyat.* Things evidently did not turn out quite as he had anticipated. Perhaps, indeed, he has missed what was most worth while after all. Although his repentance is never entirely sincere, Omar Khayyam does seem forced to admit that the pursuit of pleasure has not really satisfied the deeper desires of the human heart.

Indeed, the Idols I have loved so long
Have done my credit in Men's eyes much wrong:
  Have drowned my Glory in a shallow Cup,
And sold my Reputation for a Song.

Indeed, indeed, Repentance oft before
I swore—but was I sober when I swore?
  And then and then came Spring, and Rose-in-hand
My thread-bare Penitence apieces tore.

Would but some wingéd Angel ere too late
Arrest the yet unfolded Roll of Fate,
  And make the stern Recorder otherwise
Enregister, or quite obliterate!

Ah, Love! could you and I with Him conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
Would not we shatter it to bits—and then
Re-mold it nearer to the Heart's Desire!

THE CYRENAIC SPIRIT IN OUR DAY

One does not have to look far to see that the spirit of Aristippus and the *Rubaiyat* still has its appeal. For many of our contemporaries the pleasures of the moment and the pleasures of the senses easily overshadow the less tangible goods of the future. Dances, movies, and football games too frequently make the worth of mathematics, economics, or philosophy seem dull by comparison. And at no time is the appeal of the Cyrenaic philosophy more evident than in a war-torn world, where for many young men and women the future is uncertain and the pleasures of the moment and the pleasures of the senses well nigh irresistible. Into the strenuous and dangerous life of the soldier, the Cyrenaic attitude always fits easily and naturally. The only sure compensation for constant hardships, deprivation, routine, and discipline seems to many to be the intense and immediate pleasures provided by wine, women, and song. This is a philosophy of living which unquestionably has attracted young men and women during the strenuous years of this century. It will continue to affect their view of life long after the fighting itself is over and perhaps forgotten.

Some doubts about this philosophy, however, inevitably assail us today, as they did even so confirmed a hedonist as Omar Khayyam. At times, perhaps, many of us would like to eat, drink, and be merry, and forget the morrow. But unfortunately tomorrow has a way of showing up, despite our desire to escape it. And is the dissipation of the night before worth the headache, or the heartache, of the morrow, even on the premise of the hedonist that pleasure is the most important thing in life? Is it not true that the intensity of the pleasures of the senses is frequently more than counterbalanced by the pain which follows in their wake? Instead of remaining the master of his pleasures, the Cyrenaic easily becomes their slave. Instead of finding happiness through the pursuit of pleasure, he finds frustration, disillusion, or boredom. To these objections Aristippus and his fellow Cyrenaics have never been able to provide a thoroughly convincing answer. Where they have failed, however, more prudent hedonists have been appreciably more successful.

THE EPICUREAN VIEW OF LIFE

It is in the teaching of Epicurus (341-270 B.C.), cultured Greek thinker of the ancient world, rather than in the thought of Aristippus, that hedonism has found its most acceptable statement as a philosophy of living. Born in Samos, where his father, a citizen of Athens, had gone as a colonist, Epicurus spent his

youth in Asia Minor. His father was a master in an elementary school, and tradition has it that at an early age the son helped him in the duties of the schoolroom. When he was about twenty years old, Epicurus proceeded to Athens to be enrolled as a citizen and to complete the period of military training which was required of all Athenian youth. Shortly after the death of Alexander the Great, in 323 B.C., the Athenian colonists were expelled from Samos, and Epicurus, in order to care for his father, returned to Asia Minor, where he established himself as a teacher of philosophy. In this undertaking he was eminently successful, rapidly making a name for himself as an able thinker and teacher.

Athens was still the center of intellectual and cultural activity, however, and, as his fame increased, Epicurus felt the attraction of the home of philosophy in the ancient world. In 306 B.C. he moved with his followers to Athens, where he purchased a garden and established a school of philosophy. He soon gathered about him there a group of enthusiastic disciples, among whom even women and slaves were included. Drawing themselves apart from the political turmoil and the economic unrest which disturbed the world at that time, this group formed a highly congenial fellowship of kindred spirits.

The Garden of Epicurus became famous in antiquity for its example of goodly living and companionship as well as for its philosophical thought. To the members of this little society Epicurus seems at all times to have been most generous. He rejected the notion of a common purse for the school but contributed from his own means to the needs of the group and was widely known for his sympathy and reasonableness. Completely loyal to the wisdom of Epicurus, whom they came to venerate almost as a god, his disciples committed his "golden maxims" to memory verbatim and accepted them as the inspired scripture of their philosophical faith. Epicurus seems always to have been in rather delicate health. He was long subject to gout and for many years unable to walk. These infirmities of the flesh he bore calmly and courageously, however, and not until his seventy-second year did death bring to an end his philosophical reflection and discourse.

THE INTELLIGENT PURSUIT OF PLEASURE

Actually Epicurus is neither profound nor completely consistent in his portrayal of the good life. Philosophy was for him a very practical concern—a way of living, not primarily a system of thought. Much of the appeal of his philosophy lies, indeed, in its simplicity and common sense. He defined philosophy for his followers as "the daily business of speech and thought to secure a happy life." As a good hedonist, Epicurus has no question that pleasure is the major and essential ingredient in happiness. "Pleasure is our first and kindred good," he writes. "It is the starting point of every choice and every aversion, and to it we come back and make feeling the rule by which to judge of every good thing. . . . Wherefore we call pleasure the Alpha and Omega of a blessed life."

A life in which there is the greatest amount of pleasure and the least pain is

every man's goal, but such a life cannot be found, Epicurus points out, simply by the impulsive pursuit of immediate and intense pleasures. It is here that the Cyrenaic makes his major mistake. Only a little reflection is needed to realize that for every dissipation or overindulgence we pay with a long headache on the morning after. Epicurus writes:

> When we say then that pleasure is the end and aim [of life], we do not mean the pleasures of the prodigal, or the pleasures of sensuality, as we are understood to do by some, through ignorance, prejudice or willful misinterpretation. *By pleasure we mean the absence of pain in the body and trouble in the soul.* It is not an unbroken succession of drinking and of revelry, not the enjoyment of female society, nor feasts of fish and other delicacies of a luxurious table, that make life pleasant; it is sober reasoning which searches out the grounds for every choice and avoidance, and banishes those vain beliefs through which great turmoil takes possession of the soul.*

As Epicurus interprets life, health of the body and tranquility of the spirit constitute lasting happiness. The happy life is the tranquil life, the life free from passion, from fear, and from pain. The great obstacle to happiness, he feels, is neither pain nor poverty, nor the absence of the good things of life; it is, rather, whatever tends to disturb our security and peace of mind, whatever causes fear, anxiety, worry. In the pleasures of the mind rather than the body, and in enduring pleasure not the pleasures of the moment, the surest way to real happiness is to be found. Intellectual enjoyment at its best comes in stimulating conversation and pleasant fellowship among congenial friends, in an association free from all overanxious or soul-disturbing inquiry into the realms of hidden truth, Epicurus concludes. Above all other pleasures, however, are the delights of friendship. "Of all the things which wisdom procures for the happiness of life as a whole, by far the greatest is the acquisition of friendship," he writes. "We ought to look around for people to eat and drink with, before we look for something to eat and drink: to feed without a friend is the life of a lion and a wolf."

These pleasures are singled out above others, it is important to note, not because pleasures of the mind are in themselves superior to pleasures of the sense. All pleasure is equally good for Epicurus; it is simply the *amount of pleasure* that is important. The man of wisdom seeks to get the most pleasure in life and the least pain. An intelligent hedonist will frequently choose to suffer momentary pain if it enables him to gain lasting pleasure, and he will always avoid an indulgence of appetite or desire which brings unpleasant consequence. The temporary pain of a surgical operation, for example, is more than compensated for by the permanently improved health it can produce. Epicurus describes quite explicitly the conduct dictated by wisdom:

* "Letter to Menoeceus," in R. D. Hicks, *Stoic and Epicurean*, pp. 167-173, an excellent summary of Epicurus' philosophy of living.

> Even though pleasure is our first and native good, for that reason we do not choose every pleasure whatsoever but ofttimes pass over many pleasures when a greater annoyance issues from them. And ofttimes we consider pains superior to pleasures, and submit to the pain for a long time when it is attended for us with a greater pleasure. While, therefore, all pleasure because it is naturally akin to us is good, not all pleasure is worthy to be chosen, just as all pain is evil but all pain is not to be shunned. It is by measuring one against another, and by looking at the conveniences and inconveniences that all those matters must be judged.)

EPICUREAN AND CYRENAIC

In the thought of Epicurus we find, then, a much more restrained and prudent hedonism than in the bold irresponsibility of the Cyrenaic. Epicureanism, indeed, is more legitimately a *philosophy* of living, a pursuit of pleasure guided by reason rather than by passion. The Epicurean, not the Cyrenaic, is really the master of his pleasures rather than their slave. For him reason and intelligence seek to control emotion and desire, subjecting momentary passion and impulse to a definitely rational ideal and pointing the way to the achievement of happiness through freedom from pain in the body and trouble in the soul. Some of the admonitions of Epicurus to this effect may well astonish those who regard themselves as his disciples. "For myself," he writes a friend, "I can be pleased with bread and water; yet send me a little cheese, that when I want to be extravagant, I may be." "Plain fare is not more distasteful than a costly diet, when once the pain due to want is removed," he elsewhere observes, "and bread and water confer the highest pleasure when they are brought to hungry lips. To habituate one's self, therefore, to plain and inexpensive diet supplies all that is needed for health, and enables a man to meet the necessary requirements of life without shrinking, and it places us in a better condition when we approach at intervals a costly fare, and renders us fearless of fortune."[2]

Nor does Epicurus follow Omar Khayyam in denying to man the freedom necessary to govern his life intelligently. The man of wisdom, in his opinion, will recognize the limitations of scientific determinism and see also the grounds for belief in human freedom.

> Destiny, which some introduce as sovereign over all things, he [the wise man] laughs to scorn, affirming that certain things happen of necessity, others by chance, others through our own agency. For he sees that necessity destroys responsibility and that chance or fortune is inconstant; whereas our own actions are free, and it is to them that praise and blame naturally attach. It were better indeed to accept the legends of the gods than to bow beneath that yoke of destiny which the natural philosophers have imposed.[3]

Of all the things which disturb our tranquility of spirit and cause us worry, the most serious, Epicurus feels, is the fear of death. In his attitude toward death one

finds, perhaps, the most revealing insight into the philosophy of Epicurus at its best as well as its clear contrast to the spirit of the Cyrenaic. Prudence demands of us, Epicurus maintains, the suppression of all unnecessary desires or fears, especially those like fear of the gods or the fear of death, which so disturb our serenity. He writes to Menoeceus:

> Accustom thyself to believe that death is nothing to us, for good and evil imply sentience and death is the privation of all sentience. Therefore, a right understanding that death is nothing to us, makes enjoyable the mortality of life, not by adding to life an illimitable time, but by taking away the yearning after immortality. For life has no terrors for him who has thoroughly apprehended that there are no terrors for him in ceasing to live. Foolish, therefore, is the man who says he fears death, not because it will pain him when it comes, but because it pains him in prospect. Whatsoever causes no annoyance when it is present, causes only a groundless pain in the anticipation. Death, therefore, the most awful of evils, is nothing to us, seeing that when we are death is not come, and when death is come we are not.[4]

EPICUREAN MORALITY

Every philosophy of life, it is well to note, sets up its own cardinal virtues, its own unforgivable sins, its own peculiar moral ideal. If the good life is a life of pleasure, then the good man is he who intelligently orders his life in such fashion as to obtain the greatest possible amount of pleasure. As Robert Louis Stevenson so clearly expressed the Epicurean point of view, "If your morals make you dreary, depend upon it they are wrong." We have for so long associated "morality" and "virtue" with our own Puritan moral heritage that we have lost sight of the broader reference of these terms. In its original and wider meaning, virtue is that trait of character upon which the achievement of the good life depends, and for the Epicurean the cardinal virtue is *prudence*, the good sense to choose only those pleasures which bring lasting enjoyment and are accompanied by little or no pain. "Wherefore prudence is a more precious thing even than philosophy," Epicurus writes; "from it spring all the other virtues, for it teaches that we cannot lead a life of pleasure that is not also a life of prudence, honor and justice; nor lead a life of prudence, honor and justice that is not also a life of pleasure. For the virtues have grown into one with a pleasant life, and a pleasant life is inseparable from them."[5] The ideal Epicurean is the man who is wise enough to avoid cheating himself with short-lived pleasures that cost too much, prudent enough to choose simple pleasures that last longer and cost less, and intelligent enough to banish all envy or ambition that troubles his soul. Such a man will live—much as did Epicurus himself—the quiet, cultured life of a country gentleman, surrounded by congenial friends, far removed from the disturbing turmoil of politics or the harassing anxiety of economic strife and competition.

The Epicurean morality is, of course, frankly egoistic. A disciple of Epicurus is concerned primarily and unashamedly with what he himself can get out of life. If he thinks of others at all or undertakes to promote their welfare, it is only because of the pleasure this brings him or the pain he thus avoids. Such an attitude, Epicurus claims, is universally true: "No one loves another except for his own interest." Those who pretend to a high altruistic regard for the welfare of others are actually doing this, he insists, because of what they expect to get out of it. They are either hypocrites or else self-deceived, and so less to be admired than the hedonist, who frankly admits that his own pleasure is of more concern to him than anything else.

The essential egoism of the hedonist has been stated with devastating frankness by George Jean Nathan, noted literary critic of our day:

> To me, *pleasure and my own personal happiness*—only infrequently collaborating with that of others—are all I deem worth a hoot. It would make me out a much finer and nobler person, I duly appreciate, to say that the happiness and welfare of all mankind were close to my heart, that nothing gave me more soulful happiness than to make others happy and that I would gladly sacrifice every cent I have in the world, together with maybe a leg, to bring a little joy to the impoverished and impaired survivors of the late Afridi raids in India, but I have difficulty in being a hypocrite. That I am selfish and to a very considerable degree possibly offensive is thus more or less regrettably obvious. All that I am able to offer in extenuation is that so are most other men if you dig down into them and, paying no attention to their altruistic pretensions, get at the hearts of them. In all my experience I have yet to find and know intimately a man worth his salt in any direction who did not think of himself first and foremost. He may drop a quarter into the hat of a beggar (when somebody is looking); he may have gracious manners; he may obey the punctilio on every occasion; he may be genial and liberal and hearty; he may buy the drinks when it comes his turn; he may be scrupulously polite, considerate and superficially lovable. But under it all his first interest, his first consideration and his first admiration are reserved for himself. The man who thinks of others before he thinks of himself may become a Grand Master of the Elks, a Socialist of parts or the star guest of honor at public banquets, but he will never become a great or successful artist, statesman or even clergyman.[6]

CONTEMPORARY HEDONISM: *Lin Yutang*

Nathan's philosophy will impress us for its blunt honesty, but his egoism will hardly appeal to those not already committed to a similar point of view. In a popular volume entitled *The Importance of Living*, Lin Yutang has presented the general point of view of Epicurus and the Cyrenaics with much greater appeal

and persuasiveness. An urbane and cultured Oriental, familiar alike with the Confucian classics of his own country and the industrial civilization of the United States, Lin Yutang is one of the ablest living interpreters of the mind and spirit of China. His *Importance of Living*, published in 1937, is a highly readable account of the philosophy to which he has gradually been led in the course of a full and successful life. It is the work not of a professional philosopher but rather of one who has reached his conclusions at first hand from life as he has lived it and seen it lived. With something of the gentle sarcasm that marks the volume as a whole, Lin Yutang apologizes for this fact in his preface. As one easily detects between the lines, no apology, in his opinion, is really needed.

> I am not deep and not well read. If one is too well-read, then one does not know right is right and wrong is wrong. I have not read Locke or Hume or Berkeley, and have not taken a college course in philosophy. Technically speaking, my method and my training are all wrong, because I do not read philosophy but only read life at first hand. Thus deprived of academic training in philosophy, I am less scared to write a book about it. Everything seems clearer and simpler for it, if that is any compensation in the eyes of orthodox philosophy. I doubt it. I know that there will be complaints that my words are not long enough, that I make things too easy to understand, and finally that I lack cautiousness, that I do not whisper low and trip with mincing steps in the sacred mansions of philosophy, looking properly scared as I ought to do. Courage seems to be the rarest of all virtues in a modern philosopher. But I have always wandered outside the precincts of philosophy and that gives me courage.[7]

Lin Yutang, as he himself quite clearly recognizes, does not make any contribution to the philosophical analysis of hedonism, but he does present the moral theory of Epicurus and the Cyrenaics as an appealing program of living for our own day and age. And he does this in such graphic and concrete fashion that one cannot miss its meaning. For most readers, at least, this is a contribution which will certainly justify our looking at *The Importance of Living* as he portrays it.

THE ENJOYMENT OF LIVING

Quite in the spirit of Epicurus, Lin Yutang here maintains that the purpose of living is the true enjoyment of it. Some look, he admits, for a divine purpose in life, a purpose that God has set for humanity, and others feel compelled to seek a purpose that man should set for himself. But in his opinion neither attempt really gets very far. Even if there is a divine purpose in life, it is difficult, if not impossible, he maintains, for the human mind to grasp the purpose of a divine intelligence. Those who claim to interpret for us what God has in mind usually give us what is in their own minds; the outcome is as a rule to make God the color-sergeant of their own army. The Nazis, for example, could not imagine God without a swastika arm band. For himself, Lin Yutang concludes, he is content

to live life as he finds it, to be less philosophical and more practical. He does not presume that there must necessarily be some purpose for living, a meaning of existence outside itself. When he asks what can be the purpose of human life except the enjoyment of it, he finds the problem amazingly simple and only one possible answer to the question.

Christians have been too much concerned about human salvation and not enough about human happiness, Lin Yutang insists. "The word [salvation] has a bad flavor for me," he writes, "because in China I hear every day someone talking about our 'national salvation.' Everybody is trying to 'save' China. It suggests the feeling of people on a sinking ship, a feeling of ultimate doom and the best method of getting away alive." Why, indeed, should a man bother himself so much about salvation unless he has a feeling of being doomed? And Americans do not seem to have this feeling, as far as an Oriental can see. The problem of living, as Lin Yutang sees it, is not the problem of getting to heaven but of getting along in this world. When questioned about what they are going to do in heaven, and how they are going to be happy there, most people have only the faintest notion and talk vaguely of wearing crowns and white robes, or singing hymns and playing harps. Unless heaven is made much more vivid and convincing for him, Lin Yutang finds no reason for striving to go there at the cost of neglecting this earthly existence.

> At least, when we're planning a summer vacation we take the trouble to find out some details about the place we are going to. If the tourist bureau is entirely vague on the question, I am not interested; I remain where I am. Are we going to strive and endeavor in heaven, as I am quite sure the believers in progress and endeavor must assume? But how can we strive and make progress when we are already perfect? Or are we going merely to loaf and do nothing and not worry? In that case would it not be better for us to learn to loaf while on this earth as a preparation for our eternal life?[8]

The end, or purpose, of life, Lin Yutang concludes, is simply the true enjoyment of it. This seems so simple simply because it is so. It is not a conscious purpose that we arrive at by the study of philosophy. It is a natural attitude that we all have toward human life. The practical question that every man faces is what to do with his life, with the fifty or sixty years that he will have between birth and death. It is a question very much like that of how he should spend his vacation or his next week end. The only answer, a sensible hedonist points out, is that he should order his life so that he can find the greatest happiness in it.

When faced with a choice between pleasures of the senses and mental or spiritual enjoyment, Lin Yutang refuses to admit that a distinction is possible. "All human happiness," he writes, "is biological; it is largely a matter of digestion. Let us admit, of course, that true happiness is only happiness of the spirit, but unless the body functions well, there can be no tranquility of spirit."[9] The spirit, he concludes, in accord with much recent psychology, is actually a con-

dition of the perfect functioning of the endocrine glands. This is simply to say that the pleasures of mind and spirit cannot be separated from those of the senses.

In real life the pleasures of the mind and the pleasures of the body are inextricably tied up together, Lin Yutang points out. Mental pleasures are real only when they are felt through the body. Look at the so-called higher pleasures of the mind—literature, art, music, religion, and philosophy—and see what a minor role the intellect plays here as compared with the senses and feelings The best literature and art simply recreates life and so gives us its atmosphere and color, the fragrance of the pastures or the stink of the city gutters. So poetry is but truth colored with emotion; music is sentiment without words; and religion, wisdom expressed in fancy. There is no reason for the existence of art and poetry and religion unless they restore in us a freshness of vision, a greater emotional glamour, and a more vital sense of life. Even for philosophy, when it reflects life as it actually is, the same thing is true. There is real danger in philosophy that we lose the feeling of life itself and wander into a world of bare and cold abstraction. But this is not a philosophy that is sound and healthy, according to Lin Yutang. Only by placing living above thinking can philosophy recapture some of its original freshness and naturalness of insight, he insists. Any philosopher ought to be ashamed that he wears spectacles, has no appetite, is constantly perplexed in mind and spirit, and is entirely unconscious of the fun of living. Nothing is to be gained from this type of philosopher, for nothing he says can be important. The only philosophy that can be of use to us is one that joins hands merrily with poetry and establishes for us a truer vision, first of nature and then of human life.[10]

All of this leads Lin Yutang to call himself a materialist. His is a materialism that would re-establish our confidence in the senses and in the pleasures of sense. He does not mean to discard the life of the spirit. He simply recognizes the biological view of life. There is no such thing as a soul without nerves, without taste, without a sense of color and motion, he maintains. Spirituality is based on a material, earthbound existence. The two cannot be separated. It is hard even to imagine what angels would be like without wings.

ON THE NATURE OF HAPPINESS

When thus interpreted, the enjoyment of living covers many things. There are obvious things, such as the enjoyment of food, a gay party, an outing on a beautiful spring day. There are less obvious things—the enjoyment of poetry and of art, religion, the contemplation of clouds, of winding rivers and falling cataracts, the pleasures of friendship, of conversation, and of home life. The feast of life is before us, Lin Yutang urges in the spirit of Aristippus. The only question is what appetite we have for it. The appetite is the important thing. Most people, indeed, fail to realize how simple and how natural it is to be happy. "Let us not

lose ourselves in the abstract," he writes, "but get down to facts and analyze for ourselves what are the truly happy moments of our life."

First, then, all happiness for this contemporary hedonist is *sensuous*. We cannot find happiness by stressing the things of the spirit apart from the senses.

> Just as it is impossible for me to say whether I love my children physically or spiritually when I hear their chattering voices or when I see their plump legs, so I am totally unable to distinguish between the joys of the flesh and the spirit. Does anybody ever love a woman spiritually without loving her physically? And is it so easy a matter for a man to analyze and separate the charms of the woman he loves—things like laughter, smiles, a way of tossing one's head, a certain attitude toward things? After all, every girl feels happier when she is well-dressed. There is a soul-uplifting quality about lipstick and rouge and a spiritual calm and poise that comes from the knowledge of being well-dressed.[11]
>
> Being made of this mortal flesh, the partition separating our flesh from our spirit is extremely thin, and the world of spirit, with its finest emotions and greatest appreciations of spiritual beauty cannot be reached except with our senses.[12]

Here is the first lesson in a hedonistic philosophy. We must lose our contempt for the body and our fear of the senses. The pleasures of sense are not merely good and desirable in themselves; they are the foundation upon which all happiness in life must rest. This for Lin Yutang is the true meaning of materialism.

Secondly, happiness is to be found in the little things, *the simple things of life*. Lin Yutang's point of view is that of the poet who sees the beauty in even the simplest and most commonplace events of daily living. It is not the analytical attitude of the scientist who seeks to examine and dissect life. He is intrigued by the thirty-three happy moments that a great Chinese critic of the seventeenth century once counted when he was shut up for ten days because of rainy weather:

> To find accidentally a handwritten letter of some old friend in a trunk. Ah, is this not happiness?
>
> A magistrate orders the beating of the drum and calls it a day. Ah, is this not happiness?
>
> To have just finished repaying all one's debts. Ah, is this not happiness?
>
> To cut with a sharp knife a bright green watermelon on a big scarlet plate on a summer afternoon. Ah, is this not happiness?

The topics of which Lin Yutang writes indicate clearly the importance of little things in life. There are sections in his book on lying in bed, on smoke and incense, on tea and friendship, on conversation, on drink and wine games, on rocks and trees, on going about and seeing things. These provide the concrete

moments in our enjoyment of living. Life is full of positive joys. We fail to find them simply because of a failure to make full use of our senses. A man is generally less happy in a city than in the country because all the variations of sight and sound and smell are lost in the general monotony of office buildings and cement pavements.

Thirdly, happiness lies in *the enjoyment of the present*—the present day, the present moment, the present life. For the hedonist, "This earth is the only heaven," as Lin Yutang puts it in an expressive phrase. If we know that this earthly existence is all we have, we will try the harder to enjoy it while it lasts, he maintains. We will make up our minds to live sensibly and make the most of what we have instead of allowing a vague hope of immortality to detract from our wholehearted enjoyment of life. And what is true of this world is true also of this day and hour. The joy of the day is made up of the joys of the hour, and the joys of the hour of the joys of the moment. Time is the one thing which when lost we cannot replace, and yet we let anyone take up our time who wants to. "There is always plenty of life to enjoy for the man who is determined to enjoy it," Lin Yutang maintains. If a man does not enjoy this earthly existence, it is his own fault; it is because he does not love life sufficiently or allows it to be turned into a humdrum and routine existence.

Fourthly, *leisure* is necessary for happiness. This is one of the most characteristic principles in the philosophy of Lin Yutang, and one that he expresses in a wide variety of ways, many of them uncongenial to the Western mind. "The ideal character best able to enjoy life is a warm, carefree and unafraid soul," one who has "the spirit of the vagabond," who has perfected "the cult of the idle life": a life of inner calm, a sense of carefree irresponsibility, and an intense, wholehearted enjoyment of life as one lives it, he writes. Man is the only working animal, Lin Yutang points out in a typical chapter on "The Importance of Loafing." The most bewildering thing about man is the amount of work he imposes upon himself. Our vaunted Western civilization has made human life much too complicated for the hedonist. The matter of feeding ourselves, directly or indirectly, now occupies well over ninety percent of our effort, but the work of getting food is so strenuous that we lose our appetite for it in trying to get it—which does not seem to Lin Yutang to make much sense as a philosophy of living. Look at the vicious circle which progress imposes upon us today, he urges. People who live in the country work hard so they can make enough money to move to the city. Those in the city work hard so that they can earn enough to move back to the country again. Actually happiness depends entirely upon the temper of men and women themselves, which is usually spoiled by the hard work necessary to get things they think they want.

"Leisure in time is like unoccupied floor space in a room," Lin Yutang writes. We have to have unoccupied space in a room to make it habitable. It must not be all cluttered up like a storeroom. So our leisure hours make life endurable.

Most Americans, as he sees them, allow their lives to become so full and cluttered up that they cannot enjoy in true perspective the beauties of life. Whereas the Chinese is known as a great idler, the American is known as a great hustler. The three great American vices for this oriental hedonist are efficiency, punctuality, and desire for success. These are the things that keep the American always at work, that make him so nervous, so tense, and so unhappy. Efficiency and promptness are the thieves that steal his time, that leave him no leisure in which to enjoy himself. His insistence upon always going somewhere and doing something leaves him no time to *be* something. Character takes time to grow. It is difficult to develop personally in a type of existence in which every man is throwing away his last year's car or trading it in for the new model. Such a life has no perspective, no mellowness.

Finally, and in some ways most important of all, happiness comes in *being natural.* Lin Yutang's is a biological view of life. He accepts the fact that man is an animal and points out that he cannot be blamed on this account. One of the great achievements of science, he feels, is in making it clear that we are more like monkeys than like angels. And we can be happy only when we act as nature has made us, not when we try to remake ourselves into something quite different. Because our stomach is perhaps the most important thing about us, a good meal is one of life's greatest satisfactions. "When do we eat?" becomes the constant refrain of our waking hours. International conferences have to adjourn for a noon meal as regularly as do university classes. Friends who meet at meals meet at peace. The best friends invariably quarrel when hungry. Human happiness is largely a matter of digestion.

In a beautiful little essay on "The Inhumanity of Western Dress," Lin Yutang presents his thesis with mellow sarcasm. Who, for example, can pretend that the collar worn by most men is anything but a satanic device to make proper ventilation impossible in summer, proper protection against cold impossible in winter, and proper comfort impossible at all times. Or how justify a woman's throwing her whole figure out of shape and making walking almost impossible by her high-heeled shoes?

A FEMININE DESIGN FOR LIVING

The idea that happiness comes only in being natural Lin Yutang develops most appealingly when he writes of the enjoyment of the home, and of a woman's place in it. The final test of any civilization, this urbane hedonist maintains, is the kind of husbands and wives and fathers and mothers it turns out. The basic relationship in life is that between man and woman and child. No philosophy of living is worth considering unless it deals satisfactorily with this relationship. Lin Yutang's philosophy springs from hedonistic sources, but his is clearly a hedonism shaped and colored by centuries of Chinese life and thought. It begins with the assumption that man cannot live alone in the world and be happy. He must

become a part of some group larger than himself in which he lives and moves and finds himself. Of all such groups, the home remains the only biologically natural and entirely satisfying social unit. It is natural because a man finds himself in a home when he is born and he knows life first and primarily as home life. "One who does not make a success of this natural group life cannot be expected to make a success of life in other groups," Lin Yutang writes. No fine philosophy is going to save a man's soul if he cannot get along with his mother or his wife or his housekeeper.

Although the kind of home he has is important to a man, it is the *essential* element in the happiness of every woman, Lin Yutang is convinced. Nature has endowed woman with a maternal instinct too powerful for civilization to change it. She is a mother even more than a mate, and only in motherhood does her mental and moral development find full expression. Philosophy goes astray, therefore, when it departs from nature's own conception and tries to make a woman happy without recognizing the dominant maternal instinct that distinguishes man and woman. For a man, a baby is something of an accident in which he shows little interest until it gets old enough for him to take around and parade before his friends; whereas for a woman, having a baby, even anticipating one, is probably the most significant thing that ever comes into her life. The world becomes a different world when she becomes an expectant mother. She is needed. She is wanted.

> Thenceforth she has no doubt in her mind as to her mission in life or the purpose of her existence. No civilization has any excuse for depriving a woman of her right to have babies. Women suffer most psychologically when this central motive power of their being is not expressed and does not function. No one need tell me how kind American civilization is to women, when it permits so many nice women to go unmarried through no fault of their own.
>
> The ideal woman for me is one who loves her cosmetics along with her mathematics, and who is more feminine than feminist. And I am not sure that checking men's hats is necessarily more romantic than mending husbands' socks. Is it merely because a woman is more charming and more graceful in a chiffon dress than in a business jacket, or is it merely my imagination? The gist of the matter seems to lie in the fact that women at home are like fish in water. Clothe women in business jackets and men will regard them as co-workers with the right to criticize, but let them float about in georgette or chiffon one out of seven office hours in the day and men will give up any idea of competing with them, and merely sit back and wonder. In the office women talk with civility; outside the office, they talk with authority.[13]

Woman's place, then, is in the home; but it is as a hedonist that Lin Yutang reaches this conclusion. It is only in the home that a woman can hope to be

happy. This is the way she has been made and, try as she will, she cannot escape her nature. Looked at from this point of view, happiness is largely a matter of finding one's place in life, the work one loves and is fitted for. Men constantly have doubts about their true vocation, and shift from one to another. But there is never a doubt in a mother's mind concerning her work and no thought of giving it up. Is it not true, then, since nature never fails, that marriage is the best profession for a woman, and her chance of finding happiness surer and greater if she is a mother? In commenting upon this conviction, Lin Yutang makes one of his most discerning statements concerning human happiness: "*No one's life can be happy unless beyond the superficial attainments of the external life, the deeper springs of character are touched and find a normal outlet.*"

A HEDONIST'S VIEW OF EDUCATION

Nowhere does the viewpoint of the hedonist strike closer home than in Lin Yutang's philosophy of education. The goal of education is not breadth of information or the accumulation of facts and details, he maintains. That is the easiest of all things. The truly educated man is one who has the right loves and hatreds. He has taste or discernment. The aim of education, therefore, is the development of good taste in knowledge and in conduct. But good taste, discernment, and understanding do not come to the mind crammed full of historical facts and figures. It requires, rather, a capacity for thinking things through, an independence of judgment, an unwillingness to be taken in by any form of humbug, social, political, or academic. "In this sense philosophy is but a common, rough and ready outlook on things or on life in general, and every person has more or less of it," Lin Yutang writes. "Anyone who refuses to take the entire panorama of reality on its surface value or refuses to believe every word that appears in a newspaper is more or less a philosopher. He is the fellow who refuses to be taken in."[14]

This emphasis is sadly lacking in most of our schools, as Lin Yutang sees them. The modern school system has, rather, tried to discourage thought. Education has become "a mechanical, measured, uniform and passive cramming of information," instead of the pleasant pursuit of knowledge that it should be. We have tried to educate people in masses, as in a factory, instead of as individuals. And so we have developed a standardized product which is certified by a diploma. To have diplomas, we must have grades, and to have grades we must have standardized tests, and to have tests there must be the memorizing of facts and dates and places. But in this fashion we can never get good taste and discernment and independence of thought. The ideal pursuit of knowledge is like the exploration of a new continent. It is "an adventure of the soul," a positive, growing individual pleasure in understanding. To be successful, it must remain nobody's business but one's own. One cannot work to get good grades,

to satisfy one's parents, to earn a higher salary later in life, and hope to get an education.

The discovery of a favorite author, according to Lin Yutang, is the most critical event in any person's intellectual development. Only in this way can one get any real good out of reading. One has to be independent and search out his own masters. Such a conception of reading completely precludes the idea of reading as a duty or an obligation. The conscientious student who sets out to work because he ought to, not because he wants to, ends by "studying bitterly" and becoming "a hard grind." "No one can really learn anything from a book when he hates the author." Instead, every man must find an author who is just right for him and then proceed to devour every word that this author writes. Thus he truly steeps himself in his literary love and derives from his reading sustenance for his soul. After a few years the spell will be over and he must seek a new literary lover; after three or four such experiences he emerges a changed person. He has acquired that breadth of sympathy and understanding, that good taste and discernment, which have made of him an educated man. And, above all, the process has been a thoroughly enjoyable one, not the unappealing academic routine provided by too many institutions of higher learning.

THE RELIGION OF A PAGAN

The early Greek hedonists saw in the religion and mythology of their day an undesirable concern with another world, a fear of death and of the displeasure of the gods, which took away from this life much of its pleasure and joy. In our conventional Christianity, Lin Yutang finds much the same sort of defect. It is concerned too much, he feels, with theological doctrine, too little with life, too much with salvation, too little with human happiness. The mixing of religious devotion with scientific theory, and the belief that God takes a personal interest in each individual, are characteristics he finds unacceptable in contemporary Christianity. It is no business of religion whether the age of man on this planet is 4000 years or a million, whether he came into being by a long process of evolution or sprang full grown from the earth. It is only in the realm of morals, of conscience, and of spiritual experience that religion has a dignity and worth of its own. The church, Lin Yutang believes, must cease to preserve ancient folkways or dabble in astronomy and biology if it hopes to gain the respect of intelligent people today. It must give up its complicated theologies, its belief that salvation and immortality come only to those who accept every word in the Bible literally or who follow the complicated theories of the Apostle Paul about the divine scheme of man's salvation, and it must return instead to the simple teaching of Jesus about reverence for human personality and love of one's fellow man. Lin Yutang disassociates himself definitely from the Christian faith, therefore, and terms himself a *pagan*. The religion of a pagan, as he defines it, pro-

vides an excellent expression of what hedonism at best can hope to make of religion.

> A Chinese pagan, the only kind of which I can speak with any feeling of intimacy, is one who starts out with this earthly life as all we can or need to bother about, wishes to live intently and happily as long as life lasts, has a keen appreciation of the beautiful and the good in human life wherever he finds them, and regards doing good as its own satisfactory reward. He feels a slight pity or contempt for the "religious" man who does good in order to get to heaven and who, by implication, would not do good if he were not lured by heaven or threatened by hell. As I look at it at present, the difference in spiritual life between a Christian believer and a pagan is simply this: The Christian believer lives in a world governed and watched over by God, to whom he has a constant personal relation, and therefore in a world presided over by a kindly father. On the other hand, the pagan lives in this world like an orphan, without the benefit of that consoling feeling that there is always someone in heaven who cares and who will attend to his private personal welfare. It is no doubt a less cheery world; but there is the benefit and dignity of being an orphan who by necessity has learned to be independent, to take care of himself, and to be more mature, as all orphans are.[15]

These are the tenets of paganism: A pagan is not an atheist. He does not deny that there is a god, but he rejects the Christian idea of God. Indeed, in Lin Yutang's own words, "a pagan always believes in God but would not like to say so for fear of being misunderstood." God, for him, is the Creator of things, but beyond that he does not know much about God and is honest enough to leave the Creator in that halo of mystery which his human mind cannot penetrate. It is wrong, Lin Yutang maintains, to speak of a pagan as irreligious. The pagan refuses to believe in any special variety of revelation, and he does not find the church necessary in the expression of his religion, but he has a very genuine religion of his own. "Each man must work out his own views of religion," he maintains, "and if he is sincere, God will not blame him, however it turns out."

The kind of religion left in our lives, the kind that Lin Yutang accepts, is much simpler but for him more satisfying than orthodox Christianity. It is, above all, a reverence for the beauty and grandeur and mystery of life, a worship of the Great Spirit that is quite similar to the experience of viewing the setting sun beyond an outline of trees on the distant hill—an aesthetic experience very much akin to poetry. Its hope of immortality is at best a fine reflection, a noble fancy, lying in the poetic realm between fiction and fact. It does not encourage men to do good by exhortation about sin and salvation, or about laying up treasures in heaven; it simply accepts the fact that doing good is its own justification. It expects men to lead decent lives because they are decent human beings, not because they are afraid God will punish them if they do not. It accepts death as

it accepts pain and suffering, weighs them all against the enjoyment of living, the fresh country breeze, the clear mountain morning, and does not complain. It expects the way of Heaven to prevail, believes that there is no permanent injustice in the world, and does not ask for more. "I believe that no one can be natural and happy unless he is intellectually sincere with himself, and to be natural is to be in heaven. To me, being a pagan is just being natural," Lin Yutang concludes.[16]

EGOISTIC HEDONISM—AN EVALUATION

The enduring appeal of the pursuit of pleasure as portrayed by urbane hedonists like Lin Yutang, few would deny. This appeal is undoubtedly enhanced—and the defects in such a philosophy of living largely concealed—by the literary charm and brilliance of the writing of Lin Yutang. If a man does not find it necessary "for the good of his own soul" to seek some philosophy that he regards as nobler and more inspiring than the hedonistic ideal, let him at least live as an intelligent hedonist, a cultured Epicurean who prudently chooses those pleasures that contribute most to the enjoyment of living. Let him emulate that wise disenchantment of the Chinese pagan, who does not expect too much of life, who is seldom disillusioned, because he has few illusions, and seldom disappointed, because he has no extravagant hopes. And even those of us for whom the obvious defects of Epicureanism do make it finally unacceptable need not lose sight of its very valuable insight into human life.

The Epicurean has insisted that our philosophy of living must bring genuine and lasting satisfaction as we put it into practice. Can any philosophy which does not do this hope to meet the test of experience successfully? For who among us does not want to be happy? Who is willing to condemn a thing as wrong for no better reason than that it is pleasant? It may well be, however, that enduring happiness can never be achieved by the means which the Epicurean suggests, that much of Lin Yutang's persuasiveness is achieved at the price of a superficial reading of the facts of life. We shall do well to look carefully at the serious defects of egoistic hedonism before surrendering ourselves too quickly to its apparent charm.

A QUESTIONABLE INTERPRETATION OF HUMAN NATURE

There seems good reason to believe that the hedonist has failed to understand the basic desires of men and women, the satisfactions that make us genuinely human. For the Epicurean, as for the Cyrenaic, man is but a bundle of desires and appetites, some physical, some intellectual, some social, but each capable of separate and momentary gratification. It is easy for most thoughtful people to realize that this picture of human nature does not take us very far toward

achieving the goal of Socrates: Know thyself. The desires and appetites noted by the Epicurean are certainly genuine enough; they constitute an element in our nature that cannot be overlooked. But may it not also be true—and much more important in understanding man—that, beneath the bundle of momentary appetites and desires of which we are always aware, there is an enduring self that gives unity and purpose to living? To satisfy such an enduring self, a succession of isolated pleasures and momentary gratifications is not enough. Most of us, as rational beings, demand some more significant meaning and purpose in life. Life has to make sense, it has to get somewhere, despite Lin Yutang's refusal to admit this fact. The absence of pain in the body and of trouble in the soul is not enough; few men are satisfied for long with eating and drinking, not even with three square meals a day, a comfortable place to sleep, and congenial friends. Only to those who do not possess them do the physical comforts of life seem satisfying.

Even Lin Yutang's charming essay on the art of loafing may not be convincing to every reader. Certainly he is right in putting his finger upon hurry, worry, and frustration as the besetting sins of American life today. But these disturb us not because we are on the go but because too frequently we do not know where we are going. More training in the art of loafing, more of the spirit of the vagabond, will not necessarily cure our ills. One has only to spend an evening in a university dormitory, where life is relatively easy, where father or Uncle Sam pays the bills and the professors do all the thinking, to see ample evidence that an urge to amount to something, a need to count for something among one's fellows, are driving forces in human life. These needs the Epicurean philosophy does not recognize or satisfy. At this point, indeed, Lin Yutang is hardly an acceptable exponent of his own philosophy. For a man does not write a dozen or more volumes of brilliant essays, ably interpreting the spirit and the culture of his own people, if he has no greater purpose in life than the spirit of the vagabond. The urge to lie lazily on the beach on warm afternoons and let the world take its course does not produce results such as this. Unquestionably an urge to count for something, an innate creativity within the human soul, has a much greater significance in *The Importance of Living* than the confirmed hedonist is willing to admit. As anyone who has made the effort will tell you, the process of becoming a successful author involves a great deal of hard work. It is not a product of the cult of the idle life or the Chinese theory of leisure.

THE PURSUIT OF PLEASURE IS SELF-DEFEATING

Not only in interpreting human nature but even in describing happiness itself, the Epicurean philosophy, many people believe, lacks depth and insight. There is undoubtedly an essential relationship between pleasure and happiness. One cannot be happy without an enjoyment of living; but, paradoxically enough, the pursuit of pleasure does not lead to happiness. On this point we may best, perhaps, adopt a pragmatic or experimental test of hedonism as a philosophy of living. How does it work when actually tried? This is the most crucial test of every

philosophy, and it is here that popular hedonism apparently has failed most obviously. For who are the happy people in our acquaintance? Not the people, certainly, who are always most concerned with having a good time. Indeed, people who give themselves most assiduously to the pursuit of pleasure seem most consistently bored and fed up with life. In his very readable volume *The Conquest of Happiness*, Bertrand Russell has this amusing portrayal of the pursuit of pleasure and its outcome in contemporary American life:

> On a main road at the week-end you will see men and women, all comfortably well off, and some very rich, engaged in the pursuit of pleasure. This pursuit is conducted by all at a uniform pace, that of the slowest car in the procession: it is impossible to see the road for the cars, or the scenery, since looking aside would cause an accident; all the occupants of all the cars are absorbed in the desire to pass other cars, which they cannot do on account of the crowd. If their minds wander from this preoccupation, as will happen occasionally to those who are not themselves driving, unutterable boredom seizes upon them and stamps their features with trivial discontent. Once in a while a carload of colored people will show genuine enjoyment, but will cause indignation by their behavior, and ultimately get into the hands of the police owing to an accident: enjoyment in holiday times is illegal. . . . Or again watch people at a gay evening. All come determined to be happy with the kind of grim resolve with which one determines not to make a fuss at the dentist's. It is held that drink and petting are the gateways to joy, so people get drunk quickly and try not to notice how much their partners disgust them. After a sufficient amount of drink, men begin to weep, and to lament how unworthy they are morally, of the devotion of their mothers. All that alcohol does is to liberate the sense of sin, which reason suppresses in saner moments.[17]

As Schopenhauer, that great pessimist among modern philosophers, has made abundantly clear, this paradox in the pursuit of pleasure seems inescapable. The pleasure seeker, when he cannot get what he wants, is restless and dissatisfied; when he does, he is bored. His life swings like a pendulum from pain to *ennui*, from *ennui* to pain. The final outcome of hedonism may not be happiness but disillusionment. The happy man, on the other hand, in almost all cases seems to have little concern with the pursuit of pleasures for himself. He is interested in other things and other people, and the enjoyment of living comes to him unsought and unexpected, a kind of by-product rather than an end in itself. Somewhere the Epicurean has missed this important insight into living. The immediate desire for happiness and the urge to enjoy oneself cannot successfully be made one's dominant and direct goal in life.

A SOCIAL PARASITE

In the world in which we live today, however, the most serious defect of the hedonist philosophy lies in its social outlook. Although hedonism has numerous limitations as a personal ideal of life, it also has, for many people in many cir-

cumstances, genuine appeal. But as a social philosophy its defects are so glaring that even the most ardent disciple of Epicurus is hardly able to defend it successfully. The *consistent* hedonist is beyond question a social parasite. Only by taking what he has not earned and by depending upon others to do the hard work of the world for him is it possible for him to practice his philosophy. That such is the case is revealed clearly in the preference of the orthodox Epicurean for the pleasures of friendship rather than the responsibilities of marriage. Anyone who knows the pain of bringing children into the world and the constant difficulties of rearing them through an awkward, noisy, and contentious adolescence will agree with Epicurus that tranquility of spirit and undisturbed rest of the body are not to be found here. Indeed, anyone who fancies that the pursuit of pleasure is the main business of living will do well with Epicurus to avoid the arduous tasks of getting along with a husband or wife, building a home, and rearing a family. Yet obviously those hedonists who are too sophisticated to get married, or too intelligent to have children, depend upon others to do for them what they are unwilling to do for themselves. Unless homes are made and children reared in them, there will be no cultured and well-mannered men and women whose friendship the Epicurean can enjoy. For most people today, of course, such a consistent, orthodox hedonism as we have been describing is more theoretical than practicable.

It is here, nevertheless, that the hedonistic spirit in American life is of gravest danger to the welfare of the nation. As we become increasingly a nation of sophisticated Epicureans, we have more dogs and fewer children, but our chance of enduring happiness either as individuals or as a nation is not necessarily increasing. No one who looks at life discerningly can fail to see the shallowness, the superficiality, the lack of enduring meaning and appeal in Epicureanism as a feminine philosophy of living.

> Epicurean women abound in every wealthy community. They spend the winter in Florida, New York or Washington, dividing the rest of the year between the sea shore, the mountains, and the lakes, with occasional visits to what they call their homes. They must have the best of everything and assume no responsibility beyond running up bills for their husbands to pay, or to remain unpaid. Their special paradise is foreign travel. They flit hither and thither where least *ennui* and most diversion allures. Two or three years of this irresponsible existence is sufficient to disqualify them for usefulness either here or hereafter. When they return, if they ever do, to their native town or city, the drudgery of housekeeping has become intolerable, the responsibilities of social life unendurable, and their poor husbands are glad enough when the restless fit seizes them again and they can be packed off to Egypt, or Russia, or whatever remote corner of the earth remains for their idle hands and restless feet, their empty minds and hollow hearts, to invade with their unearned gold.[18]

It is all well and good for the superior male to smile approvingly at such gentle sarcasm until we examine the outcome of egoistic hedonism where he himself is concerned. The disciple of Epicurus, for example, will not soil his hands or disturb the tranquility of his soul by contact with the dirty game of politics. Yet unless someone is willing to assume the harassing burdens of political life, there can be no stable society in which the hedonist will be able to pursue his life of calm detachment. In the Graeco-Roman world of Epicurus' day, when there seemed nothing that an individual could do to halt the rapid disintegration of the Greek commonwealth before the rising power of Rome, the Epicurean ideal did have an understandable place. Only by withdrawing from the turmoil and uncertainty of political strife could the harassed Greek philosopher and his disciples see any chance of personal happiness. The complexities and uncertainties of an atomic age have affected many of our contemporaries in the same way. Such a philosophy of living, however, may be at best a temporary expedient, a confession of failure. It provides no guidance for an age when a better world is in the making and no challenge to the more able and intelligent to play their part in furthering the process; it produces only the social parasite, content to live off the toil of others.

At this point again one finds in the life and thought of Lin Yutang a strange but illuminating paradox. When outlining his personal philosophy in *The Importance of Living,* Lin Yutang pictures himself as an urbane and cultured hedonist who accepts the pursuit of happiness and the enjoyment of living as his only concern. But as the recent war in Asia with its threat to the national existence of China forced him to clarify his own social philosophy, he wrote a vigorous attack upon Western imperialism in the Far East and a powerful plea for world brotherhood. This he entitled, in disarming fashion, *Between Tears and Laughter,* but for him it is clearly no laughing matter. There is, he insists, with all his accustomed brilliance but with dead earnestness as well, something very worth while to be done in the world today and he urges that America, whose efficiency and love of achievement he had earlier deplored, undertake to see that it is done.

THE MAKING OF A PAGAN

In its interpretation of the place of religion in life, we note what is, for many, a final defect of egoistic hedonism. Neither the Epicurean nor the Cyrenaic understands the spiritual need that many people must satisfy if their lives are to have depth and meaning. The reaction of Epicurus and of Lin Yutang against conventional religion is a natural one and has value in emphasizing faults into which established churches too easily fall. Religion can become too disturbed about the findings of science; the church has certainly at times been guilty of defending outworn scientific theories which had no essential spiritual significance. It has at times also become too otherworldly, too much concerned with saving a man's soul without caring that his stomach was empty. It has occasionally been

more interested in theology than in life. All these things Lin Yutang points out—and points out effectively. But despite the faults of the church, many men have found in it an answer to the deeper religious needs of the human spirit which they have found nowhere else. These are needs, moreover, which they can never meet by the paganism advocated so persuasively in *The Importance of Living.* Nor does one have too much difficulty in understanding from the autobiographical statements found in that volume why Lin Yutang himself developed into a pagan rather than a Christian.

In his essay "Why I am A Pagan," he argues that inadequacies in Christianity as such caused him to give up his Christian faith. But as one reads his argument, it is easy to see that it was the inadequacy of a narrow interpretation of Christianity, not defects in Christianity itself, that made a pagan of him. Born into the family of a Chinese pastor and sent by his father to a theological seminary in China to prepare himself for the Christian ministry, Lin Yutang had every opportunity, one might suppose, to know Christianity at its best. "My father and mother were devout Christians," he writes. "To hear my father conduct the evening family prayers was enough, and I was a sensitively religious child. As a pastor's son I received the facilities of missionary education, profited from its benefits and suffered from its weaknesses."[19] Its weaknesses for him, however, outweighed its benefits. He was forbidden to attend the Chinese theater, never allowed to listen to Chinese minstrels, and entirely cut off from the great heritage of the Chinese classics. When in later life he rediscovered this Chinese literary and cultural heritage for himself, it seemed a wonderful new world as thoroughly congenial to his own oriental spirit as Western Christianity was foreign.

In the missionary college to which he was sent, thinking was persistently discouraged. It was condemned as dangerous, as allied with the devil. He was forced as a good Christian to accept without question such perplexing theological doctrines as the resurrection of the body, the virgin birth, and original sin, only to learn later that all these doctrines were seriously questioned by Christian scholars in America. As he recalled the intellectual problems that he himself had faced, it enraged him to find that Chinese Christians were required to believe categorically in these doctrines before they could be baptized, while American theologians in the same churches regarded them as open to question. The culmination of this whole subconscious process of revolt took place at the time of his mother's funeral. Four days before the funeral was to be held in Changchow, there was a pouring rain. If it continued, as was usually the case in July, the city would be flooded and there could be no funeral. One of his relatives, "a rather extreme but not unusual example of a Christian believer in China," Lin Yutang observes, told him that she had faith that God would look after the needs of his children. So she prayed, the rain stopped, and the funeral was held as planned. Such a conception of God and his relation to man was too much for a man like Lin Yutang. If this was what God meant to the Christian, and apparently it was

in China, then he could no longer call himself a Christian. "The implied idea that, but for us, God would willingly subject the tens of thousands of Changchow inhabitants to a devastating flood, as was often the case, or that he did not stop the rain because of them but because of us who wanted to have a conveniently dry funeral, struck me as an unbelievable type of selfishness," he writes. "I cannot imagine God providing for such selfish children."[20]

Obviously, before we attempt any final evaluation of the Christian philosophy of life, we must examine it with a good deal more care than this. There are many who would agree with Lin Yutang in rejecting the narrowness and traditionalism of the type of religion that he knew in China without in any sense being led to surrender the essential spirit of Christianity. The necessity which led Lin Yutang to paganism seems to have been psychological, not logical in nature. And it is just in its psychology that egoistic hedonism in general is open to most serious question. Writing not as a consistent hedonist but as one deeply imbued with the spirit of China, Lin Yutang puts his finger upon the central issue: "No one's life can be happy unless beyond the superficial attainments of the external life, the deeper springs of character are touched and find a normal outlet." For most of us, a mature and satisfying philosophy of living must provide a surer sense of values, a clearer awareness of what is worth while in life, of what really counts in the long run, than Epicureanism in any form, ancient or modern, has proved able to do.

3 · ALTRUISTIC HEDONISM

The Utilitarians

The Epicurean pursuit of pleasure, as we have seen, seems marked by such serious defects as to render it unacceptable. Is it possible, however, that these are defects not in hedonism itself but rather in an egoistic hedonism which leads men to think too much of themselves and so to lose sight of more important sources of pleasure? This is the view taken by an able group of nineteenth-century English philosophers known as *Utilitarians*. These philosophers adopt a position which is definitely hedonistic in principle but which undertakes to remedy the grave social inadequacies of Epicureanism.

Epicurus and the Cyrenaics make the pleasures of each individual his main concern in life. If a man thinks of other people at all, they maintain, it is only because of what he himself can get out of their friendship. The Utilitarian philosophers, on the other hand, insist that the greatest good of the greatest number should always be kept in mind. The disciples of Epicurus withdrew from the disturbing events of the world about them to enjoy with tranquil spirit the pleasures of mind and body. The Utilitarians were outstanding leaders of the nineteenth-century movement for social reform in England. They lectured widely, wrote innumerable pamphlets and books, edited a journal, and organized a political party, all with the purpose of improving the economic and political conditions of their day. Because of such concern with the welfare of others as well as with one's own pleasure, Utilitarianism is often referred to as *altruistic* hedonism. This in itself is enough to suggest that the philosophy of the Utilitarians will command our respect. If their altruistic hedonism can successfully combine the enjoyment of living with an interest in the welfare of one's fellow men, then it

may well prove to be an acceptable philosophy for our age. In any event, we must examine it with some care before deciding that the case for hedonism is hopeless.

JEREMY BENTHAM, FATHER OF UTILITARIANISM

Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, the two ablest exponents of Utilitarianism, were both child prodigies. They were reading Latin, Greek, and philosophy when other boys their age were still enjoying fairy tales; they spent their youth in the company of distinguished scholars and social reformers instead of in the company of the eligible young ladies of their own generation. At the age of thirteen, Bentham found his religious sensibilities offended and his mind troubled by doubts when he was required to affirm his belief in the Thirty-nine Articles of the Anglican Church before being allowed to matriculate at Oxford University. He did enter Oxford, however, and upon his graduation there proceeded to study law in London. Because of his marked ability, his father had hopes that Jeremy would become a distinguished jurist, but the son neglected the practical side of his profession in order to become an author. Despite this fact, his father, with commendable paternal affection, continued to support him and found some compensation for his early disappointment when Jeremy's first book, published anonymously not long after its author's twenty-eighth birthday, was immediately ascribed by the public to various eminent writers of the day.

Bentham spent almost the whole of his life (1748-1832) either in London or at his home in the country near by. Like Epicurus, he soon gathered around him a group of devoted friends and admirers who accepted his views almost without question and were eager to help in spreading his philosophy. "Happy, hard-working, benevolent, unimaginative and unmarried, with a mild affection for music, animals and friends, he had nothing to distract him, and he was able to devote an exceptionally long life to the development of his theories."[1] The only major interruption in Bentham's customary mode of life was an extended tour of Europe from 1785 to 1788. During this tour, he paid a visit to his younger brother, who held an important industrial position in Russia, and while there he hit upon a new scheme for prison reform in England, suggested to him by the way his brother was handling industrial workers in Russia at the time. This comparison of the plight of prisoners in England with that of industrial workers in Russia is especially interesting in view of the light it throws upon social conditions in the two countries almost 170 years ago.

Upon his return to England, Bentham worked vigorously and continuously to persuade the British government to adopt his program for prison reform in place of the notorious Botany Bay system then in use. His outstanding book, *The Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1789), was written as a background for the

new penal code he was advocating. He organized the efforts of his friends behind the proposal and incurred a large personal expense in promoting it. But all to no avail. The program was finally turned down by the British government, and this experience aroused in Bentham a deep-seated distrust not only of the current Tory political thought of his day but also of the motives of politicians in general. Despite his concern for social reform, Bentham, like most other philosophers, was largely a recluse. He was occupied chiefly in elaborating theories on paper, and he expected that they would go into effect almost automatically as soon as their logical validity was demonstrated. His close friends looked upon him as a man of profound wisdom, hung upon his words, and approved almost as a matter of course whatever he proposed. It was a great disappointment to Bentham when he discovered that all men, and especially practical political leaders, were not equally discerning.

In time, however, Bentham and the younger men around him came to realize that mere words, no matter how logical or brilliant, were not enough to achieve lasting political action or social reform. They decided, therefore, to organize a political party, called themselves the philosophical radicals, worked out a practical political platform, and soon elected to Parliament a number of able spokesmen for their program. The very considerable influence which this group exerted during half a century was due in the main not to their numbers but to the exceptional ability and social vision of these exponents of practical Utilitarianism. Bentham himself, as a matter of fact, did not call his philosophy by this name. He preferred a somewhat more cumbersome phrase, "the greatest happiness principle." The term Utilitarianism was adopted by John Stuart Mill, first to describe the views of a small literary group among Bentham's disciples and only later, when the name "philosophical radicals" proved politically inadvisable, to designate the political party and its philosophy. In time Utilitarianism became the accepted name for Bentham's philosophy as well as for Mill's own position.

THE PRINCIPLE OF UTILITY

It was Bentham's hope that he could make ethics as exact and precise as the physical sciences. To this end he sacrificed all literary appeal in his writing and sought rather to achieve the precision and clarity of the lawyer or the physicist. Consequently, his books read more like legal documents than like the literary masterpieces of a Lin Yutang, and his hedonism can derive no support from the charm or brilliance of its presentation. An unequivocal acceptance of the tenets of hedonism is clear, however, in the opening words of Bentham's *Principles of Morals and Legislation.*

> Nature has placed man under the governance of two sovereign masters, *pain* and *pleasure*. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do. On the one hand the standards of

> right and wrong, on the other the chain of causes and effects, are fastened to their throne. They govern us in all that we do, in all we say, in all we think; every effort we can make to throw off our subjection, will serve but to demonstrate and confirm it. The principle of utility recognizes this subjection and assumes it for the foundation of that system the object of which is to rear the fabric of felicity by the hands of reason and law.

Epicurus himself could have asked no more clear and forthright avowal of the dominant place of pleasure and pain in shaping our lives. Indeed, the moral philosophy of Bentham contains little more than a careful restatement of Epicureanism, with the egoism of Epicurus modified somewhat by the necessities of social life. The principle of utility itself is thoroughly Epicurean. "By utility," Bentham writes, "is meant that property in an object whereby it tends to produce benefit, advantage, pleasure, good or happiness (all this in the present case comes to the same thing) or to prevent the happening of mischief, pain, evil or unhappiness, to the party whose interest is considered."[2]

No moral theory could be simpler and more direct. A chair, for example, has utility because at a lecture we derive pleasure from sitting down rather than standing for an hour or two. A cushioned chair has greater utility than a hard chair because we get greater pleasure (that is, we are more comfortable) when sitting in the cushioned chair. Hence, when two chairs are vacant, one cushioned and the other hard, we naturally and without unnecessary reflection sit down in the cushioned chair. All choices in life, when clearly understood, are really of just this sort, in Bentham's opinion. If, in the case above, a man should stand aside to allow a lady to take the cushioned chair while he takes the hard one (as gentlemen still do), it is simply because the warm glow that he feels as a result of the lady's grateful smile brings him more pleasure than does the cushion in the chair.

THE MEANING OF RIGHT AND WRONG

For Bentham it is not our motives but the consequences of what we do that count. The right action in any circumstances is the one which on the whole has the desired results for all concerned. It is upon this natural and obvious principle that morals should be based, he maintains. "Any sort of motive is either good or bad on the score of its effects." A thing is judged to be right or wrong in terms of its outcome and, more specifically, in terms of the pleasure it produces or the pain it permits us to escape. The principle of utility is defined, accordingly, as "that principle which approves or disapproves of every action whatsoever, according to the tendency which it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question." "Of an action that is conformable to the principle of utility one may also say either that it is one that ought to be done, or at least that it is not one that ought not to be done," Bentham writes. "One may also say that it is right that it should be done, at least that it

is not wrong that it should not be done. When thus interpreted, the words ought, and right and wrong, and others of that stamp, have a meaning: when used otherwise, they have none."[3]

If this view of right and wrong is accepted, the only moral problem is that of determining what conduct produces the greatest pleasure or brings the least pain. Epicurus had rejected the more naïve Cyrenaic view that the pleasures of the moment and those of the senses are to be enjoyed without thought of the future. This he condemned as unintelligent even for a hedonist, and turned instead to intellectual and lasting pleasures which involved as little pain as possible. The only difference between one pleasure and another that Epicurus can find, however, is a difference in the *amount* of pleasure it affords. If friendship is preferred to eating or drinking, it is because friendships give us more pleasure in the long run. One pleasure is in itself no better or more desirable than another; that is, there is no *qualitative* distinction among pleasures, the only differences are *quantitative.*

This general Epicurean point of view Bentham does not question. He is interested only in a more exact standard for determining the desirable pleasures. This standard he refers to, in the language of mathematics, as his "hedonistic calculus." Seven factors must be taken into account in such a calculation, he feels: the *intensity* of the pleasures or pains involved; their *duration*; their *certainty* or uncertainty; their *propinquity* or remoteness—that is, how near or how far away they are; their *fecundity*—that is, the tendency of a pleasure to produce other pleasures, or of a pain to lead to other pains; their *purity*—that is, the freedom of pleasures from attendant or subsequent pain, or of pain from pleasures; and their *extent*—that is, the number of persons whom they affect. To popularize his "calculus" and give it a somewhat more general appeal, Bentham devised the following rhyme:

> Intense, long, certain, speedy, fruitful, pure—
> Such marks in pleasures and in pains endure.
> Such pleasures seek if private be thy end:
> If it be public, wide let them extend.
> Such pains avoid, whichever be thy view.
> If pains must come, let them extend to few.

"To take an exact account, then, of the general tendency of any act, sum up all the values of all the pleasures on the one side, and then of all the pains on the other," Bentham writes. "The balance, if it bears on the side of pleasure, will give the good tendency of the act, if on the side of pain, its bad tendency."[4] It is not to be expected that each of us will follow through a careful analysis like this each time we decide to do something, Bentham admits. But it should always be kept in mind; and the more nearly we approximate it, the more nearly moral or good our conduct will be.

In Bentham's opinion, the only thing new about the "hedonistic calculus" was in the exact formulation it gave to the usual practice of mankind. For this is essentially what we all do. "By the natural constitution of the human frame, on most occasions of their lives men in general embrace this principle without thinking of it," he writes. The real trouble is that as a rule we fail to see all that is involved and so do not act as intelligently as we should. "For such is the stuff that man is made of: in principle and in practice, in a right track and in a wrong one, the rarest of all human qualities is consistency."[5] A good philosophy makes clear for us what we need to know in order to act wisely and so improves the quality of human conduct.

LAW AND THE GOOD SOCIETY

Thus far the philosophy of Bentham is not only hedonistic but largely Epicurean. It was only when he turned from private to public morality that Bentham began to modify the tenets of Epicurus; but it is here actually that we find his chief interest in life. For he was primarily a *legislator* and only secondarily a moralist; his greatest contributions were made in the social sciences and in legal philosophy rather than in ethics. As a lawmaker Bentham was convinced that good government must promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number, not the interests of the privileged few. Since all men, in his opinion, are by nature egoistic, they think first and basically of their own good. Yet unless they can be made to think also of the good of others, a stable and well-ordered society is not possible. Hence it is the function of law to see that a man does consider the good of others as well as his own good. How is the intelligent legislator to accomplish this? Bentham asked himself. His answer contains a shrewd combination of hedonism and altruism. Legislators must pass laws to make sure that men suffer so much pain when they disregard the welfare of others that this will outweigh any pleasure they may derive from an antisocial act. Thus, a youth may be led to an act of robbery by the hope that it will give him money with which to enjoy himself. But if he is convinced of speedy and certain legal punishment for such a crime, he will be deterred and brought back to a sounder social outlook. There must, however, be a *certainty* and a *duration* of such punishment that will clearly outweigh the *intensity* and the *propinquity* of the anticipated pleasure. Here the hedonistic calculus is of obvious value to the legislator. The same principles would, of course, operate in the rules and regulations by which a wise administration directs the affairs of students on a college campus.

In what we call the "laws of nature," Bentham finds the principle of utility at work in just the way that it should be exemplified in the laws of the state. Let a man overeat, and the pains of indigestion—intense, long, and certain—soon remove the memory of the earlier pleasures he enjoyed. Let him try to get along without adequate sleep, and for weeks a nagging cold will plague him. Pleasures follow as the natural consequence of the *right* action, pains as the natural conse-

quence of *wrong* action. In our social relations and even in religion the same situation is to be seen, Bentham argues. In so far as we disregard the interests of others, they resent it and by the pressure of public opinion seek to cause us enough pain to change our attitude. Nothing can bring more intense suffering than the loneliness of the college freshman ostracized by his fellows because he has failed to conform to some college tradition or accepted social attitude. The church likewise emphasizes the divine approval of all acts that help others; it stresses the divine displeasure and future punishment that attend all acts which injure others, and thus it seeks to offset any pleasure men might find in such acts. Heaven and Hell have long been effective instruments in stimulating good moral conduct and in preventing acts harmful to others.

Bentham sees, then, four *sanctions* of the principle of utility: the legal, the natural or physical, the popular or moral, and the religious. It is the function of the law to give what additional support is needed to the natural, the popular, and the religious sanctions of utility. Thus we build a good society upon purely hedonistic principles. Recognizing that nature has placed man under the dominance of two sovereign masters, pleasure and pain, the intelligent legislator uses this fact to see that people take into consideration the welfare of others as well as their own.

BENTHAM'S ALTRUISM

For Bentham, then, interest in the welfare of others was more a matter of practical conduct than of philosophical theory. He gave the best years of his life unstintingly to improve the lot of the underprivileged, but the theory by which he justified this endeavor pictured all men as moved only by the pursuit of pleasure. As a legislator Bentham found himself concerned primarily with the general welfare, the good of the greatest number; as a philosopher he did not find any real justification for this concern. At best his Utilitarianism embodies a sort of enlightened self-interest, an egoism more refined and purified, more socially conscious than that of an Epicurus or a Lin Yutang, but nevertheless an egoistic, not an altruistic, hedonism. To find a statement of Utilitarianism that is genuinely altruistic in spirit, it is necessary to turn to the philosophy of Bentham's greatest disciple, John Stuart Mill. And Mill makes clear the inherent contradictions in the moral philosophy of Bentham that in the end render it logically unacceptable.*

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MILL'S THOUGHT

John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) ranks among the ablest as well as the most interesting figures in British philosophy. Hardly anywhere can one find a man whose life was so explicitly shaped by a specific philosophy. In large measure this

* See J. Plamenatz, *The English Utilitarians*, pp. 6, 68-76, 123, 144.

was the work of his father, James Mill, a recognized leader among the group of younger men attracted by Bentham's philosophy. More interested in Bentham's political and social principles than in his ethical theory, James Mill soon became an outstanding exponent of the "democratic radicalism" accepted by this younger group; but his greatest practical contribution both to political thought and to philosophy was undoubtedly the experiment he conducted in educating his brilliant son.

THE MAKING OF A PHILOSOPHER

John Stuart Mill, in his *Autobiography,* has provided a detailed account of the educational experiment undertaken by his father. Compared with the way in which parents today customarily treat their children, it reads almost like a record of medieval torture. At the age of three, Mill began to learn arithmetic and Greek; at eight he took up Latin and soon was reading the great Greek and Latin classics in the original. At that time Homer's *Iliad* was his favorite, but within a few years he read the *Odyssey,* the Greek dramatists, all of Thucydides, much of Plato, Virgil's *Aeneid,* Lucretius, the *Orations* of Cicero, and many less famous works as well. Later he moved into the field of "universal history" and for some time the study of history was his chief delight in life.

> A voluntary exercise, to which throughout my boyhood I was much addicted, was what I called writing histories. I successively composed a Roman history, picked out of Hooke; an abridgement of the Ancient Universal History; a History of Holland; and in my eleventh and twelfth year I occupied myself with writing what I flattered myself was something serious. This was no less than a history of the Roman Government, of which I wrote as much as would have made an octavo volume, extending to the epoch of the Licinian Laws. It was, in fact, an account of the struggles between the patricians and plebeians, which now engrossed all the interest in my mind which I had previously felt in the mere wars and conquests of the Romans. I discussed all the Constitutional points as they arose: though quite ignorant of Niebuhr's researches, I, by such lights as my father had given me, vindicated the Agrarian Laws on the evidence of Livy, and upheld to the best of my ability the Roman democratic party.[6]

Mill's reading in history was followed by an extensive study of logic, philosophy, and economic theory. At the age of twelve he began Aristotle, starting at once with Aristotle's treatment of logic in the *Organon.* It was his father's invariable practice, Mill says, to make him understand as far as possible the utility of whatever study he was assigned to do, "and this he deemed peculiarly fitting in the case of syllogistic logic, the usefulness of which had been impugned by so many writers of authority." His father's explanations did not make the usefulness of formal logic entirely clear to Mill at the time, he admits. But his own later experience led him to appreciate, quite as much as did his father, the value of an

early practical knowledge of logic. "I know nothing in my education, to which I think myself more indebted for whatever capacity of thinking I have attained," he states in his *Autobiography*. It was at this period also, when he was twelve or thirteen, that Mill read the more important dialogues of Plato, in particular the *Gorgias*, the *Protagoras*, and the *Republic*. The portrait of Socrates which he found here impressed him greatly. "The Socratic method, of which the Platonic dialogues are the chief example, is unsurpassed as a discipline for correcting errors," he writes. Socrates' analytic and searching spirit "even at that age took such hold upon me that it became part of my mind."[7]

This exacting educational program was conducted entirely by Mill's father. James Mill took the necessary time from a strenuous life for work with his son, deliberately shielding him from association with other boys of his own age, whose childish fancies aroused little sympathy in the father's mind. As John Stuart Mill grew older, he would take walks each morning before breakfast with his father and report on the reading of the previous day. His father also gradually turned over to him the education of the younger children in the family, an enterprise which Mill himself admits was a good deal more enlightening to him than it was to them.

James Mill's method was designed to make his son a first-rate thinker who would become the major prophet of Utilitarianism and in this he succeeded remarkably well. The son subsequently pointed out:

> Most boys or youths who have had much knowledge drilled into them, have their mental capacities not strengthened, but overlaid by it. They are crammed with mere facts, and with the opinions or phrases of other people, and these are accepted as a substitute for the power to form opinions of their own: and thus the sons of eminent fathers, who have spared no pains in their education, so often grow up mere parroters of what they have learnt, incapable of using their minds except in the furrows traced for them. Mine, however, was not an education of cram. My father never permitted anything that I learnt to degenerate into a mere exercise of memory. He strove to make the understanding not only go along with every step of the teaching, but, if possible, precede it. Anything which could be found out by thinking I never was told, until I had exhausted my efforts to find it out for myself.[8]

At this point Mill's father was obviously ahead of much current educational practice even at the university level.

When Mill was only nineteen, he was asked by Bentham to prepare for publication a work of Bentham's on judicial evidence. Bentham had begun the work three times, each time in a different manner, and it was Mill's assignment to condense all the material into a single, coherent treatise. Not long after he finished this task, the *Westminster Review* was founded as the literary organ of the radical

group of younger men around Bentham. Mill's father took an active part in supporting the new *Review* and wrote the leading article in the first issue. During the next few years John Stuart Mill himself was a frequent contributor to the *Westminster Review,* writing thirteen major articles as well as numerous shorter reviews of books on history and political economy.

THE CRISIS IN MILL'S INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

One cannot help being impressed by what Mill had accomplished by the time he reached twenty-one; yet his early life and education seems almost directly to contradict the accepted Utilitarian notion that pleasure is the chief end of living. Nor is it surprising that when he was about twenty Mill suffered a mental crisis which today would probably be termed nervous exhaustion. His own account of this experience is a revealing one.

> From the winter of 1821, when I first read Bentham, and especially from the commencement of the *Westminster Review,* I had what might truly be called an object in life; to be a reformer of the world. My conception of my own happiness was entirely identified with this object. The personal sympathies I wished for were those of fellow laborers in this enterprise. I endeavored to pick up as many flowers as I could by the way; but as a serious and permanent personal satisfaction to rest upon, my whole reliance was placed upon this; and I was accustomed to felicitate myself on the certainty of a happy life which I enjoyed, through placing my happiness in something durable and distant, on which some progress might be always making, while it could never be exhausted by complete attainment.
>
> But the time came when I awakened from this as from a dream. It was in the autumn of 1826. I was in a dull state of nerves, such as everybody is occasionally liable to, one of those moods when what is pleasure at other times becomes insipid or indifferent; the state, I should think, in which converts to Methodism usually are, when smitten by their first "conviction of sin." I seemed to have nothing left to live for. At first I hoped that the cloud would pass away of itself; but it did not. A night's sleep, the sovereign remedy for the smaller vexations of life, had no effect upon it. In vain I sought relief from my favourite books, those memorials of past nobleness and greatness from which I had always hitherto drawn strength and animation. I read them now without feeling, or with the accustomed feeling *minus* all its charm; and I became persuaded that my love of mankind, and of excellence for its own sake, had worn itself out.
>
> I was thus, as I said to myself, left stranded at the commencement of my voyage, with a well equipped ship and rudder, but no sail; without any real desire for the ends which I had been so carefully fitted out to work for: no delight in virtue, or the general good, but also just as little fn anything else. The fountains of vanity and ambition seemed to have dried up within me, as completely as those of benevolence. I had had (as I reflected) some gratification of vanity at too early an age: and little as it was which I had

> attained, yet having been attained too early, like all pleasures enjoyed too soon, it had made me *blasé* and indifferent to the pursuit. Thus neither selfish nor unselfish pleasures were pleasures to me. And there seemed no power in nature sufficient to begin the formation of my character anew, and create in a mind now irretrievably analytic, fresh associations of pleasure with any of the objects of human desire.[9]

Fortunately Mill's condition was not as serious as he feared. Only after a good many months did his spirits improve, but gradually they did. Music and poetry, things in which he had formerly had no interest, proved of particular help to him at this time—especially the poetry of Wordsworth. Of Wordsworth's poems he writes,

> They seemed to be the very culture of the feelings, which I was in quest of. In them I seemed to draw from a source of inward joy, of sympathetic and imaginative pleasure, which could be shared in by all human beings. From them I seemed to learn what would be the perennial sources of happiness, when all the greater evils of life have been removed. And I felt myself at once better and happier as I came under their influence.[10]

This experience gave Mill a much sounder understanding of human nature than that possessed by Bentham or the other leaders of the Utilitarian movement. He saw, as they did not, that the cultivation of emotion and feeling is as important for the individual as is the improvement of the intellect, and from this time he made a place in his own philosophy of living for the emotions as well as for intellectual growth. As a result of his own early training, however, Mill was always inclined to take things rather seriously; he never quite reached the point where he could forget himself in simple enjoyment or in the pure animal exuberance of youth.

It was during this period that Mill first became acquainted also with the young lady who after a friendship of twenty years became his wife. Mrs. Taylor was in her twenty-third year when he met her in 1830, he in his twenty-fifth. Seldom has a man owed more to the woman he married than Mill felt that he did; never has a philosopher written in more glowing terms of his wife's character and ability.

> I soon perceived that she possessed in combination, the qualities which in all other persons whom I had known I had been only too happy to find singly. Alike in the highest regions of speculation and in the smaller practical concerns of daily life, her mind was the same perfect instrument, piercing to the very heart and marrow of the matter; always seizing the essential idea or principle. Her intellectual gifts did but minister to a moral character at once the noblest and the best balanced which I have ever met with in life. Her unselfishness was not that of a taught system of duties, but of a heart which thoroughly identified itself with the feelings of others, and often went to excess in consideration for them by imaginatively investing their feelings with the intensity of its own.[11]

Most of what Mill wrote during the next twenty-five years was read and criticized by Mrs. Taylor. Her contribution to his thought is well illustrated, Mill states, in his work on the *Principles of Political Economy*:

> What was abstract and purely scientific was generally mine; the properly human element came from her: in all that concerned the application of philosophy to the exigencies of human society and progress, I was her pupil, alike in boldness of speculation and cautiousness of practical judgment. But while she thus rendered me bolder in speculation on human affairs, her practical turn of mind, and her almost unerring estimate of practical obstacles, repressed in me all tendencies that were really visionary. Her mind invested all ideas in a concrete shape, and formed to itself a conception of how they would actually work: and her knowledge of the existing feelings and conduct of mankind was so seldom at fault, that the weak point of any unworkable suggestion seldom escaped her.[12]

MATURE ACHIEVEMENT

Mill himself was no armchair philosopher, however. He combined his father's interest in practical politics with Bentham's ability to analyze objectively the motives by which one's conduct is shaped. In all probability his devotion to his wife caused him to overestimate somewhat her influence upon his thought. After a brief study of law, which was Bentham's ideal for the well-educated man, Mill, in May 1823, took a position with the East India Company, in which his father had for some years been employed. Despite the large amount of writing which he did, both political and philosophical, Mill retained a responsible post in business for most of his life. In 1856, after more than thirty years of service with the East India Company, he was made Chief Examiner of India Correspondence, the highest office next to that of the Secretary in the Company's home service. When the East India Company was dissolved by Parliament about two years later, Mill was offered a seat in the Council set up to supervise the affairs of India, but this he declined, preferring to devote himself completely to the intellectual interests in which by that time he had so distinguished himself.

Mill's early training convinced him of the importance of clear and accurate thinking; for nearly thirteen years he worked upon his first major book, *A System of Logic*. Published in 1843, it is generally regarded as his greatest single achievement. It ran through many editions and was for years the standard work in the field. The reputation of this work was due especially to the skill with which Mill defended the *inductive* method in logic, a method employed so successfully in the scientific thinking of his day. One must begin, he maintains, with observation and experience, not with some intuitive, or *a priori*, knowledge, and from empirical facts he must derive all general or universal principles. With Francis Bacon and John Dewey, Mill stands as an able proponent of the necessity of relating logic and life if one's thinking is to be significant and effective.

A brief essay on *Utilitarianism* is Mill's one direct contribution to ethical theory. This was later combined with essays *On Liberty* and *Representative Government* in a small volume that ranks among the classic discussions of political and social philosophy. The essay *On Liberty* was more directly and literally a joint work of Mill and his wife than anything else that bears his name, he tells us.

> None of my writings have been either so carefully composed, or so sedulously corrected as this. There was not a sentence of it that was not several times gone through by us together, turned over in many ways, and carefully weeded of any faults, either in thought or expression, that we detected in it. It is in consequence of this that it far surpasses anything that has proceeded from me either before or since.[13]

In his work on *The Principles of Political Economy* (1848), Mill makes a very successful effort to apply the principles of Utilitarianism to economics. His book was popular as a text for more than a generation, during which time it was regarded as an improved Adam Smith or a popularized Ricardo. Accepting in general the outlook of *laissez-faire* economics, Mill nevertheless showed a strong leaning toward a more socialized economy wherever this seemed unquestionably to promote the common good. During the later years of his life he continued to write numerous essays on political and philosophical subjects, but none so important as those already mentioned. His highly readable *Autobiography* was published shortly after his death, in 1873, and in the following year a small volume entitled *Three Essays on Religion* appeared. In these essays Mill insisted, in accord with his *Logic*, that religion must be interpreted in terms of human experience. It is what religion means in life, not the problems posed by theology, that he finds significant.

THE PHILOSOPHER IN POLITICS

It had been Mill's intention, upon his retirement in 1858 from his duties with the East India Company, to devote himself entirely to writing. But his influence in the field of politics had become so extensive that early in 1865 a group of electors from Westminster proposed to him that he stand as a candidate for Parliament from that district. The idea did not seem to Mill to be a practical one.

> I was convinced that no numerous or influential portion of any electoral body, really wished to be represented by a person of my opinions; and that one who possessed no local connection or popularity, or who did not choose to stand as the mere organ of a party, had small chance of being elected anywhere unless through the expenditure of money. Now it was, and is, my fixed conviction that a candidate ought not to incur one farthing of expense for undertaking a public duty. What has to be done by the supporters of each candidate in order to bring his claims properly before the constituency, should be done by unpaid agency, or by voluntary subscription.[14]

Mill felt it only just and courteous, however, after a group of electors had sought him out of their own accord and offered to bring him forward as their candidate, to allow them to make the final decision:

> I therefore put their disposition to the proof by one of the frankest explanations ever tendered, I should think, to an electoral body by a candidate. I wrote, in reply to the offer, a letter for publication, saying that I had no personal wish to be a member of parliament, that I thought a candidate ought neither to canvass nor to incur any expense, and that I could not consent to do either. I said further, that if elected, I could not undertake to give any of my time and labour to their local interest. I made known to them, among other things, my conviction (as I was bound to do, since I intended, if elected, to act on it), that women were entitled to representation in Parliament on the same terms as men.[15]

There is much to be said for the group of electors that decided upon him as their candidate despite these conditions.

> Nothing, at the time, appeared more unlikely than that a candidate (if candidate I could be called) whose professions and conduct set so completely at defiance all ordinary notions of electioneering, should nevertheless be elected. A well-known literary man was heard to say that the Almighty himself would have no chance of being elected on such a programme. I strictly adhered to it, neither spending money nor canvassing, nor did I take any personal part in the campaign, until about a week preceding the day of nomination, when I attended a few public meetings to state my principles and give to any questions answers as plain and unreserved as my Address. . . . My frankness evidently did me far more good than my answers did harm. Among the proofs I received of this, one is too remarkable not to be recorded. In the pamphlet, "Thoughts on Parliamentary Reform," I had said rather bluntly, that the working classes are generally liars. This passage some opponent got printed in a placard, which was handed to me at a meeting chiefly composed of the working classes, and I was asked whether I had written and published it. I at once answered, "I did." Scarcely were these two words out of my mouth when vehement applause resounded through the whole meeting. It was evident that the working people were so accustomed to expect equivocation and evasion from those who sought their suffrage, that when they found a direct avowal of what was likely to be disagreeable to them, instead of being offended, they concluded at once that this was a person whom they could trust.[16]

To Mill's surprise as much as anyone's, he was elected to Parliament by a small majority over his Conservative opponent, and he served as a member of the House of Commons during the three sessions which passed the Reform Bill of 1865. He not only supported this bill with conspicuous ability but he moved an amendment to the Reform Bill to admit to suffrage all women who possessed the

qualifications required of male electors. Although the amendment was defeated, Mill's support of it was successful enough to arouse wide public interest and to get under way the movement which later developed into the National Society for Women's Suffrage. The importance which he attached to this action may be seen from his own statement that it "was by far the most important, perhaps the only really important, public service I performed in the capacity of a Member of Parliament."

As a matter of fact, Mill proved himself, during his three years in the House of Commons, an able public debater as well as a political leader of skill and high principle. The comment upon his conduct by the British prime minister of that day, William E. Gladstone, depicts with unusual clarity the kind of man he was and the philosophy by which he lived.

> We all knew Mr. Mill's intellectual eminence before he entered Parliament. What his conduct there principally disclosed, at least to me, was his singular moral elevation. I remember now that at the time I used familiarly to call him the Saint of Rationalism. Of all the motives, stings and stimulants that reach men through their egoism in Parliament, no part could move or even touch him. His conduct and his language were, in this respect, a sermon. Again, though he was a philosopher, he was not, I think, a man of crotchets. He had the good sense and practical tact of politics, together with the high independent thought of a recluse. He did us all good. In whatever party, whatever form of opinion, I sorrowfully confess that such men are rare.[17]

THE UTILITARIAN HERETIC

Heresy has been attacked more widely by the orthodox in religious than in philosophical circles. Anyone, however, who professes to believe in the major tenets of a sect but so modifies these tenets in his effort to be honest and reasonable as to give up what is distinctive about them is guilty of heresy. From this point of view, Mill may justly be termed a Utilitarian heretic. Within the first fifteen pages of his essay on Utilitarianism, he actually discarded the main principles of Bentham's moral philosophy. The egoistic view of human nature and conduct, the appeal to enlightened self-interest, the quantitative calculus of pleasure and pain upon which Bentham put such store—all these Mill rejects. Almost all that remains of the ethical theory he inherited is a tenuous commitment to hedonism which no longer contains any of the tenets usually associated with such a philosophy of living. The breadth of his own sympathies, and his concern to do justice to the facts of life as he saw them, inevitably took Mill beyond the Utilitarian system of his predecessors. The position he adopts in his own essay is as discerning and appealing as almost any that one can find; its practical results in his own life tend to suggest as much. Yet the effort to present his philosophy

in strictly Utilitarian and hedonistic terms lands Mill in serious logical difficulty when not in downright contradiction.

The truth is that Mill had relatively little interest in the theoretical problems of philosophy and great respect also for his father and for Bentham. This loyalty to them made him seek as best he could to minimize the differences between his own thought and theirs, even where he realized that difference existed. When he first began to outgrow the narrow framework of Bentham's philosophy, to which James Mill rather dogmatically adhered, Mill felt keenly his father's displeasure. Of their relationship at that time he wrote:

> My father's tone of thought and feeling, I now felt myself at a great distance from: greater, indeed, than a full and calm explanation and reconsideration on both sides, might have shown to exist in reality. But my father was not one with whom calm and full explanations on fundamental points of doctrine could be expected, at least not with one whom he might consider as, in some sort, a deserter from his standard. Fortunately we were always in agreement on the political questions of the day which engrossed a large part of his interest and of his conversation. On those matters of opinion on which we differed, we talked little. I expected no good, but only pain to both of us, from discussing our differences: and I never expressed them but when he gave utterance to some opinion of feeling repugnant to mine, in a manner which would have made it disingenuousness on my part to remain silent.[18]

In his essay on *Utilitarianism* Mill commits himself bravely enough, therefore, to the hedonism of Bentham and Epicurus.

> The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals, utility or the Greatest Happiness Principle, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure and the absence of pain, by unhappiness, pain and the privation of pleasure. All desirable things (which are as numerous in the utilitarian as in any other scheme) are desirable either for the pleasure inherent in themselves, or as a means to the promotion of pleasure and the prevention of pain.[19]

Those who attack the Epicurean philosophy because it recognizes no higher end in life than pleasure, and thus seems to treat man as little better than a beast, are to Mill obviously misguided.

> When thus attacked, the Epicureans have always answered that it is not they but their accusers who represent human nature in a degrading light, since the accusation supposes human beings to be capable of no pleasures except those of which swine are capable. Human beings have faculties more elevated than the animal appetites, and when once made conscious of them, do not regard anything as happiness which does not include their gratification. There is no known Epicurean theory of life which does not

> assign to the pleasures of the intellect, of the feelings and imagination, and of the moral sentiments, a much higher value as pleasure than to those of mere sensation.[20]

It is necessary, therefore, to recognize the fact that some *kinds* of pleasure are more desirable and more valuable than others, Mill argues. "It would be absurd that while, in estimating all other things, quality is considered as well as quantity, the estimation of pleasures should be supposed to depend on quantity alone."

KINDS OF PLEASURES

As intelligent and social human beings, we do find many satisfactions that mean more to us than the pleasures of the senses. No amount of good food can compensate for the loss of a friend. Omar's jug of wine simply cannot compare with the satisfaction of a job well done, the sense of obligation to a cherished ideal, the enjoyment of beauty in nature or in art. "Now it is an unquestionable fact that those who are equally acquainted with, and equally capable of appreciating and enjoying, both, do give a most marked preference to the manner of existence which employs the higher faculties," Mill points out. "No human creatures would consent to be changed into any of the lower animals, for a promise of the fullest allowance of a beast's pleasure; no intelligent human being would consent to be a fool, no instructed person would be an ignoramus, no person of feeling and conscience would be selfish and base, even though they would be persuaded that the fool, the dunce, or the rascal is better satisfied with his lot than they are with theirs." It is true that a person whose capacities of enjoyment are low has the greatest chance of having them fully satisfied, Mill admits. But the person of high endowments will not want to change places with him on that account. "It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied. And if the fool, or the pig, is of a different opinion, it is because they only know their own side of the question. The other party to the comparison knows both sides."[21] One is reminded of an illuminating comment by Anatole France: "The joy of understanding is a sad joy, yet those who have once tasted it would not exchange it for all the frivolous gaieties and empty hopes of the vulgar herd."

If Mill is right, then the orthodox hedonist is wrong. If some satisfactions are in themselves so worth while as to be far preferable to other kinds of pleasure, Bentham's elaborate hedonistic calculus is no longer of value to us. The achievement of happiness is clearly not a matter of adding pleasures together, or of avoiding pain. There is, Mill recognizes, a quality of human life at its best in which we find enduring satisfaction quite different from the enjoyment of pleasure at the physical level. As most of us know quite well, simply trying to "have a good time" continuously does not satisfy one for long. Something more than this is necessary to give life meaning and purpose. Mill realized this well enough, and

his able analysis of human experience shows clearly the limitation of hedonism, as does his own continued devotion to the common good rather than to the pursuit of pleasure.

DEVOTION TO THE COMMON GOOD

Hedonism has been criticized not only for accepting the pursuit of pleasure as man's chief end in life but also for an inherent selfishness or egoism. Mill's valiant effort to meet this second weakness of traditional hedonism makes it even clearer that he himself can hardly be called a hedonist at all. The utilitarian standard of conduct, he maintains, when rightly understood, must be "not the agent's own greatest happiness, but the greatest amount of happiness altogether."

> I must again repeat, what the assailants of utilitarianism seldom have the justice to acknowledge, that the happiness which forms the utilitarian standard of what is right conduct, is not the agent's own happiness but that of all concerned. As between his own happiness and that of others, utilitarianism requires him to be as strictly impartial as a disinterested and benevolent spectator. In the golden rule of Jesus of Nazareth we read the complete spirit of the ethics of utility. To do as you would be done by, and to love your neighbor as yourself, constitutes the ideal perfection of utilitarian morality.[22]

There would seem to be little objection that one could offer to a moral ideal such as this except to point out that it is, as a matter of fact, not hedonism at all. The good of others, not the pursuit of pleasure, has become Mill's major concern, and happiness, whenever it is achieved, is a by-product of other, more fundamental aims. One is somewhat startled, to be sure, to have Jesus taken over in so bold a fashion by an avowed hedonist until one realizes what has actually happened. Instead of making a hedonist of Jesus, Mill has in a very real sense adopted the Christian point of view. Mill makes an effort to escape this commitment, it is true. "The utilitarian morality does recognize in human beings the power of sacrificing their own greatest good for the good of others," he writes. "It only refuses to admit that the sacrifice is itself a good. A sacrifice which does not increase, or tend to increase, the sum total of happiness it considers wasted. The only self-renunciation which it applauds, is devotion to the happiness, or to some of the means of happiness, of others."[23] This effort to suggest, however, that a man does not give up the pursuit of pleasure as his chief concern in life when he is working for the happiness of others instead of his own happiness, would never convince such confirmed or consistent hedonists as Epicurus and Lin Yutang.

MAN'S NATURE ESSENTIALLY SOCIAL

In his portrayal of human personality, Mill is also undoubtedly a much more discerning psychologist than his fellow hedonists. But here again, in an effort to

do justice to the facts of experience, he quite clearly discards the Utilitarian framework he inherited. With Epicurus, Bentham saw all men as motivated by self-interest—at best by enlightened self-interest, at worst by a crude and unintelligent selfishness. Mill, on the other hand, maintains that since human personality is essentially a social product, it is quite as "natural" for us to think of the interest and welfare of others as to think of ourselves.

> The social state is at once so natural, so necessary, and so habitual to man, that, except in some unusual circumstances or by an effort of voluntary abstraction, he never conceives himself otherwise than as a member of a body. In this way people grow up unable to conceive as possible to them a state of total disregard of other people's interest. Not only does all strengthening of social ties, and all healthy growth of society, give to each individual a stronger personal interest in practically consulting the welfare of others; it also leads him to identify his *feelings* more and more with their good. He comes, as though instinctively, to be conscious of himself as a being who *of course* pays regard to others. The good of others becomes to him a thing naturally and necessarily to be attended to, like any of the physical conditions of our existence.[24]

This natural basis of regard for others is cultivated and strengthened by education, by religion, and by the laws of the state, Mill points out, until it becomes one of the most influential of human motives. Thus the *civilized* human being is created, a man by "nature" devoted to the common good and unable to conceive the possibility of happiness for himself that does not involve also the good of the whole

The voice of conscience and of duty—the moral faculty, as Mill terms it—is also, in his opinion, the product of our social training, of the experiences of childhood, of home environment, and of religious instruction. We acquire our ideas of what is right and wrong from these early associations as a natural and desirable part of our social growth.

> It is natural for man to speak, to reason, to build cities, to cultivate the ground, though these are acquired faculties. Like the other acquired capacities referred to, the moral faculty, if not a part of our nature, is a natural outgrowth from it; capable, like them, in a certain small degree, of springing up spontaneously; and susceptible of being brought by cultivation to a high degree of development. Unhappily, it is also susceptible, by a sufficient use of the external sanctions and of the force of early impressions, of being cultivated in almost any direction.
>
> Men lose their high aspiration as they lose their intellectual tastes, because they have not time or opportunity for indulging them.[25]

Not until John Dewey do we find another philosopher who recognizes so explicitly the social nature of human personality and of moral conduct. It is, moreover, this social interpretation of human nature that provides Mill with his most

persuasive argument for the central doctrines of the Utilitarian philosophy. The firm foundation of Utilitarianism lies, he writes, in "the social feelings of mankind; the desire to be in unity with our fellow-creatures, which is already a powerful principle in human nature, and happily one of those which tend to become stronger from the influences of advancing civilization."[26] Promoting the common good brings us happiness because we are by nature social beings, a part of the group. Neither the thinly disguised self-interest that Bentham had suggested nor the direct pursuit of pleasure recommended by Epicurus but, rather, a genuine and increasing interest in the welfare of others is essential, Mill sees, if the Utilitarian philosophy is to work successfully.

ON LIBERTY

Mill's essay *On Liberty* provides further insight into the philosophy to which he gave allegiance. This essay is regarded by Mill himself as the best and most eloquent of his works, and here again he sounds unlike a man who believes that pleasure is his greatest good. Nowhere, indeed, can one find a more uncompromising commitment to the ideal of freedom which underlies our own traditional American and British way of life. In an age such as ours, when human freedom is seriously endangered on every hand, it is encouraging to reread Mill's eloquent essay in its defense. For in his opinion liberty is so truly the foundation of all social happiness that any encroachment upon it is not only dangerous but is doomed to failure. And he is convinced, also, that the greatest good of society as a whole is achieved by allowing each individual to exercise his own freedom unrestrained, so long as he does not harm others.

One very simple principle, Mill writes in the introduction to his essay, is entitled to govern the dealings of society with the individual—namely, "that the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection." The individual's own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant.

> He cannot rightfully be compelled to do or forbear because it will be better for him to do so, because it will make him happier, because, in the opinion of others, to do so would be wise, or even right. These are good reasons for remonstrating with him, or reasoning with him, or persuading him, or entreating him, but not for compelling him. To justify that, the conduct from which it is desired to deter him must be calculated to produce evil to someone else. The only part of the conduct of anyone, for which he is amenable to society, is that which concerns others. Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign.[27]

Mill argues the case for liberty of thought and discussion with rare insight and persuasiveness. No one, he maintains, is in a position to say absolutely that a view with which he disagrees is undeniably false. Whoever does so is actually

claiming infallibility for himself. There have been some tragic cases in history, Mill points out, when well-meaning individuals silenced other people whom they felt to be dangerous to the common good. Socrates was put to death by his fellow Athenians because he refused to give up his right to criticize the democracy of his day. Jesus was condemned by his own people because he refused to be silent concerning the defects of the religion they practiced. History has vindicated both Jesus and Socrates and has shown the error of those men who denied to them the liberty to disagree with the accepted ideas of their day. When today we silence people with whom we disagree, we claim a similar infallibility, Mill insists, and are guilty of the same error as were those who condemned Socrates and Jesus. We are turning to force, rather than reason, to lead us to truth—and there is as little ground today as in the past for expecting this to be successful.

Let us suppose, however, that an opinion is actually false. Should it then be silenced? Mill maintains that even in such circumstances it should not be. Not only does the individual who believes it have a right to his opinion, but also it is good for others to have it expressed. "He who knows only his own side of the case, knows little of that," Mill writes. If we do not know what we reject, we really do not know what we believe. Nor is it enough to hear positions which we reject stated by others who also do not accept them. This will never enable a man to escape his own prejudices.

> That is not the way to do justice to the arguments, or bring them into contact with his own mind. He must be able to hear them from persons who actually believe them, who defend them in earnest, and do their utmost for them. He must know them in their most plausible and persuasive form; he must feel the whole force of the difficulty which the true view of the subject has to encounter and dispose of; else he will never really possess himself of the portion of truth which meets and removes that difficulty. Ninety-nine in a hundred of what are called educated men are in this condition; even of those who can argue fluently for their opinions. Their conclusion may be true, but it might be false for anything they know: they have never thrown themselves into the mental position of those who think differently from them; and considered what such persons may have to say, and consequently they do not, in any proper sense of the word, know the doctrine which they themselves profess.[28]

Obviously, when Mill says he believes in liberty of thought and discussion, he means it. And his belief, like that of Socrates, rests upon a confidence in human reason. No one will insist that men be allowed to think for themselves unless he has such a confidence that ultimately the truth is to be reached in this way—and that error is to be overcome not by force but by clearer thinking.

In times of relative peace and prosperity, it is not difficult to accept such a position. Mill lived in an age when the imperialism of Prussia and the tyranny of the Russian Czar were the worst despotisms that men had to fear. And any

who are fortunate enough to live in a society that is civilized, tolerant, and humane can afford to assume, with him, that more will be lost than gained by the suppression of pernicious opinions. But in times of social unrest and change, when our most cherished institutions are in grave danger of perishing, it is by no means certain that Mill's argument is sound.

As a matter of fact, whenever the expression of an opinion serves as an incitement to action—when, for example, the harangue of a demagogue stirs a crowd to a lynching bee—Mill's position is open to serious question. As Justice Holmes pointed out, when there is "clear and present danger" in the expression of an opinion, society has every right to repress it without waiting until overt harm to others results. When we are faced, as we are today, however, with a life-and-death conflict between communism and the democratic way of life, the appeal to force seems much simpler and more certain of immediate success than does the appeal to reason, especially if we have the largest guns or the newest atomic weapons. In this situation Mill's warning that confidence in force alone will in the end prove deceptive is a timely one. And here, certainly, he stands in the tradition of the great philosophers.

EDUCATION AND SOCIAL REFORM

As might well be anticipated in view of his own early experience, Mill felt that society must look to education rather than to force as its chief hope for improvement. He considered educational reform not merely the principal remedy for our social ills but at times the *only* remedy; and his insight into the meaning of education was a profound one. It is through education of the right sort that our attitudes, convictions, and moral ideals are developed and our concern for others increased, he points out. Education in this sense involves much more than formal training provided by schools; indeed, "the main branch of the education of human beings is their habitual employment," Mill recognizes. Men who in their daily lives are the mere tenders of machines can never have access to the cultural riches of our civilization from which alone the full development of personality comes. This idea of education gradually led Mill to a more liberal economic philosophy than that of his associates. Each man must have an opportunity in his daily job to be at his best, he maintains. Human personality is of too great worth to be degraded by the ill effects of our social institutions.

In his later years, Mill advocated two measures in particular as having great promise for the future: the enfranchisement of women and the promotion of cooperative enterprise. It is interesting to note how far in advance of his contemporaries he was here. Perhaps he had a somewhat exaggerated notion of the political and social value of these two measures. Our own experience with women's suffrage has not indicated that the world will necessarily become a better place in which to live as a result of the influence of women in politics. Nor has the cooperative movement greatly modified our free-enterprise economy in

America, despite a number of efforts in recent years to promote it. In both these proposals, however, Mill rightly saw opportunity for increased development of man's moral and social capacities. The modern American woman may not be completely happy, but she certainly enjoys a fullness of life not open to women in earlier days, who were little more than the property of their husbands. And we have tried by other means to bring into modern industry the regard for human rights which Mill found so appealing in cooperative enterprise.

Despite his consistent and vigorous support of democracy and universal suffrage, Mill himself recognized clearly enough the dangers in both. He admits that democracy demands greater intelligence and greater self-control of all citizens than does any other form of government, and he constantly urges that by proper education men and women should be better fitted for their political responsibilities. Only at a relatively late stage in their development do people become capable of governing themselves, Mill feels, but once they are capable of doing so, self-government not only makes them happier but also makes them better men—more intelligent, more virtuous and more responsible than they otherwise could be.[29]

The heart of the matter is well expressed by Harold Laski, in his introduction to Mill's *Autobiography*:

> Mill was a democrat, but no one was more critical of the evils of democracy. He was an individualist, but no one was more hostile to the excesses of *laissez faire*. The ultimate thing for which he was concerned was the elevation of the mind of man. This was, at bottom, the root of all he wrote. It lends a quiet passion to his economic discussion as to his examination of the foundations of logic. It was the explanation alike of his zeal for popular education and of his defense of feminism. No one, on any final estimate, can doubt that Mill, as no other figure of his time, raised the moral stature of his generation. Whatever he touched, he did not fail to clarify. He held as high as any man the lamp of reason, and it burned the more brightly because he lived. There are men in the record of English thought whose immediate influence has been more profound. But there are few who have better illumined the tradition of their age and none whose contribution was more honorable or more nearly stainless.

THE DILEMMA OF ALTRUISTIC HEDONISM

Enough has been said to indicate the broad appeal of Mill's philosophy of living as well as the inconsistencies which it reveals upon careful examination. An excellent summary of his point of view is provided by Mill himself.

> When people who are tolerably fortunate in their outward lot do not find in life sufficient enjoyment to make it valuable to them, the cause generally

> is caring for nobody but themselves. Next to selfishness, the principal cause which makes life unsatisfactory is want of mental cultivation. A cultivated mind—I do not mean that of a philosopher, but any mind to which the fountains of knowledge have been opened up—finds sources of inexhaustible interest in all that surrounds it: in the objects of nature, the achievements of art, the imaginations of poetry, the incidents of history, the ways of mankind, past and present, and their prospects in the future.[30]

When he undertakes, however, to compress within the narrow confines of a purely hedonistic pursuit of pleasure the interests and achievements which do bring man lasting happiness, Mill falls into an inescapable dilemma. In this dilemma lies the most serious logical fallacy of Utilitarianism, a fallacy which renders it finally unacceptable to most thinkers despite its many appealing features.

HEDONISM OR ALTRUISM?

As a hedonist, the Utilitarian is committed to the pursuit of pleasure, and his own pleasure is necessarily his greatest good. As an altruist, on the other hand, his primary concern is the welfare and happiness of others. In many instances, as Mill points out, we do find pleasure not merely in the company of others but in helping others. The basic social nature of human personality makes this both natural and understandable. Thus far there is no obvious conflict between hedonism and altruism. But the consistent hedonist is forced to go one step further. Whether he analyzes the motives of a mother who makes personal sacrifices for her family or the attitude of a man who shares his wealth generously with the less privileged, the hedonist must maintain that such action is done because the individual involved expects to derive more pleasure from such action than he would from purely selfish conduct. Now one of the strange paradoxes of life is that the man who helps others in order to get pleasure for himself usually finds the experiment disappointing; actually it is the man who helps others because he is interested in their welfare rather than his own that finds lasting satisfaction in what he does.

There are times, moreover, when the welfare of others can be promoted only at the sacrifice of our own pleasures, when our own pursuit of pleasure can be continued only by sacrificing the common good. A war illustrates clearly this dilemma of altruistic hedonism. In such a situation men and women in general cannot continue to enjoy life themselves and at the same time promote the common good. A choice has to be made between these two aims. And what is true in the country as a whole in such times of crisis is particularly and inescapably true for the young man or woman called to defend the very existence of our American democracy. The youth who leaves a good job, a wife or fiancée, and goes as a soldier to face hardships, danger, and perhaps death, so that the freedom of our country and its democratic way of life may be preserved, is

obviously finding it necessary to put the common good above his own pleasures. There are satisfactions, of course, that come to the man or woman who makes this choice, but they are not satisfactions encompassed in the hedonistic pursuit of pleasure. The confirmed hedonist always finds some means of escaping the hardships and sacrifices involved. In the more serious and crucial decisions in life, one cannot be both a hedonist and an altruist; that is, he cannot follow the Utilitarian philosophy consistently. And, in such cases, it is not the egoistic hedonism of Epicurus but the altruism of Mill that men acclaim as the preferable choice.*

We have only to look, as a matter of fact, at the philosophy by which Bentham and Mill lived, rather than that which they professed, to find this same preference clearly apparent. It was altruism, not hedonism, that they chose as a guide to life. The satisfactions which gave their lives meaning and brought them a measure of enduring happiness were found not in an egoistic pursuit of pleasure but in an altruistic devotion to the common good—a deep concern for political and social reform, for the removal of injustice, and for the welfare of the underprivileged. This concern, indeed, frequently led them to sacrifice all the pleasures listed in the catalogue of the orthodox hedonist. Mill himself, when he was re-examining his own philosophy of living at the time of his nervous exhaustion, saw this fact with unusual clarity.

> I never, indeed, wavered in the conviction that happiness is the test of all rules of conduct, and the end of life. But I now thought that this end was only to be attained by not making it the direct end. Those only are happy (I thought) who have their minds fixed on some object other than their own happiness; on the happiness of others, on the improvement of mankind, even on some art or pursuit, followed not as a means, but as itself an ideal end. Aiming thus at something else, they find happiness by the way. The enjoyments of life (such was now my theory) are sufficient to make it a pleasant thing, when they are taken *en passant,* without being made a principal object. Once make them so, and they are immediately felt to be insufficient. They will not bear a scrutinizing examination. Ask yourself whether you are happy, and you cease to be so. The only chance is to treat, not happiness, but some end external to it, as the purpose of life.[31]

There are insights here upon which Mill might well have built a much sounder philosophy than the modified Utilitarianism which he defended.

THE GOOD OF THE GREATEST NUMBER

One other serious defect in Utilitarianism must be noted: its acceptance of the good of the greatest number as an adequate ethical ideal. Especially in view of the appeal this phrase has had in our own American view of life, its limitations

* For a critique indicating the psychological and empirical limitations of egoistic hedonism itself, see pp. 52-53 above.

should be recognized. A concern for the common good does make the Utilitarian philosophy of Mill and Bentham far superior to the egoistic hedonism of the Epicureans, to be sure. No one can accuse the Utilitarians of being social parasites. But emphasis upon the good of the greatest number in some situations raises a serious ethical problem. Is it always right and good, for example, that the interests of the majority should prevail? Cannot the majority be wrong and an underprivileged minority deserve more consideration? The treatment of the Jews by Hitler and the Nazis a decade or two ago forced this latter question upon our attention in no uncertain terms. The treatment of Negroes in our own country, in the North quite as much as in the South, has presented many Americans with much the same sort of dilemma.

William James, an American philosopher, noted among other things for an ability to get at the heart of a problem, states the issue in provocative fashion.

> If the hypothesis were offered us of a world in which millions were to be kept permanently happy on the simple condition that a certain lost soul on the far-off edge of things should lead a life of lonely torture, even though an impulse arose within us to clutch at the happiness so offered, how hideous a thing would be its enjoyment when deliberately accepted as the fruit of such a bargain.[32]

The appeal of the philosophy by which Mill and Bentham lived is undeniable, but the philosophy which they attempt to defend is neither logically consistent nor, for most people, ethically adequate. Neither Bentham nor Mill was able to interpret satisfactorily the convictions which guided their conduct within the framework of the Utilitarianism to which they gave verbal allegiance. It will be necessary for us to find some more secure foundation for their altruistic interest in the common good; altruism can hardly be defended successfully on purely hedonistic grounds.

4 · PESSIMISM

Arthur Schopenhauer

Although not usually included among the hedonists, Schopenhauer has an important contribution to make to our understanding of hedonism as a practical way of life. Mill, by his unwillingness to be consistent, escapes the logical consequences of hedonism; Schopenhauer, by an uncompromising development of the implications of hedonism, is led to pessimism. Every man's convictions, however, are the outgrowth not of logic alone but also of the circumstances of his life—sometimes largely of home environment and training, at other times more obviously of the conditions of the world in which he lives. As Fichte, one of the great figures in modern German philosophy, remarks: "The kind of philosophy a man chooses depends upon the kind of man he is. For a philosophical system is no piece of dead furniture one can acquire and discard at will. It is animated with the spirit of the man who possesses it."[1] In Schopenhauer's case, it may well seem that all things conspired together to make him a pessimist. Before we undertake an examination of this thought, let us look, therefore, at the man himself and the world in which he lived.

THE MAN AND HIS AGE

Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century was suffering all the disasters and ravages of war and of postwar unrest. It knew the terror of the French Revolution, the dream of empire of Napoleon, the constant march of French armies across the continent for a decade or more, and, finally, in 1815, the Congress of Vienna, where under the shrewd statesmanship of Prince Met-

ternich of Austria the forces of reaction attempted to stamp out every vestige of democratic and liberal sentiment born in the early enthusiasm of the French Revolution. Today we ourselves are once more in a position to appreciate the meaning of such disaster, destruction, and disillusion. As did the ambition of Napoleon a century ago, so the lust for power, first of Hitler and now of the Russian communists, has again brought exhaustion and prostration to Europe. Then, as now, millions of men had perished; farm land everywhere lay neglected from want of men to till it; the economic life of the continent was in chaos. Then, as now, nations in power sought to impose upon the conquered and destitute populations a political ideology they did not want.

Every such major conflict brings in its wake a wave of reaction and disillusionment. In the decade after the First World War, Europe and America felt the spirit of cynicism and despair. The age of Schopenhauer knew it after the Napoleonic era. As our own world tries again slowly and painfully to recover from the conflict, disaster, and hatred of the most destructive war in history, we too are aware of this same sense of frustration and hopelessness. It is not difficult for a man to become a pessimist as he sees the high ideals and aspirations for which millions have sacrificed their lives gradually being engulfed by a spirit of self-interest, vengeance, and aggrandizement among the victor nations. In the thinking of such an age, the problem of evil becomes dominant. The tragedy of human society seems too often but a reflection of the chaos of the universe itself; to many, a divine order appears impossible and God, if there is a God, unconcerned or impotent to aid mankind in the hardships and hopelessness of life. It was in such an age that Schopenhauer lived. Small wonder that the prevailing despair of Europe found reflection in the mood of the philosopher.

EARLY INFLUENCES

William James has suggested that a man's philosophy of living is by and large a matter of temperament. But James would certainly admit that the conditions of life serve to make manifest the latent tendencies in one's nature. Schopenhauer's paternal heritage, as well as his youth and early manhood, fitted him in peculiar fashion to respond to the spirit of his age. Cut off almost entirely for most of his life from the normal ties of home, family, and friends, he had to seek in a boarding house and a dog the affection and understanding essential for human happiness.

Life for Schopenhauer began, however, with every prospect of fortune and happiness. His father, a practical, successful, and uncommonly intelligent merchant of Danzig, was known for his broad knowledge and his cosmopolitan spirit. Because of political unrest in Danzig, the family moved to Hamburg in 1793, when young Schopenhauer was five years old. Business interests led his father to travel extensively, and he quite frequently took his young son along. When Arthur was ten years old, his father arranged for him to spend two years

with a French family. When he was about fifteen, he spent a winter in the home of a clergyman in England, where the affairs of business had taken his father. Here Schopenhauer picked up a decided distaste for the constant round of morning and evening prayers which he was forced to undergo, a good knowledge of English, and a genuine admiration for the British character. A winter in Paris the next year left him with a marked enthusiasm for the theater, if not for the French.

Expecting him to learn the mercantile business and become an accomplished man of the world, Schopenhauer's father provided every advantage for him. The atmosphere of business and finance in which Arthur grew up left its mark upon his philosophy. And despite the fact that he hated the countinghouse, and forsook it when his father died in 1805 with signs of a deranged mind and apparently by his own hand, there is a realism in Schopenhauer's treatment of human nature and a bluntness in his philosophy that clearly reflect his early experience in business.

Schopenhauer's mother was a woman of unusual ability, a brilliant and popular novelist of the day. Having married for social position rather than love, as she herself frankly confessed, she soon tired of her rather prosaic husband, who was twenty years her senior. At his death she sought a more exciting life in the sophisticated intellectual and literary circles of Weimar. There a brilliant company were gathered, with Goethe at its head, and her house soon became one of the social centers in the city. She was no more happy in the company of her son, however, than she had been with her husband. The two finally arranged to live apart, he coming to call upon her only on her afternoons at home, a guest among other guests. Their relationship at the time is described in one of his mother's candid letters to young Schopenhauer:

> When you get older, dear Arthur, and see things more clearly, perhaps we shall agree better. Till then let us see that our thousand little quarrels shall not hunt love out of our hearts. To this end we must keep well apart. You have your lodgings; as for my house, whenever you come you are a guest, well received, of course, only you mustn't interfere. I can't bear objections. Days when I receive, you may take supper with me, if you will only be so good as to refrain from your painful disputations, which make me angry, too, and from your lamentations over the stupid world and the sorrows of mankind; for all that always gives me a bad night and horrid dreams, and I do so like a sound sleep.*

Evidently Schopenhauer's sharp tongue was not reserved for his rivals in philosophy nor his pessimistic view of life to academic discussions. But even his mother's extreme expedient did not succeed. Things went from bad to worse, and finally one afternoon in a moment of anger she pushed Schopenhauer down the stairs of her house. He left Weimar soon afterward and never again made

* Quoted by J. Royce, *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy*, p. 247.

an effort to see her, although she lived for another twenty-four years. We ought not to conclude, however, that the fault in this case was all Schopenhauer's. A comment in the *Memoirs* of an acquaintance of his mother's runs as follows: "Madame Schopenhauer, a rich widow. Makes profession of erudition. Prattles much and well, intelligently; without heart and soul. Self-complacent, eager after approbation. God preserve us from women whose mind has shot up into mere intellect."* Undoubtedly these experiences with his mother suggested to Schopenhauer many of those half-truths about women which not only serve to confirm his general pessimism but also add spice to his essays on life (at least for male readers).

ACADEMIC INTERESTS AND ACTIVITIES

It was not until he was twenty-one that Schopenhauer was able to begin his studies at the University of Göttingen. Here he devoted himself at first to courses in science and, before long, to philosophy. Kant and Plato were his favorite philosophers, but his interests were broad and general rather than technical or scholarly. He was an eager reader, with wide literary sympathies, and a keen observer, with the insight of one who enjoyed a rich and varied portrayal of life and saw swiftly rather than studied exhaustively. His sense of humor was also keen, leading him to single out the comic and the ridiculous in whatever he saw or read. Obtaining his doctorate when he was twenty-five, Schopenhauer gave himself at once to work on the book that was to establish his reputation in philosophy.

In five years *The World as Will and Idea* was completed, and in 1818 Schopenhauer sent his manuscript to the publishers with the modest claim that here was an original and highly significant work that "would hereafter be the source and occasion of a hundred other books." Actually, Schopenhauer was right but his masterpiece attracted very little attention when it was published. The young philosopher was furious when he learned that the greater part of this first edition was finally sold for waste paper, and he wrote such bitter letters to the publishers that they severed all further relations with him. A winter in the warm Italian sunshine, however, helped somewhat to overcome the pessimistic mood into which Schopenhauer was plunged by this disappointment. He was rather pleased also a year or two later to find the German universities taking some recognition of his philosophy. In 1820, after a good deal of negotiation, he was appointed a lecturer in philosophy at the University of Berlin. But with almost unbelievable egotism Schopenhauer deliberately chose to lecture at the same hours that were assigned for the lectures of Hegel, at that time the outstanding figure in German philosophy. Consequently he soon found himself talking to empty seats. For several years he continued to have his name printed

* *Memoirs of Anselm Feuerbach*, quoted by William Wallace, *Life of Arthur Schopenhauer*, p. 81.

in the university catalogue along with the announcement of his course of lectures, but nobody came to hear him. It took another two years in Italy for him to recover from this unpleasant experience. Even that was not enough, however, to prevent sarcastic comments upon professional philosophers, to whom he referred as "Sophists," from appearing with increasing frequency in subsequent editions of *The World as Will and Idea.*

Schopenhauer usually manages in these comments to sound a note of high principle. "The rule, 'I sing the song of him whose bread I eat,' has always held good; the making of money by philosophy was regarded by the ancients as characteristic of the Sophists. Since nothing is to be had for gold but mediocrity, we must be content with it here also," he writes.[2] "Life is short but truth works far and lives long; let us speak the truth." The fact that he had inherited an interest in his father's business ample enough to permit him to live in modest comfort had more to do, no doubt, with Schopenhauer's attitude than any superior loyalty to truth on his part. Unable to establish himself at the University of Berlin, he was free to give expression to his pessimistic conclusions about life and humanity with a frankness hardly possible for those whose daily bread depends upon official approval. Nor did he have a wife to see to it that he was properly ambitious for academic advancement or economic security. It is reported that thoughts of marriage did occur to Schopenhauer at about this time, but he could not bring himself to sacrifice his cherished independence for prospects so uncertain.

HUMAN, ALL TOO HUMAN

In 1825, Schopenhauer returned to Berlin, interested apparently in seeing what he could do to settle an old law suit against him there. While still connected with the university, he had come one day upon three women chattering away on a landing outside his room. When one of them refused to go away, the philosopher took his walking stick and put her out by force. Unfortunately for him, she fell down the steps in the process, was injured slightly, and brought suit against Schopenhauer for assault and battery. Despite all that he could do, he had to pay costs in the case and a compensation of five thalers a month to the woman for the rest of her life.

A few years after Schopenhauer returned, Berlin was visited by a cholera epidemic. Frightened by a dream which foretold his death if he remained in the city, he departed in haste and did not feel it safe to stop until he reached Frankfurt. In Frankfurt he spent the remaining years of his life, living quietly in two rooms with his pipe and his flute but with no friends or companions except a small poodle, the only creature to which Schopenhauer ever seems to have felt any real attachment. He named the dog Atman, a term taken from the pessimistic religion of India, in which Schopenhauer had become more and more interested in his later years. (A bronze statue of the Buddha was among his prized possessions.) The boys of the neighborhood preferred to call his poodle

"*der junge Schopenhauer*," a nickname not too hard to understand when one looks at the philosopher's picture.

Schopenhauer was one of those philosophers whose genius expresses itself early and who is content thereafter largely with the elaboration of his early ideas. He was only thirty when he published *The World as Will and Idea*; during the next forty years he hardly deviated in the slightest detail from the philosophy expressed in it. His later essays are humorous and readable, full of wisdom and insight, but they are nevertheless only elaborations or applications of the convictions stated in his one great work. During Schopenhauer's last years, however, an increasing interest in his philosophy tended to mollify somewhat the pessimism of his youth. The growing prestige of science, and especially of the biological sciences, drew attention to Schopenhauer's treatment of the *will to live*. Darwin's famous *Origin of Species*, published in 1859, gave convincing scientific validation to the thesis that life is strife and a struggle, a principle upon which Schopenhauer had based his own philosophy some forty years earlier.

In any case the freshness, vigor, and realism of Schopenhauer's philosophy gradually attracted many intelligent readers outside academic circles, men and women concerned with life itself rather than with abstract or technical treatises on the subject. A little circle of welcome flatterers gathered around the old philosopher at Frankfurt. Students made pilgrimages to his home; army officers felt the fascination of his pessimism; Leipzig University offered a prize for the best essay on his thought; his *Essay on Women* not only caused men to smile but brought increased attention to him from the sex he so maligned. On his seventieth birthday he received messages of congratulation from all over the world.

Schopenhauer loved the admiration of these people. An old man now, with clear, blue eyes and a somewhat sarcastic smile, he smoked his pipe, played his flute, had his portrait painted for posterity, and found life not nearly as gloomy and sad as he had pictured it in his youthful essays. This recognition came to him none too soon, however. The next year, with the will to live pretty well exhausted, Schopenhauer, after having his breakfast at the usual hour, died quietly and peacefully as he sat on his sofa. He had only to die, moreover, to establish his philosophical reputation securely—a somewhat sardonic commentary on his own pessimism. His name has now become an accepted symbol of whatever is gloomy and disillusioned in the thought of our own age as well as his.

Such, in brief, are the facts of Schopenhauer's life. They do not reveal a man whom one can either admire or like. But the significance of these facts for the development of Schopenhauer's philosophy is a quite different matter. On this point a comment by Josiah Royce, distinguished American philosopher of a generation ago, is particularly pertinent:

> There are conditions which make manifest the latent evil of human selfishness, the dangers of the restless will that is in us all alike, better than do

other conditions, but which do not therefore create that latent evil. It will not do to state the case against Schopenhauer's pessimism in such shallow fashion as to make it appear that whilst all pessimism is mere pettiness, all optimism is *prima facie* noblemindedness. Optimists also can be selfish and even intolerable. In fine, then, I am disposed to say, as a matter of mere historical judgment, that Schopenhauer's nervous burdens unquestionably opened his eyes to the particular aspect of life which he found so tragic, but that meanwhile the fact of such burdens is of positively no service to us in forming our estimate of the ultimate significance of our philosopher's insight—an insight which, for my part, I find as deep as it is partial.[3]

THE WORLD AS WILL

No single aspect of a workable philosophy of living is more important than its estimate of man's place and worth in the total scheme of things. Is man but a cosmic accident, "a planetary eczema that soon will be cured," as one recent writer has put it? Or is man the center and climax of the divine creative activity, a son of God himself, as the Christian faith maintains? Is the universe itself the expression of moral order, the medium through which a divine personality works in human life? Or is it a blind mechanism, unconcerned with human life and destiny and unaware of the nobler aspirations of the human spirit? In its broadest outreach this aspect of philosophy is known as *metaphysics.* When stated in technical or scholarly terms metaphysics can become exceedingly academic and beyond the comprehension of the ordinary reader. But obviously, in its practical bearing upon the philosophy by which one lives, nothing is more influential than the metaphysics a man accepts. It colors his whole outlook on human nature, on the worth of life, on the trustworthiness of science, and on the acceptability of religious faith.

Schopenhauer's approach to metaphysics is neither academic nor difficult to understand.

> Temples and churches, pagodas and mosques, in all lands and all ages, in splendor and vastness, testify to the metaphysical need of man, which strong and ineradicable follows close upon his physical need. Certainly whoever is satirically inclined might add that this metaphysical need is a modest fellow who is content with poor fare. It sometimes allows itself to be satisfied with clumsy fables and insipid tales. If only implanted early enough, they are for a man adequate explanations of his existence and supports of his morality. Consider, for example, the Koran. This wretched book was sufficient to found a religion of the world, to satisfy the metaphysical need of innumerable millions of men for twelve hundred years, to become the foundation of their morality, and also to inspire them to bloody wars and extended conquests. I have not been able to discover one single valuable

thought in it. Such things show that metaphysical capacity does not go hand in hand with metaphysical need.

With the exception of man, no being wonders at its own existence; but it is to them all so much a matter of course that they do not observe it. Only after the inner being of nature has ascended, vigorous and cheerful, through the long and broad series of animals, does it attain at last to reflection for the first time on the entrance of reason, thus in man. Then it marvels at its own works, and asks itself what it itself is. Its wonder, however, is the more serious, as here it stands for the first time consciously in the presence of *death*. With this reflection and this wonder there arises therefore for man alone, the need for a *metaphysic*; he is accordingly an *animal metaphysicum*. The lower a man stands in an intellectual regard the less of a problem is existence itself for him; everything appears to him rather a matter of course. This rests upon the fact that his intellect still remains perfectly true to its original destiny of being serviceable to the will. On the other hand, it is the knowledge of death, and along with this the consideration of the suffering and misery of life which gives the strongest impulse to philosophical reflection. If our life were endless and painless it would perhaps never occur to anyone to ask why the world exists; and is just the kind of world it is, but everything would just be taken as a matter of course. In accordance with this we find that the interest which philosophical and also religious systems inspire has always its strongest hold as the dogma of existence after death.[4]

ON REASON AND HUMAN NATURE

The typical error of the philosopher, Schopenhauer maintains, has been in treating man as the *rational* animal. This idea naturally appeals to philosophers but it takes very little observation or psychological analysis to see that it is not correct, he argues. Although reason is certainly man's most valuable possession, it is actually but a sort of surface crust upon human behavior. We all make some pretense of being rational and intelligent, to be sure. We do so to maintain our prestige with our fellows, perhaps to impress those upon whom we look as inferior, even it may be to deceive ourselves at times. But beneath all such rational reflection, there is a dominant *will*, a persistent vital impulse or desire, that molds our thinking to its own purpose. Intellect may seem at times to direct the will; actually it is only an instrument to accomplish the purposes of impulse and appetite. Thinking is an aspect of living. We *think* initially in order to *act*, not to understand.

In all animal natures the *will* is primary and substantial, the intellect is secondary, indeed a mere tool for the service of the former. As a species of animals is furnished with hoofs, hands, wings, or teeth according to the aims of its will, so also is it furnished with a more or less developed brain, whose function is the intelligence necessary for its endurance. . . . The *intellect* becomes tired; the will is never tired. After sustained work with the head

> we feel the tiredness of the brain, just like that of the arm after sustained bodily work. All *knowing* is accompanied with effort; *willing,* on the contrary, is our very nature, whose manifestations take place without any weariness and entirely of their own accord. . . . Hence all continuous mental work demands pauses and rest, otherwise stupidity and incapacity ensue; if rest is persistently denied to the intellect it will become fatigued and may pass into complete incapacity, into childishness, imbecility and madness. . . . The will, on the contrary, is never lazy, is absolutely untiring, it never ceases willing and when during sleep it is forsaken of the intellect it is active as the vital force, cares the more uninterruptedly for the inner economy of the organism and sets in order again the irregularities that have crept into it. For it is not, like the intellect, a function of the body, but the *body is its function.*[5]

Examine your own conduct honestly, Schopenhauer suggests, and you will see at once that you do not want a thing because it is good; instead you find it good because you want it. "Thus we speak of good eating, good roads, good weather, and so on; in short, we call everything good that is just as we wish it to be." Other animals seek what they want without cloaking their desires in elaborate philosophies; only man finds it necessary to seek good reasons to justify himself in doing what he wants to do.

This process of rationalization has received much attention at the hands of contemporary psychology. Little has been added, however, to Schopenhauer's discerning analysis of the matter. "Nothing is more provoking," he writes, "when we are arguing against a man with reasons and explanations, and taking all pains to convince him, than to discover at last that he *will* not understand, that we have to do with his will." Hence, the uselessness of logic as a practical device. No one was ever convinced by argument of a thing he did not want to believe. In college classrooms, it is true, students do, as a rule, accept the conclusions presented to them with faultless logic by their professors. But one need not be a mind reader to recognize that in any discussion of controversial issues their own self-interest, their concern with the matter of grades, not the logic of the professor, is all too often responsible for this. To convince a man you appeal not to logic but to desire and self-interest. This fact is well known in all business circles; it is a basic tenet of advertising, which provides the lifeblood of business. No practical politician ever hopes for election at the polls or expects to gain a second term in office without operating on this principle. Only the philosophers have been shut off enough from the everyday world of affairs, where the nature of man is actually revealed, to describe human beings as *rational.* So, at least, runs the argument of Schopenhauer.

Reason, he concludes, holds a definitely secondary place in human nature. It is at best but the servant of will, at worst the tool of desire. Reason enables man to get the things he wants more effectively than does unaided appetite at

the animal level; it seldom enables him to change the dominant force of desire. Not only do we think in order to get what we want; we actually believe what we want to believe, not what is objectively true, and we refuse to believe what is contrary to our desires. In facing the unpleasant aspects of our world, reason simply gives way to imagination and to hope.

> Plato very beautifully called hope the dream of the waking. Its nature lies in this that the will, when its servant the intellect is not able to produce what it wishes, obliges it at least to undertake the role of comforter, to appease its lord with fables, as a nurse a child, and so to dress these out that they gain an appearance of likelihood. Now in this the intellect must do violence to its own nature, which aims at the truth. Here we see clearly who is master and who is servant. . . . Our *interest,* of whatever kind it may be, exercises a like secret power over our judgment; what is in conformity with it at once seems fair, just, and reasonable, what runs contrary to it presents itself to us as unjust or outrageous. What is opposed to our plan, our wish, our hope, we often cannot comprehend or grasp at all, while it is clear to every one else; but what is favorable, on the other hand, strikes our eye from afar. What the heart opposes, the head will not admit. A trifling and absurd, but striking example of that mysterious and immediate power which the will exercises over the intellect, is the fact that in doing accounts we make mistakes much oftener in our own favor than to our disadvantage, and this without the slightest dishonest intention. Thus is the intellect daily befooled and corrupted by the impositions of inclination.[6]

THE WILL TO LIVE

If man is dominated by will, not by intellect, what is will? Schopenhauer leaves us in no doubt on this point. He does not mean what is popularly called "will power," that is, the higher forms of conscious choice or moral obligation. By *will* he means simply the active appetites and desires of living, wanting, longing, self-asserting. Will, as we know it in man and as we see it expressed in animal life below the human level, is simply the *will to live*, the biological drive inherent in life itself. In simplest form, the will to live expresses itself as hunger. Nothing is so important to a starving man as food, no effort too demanding, no deception too unforgivable, to satisfy this basic appetite. The human body itself, according to Schopenhauer, is but an expression of this underlying will to live. Pushed on by that force which we vaguely call life, the blood builds its own vessels by wearing grooves in the body of the embryo; the grooves deepen, close up, and become arteries and veins. The will builds the brain as an instrument for its own purposes in the struggle for existence just as surely as it builds hands and feet or the complicated digestive tract. "Teeth, throat and bowels are objectified hunger; the grasping hand, the hurrying feet, correspond to the more indirect desires of the will which they express."

It is in the relation of the sexes, however, that the will to live finds clearest and most direct expression, and this relationship as a result dominates our thought as well as our conduct, Schopenhauer maintains.

> The sexual impulse proves itself the strongest assertion of life by the fact that to man in a state of nature, as to the brutes, it is the final end, the highest goal of life. Self-maintenance is his first effort, and as soon as he has made provision for that, he only strives after the propagation of the species: as a merely natural being he can attempt no more. Nature also, the inner being of which is the will to live itself, impels with all her power both man and the brute toward propagation. Then it has attained its end with the individual, and is quite indifferent to its death, for, as the will to live, it cares only for the preservation of the species, the individual is nothing to it.[7]
>
> If one considers the important part which the sexual impulse in all its degrees and nuances plays not only on the stage and in novels, but also in the real world, where, next to the love of life, it shows itself the strongest and most powerful of motives, constantly lays claim to half the powers and thoughts of the younger portion of mankind, is the ultimate goal of almost all human effort, interrupts the most serious occupations, sometimes embarrasses even the greatest minds, does not hesitate to intrude upon the negotiations of statesmen and the investigations of men of learning, knows how to slip its love letters even into philosophical manuscripts, and no less devises daily the most entangled and the worst actions, destroys the most valuable relationships, demands the sacrifice sometimes of life or health, sometimes of wealth, rank and happiness, nay, robs them who are otherwise honest of all conscience, makes those who have hitherto been faithful, traitors; accordingly, on the whole, appears as a malevolent demon that strives to prevent, confuse and overthrow everything; then one will be forced to cry, Wherefore all this noise? Is it merely a question of every Hans finding his Grethe? Why should such a trifle play so important a part, and constantly introduce disturbances and confusion into the well-regulated life of man? But to the earnest investigator the spirit of truth gradually reveals the answer. . . . It is no trifle that is in question here, on the contrary, the importance of the matter is quite proportionate to the seriousness and ardour of the effort. The ultimate end of all love affairs is really more important than all other ends of human life, and is therefore quite worthy of the profound seriousness with which everyone pursues it. That which is decided by it is nothing less than the composition of the next generation. . . . It is not a question of individual weal or woe, as in all other matters, but of the existence and special nature of the human race in future times, and therefore the will of the individual appears at a higher power as the will of the species;—this it is on which the pathetic and sublime elements in affairs of love depend, which for thousands of years poets have never wearied of representing in innumerable examples; because no theme can equal in interest this one, which stands to all others which only concern the welfare of individuals as the solid body to the surface, because it concerns the weal and woe of the species [8]

THE WILL AS WILL OF THE SPECIES

The will to live which moves the individual so powerfully and dominates his conduct so completely is not an expression primarily, then, of his own individual desire or passion; will in the individual springs, rather, from the life force in the human race as a whole, of which the individual is but a limited and partial expression. It is with mankind, not simply with this particular man or woman that the will to live is concerned.

> The aim of nature is directed to the maintenance, and therefore to the greatest possible increase, of the species. . . . What draws two individuals of different sex exclusively to each other with such power is the will to live, which exhibits itself in the whole species, and which here anticipates in the individual which these two can produce an objectification of its nature. . . . The growing inclination of two lovers is really already the will to live of the new individual which they can and desire to produce, nay, even in the meeting of their longing glances its new life breaks out, and announces itself as a future individuality harmoniously and well composed.[9]

Propagation of the species, then, is not only the dominant motive but the ultimate purpose of every living organism. Only so can the will to live conquer death. To ensure the success of this conquest, the will to reproduce is placed almost entirely beyond the control of the intellect. Here intelligence has little chance against the deeper purposes of the will, as many parents have learned to their sorrow when attempting to reason with infatuated sons or daughters concerning the mate they have chosen.

THE WORLD AS WILL

Such is our philosopher's view of human nature and conduct. But man, for Schopenhauer, is not an isolated phenomenon, unrelated to the larger universe around him. He is, rather, the clearest expression of its inner character and being; in human nature we find our best clue to the nature of the universe itself. Two approaches can be made to an understanding of any object, Schopenhauer points out: one is external, the other internal; one is the way of rational analysis, the other the way of immediate, intuitive knowledge. As we examine ourselves in the first fashion, externally and rationally, we can know only the physical organism and the world of matter of which it is a part. But the immediate and intuitive insight that we have into human nature reveals to us the dominant, vital *will to live* as the reality beneath the physical and material externality, shaping and molding it according to its own deeper desires and purposes. Had we the ability to look beneath the surface, to obtain such an inside, intuitive knowledge of the rest of the universe, we would find just the same thing that we find in man. As a matter of fact, we are not able to do this. We must be content with the knowledge of the external universe which the human mind can grasp. The world of matter and physical objects, as science portrays it, is actually a product

of thought and rational analysis, and so only an *idea* in the human mind, Schopenhauer maintains.* But there are indications enough that beneath the external appearance, behind the material and physical world which we know only as *idea*, there is at work the same dynamic, living *will, the World-Will*, of which the will to live of the human race as a whole, like each individual human desire, is but one aspect, a single, partial expression.

> If we observe the strong and unceasing impulse with which the waters hurry to the ocean, the persistency with which the magnet turns ever to the north pole, the readiness with which the iron flies to the magnet, the eagerness with which the electric poles seek to be reunited, and which, just like human desire, is increased by obstacles; if we see the crystal quickly take form with such wonderful regularity of construction, which is clearly only a perfectly definite and accurately determined impulse in different directions, seized and retained by crystallization; if we observe the choice with which bodies repel and attract each other, combine and separate when they are set free in a fluid state; lastly, if we feel directly how a burden which hampers our body by its gravitation toward the earth, unceasingly presses and strains upon it in pursuit of its one tendency; if we observe all this, I say, it will require no great effort of the imagination to recognize, even at so great a distance, our own nature. That which in us pursues its ends by the light of knowledge, but here, in the weakest of its manifestations, only strives blindly and dumbly in a onesided and unchangeable manner, must yet in both cases come under the name of Will, as it is everywhere one and the same—just as the first dim light of dawn must share the name of sunlight with the rays of the full mid-day.[10]

The unceasing, striving, creative power at work everywhere in the universe—whether in the instinct of the animal, the life process of the plant, or the blind force of the physical world—this is just the *will* which we know in our own experience and which underlies all existence. Space and time, which the intellect uses to divide life into separate, individual things, are, as a matter of fact, but an illusion hiding the inner unity and oneness of reality, Schopenhauer insists. Actually the separate existence of the individual merges into that of the species, the various species into the stream of life; life itself is only will. What science has called the laws of nature are but the principles by which the World-Will operates in the physical universe, as in animals it operates by instinct and in man by intelligence. In one instance after another Schopenhauer notes the truly remarkable function of instinct as an instrument of the will to live at the animal level: "the bird builds the nest for the young it does not yet know; the beaver constructs a dam the object of which is unknown to it; insects deposit their eggs where the coming brood finds future nourishment." The cause of human action,

* It is this that accounts for the title Schopenhauer gave to his volume *The World as Will and Idea.*

as we know it immediately, is the dominant force of will. The final cause of all things is the same dominant but unconscious and groping World-Will.

In later life, Schopenhauer read widely in the field of science to provide corroborations for his thesis. But it was not until the work of Henri Bergson, distinguished French philosopher of our own day, whose *Creative Evolution* (1907) is one of the outstanding achievements of contemporary philosophy, that Schopenhauer's insight was given convincing scientific validation. In the "Life Force," the *élan vital*, which Bergson sees as the creative driving force behind all human conduct and natural phenomena alike, one finds again the World-Will of Schopenhauer—described in scientific rather than popular fashion, to be sure, but true nonetheless to Schopenhauer's original insight.

PESSIMISM: THE WORLD AS EVIL

In popular usage, anyone who constantly looks on the dark side of life, who sees the world as gloomy, unhappy, and unappealing, is apt to be dubbed a pessimist. In more accurate philosophical terms, a pessimist is one who finds life, despite its occasional bright moments, "so bad that it ought not to be," who sees evil, not good, as the ultimate fact of existence. So, also, the philosophical optimist is not simply one who looks on the bright side of things but one who finds this world, despite its obvious pain and unhappiness, the best of all possible worlds, who sees good, not evil, as the ultimate fact in life.

Schopenhauer was a pessimist in the philosophical as well as the popular sense. The pleasures of life, in his opinion, are but passing shadows which throw the fundamental evil of the world into stronger relief. The pursuit of pleasure, to which a man dominated by will and desire inevitably gives himself, brings pain, not happiness. We have only to look at life as we see it around us, he maintains, to recognize that pain and suffering, not pleasure and happiness, are the constant lot of our fellows as well as ourselves.

DESIRE AND HAPPINESS

First, life is evil because will and desire are basic aspects of human nature. The very *will to live* itself engenders a ceaseless striving, a restless longing to satisfy our desires. The hedonist, in his naïveté, has assumed that if we get what we want, if our desires are fulfilled, we will be happy. It is quite obvious to Schopenhauer that such is not the case.

> All *willing* arises from want, therefore from deficiency, and therefore from suffering. The satisfaction of a desire ends it, yet for one desire that is satisfied there remain at least ten which are denied. Further, the desire lasts long, the demands are infinite; the satisfaction is short and scantily measured out. But even the final satisfaction is itself only apparent; every

> satisfied wish at once makes room for a new one. No attained object of desire can give lasting satisfaction, but merely a fleeting gratification; it is like the alms thrown to a beggar that keeps him alive today that his misery may be prolonged till the morrow. Therefore, so long as we are given up to the throng of desires with their constant hopes and fears, so long as we are the subjects of willing, we can never have lasting happiness or peace.[11]

Getting what we want, then, does not make us happy. It simply makes us want other things we do not have. Schopenhauer wrote at a time when the material comforts of life were denied to the mass of people, when want seemed almost universal in a period of postwar exhaustion. Had he lived in our country amid the prosperity of the 1950's, when it seemed as if everyone might have almost anything he desired, even Schopenhauer would have smiled to himself as he saw his analysis of life so amply substantiated. A machine civilization has brought material possessions to most of us that far exceeded the fondest dreams of our forefathers. Yet no generation has been less satisfied and happy. When we had one automobile, we wanted two; when we bought one radio for the family, we soon realized that we must have one for every member of the family to escape the inevitable conflict of desire for different programs to suit the tastes of each individual. If we had last year's car or last year's radio, we were dissatisfied with its old-fashioned and outmoded features and felt that only this year's model could make us happy. Advertising, which is the life of modern business, makes it a point, indeed, to see that the gratification of one desire does not bring us any lasting satisfaction. Ten more desires must at once be stimulated by the shrewd advertiser to take the place of the one that has been satisfied.

Even the complete fulfillment of desire, the getting of everything that we want, holds out no hope of happiness, according to Schopenhauer. Above the mass of the people, most of whose desires are unfulfilled, is the small, privileged group which has the means to gratify every desire: leisure, travel, amusement; no faintest passing fancy is denied its members. But instead of happiness, the result is only *ennui*, boredom. We are unhappy when we cannot have what we want. When we get it, we find that we no longer want it. None are so easily bored as the "idle rich," who give all their thought and effort to having a good time.

> As soon as want and suffering permits rest to man, *ennui* is at once so near that he necessarily requires diversion. The striving after existence is what occupies all living things and maintains them in motion. But when existence is assured, then they know not what to do with it; thus the second thing that sets them in motion is the effort to get free from the burden of existence, "to kill time," *i.e.*, to escape from *ennui*. Accordingly we see that almost all men who are secure from want and care, now that they have thrown off all other burdens, become a burden to themselves, and regard as a gain every hour they succeed in getting through with. *Ennui* is by no means an evil to

> be lightly esteemed, in the end it depicts on the countenance real despair. It makes beings who love each other so little as men do, seek each other eagerly, and thus becomes the source of social intercourse. As want is the scourge of the people, so *ennui* is that of the fashionable world. Thus between desiring and attaining all human life flows on. The desire is, in its nature, pain, the attainment soon begets satiety; the end was only apparent; possession takes away the charm; the desire, the need, presents itself under a new form; when it does not, then follows emptiness, *ennui,* against which the conflict is just as painful as against want.[12]

LOVE AND HAPPINESS

There is that romantic period in youth when all of us are convinced that in love, as in nothing else, man's happiness is to be found. But even here the pessimism of Schopenhauer demolishes completely the assumptions of hedonism. What we like to call love, Schopenhauer insists, is but the most subtle device of the *will to live,* its shrewdest method of achieving its end, which is the perpetuation of the species, not the happiness of the individual. Opposites attract each other, as we constantly observe, the reason being that thus the species is improved. In every case of sex appeal and romantic passion the subtle purpose of the will to live is the production of a hardy offspring. Such is the unconscious eugenics of love.

"Each one loves what he lacks," Schopenhauer maintains. Accordingly the most manly man will seek the most womanly woman, and vice versa. Each one will regard as especially beautiful in another individual those perfections which he himself lacks—nay, even those imperfections which are the opposite of his own. Little men love big women, fair persons like those who are dark, intelligent women fall in love with strong but stupid men. The weaker a man is the more he will seek a strong woman; and the woman on her side will do the same. Everyone endeavors to neutralize by means of the other his own weaknesses and defects so that they will not perpetuate themselves. What guides us here, Schopenhauer insists, is an instinct which is directed toward the welfare of the species, not the happiness of the individual. The health of the race is the great work with which Cupid is occupied unceasingly. In comparison with the importance of this great affair, the affairs of individuals are very trifling; therefore, he is always ready to sacrifice them without hesitation.

The passion of love depends, then, upon an illusion, the illusion that the satisfaction of desire will bring us happiness. With the fulfillment of desire, the individual discovers that he has been the dupe of the species. In reality, love is a deception practiced by nature for its own ends, and marriage is bound to be disillusioning.

> Nature can only attain its ends by implanting a certain illusion in the individual, on account of which that which is only a good for the species

appears to him as a good for himself, so that when he serves the species he imagines he is serving himself. In accordance with the character of the matter, every lover will experience a marvelous disillusion after the pleasure he has at last attained, and will wonder that what was so longingly desired accomplishes nothing more. Because the passion depended upon an illusion, the deception must vanish after the attainment of the end of the species. The spirit of the species which takes possession of the individual sets it free again. Forsaken by this spirit, the individual falls back into its original limitation and narrowness, and sees with wonder that after such a high and heroic effort nothing has resulted. Contrary to expectation, it finds itself no happier than before. It observes that it has been the dupe of the will of the species.

Marriages from love are made in the interest of the species, not of the individual. Certainly the persons concerned imagine that they are advancing their own happiness; but their real end is one which is foreign to themselves, for it lies in the production of an individual which is only possible through them. Brought together by this aim, they ought henceforth to try to get on together as well as possible. But very often the pair brought together by that instinctive illusion, which is the essence of passionate love, will in other respects be of very different natures. Accordingly, love marriages, as a rule, turn out unhappy; for through them the coming generation is cared for at the expense of the present. "Who marries for love must live in sorrow," says the Spanish proverb. The opposite is the case with marriages contracted for the purposes of convenience, generally in accord with the choice of the parent. Through them the happiness of the present generation is cared for, to the disadvantages of the coming generation. A girl who, against the advice of her parent, rejects the offer of a rich and not yet old man, in order, setting aside all considerations of convenience, to choose according to her instinctive inclination alone, sacrifices her individual welfare to the species. But just on this account one cannot withhold from her a certain approbation; for she has preferred what is of most importance, she has acted in the spirit of nature (more exactly, of the species), while the parents advised in the spirit of individual egoism.[13]

KNOWLEDGE AND HAPPINESS

If not in love, the dream of youth, neither in knowledge, the goal of maturity, is happiness to be had, according to our pessimistic philosopher. The higher the organism, the greater its suffering. A man suffers more than a dog or a horse; in memory and imagination he multiplies the unhappiness of daily experience, and so increases his own misery. The man who is aware of the strife and conflict, the want, and the exploitation existing throughout the world as a whole suffers more than the uninformed or self-centered individual who sees no further than the confines of his own family, his neighborhood or his community.

In the plant there is as yet no sensibility, and therefore no pain; even in the insect the capacity to feel and suffer is still limited. It first appears in a high

> degree with the complete nervous system of vertebrate animals and always in a higher degree the more intelligence develops. Thus, in proportion as knowledge attains to distinctness, as consciousness ascends, pain also increases, and reaches its highest degree in man. And then, again, the more distinctly a man knows, the more intelligent he is, the more pain he has; the man who is gifted with genius suffers most of all.[14]

Schopenhauer's gloomy view finds support in a study some years ago of the effects of famine in China. The most intelligent and cultured were the first to die or become mentally deranged. They felt most keenly the privation and want, the pain of famine; the stolid and dull-witted lived on, hardly conscious of the famine, since they had known little else but poverty for generations.

THE EVILS OF LIFE

At bottom, life is evil because life is strife. The restless will to live can beget only conflict, competition, and strife. The effort to get what we want leads us inevitably into conflict with others. The goods of the world are limited; the desires of men are infinite. On every hand we see evidence of the inevitable strife and conflict into which we are led by nature. Every kind of being fights for the matter, the space, and the time of the other.

"This strife may be followed throughout the whole of nature; indeed nature only exists through it," Schopenhauer writes. At the animal level every beast is the prey and food of another.

> Many insects lay their eggs on the skin and even in the body of the larvae of other insects, whose slow destruction is the first work of the newly hatched brood. The young hydra, which grows like a bud out of the old one, and afterwards separates itself from it, fights while it is still joined to the old one for the prey that offers itself, so that the one snatches it out of the mouth of the other. But the bulldog-ant of Australia affords us the most extraordinary example of this kind; for if it is cut in two, a battle begins between the head and the tail. The head seizes the tail in its teeth, and the tail defends itself bravely by stinging the head: the battle may last for half an hour, until they die or are dragged away by other ants. This contest takes place every time the experiment is tried. Thus the will to live everywhere preys upon itself; and in different forms is its own nourishment, till finally the human race, because it subdues all others, regards nature as a manufactory for its own use. Yet even the human race reveals in itself with most terrible destructiveness this same conflict, this variance with itself of the will, and we find *homo homini lupus* (man is a wolf to man).[15]

As Schopenhauer surveyed the human scene in his own age, he everywhere found manifestations of the strife and conflict bred by will and desire. If he had lived in our day, he might well have pointed to the same conditions. The strong nations prey upon the weak, and then in turn become the victims of the conflict they have initiated. The imperious will of Napoleon urged him on from victory

to victory; but none brought him lasting satisfaction and he fell at last before the combined forces of the nations he had oppressed. Austria, Prussia, and England at once sought to gain for themselves the power of the fallen conqueror, each at the expense of the others, and so the strife continued unceasingly. As Schopenhauer witnessed this spectacle in the Napoleonic era, we witnessed it again in the fate of Hitler and the Nazis. And the same weary cycle repeats itself as Russia and the United States now rise to compete for the domination of a world that is larger than Napoleon's but actually little changed for the better. A war to end wars breeds only a worse conflict in its place. Nations that unite to wage war victoriously fall immediately into conflict with one another when victory is won.

The world, then, is evil, not good; pain is the basic fact of human existence, and what we call pleasure is only the temporary cessation of pain, Schopenhauer concludes. The total picture of life is too painful, indeed, for contemplation. We make it bearable only by closing our eyes to its real character.

> Life presents itself as a continual deception in small things as in great. If it has promised, it does not keep its word, unless to show how little worth desiring were the things desired. The enchantment of distance shows us paradises which vanish like optical illusions when we have allowed ourselves to be mocked by them. Happiness accordingly always lies in the future, or else in the past, and the present may be compared to a small dark cloud which the wind drives over the sunny plain: before and behind it all is bright, only it itself always casts a shadow. . . . We are not properly conscious of the blessings and advantages we actually possess, nor do we prize them, but think of them merely as a matter of course, for they gratify us only negatively by resisting suffering. Only when we have lost them do we become sensible of their value; for the want, the privation, the sorrow, is the positive thing, communicating itself directly to us.[16]
>
> As far as the life of each individual is concerned, every biography is the history of suffering, for every life is, as a rule, a continual series of great and small misfortunes, which each one conceals as much as possible, because he knows that others can seldom feel sympathy or compassion but almost always satisfaction at the sight of the woes from which they are themselves for the moment exempt. If we should bring clearly to a man's sight the terrible sufferings and miseries to which his life is constantly exposed, he would be seized with horror; and if we were to conduct the confirmed optimist through the hospitals, infirmaries, and surgical operating rooms, through the prisons, torture-chambers, and slave-kennels, over battle fields and places of execution, he, too, would understand at last the nature of this "best of possible worlds." For whence did Dante take the materials for his hell but from this our actual world? And yet he made a very proper hell of it. And when, on the other hand, he came to the task of describing heaven and its delights, he had an insurmountable difficulty before him, for our world affords no materials at all for this. From this it is sufficiently clear what manner of world it is.[17]

It is only the young who, in their ignorance, think that happiness is possible. Youth thinks that willing and striving are joys, it has not yet discovered the weary insatiableness of desire, and the fruitlessness of fulfillment, it does not yet see the inevitableness of defeat, Schopenhauer writes. But with old age there comes disillusion—"for by that time the fictions are gone which gave life its charm; the splendors of the world have been proved null and void, its pomp, grandeur and magnificence are faded. A man has then found out that behind most of the things he wants, and most of the pleasures he longs for, there is very little after all, and so he comes by degrees to see that our existence is all empty and void."[18]

THE WISDOM OF LIFE

After such undiluted and thoroughgoing pessimism, one might well expect Schopenhauer to advise suicide as the only possible escape from the suffering and disappointment which he takes to be the general lot of mankind. But like most sensible pessimists he managed to find good reasons for avoiding this conclusion. What most impressed Schopenhauer as a philosopher was the futility of suicide. It was a gesture at which the World-Will could smile contentedly. Suicide may seem at first a triumph for the individual over will and desire, but in reality this is not the case and, even more important, in the species the will to live persists unhindered despite an occasional suicide. For every such deliberate death there are a thousand unplanned births.

> Far from being denial of the will, suicide is a phenomenon of strong assertion of the will. The suicide wills life and is only dissatisfied with the conditions under which it has presented itself to him. He therefore by no means surrenders the will to live, but only life, in that he destroys the individual manifestation. Suicide, the willful destruction of the single phenomenal existence, is a vain and foolish act; for the thing-in-itself [the species, life, the will in general] remains unaffected by it, even as the rainbow endures however fast the drops which support it for the moment may change.[19]

The evil of life lies not in our own unhappiness; that is but superficial. The ultimate evil consists in the fact that the game of life is played at all. Not the impotent pawn but the ruthless player, the brutal World-Will, must be killed. It is the part of the philosopher to make a contribution to this larger end, not to retire from the game by a futile gesture of self-destruction. Thus Schopenhauer interprets his own role.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF REASON

With the hedonists Schopenhauer recognizes that man is essentially egoistic by nature; each of us is interested primarily in himself, in his own desires, needs,

and ambitions. But Schopenhauer sees, as the hedonists do not, that in man's egoism and self-centeredness lies the root of strife, suffering, and unhappiness in human life. Each individual, he writes,

> makes itself the centre of the world, has regard for its own existence and well-being before everything else; indeed from the natural standpoint, is ready to sacrifice everything else for this—is ready to annihilate the world in order to maintain its own self, this drop in the ocean a little longer. Every one looks upon his own death as upon the end of the world, while he accepts the death of his acquaintances as a matter of comparative indifference if he is not in some way affected by it. This disposition is *egoism*, which is essential to everything in Nature. Yet it is just through egoism that the inner conflict of the will with itself attains to such a terrible revelation.[20]

To conquer will and free ourselves from its domination, we must, then, overcome the egoism that is so deeply embedded in human nature. This task, as Schopenhauer well realizes, is not easy, but it is not an impossible one, and he sets out to show how it can be accomplished. Despite his earlier emphasis upon the secondary place of intellect in human nature, Schopenhauer in the end cannot escape the conviction of all philosophy that reason should serve as a pathway to the good life. Man's intellect has been produced as the instrument and servant of the will to live, and for most of us it operates only in this capacity, but it is possible nevertheless for reason in time to master the will that produced it. Desire can be moderated by knowledge; passion controlled by understanding.

> Of ten things that annoy us, nine would not be able to do so if we understood them thoroughly in their causes, and therefore knew their necessity and true nature; but we would do this much oftener if we made them the object of reflection before making them the object of wrath and indignation. For what bridle and bit are to an unmanageable horse, the intellect is for the will in man; by this bridle it must be controlled.[21]

Our desiring and striving, our impatience with the conditions of life, arise for the most part from the fact that we regard things as a result of circumstances which might easily have been different. "We do not generally grieve over ills which are directly necessary and quite universal; for example, the necessity of age and death, and many daily inconveniences," Schopenhauer points out. When reason gains control over will, we are able to see clearly the necessity that exists in the nature of things. We realize that things could not be otherwise than they are, "that pain as such is inevitable and essential to life, and that nothing depends upon chance but its mere fashion, the form under which it presents itself, that thus our present sorrow fills a place that without it, would at once be occupied by another which now is excluded by it."[22] Thus reason leads us to accept a deterministic philosophy and so enables us to escape the ceaseless round of desire and disillusion which makes up the life of the ordinary man. We become

less anxious for our own well-being; we understand that fate can affect us little in what is essential.

The life of reason, then, is, for Schopenhauer, a life of self-control, of contemplation, of disinterestedness, to use a term of Walter Lippmann's. It is a life freed from the desire and passion that egoism breeds in us. Most men see things only as objects of desire, and for them intellect remains the tool of will. But the man in whom reason has finally overcome the domination of will is able to forget his own individual desires and ambitions; he sees things as objects of contemplation rather than of desire. It is in the disinterested pursuit of truth that such a goal is most completely achieved, Schopenhauer feels. This is the ideal of pure science at its best. The great scientist is interested in truth for its own sake, not for what he can get out of it. A detachment of spirit, a freedom from individual ambition and self-interest, distinguishes such an individual and releases him from the pettiness and bitterness of ordinary life. In this enjoyment of knowledge for its own sake, reason in man achieves its full triumph over the will to live. "But, in fact, such a powerful control of reason over directly felt suffering seldom occurs," our pessimistic philosopher sadly admits. Among the vast multitude of human beings there are few men and no women who can expect to rise to such heights as this. The life of reason holds out little hope, therefore, for either the common man or the most gifted woman.

ON WOMEN

Schopenhauer's essay *On Women* is one of the classics in the literature of misogyny, "that last recourse of the captured male." His own experience with women had been an unfortunate one, and his estimate of feminine intelligence was low. As far as he could see, woman is by nature too completely a creature of emotion and desire for reason ever to rule her life. Indeed, it is just in the physical charms of the young woman that the will to live presents its greatest temptation to the man whose reason is struggling to free itself from slavery to passion and desire.

In his youth a man has not intelligence enough to realize how temporary and deceptive are the feminine charms that move him; when that realization comes, it is too late.

> With young girls, nature seems to have in view what, in the language of drama, is called a striking effect, as for a few years she dowers them with a wealth of beauty and is lavish in her gift of charm, at the expense of all the rest of their lives, so that during those years they may capture the fancy of some man to such a degree that he is hurried away into undertaking the honorable care of them, in some form or another, as long as they live—a step for which there would not seem to be any sufficient warrant if reason only directed man's thoughts.[23]

Women, Schopenhauer concludes with obvious masculine prejudice,

> form the *sexus sequior*—the second sex, inferior in every respect to the first; their infirmities should be treated with consideration; but to show them great reverence is ridiculous and lowers us in their eyes. . . . The nobler and more perfect a thing is, the later and slower it is in arriving at maturity. A man reaches the maturity of his reasoning powers and mental faculties hardly before the age of twenty-eight; a woman, at eighteen. And then, too, in the case of woman, it is only reason of a sort—very niggard in its dimensions. That is why women remain children their whole life long; never seeing anything but what is quite close to them, and preferring trifles to matters of first importance. For it is by virtue of his reasoning faculty that man does not live in the present only, like the brute, but looks about him and considers the past and the future; and this is the origin of prudence as well as of care and anxiety. Both the advantages and the disadvantages which this involves are shared in by the woman to a smaller extent because of her weaker power of reasoning. She may, in fact, be described as intellectually shortsighted because while she has an intuitive understanding of what lies quite close to her, her field of vision is narrow so that things which are absent, or past, or to come, have much less effect upon women than upon men. This is why women are more often inclined to be extravagant. In their hearts women think that it is men's business to earn money and theirs to spend it—if possible, during their husband's life but at any rate after his death. However many disadvantages all this involves, there is at least this to be said in its favor, that the woman lives more in the present than the man and that if the present is at all tolerable she enjoys it more eagerly. This is the cause of that cheerfulness which is peculiar to woman, fitting her to amuse man in his hours of recreation and, in case of need, to console him when he is borne down by the weight of his cares.[24]

What shall we say of these ungallant comments upon feminine character in Schopenhauer's essay *On Women*? In one way they resemble the position presented so appealingly by Lin Yutang in *The Importance of Living*. Nature has so shaped the outlook of woman by a maternal instinct, a domination of feeling and desire over reason, an enduring concern for the welfare of the species, that she can never hope to escape her destiny in life. On this fact both agree. But concerning its implications they disagree sharply. To Lin Yutang, with his love of life, the charm of woman lies in her femininity; she should make the best use possible of it. For Schopenhauer, the pessimist, the less an intelligent man has to do with women, the better it will be for him. Let him never forget the snare of the will to live that lies hidden behind a woman's charms, the inevitable disillusion to which his desire for her must lead. Thus one's philosophy turns the facts of life to its own ends.

THE ENJOYMENT OF BEAUTY

Schopenhauer was as fond of music as he was of philosophy. At noon each day he customarily found relaxation in playing for half an hour upon his flute. The enjoyment of art and music, he gradually came to realize, affords a deliverance from life's pain and strife more widespread and appealing than that which disinterested reason provides for a masculine intellectual aristocracy. Both art and science enable man to forget his individual desires, ambitions, and frustrations, to overcome the limitations of self-interest, and to become aware of that which is universal. It is in this fashion that they both provide an escape from the pain and tragedy of life, Schopenhauer feels. Although the truth that science seeks is an abstract truth, however, and is gained only as the result of careful, rational thought, great art is the product of an immediate insight in which a man of genius grasps the true nature of things without that long process of rational analysis upon which scientific knowledge depends.

In great art we find what Schopenhauer calls the "concrete universal"; that is, the poet or painter depicts a particular object with such insight that it reveals a universal truth. The madonnas of Raphael portray not one woman, but womanhood at its best.

> In the selection of a theme both poetry and the plastic arts take some one individual person or thing and endeavor to present it as a separate entity with all its peculiarities even down to the minutest, exhibited with the most accurate precision. . . . The nature of art is such that with it one case holds good for a thousand, for by a careful and detailed presentation of a single individual, person or thing, it aims at revealing the genus to which that person or thing belongs. Thus some one event or scene in the life of a man, described with complete truth—described, that is to say, so as to exhibit precisely all the individuals which go to make it what it is—gives us a clear and profound insight into humanity itself, as seen from this particular point of view. . . . The true work of art should lead us from the individual fact, in other words, that which exists once only and then is gone forever, to that which always exists an infinite number of times in an infinite number of ways.[25]

Since the will alone is the source of all our sorrows and sufferings, the whole possibility of suffering is taken away if willing and desiring vanish from consciousness. Now this is just what happens in the enjoyment of art and music, Schopenhauer points out; and it explains the feeling of pleasure which accompanies the perception of the beautiful.

> The abundance of natural beauty which invites contemplation and even presses itself upon us whenever it discloses itself suddenly to our view, almost always succeeds in delivering us, though it may be for only a moment, from subjectivity, from the slavery of the will. This is why the man

> who is tormented by passion, or want, or care is so suddenly revived, cheered and restored by a single free glance into nature: the storm of passion, the pressure of desire and fear and all the miseries of willing are then at once in a marvelous manner, calmed and appeased. Happiness and unhappiness have disappeared; we are no longer individual; the individual is forgotten; we are only pure subject of knowledge; we are only that *one* eye of the world which looks out from all knowing creatures but which can become perfectly free from the service of will in man alone. Thus all differences of individuality so entirely disappear that it is all the same whether the perceiving eye belongs to a mighty king or a wretched beggar; for neither joy nor complaining can pass that boundary with us. So near us always lies a sphere in which we escape from all our misery; but who has the strength to continue long in it? As soon as any single relation of these objects of contemplation to our will or to our person comes again into consciousness, the magic is at an end and we are again abandoned to all our woe.[26]

Being especially fond of music and conscious of its immediate appeal to all sorts of people, Schopenhauer contends that it must be given a place by itself among the arts. "The effect of music is stronger, quicker, more necessary and infallible," he writes. "It stands alone, quite cut off from all the other arts." We have only to look at our own experience to find ample confirmation of Schopenhauer's position. When the army desires to make its soldiers forget themselves and become part of a larger whole, it turns to martial music. To develop "college spirit" among its students, to unite them in a common cause, a college or university makes use of the song which has become its "alma mater." And almost every one of us is able to forget himself, for a brief time at least, as he enjoys a great symphony rendered by one of the outstanding orchestras of our day.

This larger appeal and significance of music is explained by the fact that music alone among the arts reflects the inner nature of all reality which is will, Schopenhauer argues. Music does not express this or that particular joy, this or that sorrow or delight, or peace of mind; but joy, sorrow, pain, delight, merriment, peace of mind *themselves*, in their essential nature without accessories, he maintains.

> It is precisely this universality, which belongs exclusively to it, that gives music the high worth which it has as the panacea for all our woes. The unutterable depth of all music by virtue of which it floats through our consciousness as the vision of a paradise firmly believed in yet ever distant from us, and by which also it is so fully understood and yet so inexplicable, rests on the fact that it restores to us all the emotions of our inmost nature, but entirely without reality and far removed from their pain.[27]

THE PESSIMIST'S VIEW OF RELIGION

In the enjoyment of beauty, then, we may forget our pain and suffering for a time at least. But even here there is no permanent escape from evil for the

pessimist. The contemplation of beauty gives us a foretaste of peace, but not the peace eternal. Even the artist is inexorably called away from his vision of beauty by the urge of appetite, if not of ambition; and the ordinary man or woman can hope at best to enjoy only brief moments of this higher peace, to escape but fleetingly the pendulum of life which swings relentlessly from pain to *ennui* and back to pain.

In his later years Schopenhauer came to feel that religion might perhaps be able to do what art could not. His own youthful reaction to religion had been a critical one. In the Christian churches of his day he saw only ecclesiastical organization, theological argument, hypocrisy, and self-deception. But in time he realized that the Christian view of life was in some ways remarkably similar to his own, and he took it upon himself to call men back to what he felt to be true religion. Orthodox Christianity has always maintained that man's state in this world is "both exceedingly wretched and sinful," he points out. It has condemned the quest for earthly goods together with all human selfishness, and has urged man to think of his neighbor as himself. With none of this does Schopenhauer have any quarrel. Christianity, he declares, is actually "a profound philosophy of pessimism." "Certainly the doctrine of original sin (assertion of the will) and of salvation (denial of the will) is the great truth which constitutes the essence of Christianity, while most of what remains is only the clothing of it, the husk or accessories," he writes. "That in recent times Christianity has forgotten its true significance, and degenerated into dull optimism, does not concern us here."[28]

The doctrine of the brotherhood of man Schopenhauer would have us take much more seriously than we customarily do. It is egoism, selfishness, sinfulness that lead us to make a distinction between our own interests and the interests of others. The highest religious vision leads us to see that we are one with all men.

> Then it clearly follows that such a man, who recognizes in all beings his own inmost and true self, must also regard the infinite suffering of all suffering beings as his own, and take on himself the pain of the whole world. No suffering is any longer stranger to him. All the miseries of others which he sees and is so seldom able to alleviate, all the miseries he knows directly, and even those which he knows as only possible, work upon his mind like his own.

When this state of mind is reached, a man thinks no more of self; individuality and the will to live are overcome.

> The will now turns away from life; it now shudders at the pleasures in which it recognizes the assertion of life. Man now attains to the state of voluntary renunciation, resignation, true indifference, and perfect willlessness. . . . That is to say, it no longer suffices for such a man to love others as himself, and to do as much for them as for himself.

There arises within him a horror of the will to live itself, which he recognizes as full of misery and sin. He therefore disowns this aspect of his nature, and "ceases to will anything, guards against attaching his will to anything and seeks to confirm in himself the greatest indifference to everything."[29]

Such an interpretation of religion obviously reflects the disenchanted wisdom of the Orient, not the eager ambition of the Western world. The profoundest religion, Schopenhauer feels, is not the Christianity of Europe and America but the Buddhism of India and China. The Buddhist recognizes specifically, as the Christian does not, that all individual distinctions are transitory and unreal. He accepts as the major goal of the religious life not love of others but the complete extinction of will and desire in Nirvana. And he realizes that in the ideal of asceticism one finds the surest road to salvation and the blessedness of Nirvana.

> By the term *asceticism*, which I have used so often, I mean in its narrower sense this intentional breaking of the will by the refusal of what is agreeable and the selection of what is disagreeable, the voluntarily chosen life of penance and self-chastisement for the continual mortification of the will. He who has attained to this point compels himself to refrain from doing all that he would like to do and to do all that he would like not to do. Since he denies the will which appears in his own person, he will not resist if another does the same, *i.e.*, inflicts wrong upon him. Therefore every suffering coming to him from without, through chance or the wickedness of others, is welcome to him, every injury, ignominy and insult. He receives them gladly as the opportunity of learning with certainty that he no longer asserts the will, but gladly sides with every enemy of the manifestation of will which is his own person. Therefore he bears such ignominy and suffering with inexhaustible patience and meekness, returns good for evil without ostentation, and allows the fire of anger to rise within him just as little as he does that of the desires. If at last death comes, which puts an end to this manifestation of that will whose existence here has long since perished through free-denial of itself, it is most welcome and is gladly received as a longed-for deliverance.[30]

THE BLESSEDNESS OF NIRVANA

That this prospect of the complete denial of all desire holds so little appeal to most of us is simply evidence of the power that the will to live still exercises upon us. To those who have been freed from this domination of the World-Will, and from the mirage of happiness that it holds before our eyes—to such alone is the deeper peace and blessedness of salvation known.

> The wicked man, by the vehemence of his volition, suffers constant, consuming, inward pain, and finally, if all objects of volition are exhausted, quenches the fiery thirst of his self-will by the sight of the suffering of others. He, on the contrary, who has attained to the denial of the will to live, however poor, joyless, and full of privation his condition may appear

when looked at externally, is yet filled with inward joy and the true peace of heaven. It is not the restless strain of life, the jubilant delight which has keen suffering as its precedent or succeeding condition; but it is a peace that cannot be shaken, a deep rest and inward serenity, a state which we cannot behold without the greatest longing when it is brought before our eyes or our imagination, because we at once recognize it as that which alone is right, infinitely surpassing everything else. Then we feel that every gratification of our wishes won from the world is merely like alms which the beggar receives from life today that he may hunger again with the morrow; resignation, on the contrary, is like an inherited estate, it frees the owner forever from all care.

Nothing can trouble him more, nothing can move him, for he has cut all the thousand cords of will which hold us bound to the world, and as desire, fear, envy, anger, drag us hither and thither in constant pain, he now looks back smiling and at rest on the delusions of this world, which once were able to move and agonize his spirit also, but which now stand before him as utterly indifferent to him as the chessman when the game is ended, or as in the morning, the cast-off masquerading dress which worried and disquieted us in the night in carnival. Life and its forms now pass before him as a fleeting illusion, as a light morning dream before half-waking eyes, the real world already shining through it so that it can no longer deceive, and like this morning dream they finally vanish altogether without any violent transition.[31]

PESSIMISM: A FINAL REFUTATION OF HEDONISM

What shall we say of such uncompromising pessimism? Is it enough to make the easy comment that to those who wear dark glasses the world always looks dark? Can we explain the unpleasant conclusions to which Schopenhauer's analysis of life led him merely by pointing to the circumstances in which his own life was cast, to the man himself and the age in which he lived? This has been done. "The natural response to such a philosophy is a medical diagnosis of the age and of the man," writes Will Durant. "Pessimism is an indictment of the pessimist. Given a diseased constitution and a neurotic mind, a life of empty leisure and gloomy *ennui*, and there emerges the proper physiology for Schopenhauer's philosophy."[32]

Such a statement, as appealing as it is to many who read Schopenhauer for the first time, is too easy an escape from the task of facing squarely the issues raised by this disturbing analysis of life. It is an escape so easy, indeed, that once we accept it we can never find any dependable ground for distinguishing the truth from the false. If Schopenhauer's pessimism is but the inevitable consequence of the individual and social influences that shaped his life, then we can legitimately claim no more than this for optimism or high idealism, which may

hold greater appeal for us. Once we admit that the conclusions of the human mind are but the reflection, the inevitable product, of those circumstances and surroundings in which it is set, we surrender all hope of establishing any enduring truth. That is certainly too high a price to pay, if it can be avoided, for an easy answer to the pessimism of Schopenhauer. The innate confidence in the ability of human reason to distinguish the true from the false is one of man's most prized possessions, one without which he could have little hope of building an enduring and satisfying philosophy of life.

The unpleasant and disagreeable aspects of his own life undoubtedly served to open Schopenhauer's eyes to the widespread tragedy of human existence, but just as surely he did not create those aspects of life which he found so tragic. If his insight is limited and partial, it is also penetrating and disturbing. Too much that he has to say rings true in our experience, too much of his philosophy anticipates contemporary movements of wide influence—such, for example, as the Freudian psychology or the philosophy of Henri Bergson—to be easily dismissed as a product of a neurotic mind or a diseased constitution. The problems which Schopenhauer raises must be dealt with honestly and convincingly by every thoughtful student of philosophy. His emphasis upon the primary place of will in human life finds influential expression in the anti-intellectualism of our own day. In the thought of both Nietzsche and William James, we shall meet this point of view again and deal with it more directly. For our present consideration, however, the significance of Schopenhauer's pessimism is found primarily in the fact that it provides at once a final refutation of hedonism and a natural transition from a hedonistic to a rationalistic philosophy of life.

Schopenhauer accepts the basic assumption of hedonism—that man naturally gives himself to the pursuit of pleasure and the satisfaction of desire. But his searching analysis of human experience shows conclusively that such hedonism is self-refuting. The pursuit of pleasure, the effort to get what we want when we want it, brings not happiness but pain, suffering, and disillusion. All life does swing like a pendulum from the pain of desire unsatisfied to the boredom and satiety of desire that is satisfied *when life is lived upon hedonistic premises.* It is not the conclusion reached here by Schopenhauer that should be attacked. Rather it is his adoption of the basic assumption of hedonism that is questionable. Given his assumption, the conclusion is sound. He argues convincingly for what experience has continued to demonstrate pragmatically, that those who seek happiness in the pursuit of pleasure are not the happiest but the most restless, bored, and disillusioned among us.

In such circumstances the confirmed pessimist will probably do well to follow Schopenhauer's counsel and root out the desires and passions which thus lure him into a life of restless boredom or disillusionment. But the intelligent student of life will rather raise a question concerning the hedonistic assumptions upon which this pessimistic philosophy rests. It may well be, as we have already

suggested, that there are other, more adequate and worthy ends in life than the pursuit of pleasure, the satisfaction of appetite and desire. In a life devoted to ideals and purposes that are more uniquely human, we may find a meaning and satisfaction much more enduring and appealing than the bleak resignation of the ascetic to which Schopenhauer's pessimism finally leads him. Such, at least, is the claim made by exponents of that philosophy known as rationalism, to which we now turn. Here the life of reason, to which Schopenhauer himself was eventually led, is presented to us not as the last hope of the pessimist, weary of life and anxious to escape its trials and hardships, but rather as the conviction of intelligent men who are eager to live in a way that is truly and uniquely human and thus to enjoy the lasting satisfaction which understanding alone can bring to human life. A philosophy of this sort certainly seems to hold more promise than does the pursuit of pleasure to which the hedonist gives himself.

II

The Life of Reason

Men are disturbed not by things but by the view they take of things.

EPICTETUS

Life itself is neither good nor evil, but only a place for good and evil.

MARCUS AURELIUS

It is written in many languages and in the idiom of many cultures that if man is to find happiness, he must reconstruct not merely his world, but, first of all, himself.

WALTER LIPPMANN

5 · EARLY RATIONALISTS

The Stoics

As our examination of hedonism has moved beyond the urbane and sophisticated essays of Lin Yutang to the disillusioned pessimism of Schopenhauer, the inadequacy of the pursuit of pleasure as a workable philosophy of living has become increasingly apparent. The charm of its simplicity is lost when we discover that it is perhaps too simple. The appeal of its naturalness fades when we see that it is natural for man only at the animal level. Among the critics of hedonism, the most forthright and uncompromising are the Stoics, early exponents of rationalism, who proposed to develop a philosophy more genuinely human in outlook and spirit. We are in the world, these philosophers maintain, not to live pleasantly but to acquit ourselves like men; only by thus acting in accord with our real nature can we derive any lasting satisfaction.

It is the life of reason, say the Stoic philosophers, that is most uniquely human and satisfying. Actually the hedonists themselves in almost every case covertly return to reason as the *sine qua non* of the good life. Neither the prudence urged by Epicurus nor the enlightened self-interest of the Utilitarians is possible unless reason controls man's immediate and "natural" desire for pleasure. And Schopenhauer's recommendation that we adopt the self-denial of the ascetic to escape the ills of life demands an even more thorough domination of desire by reason. In these philosophies, however, reason is at best but a helpful guide in the pursuit of pleasure; at worst, as for Schopenhauer, it is a refuge from the inevitable disillusionment that comes in the wake of desire and passion. For the Stoics, on the other hand, the life of reason is not merely a means to other satisfactions; it is something of intrinsic worth and value in its own right.

THE SCHOOL OF CYNICS

Historically, the forerunners of the Stoics were a group of early Greek philosophers known as Cynics. Providing a connecting link between the teaching of Socrates and that of the Stoics, these early Cynics developed a way of life rather than a system of philosophy. Their ideal of the good life differs surprisingly little, as a matter of fact, from the pessimism of Schopenhauer. Antisthenes, the founder of the school, was an Athenian about twenty-five years younger than Socrates. His first introduction to philosophy seems to have been the lectures of the Sophist orator Gorgias, and from the Sophists he learned to think of natural law, not human convention, as the proper foundation of morals and social life. But Antisthenes soon became an ardent admirer and disciple of Socrates, from whom his deepest philosophical insights were derived. Something of the influence of Socrates on the youth of his day is to be seen in the tradition that every morning Antisthenes walked forty furlongs from his home outside Athens in order to hear the master. He is mentioned also as being in the group who was with Socrates till the end of the day on which he drank the hemlock. Not long after Socrates' death, in 399 B.C., Antisthenes set up a school of his own in Athens, meeting his disciples in a gymnasium known as the Cynosarges. It was for this reason that the group became known as Cynics. The unconventional behavior and biting sarcasm of the followers of Antisthenes helped give the term "cynic" its later connotation.

Antisthenes accepted the Socratic principle that reason provides the only foundation for morality and the good life. But Socrates' complete lack of interest in the material things of life made an even greater impression upon the mind of Antisthenes. When a friend on one occasion poked fun at Socrates because of his frugal circumstances and the absence of pleasure from his life, Socrates is said to have replied: "You, Antiphon, would seem to suggest that happiness consists in luxury and extravagance; I hold a different creed. To have no wants at all is, to my mind, an attribute of godhead; to have as few wants as possible the nearest approach to godhead."[1] This Socratic dictum became the cornerstone of the Cynic philosophy. With Schopenhauer, Antisthenes agrees that the pursuit of pleasure does not lead to happiness but, rather, drives man into a slavery to desire and to external circumstances beyond his control. To Antisthenes, indeed, is attributed the statement "I would rather go mad than feel pleasure," strong language even for Schopenhauer.

For the Cynic, then, the good life is found only as man rids himself of all convention, rejects all the requirements of civilization, frees himself completely from the disturbing influences of every external circumstance. One should "live according to nature," in the most radical sense of that phrase. In the midst of civilization the Cynic leads the existence of a savage, "ridding himself not only of all artificial wants which complicate and enervate life, but of all ties whatso-

ever that bind him to the rest of the world." Since the external world is beyond his control, the wise man will free himself completely from dependence upon it. He will not be concerned about "the material goods of life nor the attitude of his fellow men toward him. He will rather master himself, controlling his desires so that nothing outside can disturb him." In time, this philosophy led the followers of Antisthenes to a rigorous asceticism quite Schopenhauerian in outlook.

The spirit of the Cynic is well exemplified in the life of Diogenes, one of Antisthenes' best-known disciples. Wandering about Greece with no other shelter than a tub, Diogenes, upon noticing a child drinking with its hands, threw away his cup as a final unnecessary luxury. On another occasion, as Diogenes sat upon his tub enjoying the sun, the great king Alexander chanced to ride by and stopped his horse to converse with the rather notorious and eccentric old philosopher. Impressed by his independence of spirit in the presence of a king, the impetuous monarch exclaimed, "Ask anything you wish of me, and I will grant it." "Then be so good," replied Diogenes, "as to stand out of my sunlight." Thoroughgoing individualists themselves, the Cynics carried their contempt for conventional order and decency to lengths that shocked their contemporaries. It is not hard to understand how the word "cynic" has come to denote a contempt for all the accepted conventions of social life. In their independence of mind, their indifference alike to the comforts and the inconveniences of life, their insistence that a man must master himself, the Cynics afford a good introduction to the philosophy of the Stoics, but they themselves obviously failed to grasp the spirit of the life of reason at its best.

THE ABLER EXPONENTS OF STOICISM

ZENO

Like so much of our philosophical heritage, Stoicism had its origin in Athens. It is, however, cosmopolitan rather than distinctively Greek in spirit and outlook. Zeno (336-264 B.C.), the founder of Stoicism, was the son of a merchant of Cyprus. Attracted to Athens by the intellectual pre-eminence of that city, he studied for a time under several of the later Cynic philosophers and then, about 300 B.C., established his own school in the *Stoa Poikile* (Painted Porch). Gathering here for informal discussions of the problems of philosophy, his followers soon became known as Stoics, or "men of the porch."

Zeno himself was unassuming and not especially attractive—lean and short in stature, delicate in constitution, with swarthy complexion and stout calves. But he was a man of marked ability, moral earnestness, and good will, and he earned the respect and admiration of his contemporaries. So great was his fame that in time large crowds of students were drawn to hear him. Even the tradesmen of

Athens seem to have been pleased at the crowds and, to honor the philosopher, the city voted him a golden crown and a bronze statue. The public citation read on that occasion indicates how successfully Zeno avoided the difficulties into which a devotion to philosophy had led Socrates. It runs as follows:

> Whereas Zeno, the son of Mnaseas from Citium, has spent many years in the city in the pursuit of philosophy; and has been throughout a good man in all respects, and has encouraged the young men who resorted to him in virtue and temperance, and has sped them on the right path, and has made his own life an example to all men, for it has been consistent with the teaching he has set forth;
>
> Now it seems good to the people of Athens to commend Zeno, the son of Mnaseas from Citium, and to crown him with a golden crown (in accordance with the law) for his virtue and temperance, and to build him a tomb on the Ceramicus at the public expense.[2]

The Stoic school continued under Zeno's direction for about forty years, until at an advanced age he suffered a minor injury which he regarded as an indication of the divine will and accordingly put an end to his own life.*

During his years in Athens, Zeno gathered about him a group of able disciples. Among his successors, Cleanthes and Chrysippus in particular carried forward the work that he had begun until the Stoic philosophy became by far the most influential intellectual and moral force in the Graeco-Roman world. As early as 150 B.C. the teaching of the Stoics had gained great popularity in Rome. There was much in Stoicism that would have a natural appeal to the typical Roman during the vigorous days of the Republic, and also much that attracted the abler Roman leaders in the trying days of the Empire. To the nobler minds of the day, Stoicism offered "a welcome refuge from the trivialities and anarchy of the life which surrounded them; and it succeeded in evolving a type of character and belief, superior in some respects to anything else that the ancient world produced."[3] Such distinguished Roman citizens as Cicero and Cato were numbered among its adherents, and Epictetus, Seneca, and Marcus Aurelius, the ablest exponents of the Stoic philosophy, lived in Rome.

EPICTETUS

In many ways the most significant figure among the Stoic philosophers was Epictetus, Greek slave in the household of a Roman soldier. Certainly the Stoic doctrines of rational self-control and obliviousness to the ills of life come better from the lips of such a teacher than from the pen of Seneca, wealthy Roman senator, or from the Emperor Marcus Aurelius. Relatively little is known of the early life of Epictetus. He first appears as a slave in Rome, but the young slave must have showed signs of unusual intellectual ability, for he was permitted to attend lectures by the distinguished philosophers of the day. Why his master, a

* The teaching of Zeno and the early Stoics is well presented in R. D. Hicks, *Stoic and Epicurean*, Chap. 1.

dissolute Roman soldier, captain of the Emperor Nero's guard, would allow such a thing is not clear. Certainly it sprang from no love of philosophy on his part. More probably it was due to the desire, common at that time among the wealthy and prominent men of Rome, to number among their slaves poets, rhetoricians, and philosophers, much as the wealthy of later ages have been known to collect rare libraries or rich art galleries largely because of the prestige such possessions brought.

Epictetus' early life could not have been very happy. The Stoic philosophy, to which he was attracted, provided much more for him than a mere theoretical system. It offered a way of living adequate to meet the uncertainties in a household ruled by a hard and often irresponsible soldier of fortune. Tradition has it that at one time, when his master in a fit of anger was having Epictetus' leg twisted, Epictetus pointed out to him that under such treatment one's leg would break and, when it broke, his only comment was, "You see, it is as I told you." Unfortunately, since there is good evidence that Epictetus was lame in his youth, the story is probably apocryphal. But there were occasions enough in the life of a Roman slave where the Stoic obliviousness to pain and suffering was an invaluable asset.

When Nero was forced to flee from Rome, Epictetus' master, as captain of the royal guard, accompanied him and later aided the tyrant in taking his own life. For this act he was himself put to death by Nero's successor. Epictetus was then able to obtain his freedom. He had already achieved some renown as a philosopher, and he soon established himself as a teacher in Rome, where he continued to live until the year 75 A.D. Independence in thinking is never welcome to a despot, however, and in that year all philosophers were expelled from Rome by order of the new emperor. Epictetus was thus forced to leave the city, but about 90 A.D. he opened a school not far away in Nicopolis, where he continued to teach until he was an old man. Distinguished more as a lecturer and speaker than as an author, Epictetus wrote nothing that has been preserved, but a group of enthusiastic followers gathered about him, one of whom fortunately copied his lectures on philosophy and edited them in eight volumes. Four of these now survive, known as the *Discourses of Epictetus.*

That our philosopher was an effective teacher is clearly indicated in the introduction to these *Discourses*, written by the disciple who edited them. After apologizing for the fact that the work is edited by him instead of published by Epictetus, the writer goes on to say that in his lectures Epictetus "had no other purpose than to move the minds of his hearers to the best things. If indeed these *Discourses* should produce that effect, they will have, I think, the result which the words of the philosopher ought to have. But if they shall not, let those who read them know that, when Epictetus delivered them, the hearer could not avoid being affected in the way Epictetus wished him to be."*

* See W. J. Oates, *The Stoic and Epicurean Philosophers*, p. 223.

Epictetus urges young men, and even young women, to the study of philosophy. His belief in the power of reason over men's minds is strong, and he is convinced that the remedy for the ills of mankind lies in philosophy. Without philosophy it is impossible, he maintains, to live a virtuous life. His concept of philosophy is quite practical, however. The aim of the philosopher, as he sees it, is practice of the good, not merely knowledge of the good. Practice has much greater efficacy, also, in instructing others than does mere talk about the good life. We learn by doing, Epictetus avers, not by listening (a principle of which our colleges and universities still often seem unaware). Every habit and faculty is maintained and increased by the corresponding action, he points out: the ability to run is achieved by running. If you would be a good reader, read; a good writer, write.

> If then you wish not to be of an angry temper, do not feed the habit: throw nothing on it which will increase it; keep quiet and count the days on which you have not been angry. I used to be in a passion every day, now every second day, then every third, then every fourth. If you have skipped thirty days, make a sacrifice to God. For the habit at first begins to be weakened and then is completely destroyed.[3a]

Epictetus himself never married. He did advise one disciple that it was his duty to marry and raise intelligent children to take his place in the world; but in general he felt that, with the world in the state in which it then was, the philosopher should not be tied down by the normal responsibilities of life. Instead he must remain free to devote his full effort to a higher service of his fellow man and society. It is the duty of philosophers, Epictetus declares, "to superintend as far as they can all mankind and see what they do, how they live, what they neglect contrary to their duty." He who talks to all men about what is right and what is wrong, about slavery and freedom of the spirit, about the enduring purpose of life, is doing a greater service to the state than if he took public office and carried out its routine activities. Until a man learns to control himself, however, it is unwise, Epictetus warns, for him to undertake to admonish others. This conviction, indeed, underlies all Stoic philosophy.

LUCIUS ANNAEUS SENECA

In the figure of Epictetus, one sees Stoicism as a way of life for the man whom ill fortune has cast into the lot of a slave. In the writings of Seneca and Marcus Aurelius—one a distinguished senator, the other an emperor of Rome—there is evidence that Stoicism has equally large appeal for those most favored by circumstance. Born, about 4 B.C., of a wealthy and illustrious Spanish family, Seneca had all the things that should have made life quite agreeable—if the hedonists are to be trusted. He had cultured companions, leisure, ample means to satisfy every desire. His father educated him for the legal profession in the

expectation that he would hold public office, and he rose rapidly in the public life of Rome. He owned large estates, partly inherited from his father, partly given him by the emperors he served. According to report, his holdings in Brittany alone amounted to approximately a million dollars. During the reign of the Emperor Claudius, Seneca became involved in the court scandals and was banished to Corsica, but after some years he was recalled and he returned once more to high public favor.

His own deeper interests, however, lay in philosophy rather than in politics. He attended the lectures of the Stoic teachers of the day and later became the companion of the ablest of these men. After returning to the royal favor, he was for a time the tutor and counselor of the Emperor Nero, being especially close to that young prince in his better days. During the later years of his life Seneca again fell into disfavor at court and retired to his own private estate. The suspicious and vacillating Emperor, imagining that his former counselor was implicated in one of the plots against his life, determined to have Seneca killed. An effort was first made to poison him through one of his servants; when this failed, Nero sent a centurion to inform Seneca that he had been condemned to death by the Emperor. Without apparent surprise, Seneca called for his will. When this was denied him by the officer, he turned to his friends and, expressing his regret at not being able to requite them as they deserved, remarked that he was still at liberty to bequeath them the thing he esteemed most—the pattern of his life.*

Paulina, his wife, was determined to die with him, so the veins in the arms of both were opened at the same time. Seneca, who was by now almost seventy, did not bleed very freely; hence he was forced to have the veins of his thighs cut as well. When the pain was almost too much for him to bear, he asked that his wife be removed to another room lest the agonies of the one tend to lessen the courage and self-control of the other. In the meantime, having heard of what was happening, Nero gave orders to have Paulina's wounds bound up. Thus she was saved from death for a time, but during the few remaining years that she lived she showed no further animation or interest in life.

A number of Seneca's essays and letters have been preserved. They reveal a spirit of calm reasonableness together with a wide and deep insight into life. Only by patience and self-discipline is the life of reason to be achieved, Seneca points out. Each night he himself practiced a reflective self-analysis rather like that recommended by Epictetus. "So soon as the candle is taken away," he tells us, "my wife, who knows my custom, lies still without speaking a word; and then I recollect all that I have done or said that day, and take myself to task. And why should I conceal or reserve anything, or make any scruple of inquiring into my errors, when I can say to myself: Do it no more, and for this once I will

* See R. M. Gummere, *Seneca the Philosopher and his Modern Message*, pp. 27-29.

forgive thee?" One does have the uneasy feeling that in such circumstances most of us would be more lenient with ourselves, but then too few, perhaps, have cultivated adequately the self-control of the Stoic philosopher.

MARCUS AURELIUS ANTONINUS

The Emperor Marcus Aurelius ranks among the outstanding men of the Roman Empire, among the finest individuals, indeed, of any age. "He was certainly the noblest character of his time," writes the distinguished historian Barthold Niebuhr, "and I know no other man who combined such unaffected kindness, mildness and humility with such conscientiousness and severity toward himself." Every Roman of his day was anxious, it is said, to possess his portrait. Our own recent experience with such leaders as Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin has made us somewhat suspicious of this practice, but in the case of Marcus Aurelius the desire seems to have reflected genuine admiration as well, no doubt, as a measure of political diplomacy.

As a youth, Marcus Aurelius showed high promise in philosophy as well as in such manly sports as wrestling and boar hunting. His education was decidedly not that of the typical prince, but more in line with Plato's proposals for his philosopher-kings. The guardians of the young man gathered about him the most distinguished teachers of his day, and he early became acquainted with the Stoic philosophy. When only twelve years old he assumed the simple garb of the Stoic disciple and accustomed himself to sleep upon a plank bed. In the first book of his *Meditations*, Aurelius expresses his debt to these early Stoic teachers in interesting fashion. From one, he writes, he learned to avoid factions at the races, to work hard, and to avoid listening to slander; from another, to despise superstition and to practice self-denial; from a third, undeviating steadiness of purpose and the uncomplaining endurance of misfortune; from a fourth, "not continually to excuse the neglect of ordinary duties by alleging urgent occupations."

For many years Marcus Aurelius lived quietly either at Rome or at the villa of his foster-father, the emperor, on the seacoast about twelve miles from the capital, hunting, fishing, wrestling, and continuing his studies. A not very happy matrimonial venture was perhaps the one disturbing event of these years. The emperor had broken off the engagement of Marcus Aurelius to a prominent young woman to whom he had been betrothed at fifteen, and married his own daughter Faustina to Aurelius instead. The quiet and unostentatious life of the philosopher-prince, however, never had much appeal to Faustina, who could not forget that she was an emperor's daughter. Even the large family she bore her husband did not quite keep her occupied, and a good deal of gossip and scandal attached to the life she later led while her emperor-husband was occupied with the almost constant wars that marked his years as ruler.*

* For a detailed account of Marcus Aurelius' life and letters, see H. D. Sedgwick, *Marcus Aurelius*.

In 161 A.D., when Marcus Aurelius was forty, his foster-father became critically ill. Summoning his councilors, he ordered transferred to Marcus' room the little god of fortune whose statue was kept in the private bedchamber of the emperor as an omen of public prosperity. In this instance the charm had little potency, however, for almost immediately a veritable deluge of misfortune descended upon the state. An inundation of the Tiber destroyed homes and streets over a large portion of the city of Rome, and along the borders of the empire revolts broke out among the fierce barbarian tribes in one section after another. Despite his own disinclination to do so, Marcus Aurelius was forced to spend most of his time and energy as emperor in quelling such uprisings and restoring order in the empire. It was during these military campaigns that his *Meditations* were written, largely as a private diary and with no thought of publication. The calmness of spirit and the insight into human nature found here reflect the calmness of the emperor's mind, not that of the world in which he lived. In these *Meditations*, indeed, one sees ample evidence that the life of reason can enable a man to master external circumstance, no matter what its nature.

There were occasions enough upon which Marcus Aurelius, emperor though he was, was called upon to practice the philosophy he professed. It was necessary for him to act with forbearance toward a wife of frivolous and perhaps uncertain character, and in this situation he manifested admirable patience and restraint. He also admitted his foster-brother into full participation in the imperial powers, only to find him to be a man quite unworthy of this confidence, interested merely in a life of pleasure and self-indulgence and constantly causing trouble. Perhaps the clearest expression of Marcus Aurelius' spirit is to be seen, however, in his attitude toward the revolt of a general he trusted and admired. While Aurelius himself was busy with wars in the West, this general, Avidius Cassius, set himself at the head of the army in the East and proclaimed himself ruler there, alienating many of the eastern provinces from their loyalty to Marcus Aurelius. The emperor was gathering a force to quell the rebellion when Cassius was assassinated by his own officers and the disaffection quieted. Aurelius thereupon requested the Senate to pardon the family of the rebellious general and journeyed in person through the provinces that had revolted, showing the greatest forbearance and clemency in dealing with all those implicated in the affair. Almost immediately upon his return from this mission, Aurelius had to leave Rome again to oppose barbarian forces in Germany. During this campaign, he contracted a contagious malady and died in camp near Vienna in 180 A.D. Amid widespread grief among his subjects, his ashes were carried to Rome, where he received the honor of deification. Those who could afford it had his statue or bust placed among their *Dei Penates* (household deities).

By no means every philosopher is able to take his place among the saints, but Marcus Aurelius deservedly was thus honored. During his reign, the cardinal ideals of Stoicism—reason, justice, and forbearance—became principles by

which the life of the state was guided. Despite the frontier wars which so occupied the emperor, he managed the affairs of his government with great wisdom and ability, and was almost universally admired. It is only, so Plato insists, when kings become philosophers that justice will prevail in the state. Marcus Aurelius went far to substantiate the Platonic dictum. The historian Gibbon was so impressed, for example, by the achievements of Aurelius and his foster-father that he wrote, with perhaps pardonable exaggeration: "If a man were called upon to fix the period in the history of the world during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous he would, without hesitation name that which elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus [the son and successor of Marcus Aurelius]." Seen in the light of the life Marcus Aurelius lived, the nine rules he drew up for reflection before dealing with an offender become all the more impressive. These rules succinctly summarize the philosophy of living that characterizes his *Meditations* as a whole. Remember, Aurelius writes, that:

1. Men were made for each other.
2. Invincible influences act upon men and mold their opinion and their conduct.
3. Sin is mainly error and ignorance—an involuntary slavery.
4. We ourselves are feeble and by no means blameless.
5. Our judgments are apt to be very rash and immature.
6. Man's life is only for a moment and after a short time we are all laid out dead.
7. No wrongful act of another can bring shame upon us.
8. Our own anger hurts us more than the acts of others.
9. Benevolence is invincible, if it be not affected or acting on our part.[4]

THE STOIC VIEW OF LIFE

MAN THE MASTER OF HIS FATE

As a practical philosophy of living, Stoicism puts its primary emphasis upon the doctrine that the character of life is determined from within, not from without. In every sense that matters, man is the captain of his soul, the master of his fate. It is our responsibility, as well as our opportunity, to see that we make of life something worth while. This emphasis is to be seen with equal clarity in the lives and in the teaching of the great Stoics. "Men are disturbed not by things, but by the view which they take of things," Epictetus writes. "Thus death is nothing terrible else it would have appeared so to Socrates. But the terror consists in our notion of death." "The origin of perturbation is this, to wish for something and that this should not happen. Therefore, if I am able to change

externals according to my wish, I change them, but if I cannot, I am ready to tear out the eyes of him who hinders me."[5]

Little reflection is needed, according to the Stoic, to recognize that external circumstances in themselves do not really matter. They affect us only as we let them. It is our own attitude that counts. Whether a particular situation is good or evil, whether beneficial or harmful, depends on how we take it—on what we make of it—and that depends entirely upon ourselves. For all the great Stoics Socrates provides the example of how life should be lived and hardship encountered. His attitude toward his accusers at his trial, his calmness in the face of death, his contention that those who are guilty of injustice harm themselves more than their victims, his complete indifference to the material advantages for which men customarily strive—all these expressed perfectly the Stoic philosophy. As clearly stated by Marcus Aurelius, "External things touch not the soul, not in the least degree." Man is not rightly the creature but the master of circumstance. Too easily we let ourselves believe that our happiness depends upon what we have. Actually it depends, the Stoic insists, upon what we are. We envy the man with wealth, the youth bursting with physical vigor, the woman of striking beauty, those who are popular and well-liked by their fellows. Yet in themselves such things have no merit. They are neutral. The world in which we live is neither good nor evil; it is simply a place for good and evil. This conviction the Stoic philosophers never tire of repeating. "No man finds poverty a trouble to him but he that thinks it so; and he that thinks it so, makes it so," Seneca writes. "He that is not content in poverty, would be so neither in plenty; for the fault is not in the thing but in the mind. If anyone be sickly, remove him from a kennel to a palace; he is at the same pass, for he carries his disease along with him." "No man shall ever be poor who goes to himself for what he wants, and that is the readiest way to riches."

It is, the Stoics would insist, the student who is compelled to work his way through college by force of circumstance who usually gets the most out of an education. A man who has to work hard comes out with the character and determination needed to succeed in later life. To have things handed to us on a silver platter by fond parents is hardly the way to develop the stamina and self-control required for great achievement. Splitting rails will not make of every man a Lincoln, even though popular orators sometimes give one this impression, but undoubtedly the hard work needed to overcome poverty does undergird greatness of character, whereas wealth and luxury too easily breed a softness and subtle degeneration in moral fiber. Frequently, also, a physical handicap or misfortune serves as a stimulus to greater determination or concentration of effort, whereas those of us with comparatively good health spend life at the level of mediocrity. Deafness does not necessarily make a Helen Keller or an Edison, nor infantile paralysis send one to the White House for four terms; but physical ailment is obviously not in itself an evil. The typical ills that affect life are all

capable of being turned to our own advantage if we are men enough so to use them. It is our attitude which determines whether or not we find the means of surmounting difficulty and making life worth while.

An appealing statement of the Stoic philosophy is found in Seneca's essay, *Of A Happy Life.*

> There is nothing in this world that is more talked of or less understood than the business of a happy life. It is every man's wish and design, and yet not one of a thousand knows wherein that happiness consists. We live, however, in a blind and eager pursuit of it; and the more haste we make in the wrong way, the farther we are from our journey's end. The great blessings of life are within us and within our reach. Tranquility is a certain state of mind, which no condition of fortune can either exalt or depress. The foundation of felicity is wisdom and virtue: the knowledge of what we ought to do and the conformity of the will to that knowledge. He that is perfectly wise is perfectly happy: nay, the very beginning of wisdom makes life easy to us. Wisdom instructs us in the way of nature and in the government of life; not to make us live only, but to live happily. She allows nothing to be good that will not be so forever; no man to be happy but he that needs no other happiness than he has within himself; no man to be great or powerful that is not master of himself. A wise man in whatever condition he is will still be happy, for he subjects all things to himself and himself to reason. A good conscience is the testimony of a good life and the reward of it. He that would be truly happy must so live with men as if God saw him, and so speak to God as if men heard him.[6]

RATIONAL SELF-CONTROL AND UNIVERSAL LAW

Feeling and emotion, the Stoics contend, are signs of weakness. They are expressions of man's lower, or animal, nature. It is through desire, as Schopenhauer so clearly saw, that we are brought most surely into subjection to external circumstance. For the Stoics, as for Schopenhauer, the rational life involves a complete control of emotion and appetite by the dictates of reason. With entire freedom from emotion and with reasoned calmness, the man who is master of himself will look unperturbed upon the world about him. Desire and emotion seem to the Stoics much like a disease. Given ever so slight a foothold in our lives, they soon spread like a contagion to control us. Even the sorrows and misfortunes of others must not be allowed to disturb the calmness and serenity of spirit which is the goal of the rational life. We should help others as reason demands, to be sure, but we should do it without letting ourselves be led into feelings of pity or sympathy.

Epictetus does not shrink from the uncompromising logic of this view of life.

> When you see a person weeping in sorrow, whether when a child goes abroad, or when he is dead, or when the man has lost his property, take care that the appearance does not hurry you away with it as if he were

> suffering in external things. But straightway make a distinction in your mind, and be in readiness to say, it is not that which has happened that afflicts this man, for it does not afflict another, but it is the opinion about the thing which afflicts the man. So far as words go, then, do not be unwilling to show him sympathy, and even if it happens so, to lament with him. But take care that you do not lament internally also.[7]

Seldom has the position advocated by the Stoic been expressed with more dignity and simplicity than by Seneca.

> I will look upon death or upon comedy with the same expression of countenance. I will despise riches when I have them as much as when I have them not. Whether fortune comes or goes, I will take no notice of her. I will view all lands as though they belonged to me, and my own as though they belonged to all mankind. I will so live as to remember that I was born for others and will thank nature on this account; for in what fashion could she have done better for me? Whatever I may possess, I will neither hoard it greedily, nor squander it recklessly. I will think that I have no possessions so real as those which I have given away to deserving people. I will do nothing because of public opinion, but everything because of conscience. Whenever I do anything alone by myself, I will believe that the eyes of the Roman people are upon me while I do it. I will bear in mind that the world is my native city, that its governors are the Gods, and that they stand above and around me criticising whatever I do or say. When either nature demands my breath again, or reason bids me dismiss it, I will quit this life, calling all to witness that I have loved a good conscience and good pursuits, that no one's freedom, my own least of all, has been impaired through me.[8]

In the life of reason, then, as portrayed by the Stoic, self-control is given primary place. The rational man is the master of circumstance because he is master of himself, not the creature of emotion and desire. But the Stoic philosophy does not stop here; indeed, it cannot stop here. The question still remains, in accord with what principles shall the rational man direct his life? Self-control in itself is but an empty formula; rational self-control is good and desirable because it brings human conduct into conformity with the laws of the universe itself, the Stoics maintain. In the life of reason man rises above the strife and pettiness of human desire to the orderliness and certainty of universal law; he lives in accord with the law of nature and with the law of God.

As this deeper note in the Stoic philosophy becomes clear, rational self-control assumes greater significance. The intelligent—that is, the rational—man is aware of the fact that the order and law of the universe, the Divine Reason, is both universal and necessary. It is not only foolish, it is useless, to try to disobey its dictates and escape its consequences. One brings upon himself only unnecessary anxiety and suffering by attempting to disregard universal law. When a man can see, moreover, that the dictates of reason in his own life are but an expres-

sion of the rational law of the universe, he can gladly accept such universal law as his own and direct his life accordingly. In the words of Epictetus,

> Remembering then this disposition of things, we ought to go to be instructed, not that we may change the constitution of things—for we have not the power to do it, nor is it better that we should have the power—but in order that, as the things around us are what they are and by nature exist, we may maintain our minds in harmony with the things which happen.[9]

Thus the wise man is content. He has what he wants because he has learned to want what is in conformity to the laws of the universe. "To be instructed is this, to learn to wish that everything may happen as it does," Epictetus writes.

REASON AND RELIGION

In its reverence for universal law, Stoicism takes on a genuinely religious aspect. Stoic philosophy, indeed, exhibits a much deeper spiritual insight than do the popular Roman and Greek religions of the day. The Stoics recognized that the popular deities—Zeus, Mercury, Bacchus, and the rest—were but personifications of nature in her various aspects, and they saw beneath the apparent variety in nature an unchanging order and purpose, a Divine Reason. Nor did they hesitate to use the word God for this enduring rational principle, governing at once the universe of nature and the life and destiny of man. Stoicism was thus monotheistic, or, perhaps better, pantheistic, in tendency, and far more appealing to sensitive men than the current polytheism of that period.

Among the finest expressions of the religious spirit of Stoicism is the *Hymn to Zeus,* written by Cleanthes, who succeeded Zeno as leader of the Stoic school in Athens. This hymn, the only important document from the early period of Stoicism to be preserved in full, ranks in the quality of its religious insight with the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures:

> O King, most High, nothing is done without Thee,
> Neither in heaven or on earth, nor in the sea,
> Except what the wicked do in their foolishness.
> Thou makest order out of disorder,
> And what is worthless, becomes precious in Thy sight;
> For Thou hast fitted together good and evil into one,
> And hast established one law that exists forever.
> But the wicked fly from Thy law, unhappy ones,
> And though they desire to possess what is good,
> Yet they see not, neither do they hear, the universal law of God.
> They go astray, each after his own devices,—
> Some vainly striving after reputation,
> Others turning aside after gain excessively,
> Others after riotous living and wantonness.
> Nay, but O Zeus, giver of all things,
> Deliver men from this foolishness,

> Scatter it from their souls and grant them to obtain wisdom,
> For by wisdom Thou dost rightly govern all things.
> Nor is there, for mortal men or for the gods, greater thing than this—
> Rightly to adore the universal law.

No conflict exists, then, for the Stoic philosophers between reason and religion. They recognize that the enduring order in the universe is an expression of the Divine Reason and is rightly called the will of God. What is irrational in man's conduct is contrary to the will of God and sinful; the just punishment for sin lies in the inescapable consequence of irrational conduct.

The Stoics come surprisingly close, as a matter of fact, to the Christian conviction that man is made in the image of God. In inner nature, man and the universe are essentially akin, they point out, and man's chief responsibility is to measure up to his divine heritage. As Epictetus writes:

> You are a distinct portion of the essence of God, and contain a certain part of him in yourself. Why then are you ignorant of your noble birth? Why do you not consider whence you came? You carry a God about with you, poor wretch, and know nothing of it. Do you suppose I mean some god of gold or silver? It is within yourself that you carry him, and you do not observe that you profane him by impure thoughts and unclean actions. If the mere external image of God were present, you would not dare to act as you do; and when God himself is within you, and hears and sees all, are you not ashamed to act thus,—insensible of your own nature, and at enmity with God.[10]

Another important aspect of the Stoic philosophy, especially in the light of contemporary events, is its emphasis upon world citizenship. No man can live to himself, the Stoics point out. Man is but part of a larger whole, and his own greatest good lies in the good of the whole. Selfish conduct and desires bring strife and suffering into human society and harm all alike. When one understands this, reason helps him rise above self-interest and desire to a concern for the welfare of the whole. National conflicts and racial antagonisms appear to the Stoic equally selfish and irrational. The accidents of birth determine a man's color and nationality; his human nature makes him of equal worth with all men. In the words of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, this aspect of Stoicism is particularly impressive. "My city and my country, so far as I am Antoninus," he writes, "is Rome; but as far as I am a man, it is the world."

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Perhaps the most serious philosophical problem posed by the Stoic philosophy is the problem of evil. If one maintains that the character of life is determined from within, that each man can make of life what he chooses, then how

shall he explain the large amount of suffering and pain in life? Surely, if each of us could control his life, he would not choose to inflict so much suffering and hardship upon himself or have it inflicted upon others. Surely, if a Divine Reason orders the universe in which we live, there should be more to justify our hope for a better world. In times like ours, when atomic weapons threaten not only a widespread and gruesome fate for millions of helpless civilians but also the total destruction of all that is best in our civilization, the problem of evil becomes especially acute. Can the Stoic meet squarely the issues raised here? The fact that Stoicism has continued to exercise so much influence indicates that, in large measure at least, it can.

First, the Stoic insists repeatedly and emphatically, hardship and suffering, poverty, sickness—the ills of life that are usually called evils—are necessary to bring out our best qualities. Strong character can be developed not by a life of softness and ease but only by facing danger and enduring hardship. Just as a teacher gives the most difficult tasks to those students who have the most ability, so God deals with the noblest men and women in this life. As Epictetus writes, "It is difficulties that show what men are. Therefore, when a difficulty confronts you, remember that God, like a trainer of wrestlers, has matched you with a rough young man." The dangers and hardships of war tend to confirm this. In time of war, deeds of moral heroism become commonplace; the courage of many a man, which in times of prosperity and ease was never suspected, now comes to the surface. Instead of the selfish, petty life so widely characteristic of men and women in times of peace and prosperity, we see in times of battle the high qualities of courage in our aviators and jungle fighters, the quiet heroism of doctors, nurses, chaplains. It was with this in mind that William James wrote his justly famous essay entitled "The Moral Equivalent of War."

Thus the Stoic begins his attack upon the problem of evil. We must look beneath surface appearance, he tells us, before deciding that any particular hardship, deprivation, or danger can justly be called evil. Upon examination, most of these so-called ills of life turn out to hold more promise of good than of evil. Yet all evil cannot be thus accounted for. There are situations for which this argument does not provide a satisfactory explanation.

Secondly, therefore, the Stoic points out, man is but a part of a larger whole, and what seems evil to the individual may actually prove necessary for the whole and hence good. The typical ills of life can be divided into three classes: there are evils we bring upon ourselves by our own misdeeds, evils that others bring upon us, and evils that befall us as a result of the forces of nature. It is difficult to imagine any specific ill that does not fall under one of these headings. As each is examined, its justification in the total scheme of things becomes apparent. In so far as we bring hardship and pain upon ourselves, we recognize the justice and even the desirability of suffering the consequences of our own misdeeds. The child who plays with fire gets his fingers burned. The student who does not pre-

pare the work assigned fails the course he is taking, perhaps is forced to leave school entirely. Thus by experience each learns the necessity of intelligence and hard work for successful living. Only as cause and effect operate dependably in our own conduct is the development of character and understanding possible.

With regard to the ills brought upon us by others, much the same truth holds good. Only as nations, like men and women, suffer the consequences of their misdeeds and injustices will they learn the necessity of a higher, more reasonable, and just social ideal. War is certainly the gravest of all social ills, bringing destruction and death upon thousands of innocent men and women. But if we in the United States, for example, failed during the 1930's to assume our responsibilities for building a more just world order, if we were content to enjoy our own prosperity and forget the rest of the world, then we perhaps justly found ourselves unable to escape the havoc of war and bloodshed which the Nazi tyranny and the Japanese imperialism let loose upon the world. Only thus could we learn—let us hope once and for all—that one nation cannot live to itself alone, that the world is a unity in which each nation must assume its responsibility for the common good or with the rest of humanity suffer the consequences of international strife and hatred.

A universal law of social life operates in this fashion, one might well argue in the spirit of the Stoic, to lift the nations of the world to a higher moral ideal. When this law is not observed, the righteous and the guilty suffer alike. The weaker democracies as well as the stronger democracies—Norway and Holland as well as France and England—paid the penalty for their failure to observe the moral law at work in human society. Nations, to be sure, are not so rational as individuals; the group mind (if such there be) is as yet largely emotional, and national self-interest is easily disguised as the highest patriotism.* Yet as each man is rational by nature, so mankind itself may become rational. Indeed, so mankind *must* become rational in its collective life, the Stoic would insist, if it wishes to escape the suffering which inevitably follows the breaking of these universal moral laws at work in our larger human relationships.

Finally, what is true for the individual and for society is also true in the physical universe. The suffering that comes to us from action of the forces of nature results from the operation of dependable rational laws; and it is far better that we live in a dependable universe governed by rational law than in a universe at the mercy of the changing whims and fancies of an inscrutable fate. It is true that shipwreck at sea or famine on land may wipe out the lives of thousands of helpless victims year by year. But it is also true that the mind of man is capable of grasping the laws at work in the world of nature. Ships can be built capable of meeting the ocean's buffeting; ways can be devised to control flood and to irrigate arid desert land. In modern science the mind of man has an instrument capable of bending the forces of nature to the needs of human life to an almost unbeliev-

* See especially R. Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, Chap. 4.

able degree, but this is possible only because the forces of nature are governed by rational law rather than by chance. If water boiled today when heated but froze under the same conditions tomorrow, if the forces of gravity operated today but could not be counted upon tomorrow, it is easy to see how completely impossible life as we know it would be. The individual may suffer as a result of natural calamity, but mankind is immeasurably benefited by the operation of universal laws of nature that bring rain or sunshine upon the just and the unjust alike.

Although the early Stoics did not formulate their philosophy in exactly these terms, it is in general such an interpretation of evil as this that they offer us,* and it is one that stands up well under examination. Upon each of us, as rational men and women, falls a responsibility for removing the ills of life, whether they spring from individual, social, or natural causes. If a man will govern his life by reason, he will have an instrument capable of making life pretty much what he desires. And this is true because the universe itself is governed by dependable, rational law.

MAN THE CAPTAIN OF HIS SOUL

Ultimately, however, only that is evil, the Stoic points out, which we regard as such and allow to affect us undesirably. It is our own attitude toward an external fact that determines its character. "External things touch not the soul, not in the least degree." "Life is neither good nor evil but only a place for good and evil." Here we meet the most characteristic of the Stoic doctrines regarding the problem of evil. The essence of virtue is integrity of character; it is rational self-control. The good man can be good no matter what the circumstances of his life, for there is no circumstance which can take his integrity from him. That this is a philosophy by which man can live was convincingly demonstrated by all the great Stoics whose lives we have examined. Nowhere has their conviction been more movingly expressed than in the familiar lines of William Ernest Henley's *Invictus*:

Out of the night that covers me,
  Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
  For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
  I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeoning of chance
  My head is bloody, but unbowed.

It matters not how strait the gate
  How charged with punishment the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
  I am the captain of my soul.

* See, for example, Epictetus, *Discourses* II, 5, 10.

QUESTIONABLE ASPECTS OF STOICISM

The enduring appeal of Stoicism is undeniable. Although we may not always agree with the Stoic, we cannot help admiring his conviction and his spirit. In a time of crisis, whether in the life of an individual or of a nation, the Stoic philosophy sounds a note of courage and heroism. It provides the rational man with an assurance that he can face the world undisturbed, master of himself and so also of the forces around him in the only sense that really matters. In our day, as in the turbulent circumstances of the Roman Empire, this assurance has proved of inestimable value.

Some years ago, as a matter of fact, Bertrand Russell, in his disturbing essay "A Free Man's Worship," advocated a Stoic attitude as the only spiritual refuge for the thoughtful man today who really understands the scientific picture of the universe. The world which modern science portrays for us is purposeless and void of meaning, Russell insists. Man is the product of causes which had no awareness of the end they were achieving; our hopes, our fears, our loves, and our most cherished beliefs are but the outcome of an accidental collocation of atoms. No heroism, no intensity of thought or strength of conviction can preserve an individual life beyond the grave.

> All the labors of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and the whole temple of man's achievements must inevitably be buried within the debris of a universe in ruins—all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand. Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built. . . .
>
> Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way; for man, condemned today to lose his dearest, tomorrow himself to pass through the gate of darkness, it remains only to cherish, ere yet the blow falls, the lofty thoughts that ennoble his little day; disdaining the coward terrors of the slave of Fate, to worship at the shrine that his own hands have built; undismayed by the empire of chance, to preserve a mind free from the wanton tyranny that rules his outward life; proudly defiant of the irresistible forces that tolerate, for a moment, his knowledge and his condemnation, to sustain alone, a weary but unyielding Atlas, the world that his own ideals have fashioned despite the trampling march of unconscious power.[11]

One does not have to accept such a position as this in order to admire the courageous spirit reflected in it. It is not too much to say, indeed, that no mature philosophy of living is possible without a Stoic strain within its fabric. Nevertheless, the Stoic philosophers have not succeeded in making rationalism generally

acceptable to ordinary men and women. To begin with, the Stoic interpretation of personality is certainly not an adequate one. Life, as portrayed by even the great Stoics, seems a coldly rational affair. All other values are subordinated to the intellectual. But modern psychology has indicated beyond any question that the affections are as essential to man as is his reason. It is hard to believe that a satisfying philosophy of living can be based on so determined a repression of man's feelings and emotions as the Stoic recommends. As it has been expressed aptly by one critic, "No woman was ever known to be a consistent and steadfast Stoic. Indeed a Stoic woman is a contradiction in terms. Stoicism is something of which men, and unmarried or badly married men at that, have an absolute monopoly."[12]

Upon closer examination, moreover, Stoicism shows a lack of internal self-consistency. There is an inherent contradiction between its ethics and its physics which even the great Stoics do not clearly face. If the universe is rigidly determined by natural law, then all that happens, including human conduct, is the result of forces over which the individual has no control. He cannot be blamed for what he does or expected to do otherwise. The Stoic ethics is based, in fact, upon an assumption of human freedom which its account of the universe does not justify. Even the theology of the Stoics is not entirely consistent. Their philosophy of living, on the one hand, embodies a brave acceptance of things as they are, an injunction that the rational man can within himself come to terms with the world order. But there runs throughout the philosophy of the abler Stoics a confidence that the rational order of nature is at heart akin to the spirit of reason in man. Somehow, in the very nature of things, there is a "Divine Friend," upon whom the rational man may always depend. Thus Stoicism swings between defiant recognition of unalterable natural law and an almost mystic faith that despite occasional mischance man can count upon the stability and reasonableness of the world order to support the values that mean most to human life.*

It is true, also, that the Stoic philosophy ignores completely the external conditions out of which life is made. It is too fatalistic in spirit to provide an adequate basis for life at its best. Its injunction seems to be that we take things as they come rather than that we seek to make our world a better and more desirable place in which to live. In youth especially, there is the desire for action, the conviction that the evils in our world should be eradicated, not calmly or passively accepted. Although Stoicism may well appeal to those who have felt the disillusionment or the bitterness that age too frequently brings, it is hardly likely that such a philosophy will or should satisfy those who are young, vigorous, and hopeful.

These difficulties, and others like them, are insistently raised in our minds by the popular rationalism of the Stoic philosophers. They are serious problems for any adequate philosophy of living. It will be helpful, therefore, to examine with

* See R. M. Wenley, *Stoicism and Its Influence*, pp. 107-110.

some care the philosophy of Benedict Spinoza, unquestionably the ablest modern exponent of rationalism, and to look also at a provocative work of our day, Walter Lippmann's *Preface to Morals*, in which a discerning contemporary writer makes clear the implications of rationalism for our generation. If it is possible to answer convincingly our objections to the Stoic philosophy, we should be able to find such answers in the thought of Lippmann and Spinoza.

6·SCIENTIFIC RATIONALISM

Benedict Spinoza

Benedict Spinoza is more than an able and discerning exponent of rationalism; he stands among the two or three greatest figures in the history of modern philosophy. Those who consider moral ideals to be of primary importance in life are apt to find the philosophy of Immanuel Kant more appealing. But those to whom the intellectual and scientific outlook is especially congenial have consistently seen in the thought of Spinoza one of the supreme expressions of human reason. Whatever our final decision on this issue, however, when discussing Spinoza we are dealing with a giant in the realm of the intellect, and as in all such considerations of genius the mind of the reader is itself being tested. Intellectual achievement cannot be had without a willingness to discipline our own thinking, to follow as far as we can the insights of genius, and so to become ourselves a little more mature in understanding and appreciation.

Estimates of Spinoza have been almost unbelievably diverse. He was in his own time condemned unreservedly as an atheist and enemy of religion. Yet by later critics his thought has been taken to be so fundamentally religious in spirit that he is described as "God-intoxicated." Is he the cold and remorseless fatalist whose philosophy undermines the established foundations of religious faith, or is he the saint whose humility and gentleness of life hold charm and comfort for all who are burdened or outcast? To this question each reader must find the answer for himself. And his estimate of Spinoza will in large measure be determined by the answer he finds.

THE LIFE OF SPINOZA (1632-1677)

The course of our study so far has made it increasingly apparent that a man's life and his philosophy are not separate and unrelated but rather are aspects of one larger whole. In some cases this relationship is quite apparent; in others its exact nature must remain largely a matter of conjecture. Spinoza's case is one of those in which the underlying principles of his philosophy are as apparent in the life he lived as in the pages of his great treatise on *Ethics*. All that he reasoned out so logically and objectively was likewise a product of his own spiritual travail. As one of his biographers has aptly said, "Spinoza's philosophy was more than a delicate bloom nurtured in the forcing-house of his mind; it was a virile and luxuriant tree rooted in the depths of his soul."[1] If fate seems to have conspired irresistibly to make of Schopenhauer a pessimist, the tides of life just as surely moved to turn Spinoza toward the rationalism of the Stoics, equipping him to bring to full fruition the cardinal insights upon which this philosophy rests.

During the sixteenth century, a colony of Spanish and Portuguese Jews, to escape persecution by the Spanish kings, had broken the ties of home and family and made their precarious way to Holland. These Jews, who were successful merchants and businessmen in the days when commerce was making the middle class wealthy, established themselves in Holland, and into this colony, about a century later (1632), Baruch Spinoza was born.

Spinoza early distinguished himself as a studious youth with greater taste for the learning of the synagogue than for the business of his father, a fairly well-to-do merchant who was widely respected and a man of some authority in the local Jewish congregation. In the synagogue Spinoza received a thorough education covering all aspects of Judaism. It was not long before he passed from his study of the Bible itself, the basic curriculum of the synagogue, to an examination of the Talmud, which contained the writing of later Jewish rabbis. But the commentaries of the great rabbis, men like Abraham Ibn Ezra and Moses Maimonides, raised in his mind more perplexing questions about his ancestral faith than they answered. Hence, instead of settling down to the life of a Jewish rabbi, for which he had seemed particularly well suited, Spinoza was led to undertake the study of Latin as a gateway to the intellectual world of his day.

The Dutch scholar Franciscus Van den Ende, under whom Spinoza began his new studies, was a man of wide interests. A physician and a patriot as well as something of a free-thinker, Van den Ende stimulated the young student's intellectual curiosity far beyond the simple problems involved in mastering another language. His ample library gave Spinoza contact with the best thinkers of the day, especially with the new scientific speculation of the seventeenth century, which was revolutionizing modern thought. Upon the death of his father, Spinoza took up his abode in the house of Van den Ende. Actually his own home life

had never been a happy one. After the early death of his mother, who was his father's second wife, the household had been for a time in charge of an older half sister, Rebecca, and then the father married a third wife. Life in the home of his Dutch master proved much more appealing to Spinoza. There is a story, indeed, that Van den Ende's daughter, reputed to be a brilliant girl if not beautiful, gave an added flavor to the pursuit of learning for the young student. Since Clara Maria was only about twelve years old when Spinoza completed his studies with her father, the affair could not have been serious. But whatever uncertainty the young lady may have caused Spinoza in making up his mind about his future plans, Clara Maria's preference for another suitor definitely settled the issue for him in favor of the life of reason.

During this period, Spinoza read widely in philosophy. He knew Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, but among the ancients he preferred the great Stoic philosophers, and above all he was attracted by the thought of René Descartes, the brilliant French mathematician and philosopher, who was just then at the height of his influence. Descartes, often called the father of modern philosophy, was a confirmed rationalist, maintaining that in human reason rather than religious faith is to be found the only dependable key to knowledge of the universe. This was an age upon which the brilliant achievements of the physical sciences were having a profound influence. In the speculation of Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo, in the scientific genius of Newton, human reason was gradually forcing the natural universe to reveal its way of behavior; and nature's laws when discovered proved to be so precise and dependable, so capable of exact formulation, that mathematics easily ranked as the queen of the sciences. Here, it was felt, reason expressed her insights with perfect and inescapable logic, and upon this scientific foundation Descartes built his philosophy.

EXCOMMUNICATION

Increasingly Spinoza was drawn to the rationalism of Descartes. As the religious creed of his fathers proved unequal to the demands made upon it by his growing scientific knowledge and his changing spiritual needs, he began to question the reasonableness of many of his former beliefs. "I confess," he is reported to have said, "that I can perceive no valid objection to the belief that God has a body. As for angels, it is certain that Scripture does not say they are real and permanent substances, but mere phantoms. And as for the soul, it would be vain to search for a single passage in support of its immortality."[2]

Speculation of this sort is apt to be dangerous in any age. In Holland during the seventeenth century it was particularly so. The fierce struggle between Catholic and Protestant engendered by the Reformation was still raging, and the Jews could not afford to offend the Protestants, who had given them political protection in Holland. Word of Spinoza's scientific speculation and his doubts about the orthodox Jewish faith reached the elders of the synagogue. He was called

before them and, when his ideas appeared heretical and likely also to antagonize the Christian community, they offered him a substantial annuity if he would refrain from spreading them. This arrangement Spinoza flatly refused. The synagogue decided, therefore, that he had to be excommunicated, and on July 27, 1656, when he was but twenty-four years of age, Spinoza was formally accused of heresy and officially cut off from all further contact with his own religious group. The writ of excommunication, which is still preserved in the archives of the Amsterdam Synagogue, left no doubt about the completeness and finality of this break:

> With the judgment of the angels and the sentence of the saints, we anathematize, execrate and cast out Baruch de Espinoza, the whole of the sacred community assenting. Let him be accursed by day and accursed by night, let him be accursed in his lying down and accursed in his rising up; accursed in going out and accursed in coming in. May the Lord never more pardon or acknowledge him. May the wrath and displeasure of the Lord burn henceforth against this man, load him with all the curses written in the Book of the Law, and blot out his name from under the sky; may the Lord sever him from all the tribes of Israel, weigh him with all the maledictions of the firmament contained in the Book of the Law and may all ye who are obedient to the Lord your God be saved this day.
>
> Hereby then are all admonished that none hold converse with him by word of mouth, none hold communion with him by writing; that no one do him any service, no one abide under the same roof with him, no one approach within four cubits length of him, and no one read any document dictated by him, or written by his hand.

The young philosopher took his excommunication calmly. It was nothing more than he had expected, he said. Changing his name from Baruch to Benedict (its Latin equivalent), he found a room just outside Amsterdam with Gentile friends who were members of a pious but tolerant Christian sect known as the Collegiants because of the fact that they spoke of their congregations as "collegia" rather than churches. For a living Spinoza reputedly began grinding and polishing lenses, a trade in which he was already interested, perhaps as a student of the new science.

The years that followed were quiet but fruitful ones. Spinoza worked at his trade by day and at his books in the evening, coming down occasionally for a pipe of tobacco smoked in the peace of the evening with his host and hostess or a friendly discussion of the Sunday sermon they had just heard. This provided almost the only contact with his fellows that he desired for some time. Cut off as a Jew from the rest of the world, from his family, who had disinherited him, and from the people of his own religion, who now shunned him, Spinoza was forced to find a philosophy adequate for the needs of his spirit in circumstances such as these.

Frugal and simple in his tastes, he was quite content to meet the bare needs

of the body, and he always avoided any show of extravagance or luxury. At a later time, when offered a new gown by a distinguished guest who was surprised at the worn and rumpled one the philosopher was wearing, Spinoza replied that a man was none the better for wearing fine clothes. The independence of his mind and the originality of his insight were in marked contrast, however, to this simplicity of heart and meagerness of worldly circumstance. His love of knowledge seemed the only love left to him, and to this consuming passion Spinoza gave himself unstintingly. Often he became so absorbed in his work that he would remain in his room for two or three days at a time, having his meals brought upstairs.

Spinoza stood head and shoulders above the men of his own day, seeing as no one else did the far-reaching implications of the new science of Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton, and the new philosophy of Descartes, and gradually fashioning this insight into a unity with his Jewish religious heritage which easily ranked among the most original contributions to philosophy since the works of Plato and Aristotle.

GROWING RENOWN

After living for about four years in the suburbs of Amsterdam, Spinoza decided to leave the city. His reasons for making this move are not entirely clear. The overgrown city, built on a marsh and frequently enshrouded in fog, was certainly no place for one with an inherited tendency to tuberculosis, nor was the tempo of life in a busy commercial center suited to his tastes. In this short time Spinoza seems to have become the accepted leader of a small group of intellectuals in Amsterdam, interested in the new science and philosophy and looking to the brilliant young Jew for guidance in their thinking. Fond as he was of these new friends, Spinoza may well have found that their demands upon him interfered seriously with his own research and writing. So he moved to a quiet village in the country, a place called Rhynsburg, not far from Leyden, which was settled largely by members of the Collegiant sect. Many of the people Spinoza had come to know during the past four years were members of this sect. He undoubtedly liked their serious and peace-loving manner of life and, no doubt at their suggestion, chose Rhynsburg as his new home. On a pleasant side street, he rented a modest cottage and settled down to the philosophical thought and writing that meant so much to him.

Even here, however, Spinoza's ability was too marked for him to remain long in seclusion. His presence in the village became known at the near-by University of Leyden, and soon the students of the university began to seek him out. They discovered that Spinoza not only knew Hebrew far better than any of their own professors of theology or language but was a master of the "new philosophy" of Descartes as well. In 1663, Spinoza published his first book, *The Principles of Cartesian Philosophy*, arranged in a geometric version. Dictated originally as the basis for his instruction of a young student who lived with him at the time, the

work attracted much favorable attention among his friends in Amsterdam, and at their insistence Spinoza agreed to publish it. During his three years in Rhynsburg, Spinoza also wrote his essay *On the Improvement of the Understanding,* which, like Descartes' influential *Discourse on Method,* was intended to provide a background and introduction to his philosophy. Although never completed and not published until after his death, this essay is by far our most revealing and readable introduction to the philosophy Spinoza lived by.

By this time, Spinoza's days of obscurity were at an end. He decided to move again, this time to The Hague, capital city of Holland. The Hague had become a center of enlightenment; a number of the most eminent scientists and scholars in the country were living there; and, if he must live near a city, The Hague appealed to Spinoza far more than Amsterdam, since it was not a commercial center of importance and had a somewhat more healthful climate. Still eager to preserve what quiet and solitude he could, Spinoza rented a small house in the suburb of Voorburg, about half an hour's walk from the capital and, late in April 1663, he packed his belongings and left the cottage in Rhynsburg.

Once it became known in The Hague that Spinoza had come to live in the neighborhood, however, a steady stream of visitors came out to see him. "I have scarcely been my own master because of the friends who have seen fit to visit me," Spinoza wrote a few weeks after he moved to Voorburg. But the young philosopher was certainly pleased to find that he was held in such esteem by the leading intellectual and political figures in the country. His admirers provided not only a desirable medium for the spread of his ideas but also some assurance of protection in publishing the books upon which he was working. He was eager, therefore, despite his innate reserve, to converse and correspond with the enlightened men of high station who sought him out as well as with men of all sorts who showed a genuine interest in the pursuit of philosophy.

Although Spinoza was just a little more than thirty when he moved to the suburbs of The Hague, a brief catalogue of the men with whom he was associated at that time reveals the extent of his ability and influence. Many of these friends were men of genuine distinction in the field of scholarship. Henry Oldenburg, a rather well-to-do German of aristocratic family, who later became secretary of the Royal Society of London, was a regular correspondent for many years. Christian Huygens, a man of about Spinoza's age, already enjoyed international renown as a scientist; Isaak Vossius was a well-known theologian and humanist; Conrad Burgh was Treasurer-General of the United Netherlands; Koenraad van Beuningen was a former burgomaster of Amsterdam. Most important of all, Jan de Witt, for many years the head of the Dutch government, and a man of learning as well as a liberal statesman, was genuinely devoted to the brilliant young philosopher. Indeed De Witt may well have granted Spinoza a small pension from the state to help support him during these years.

With such connections and interests Spinoza was drawn inescapably into the

political life of the day. In 1664 a strong reaction set in against the liberal policies pursued by the government of Jan de Witt. The Dutch possessions in North America had been captured by the British, the Dutch navy had been defeated, and a cry went up from the reactionaries to get rid of De Witt, whom they branded as an infidel and traitor. Spinoza felt compelled to join those who rallied to support De Witt. He laid aside his more theoretical writing and began work on a *Treatise on Theology and Politics*, in which he vigorously defended the right of each individual to complete freedom of thought. Rejecting all dictation by either church or state, Spinoza insisted that the dictates of reason alone provide our final authority in religion and politics as well as in science.

Shortly before Spinoza was ready to publish his book, one of his close friends was imprisoned for expressing ideas very similar to his own, and was so brutally treated in prison that within a year he died. Spinoza was outraged. In the preface to his *Treatise* he loses for a time the calm objectivity of the life of reason, which in general he commends so highly, and condemns in indignant terms those reactionary groups that brought about the death of his friend. "Doomed indeed is any land," Spinoza wrote, "where opinions are put on trial and condemned as crimes, and where those who avow them are sacrificed, not to public safety, but to the hatred and savagery of their enemies. Deeds alone should be made the grounds of criminal charges, and speech should be utterly free. Every man should be allowed to think what he likes and to say what he thinks; without such freedom there cannot be any peace or true piety."

Fortunately, the *Treatise on Theology and Politics* was published anonymously. Even in comparatively tolerant Holland, its unorthodox religious outlook and liberal spirit created quite a furor, and almost immediately the book was banned by the church and its sale forbidden by the civil authorities. Several editions appeared, nevertheless, under false title pages, disguised either as a medical treatise or a historical work, and the book was widely read. Its authorship was generally suspected, and Spinoza gained considerable fame as an able and liberal thinker. Many letters came to him condemning his views violently, but he also received notes of commendation from a number of distinguished and cultured men of the day. Despite the furor caused by the *Treatise,* Spinoza himself was not molested, even after his responsibility for the book became generally known. By this time he evidently had too many influential connections.

LATER YEARS AND DEATH

After the *Treatise,* Spinoza published nothing but continued his study and writing without interruption. For some time he had been at work on his *Ethics,* a book which may well be ranked with Plato's *Republic* among the greatest single volumes in the literature of philosophy. Science, psychology, and religion as well as metaphysics and ethics in the narrower sense are here brought together into a closely knit piece of reasoning which is almost without parallel in the history of

human thought.[3] The *Ethics* is not a book to be read for enjoyment. It is to be studied page by page, section by section—indeed, almost word by word. For Spinoza's Latin terminology and his mathematical approach must be mastered before his philosophy can be understood. Spinoza entitled his work *Ethics Demonstrated in the Manner of Geometry* and attempted actually to apply the dictum of Descartes that philosophy, to be completely convincing, must be presented like geometry. Axioms, definitions, theorems, and proofs follow each other in the pages of the *Ethics* in approved Euclidian fashion, each proposition depending directly upon another preceding it. Despite the genius and ingenuity of Spinoza, the resulting discussion goes far to prove that philosophy might better use its own methods than those borrowed from science. Few modern readers attempt to penetrate the obscurity which this geometrizing of ethics produces; they are content, as a rule, to seek the heart of Spinoza's thought in commentaries rather than in the original.

In 1675 Spinoza finished his *Ethics,* after twelve years of work on it. Looking at the finished product, built theorem upon theorem with geometrical precision, its author remarked: "I do not claim to have found the best philosophy. But I know this—that I think it the true one. If you ask me how I know this, I can only answer: in the same way that you know that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles." Conscious of the furor created by his *Treatise on Theology and Politics,* Spinoza for some time made no effort to publish the *Ethics.* When at length he did contemplate publishing it, a rumor spread to the effect that a book of his was about to appear which endeavored to prove that there was no God. A complaint was lodged with the authorities against him, and at the advice of friends he determined to await a more favorable time to publish his masterpiece. Such a time did not arrive; when Spinoza died, in 1677, the *Ethics* was still carefully locked in his writing desk. To be sure that the book would not be lost, however, he had made arrangements to have the manuscript transmitted after his death to his publisher in Amsterdam.

Just as Spinoza was completing the final part of the *Ethics,* disaster befell the republican government of his friend Jan de Witt. The army of Louis XIV of France invaded the Netherlands, and the country was saved from complete defeat only by the cutting of the dikes and the flooding of a large region. De Witt's enemies made good use of his defeat, stirring up the people against him to such an extent that they turned upon De Witt and his brother and brutally murdered them both. Only the foresight of his landlord in locking the door prevented Spinoza from rushing out to denounce the mob and perish with his friend and benefactor. Realizing at length the futility of such conduct, the philosopher regained his accustomed composure. When one of his friends expressed some surprise at his restraint, Spinoza replied, "Of what use would wisdom be to us, if having succumbed to the passions of the mob, we lacked the strength to recover ourselves again?"

With the death of De Witt, the liberal forces in Holland were left without strong leadership. They continued to struggle against the reactionary aristocracy and clergy as best they could, however, and looked to Spinoza for guidance in this effort. It was generally recognized that he had one of the clearest minds in the country, and his reputation and influence continued to increase. Although still by no means well off, Spinoza by now had as much of this world's goods as he desired, for money possessed no greater attraction for him than did fame or social position. When one of his friends and admirers, Simon De Vries, a rich merchant of Amsterdam, offered him a substantial gift of money at one time, Spinoza refused it; and when his friend proposed to will him a much larger sum, Spinoza finally persuaded De Vries to leave the wealth to his own brother instead. De Vries nevertheless included in the will a modest annuity of 500 florins for the philosopher. Even this Spinoza declared too much for his needs but finally agreed to accept a part of the bequest. Louis XIV of France, outstanding ruler of the day, was also willing apparently to give Spinoza a substantial pension if the philosopher would dedicate one of his books to him. Spinoza, in the words of an early biographer, "with all the civility he was capable of," begged to be allowed to refuse this generous proposal.

Most flattering of all, however, was the offer, which came to Spinoza without any solicitation on his part, of a professorship in philosophy at the University of Heidelberg. In February 1673 he received a totally unexpected letter from a councilor of the ruler of the principality in which the university was located. It read:

Most Renowned Sir,

His Serene Highness, the Elector Palatine, my most gracious Master, has commanded me to write to you, who are as yet unknown to me, but most highly commended to his Serene Highness, the Prince, and to ask you whether you are willing to accept an Ordinary [full] Professorship of Philosophy in his Illustrious University. You will be paid the annual salary which the ordinary Professors enjoy today. You will not find elsewhere a Prince more favorable to distinguished geniuses, among whom he reckons you. You will have the utmost freedom of philosophizing, which he believes you will not misuse to disturb the publicly established Religion. I could not but comply with the request of the most wise Prince. Therefore, I most earnestly beg you to answer me as soon as possible, and to entrust your answer to the care of Mr. Grotius, his Serene Highness the Elector's Resident at The Hague. . . . So Farewell and Hail to you, Most Honored Sir.

Undoubtedly this generous offer must have moved Spinoza greatly. For a whole month he debated the question, sitting alone in his small attic. The ruler of the Palatine was famed throughout Europe for his liberalism; the University of Heidelberg was a center of learning which would tempt any scholar. Yet at the

end of the month Spinoza wrote a courteous letter to the Councilor of the Prince, declining the post:

Most Honorable Sir,

If I had ever entertained a wish to take on a Professorship in any faculty, I could have desired no other than that which is offered me through you by His Serene Highness the Elector Palatine, particularly because of that freedom of philosophizing which the Most Gracious Prince is pleased to offer, to say nothing of my long-felt desire to live under the rule of a Prince whose wisdom all admire. Since, however, it was never my intention to give public instruction, I cannot be induced to embrace this glorious opportunity, although I have debated the matter with myself so long. For, first, I think that if I want to find time for instructing youth, then I must desist from developing my philosophy. Secondly, I think that I do not understand within what limit that freedom of philosophizing ought to be confined in order to avoid the appearance of wishing to disturb the publicly established Religion. For Schisms arise not so much from an ardent love of religion as from men's various dispositions, or the love of contradiction, through which they are wont to distort and to condemn all things, even those that have been correctly stated. I have already experienced these things while leading a private and solitary life; much more then are they to be feared after I shall have risen to this degree of dignity. Thus you see, Most Honored Sir, that I am not holding back in the hope of some better fortune, but from love of peace, which I believe I can obtain to a certain extent merely by refraining from public lectures. . . .

Yours entirely,
B. d. S.[4]

As it turned out, Spinoza's decision was a wise one for reasons other than those he states. The following year Heidelberg was captured by the French armies and the university was closed, while Spinoza continued his writing in Holland undisturbed. His last work was an unfinished *Treatise on Politics,* designed, he states, to show how "government can be so organized that it will escape tyranny, and be compatible with the peace and ability of the citizens." Having dealt with monarchy, and then with aristocracy, Spinoza came to his chapter on democracy. But that was as far as he got. He was now too ill to go on. Although only in his early forties, an inherited tendency had developed into active tuberculosis as he worked at the grinding and polishing of lenses, or at his writing desk. Spinoza knew that the end of his life was at hand, but true to the spirit of his philosophy he was not disturbed. He had lived as he desired, had done the work upon which his heart was set, and he calmly made ready for death. Going through his manuscripts, he destroyed what he felt to be of no consequence. Locking the others in a desk drawer, he arranged to have them forwarded to his publisher in Amsterdam upon his death. The only instruction he gave was that when the *Ethics* was published his name should not appear on the book. Its truth, he felt, should be

self-evident to the intelligent reader. It needed no other endorsement, and he saw no reason to seek further fame or denunciation for himself.

One Sunday afternoon in February 1677, when the family with whom he lived was at church, Spinoza passed quietly away. Only his friend and physician, Dr. Schuller, was at his bedside. Four days later, he was buried. Despite the rain, which fell steadily on that inclement February day, many distinguished men in the Dutch capital attended his funeral, and six carriages followed his coffin to the grave.

Those who opposed his ideas sought in vain to destroy the dead philosopher. A hundred years later, the enduring significance of Spinoza's thought was widely recognized in literary and philosophical circles throughout Europe. Two hundred years after his death a statue in his honor was erected in The Hague. Today he ranks among the two or three ablest and most influential men in the history of modern philosophy.

ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE UNDERSTANDING

The philosophy to which he gives allegiance is clearly outlined in Spinoza's early essay *On the Improvement of the Understanding*. His interest in philosophy, as described there, is actually quite practical. He is seeking, he tells us, to discover "an absolute and unchanging good that will never fail or disappoint us." And, with Descartes and the Stoics, Spinoza puts his confidence unhesitatingly in the life of reason as the only path to such enduring satisfaction. A revealing account of the considerations that led him to this conclusion is found in the opening pages of his essay. Its Stoic note is unmistakable.

> After experience had taught me that all the usual surroundings of social life are vain and futile, seeing that none of the objects of my fears contained in themselves anything good or bad, except in so far as the mind is affected by them, I finally resolved to inquire whether there might be some real good, which would affect the mind singly, to the exclusion of all else; whether, in fact, there might be anything of which the discovery and attainment would enable me to enjoy continuous, supreme and unending happiness. I say, "I *finally* resolved," for at first sight it seemed unwise willingly to lose hold on what was sure for the sake of something then uncertain. I could see the benefits which are acquired through fame and riches, and that I should be obliged to abandon the quest of such objects, if I seriously devoted myself to the search for something different and new. I perceived that if true happiness chanced to be placed in the former I should necessarily miss it; while if, on the other hand, it were not so placed, and I gave them my whole attention, I should equally fail.[5]

Riches, fame, and the pleasures of sense, the three sources to which men ordinarily turn in search of happiness, did tempt him at times, Spinoza admits. But

careful examination revealed to him the deceptive character of pursuits such as these. He saw, as did Schopenhauer a century and a half later, that none of these holds promise of any enduring satisfaction. In the case of riches and fame, the more we have the more we want; and the gratification of appetite brings with it only satiety and boredom or remorse and repentance, depending upon the nature of the pleasures indulged in. If, on the other hand, our desires and hopes are frustrated, we are plunged into the deepest disappointment and sadness.

> All the objects pursued by the multitude, not only bring no remedy that tends to preserve our being, but even act as hindrances, causing the death not seldom of those who possess them, and always of those who are possessed by them. There are many examples of men who in pursuit of wealth have exposed themselves to so many dangers, that they have paid their life as a penalty for their folly. Examples are no less numerous of men who have endured the utmost wretchedness for the sake of gaining or preserving their reputation. Lastly, there are innumerable cases of men who have hastened their death through overindulgence in sensual pleasure. All these evils seem to have arisen from the fact that happiness or unhappiness is made wholly to depend on the quality of the object which we love. When a thing is not loved, no quarrels will arise concerning it—no sadness will be felt if it perishes—no envy if it is possessed by another—no fear, no hatred, in short no disturbances of the mind. All these fears arise from the love of what is perishable, such as the objects already mentioned.[6]

This does not mean that riches and fame, or the pleasures of sense, are in themselves evil. Spinoza is too consistent a Stoic to reach this conclusion. The terms good and evil are only relative, he points out. Nothing external is either good or evil in itself; its worth for us is determined by how we use it. So wealth, fame, and even pleasure, when not sought for their own sake but used instead as means to a good end, are quite desirable. The only enduring good in human life, Spinoza at last concludes, is the development of character; the good man is the man of mature and disciplined character. Here and here alone is the source of lasting happiness.

> What that character is we shall show in due time, namely, that it is the knowledge of the union existing between the mind and the whole of nature. This, then, is the end for which I strive: to attain such a character myself, and to endeavor that many should attain it with me. In other words, it is part of my happiness to lend a helping hand, that many others may understand even as I do, so that their understanding and desire may agree with my own. In order to bring this about, it is necessary to understand as much of nature as will enable us to attain to the aforesaid character, and also to form a social order such as is most conducive to the attainment of this character by the greatest number with the least difficulty and danger.[7]

Mature and disciplined character depends ultimately, however, upon the development of reason and understanding. In order to achieve the good life, one

must first be intelligent. On this point Spinoza is quite specific; it is his primary concern in this early essay.

> Before all things, a means must be devised for improving the understanding and purifying it, so that it may apprehend things without error, and in the best possible way. The more the mind knows, the better it understands its forces and the order of nature; the more it understands its forces or strength, the better it will be able to direct itself and lay down rules for itself; and the more it understands the order of nature the more easily it will be able to liberate itself from useless things; this is the whole method.[8]

Such a philosophy had large appeal, not only to Spinoza but also to most of the thoughtful men of his age. The circumstances of our philosopher's youth and early manhood unquestionably heightened the attraction of the life of reason in his own case. The rising prestige of the natural sciences at the time soon produced an almost unbounded confidence in human reason among his contemporaries. Before too many years, the rationalism of Descartes and Spinoza was generally accepted as the only tenable position for the intelligent man, and the eighteenth century in Europe is itself now known as the Age of Reason.

GOD AND NATURAL LAW

His own Jewish heritage and training, on the one hand, and the spirit of his age, on the other, made it inevitable that Spinoza in his search for knowledge would have to deal with the growing conflict between religion and science. Few philosophers have been in better position to understand the diverse demands upon the human spirit that come from religious faith and from the scientific enterprise. Spinoza knew both at first hand. His early training in the synagogue had left a deep impression upon him, even though he had not been willing to continue his studies there. The wide interest in science that characterized his age, especially as reflected in the philosophy of Descartes, had stirred his interest and fired his imagination even more deeply during his mature years. Without question, one of the major aims of his philosophy is to provide an interpretation of the universe that does justice to religious faith as well as to scientific theory. This is a continuing interest, moreover—to be seen as clearly in his mature discussion of *Ethics* as in the *Treatise on Theology and Politics*, which he published a few years after completing his essay *On the Improvement of the Understanding.*

Among the most impressive characteristics of Spinoza's philosophy are the clarity and depth of his insight. Writing some three hundred years ago, when modern science was in its infancy and when the modern interpretation of religion had not yet been undertaken, Spinoza recognized with complete certainty what the scientific interpretation of the universe in terms of natural law involved. It

was only after another two hundred years that his position became the accepted outlook of those trained in science. And with equal clarity he saw what religion must mean to men committed to the scientific viewpoint regarding the universe. It is perhaps not too much to say that if a reconciliation of science and religion is possible—within the framework which accepts science "as a closed system of rational law"—then it is to be found in Spinoza's philosophy. Later treatments of the subject have done little more than popularize or develop his essential insights. If in the last two or three decades our thinking about the relation of science and religion has taken a somewhat different turn, it is not because of inadequacies in Spinoza's understanding of Newtonian science but rather because a revolution in the field of science itself has brought into question much that formerly seemed essential to the very existence of the scientific enterprise.

SCIENCE AND POPULAR RELIGION

Already in Spinoza's day the point of view of modern science was creating a number of problems with regard to the traditional interpretation of the Bible. Many of these Spinoza faced in his early study of the rabbinical writings on the Old Testament. A major portion of his *Treatise on Theology and Politics* is devoted to a discussion of the Bible from the new scientific point of view. Much of the difficulty, he was convinced, came from a failure to read the Bible intelligently. The people of his age were reading into it their own beliefs and prejudices. A better understanding of the Bible itself seemed necessary to Spinoza before any further progress could be made. "I determined to examine the Bible afresh in a careful, impartial and unfettered spirit," he writes, "making no assumptions concerning it and attributing to it no doctrines which I do not find already therein set down."[9]

Much of what Spinoza had to say about the Bible in the seventeenth century has just begun to find wide acceptance in our own country in the twentieth. It is of great importance in interpreting the Bible, he points out, to determine the situation in which a specific book was written. What purpose did the author have in mind? What group of people was he writing for? What particular historical situation did he face? The books in the Bible, Spinoza recognized, were written for specific purposes, to accomplish specific religious aims, and can be understood only when seen in their context. Thus, we have come in recent years to see that the Book of Jonah was written to rebuke the Jews for their spiritual exclusiveness and narrowness after the Exile. The book is a great missionary document, whose deeply religious spirit comes very near to that of the New Testament. But for many the religious significance of the Book of Jonah has been all but lost in arguments about whether or not a whale can swallow a man. A question such as that Spinoza finds entirely inconsequential. He insists, instead, upon a fact that all people admit but few in his opinion correctly understand: "Scripture does not aim at imparting scientific knowledge." The Bible is a book of religion, not a

book of science. It is written to inspire men, to enable them to lead better lives, not to give them scientific information about the universe. The authors of the Bible were not philosophers and were not writing scientific treatises. They wrote very simply, to reach the ordinary men and women of their day, Spinoza maintains, and they "clothed their teaching in the style and confirmed it with the reasons which would most deeply move the minds of the masses to devotion toward God."[10]

Thus there is a fundamental difference in purpose between science and religion, and this is clearly to be seen in the Bible itself, according to Spinoza. The Bible is not coldly scientific and logical but, like most oriental writing, makes an appeal to the imagination and the feeling of its readers. In many cases it is deliberately allegorical and symbolic. "Scripture does not explain things by their secondary causes," he writes, "but only narrates them in the order and style which has most power to move men, and especially uneducated men, to devotion. . . . Its object is not to convince the reason, but to attract and lay hold of the imagination." When this is understood and the Bible properly interpreted in terms of its own purpose, it contains nothing contrary to reason. "In the whole course of my investigation I found nothing taught *expressly* by Scripture which does not agree with my understanding or which is repugnant thereto," Spinoza writes.[11] It is only when the aim of the Bible is lost sight of, and when it is interpreted literally, as if it were a scientific document, that one is confronted by the contradictions that have been the source of so much controversy. Thus, when the Bible speaks of the four corners of the earth, or of the sun rising and setting, we realize today that these phrases are not meant literally and we see no problem—but in Spinoza's day, when the scientists were just marshaling evidence to show that the earth is round and not flat, or that the earth moves around the sun rather than the sun around the earth, an insistence upon the literal, scientific truth of phrases such as this caused serious problems in the minds of many devout Christians.

The conclusion to which Spinoza was led in his early discussions is one that has appealed to many later thinkers. Despite his commitment to science and the scientific method, he did not feel at that time that it was the only avenue to the good life or to faith in God. Religion and science each has its own domain; when properly understood, neither should transgress upon the other: "We may draw the absolute conclusion that the Bible must not be accommodated to reason, nor reason to the Bible," he writes. Religion is concerned with man's spiritual life and the certainty upon which all religious conviction rests is moral certainty, not scientific or rational proof. "A mind turned to what is just and good" is the only "proof" of religion that is desirable or possible, Spinoza maintains. Once the moral teaching of the prophets and of Jesus is clearly understood, however, we find that it is in complete accord with reason, he points out. "It is no accidental coincidence that the Word of God which we find

in the prophets coincides with the Word of God written in our hearts."[12] Reason should be left completely free, therefore, in its scientific investigation and philosophical knowledge of the universe; religion should concern itself with moral ideals and principles, not with scientific speculation: "neither should be subservient to the other, but each should keep her unopposed dominion."

When the faith of the ordinary Christians of his day was somewhat upset by his ideas, Spinoza, in keeping with this conviction, refused to allow the *Treatise on Theology and Politics* to be translated from Latin into Dutch. He consistently encouraged the children of his landlady to attend church, and when she one day asked him whether she could be saved in the religion she professed, he replied: "Your religion is a very good one; you need not look for another, nor doubt that you may be saved in it, provided, whilst you apply yourself to piety, you live at the same time a peaceful and quiet life."[13] It is in terms of moral attitudes such as these, rather than in terms of its scientific outlook, that popular religion and the Bible should be judged, Spinoza insists. And, as he looked at the conflict between Protestants and Catholics of his day, it did not seem to him that Christians stood this test very well. "I have often wondered," he writes, "that persons who make a boast of professing the Christian religion, namely, love, joy, peace, temperance, and charity to all men, should quarrel with such rancorous animosity, and display daily toward one another such bitter hatred, that this, rather than the virtues they claim, is the readiest criterion of their faith."[14]

CONCERNING MIRACLES

The most serious conflict between science and popular religion Spinoza found in the interpretation of miracles. To many religious men in his day, the miracles recorded in the Bible were taken to be our clearest evidence of the presence and activity of God. This seemed to Spinoza a fundamental misunderstanding both of religion and of the nature of God. It showed how inadequately most people understood the meaning of science and the scientific picture of the universe. Such people, Spinoza writes,

> think that the clearest possible proof of God's existence is afforded when nature, as they suppose, breaks her accustomed order, and consequently they believe that those who then explain or endeavor to understand phenomena, or miracles, through their natural causes are doing away with God and His providence. They suppose, forsooth, that God is inactive so long as nature works in her accustomed order, and *vice versa,* that the powers of nature and natural causes are idle so long as God is acting.[15]

It was just this kind of separation between God and the rational order of nature that did violence, in Spinoza's opinion, to religious faith as well as to the view of the new science. God was here pictured as a kind of oriental mon-

arch who intervened, when he felt like it, with the work of nature. What science had revealed unmistakably to Spinoza was the law-abiding character of the universe. It was not whimsical but dependable. It could be counted on to act in accord with certain principles which were rational. And he was convinced that in this fact, not in the performance of miracles, was to be found the clearest indication of the providence of a rational deity. "Nothing, then, comes to pass in nature in contravention to her universal laws, nay, there is nothing that does not agree with them and follow from them," Spinoza writes, "for whatsoever comes to pass, comes to pass by the will and eternal decree of God;" and the providence of God, in its deepest sense, "means nothing but nature's order following necessarily from her eternal law."[16]

If this is not the case, we are left with the conclusion that the laws of nature are actually opposed to the will of God, so that this is not the kind of universe God would like it to be but one that came into being and operates in some way against His will. Such a conclusion, Spinoza maintains, is no more satisfactory for religious faith than for scientific thought. Thus, the popular belief in miracles actually turns out to be religiously unacceptable as well as scientifically untenable.

> It is plain that the universal laws of nature are decrees of God following from the necessity and perfection of the Divine nature. . . . If anyone asserted that God acts in contravention to the laws of nature, he *ipso facto* would be compelled to assert that God acted against his own nature—an evident absurdity. Therefore miracles, in the sense of events contrary to the laws of nature, so far from demonstrating to us the existence of God, would, on the contrary, lead us to doubt, where, otherwise, we might have been absolutely certain of it, knowing that nature follows a fixed and immutable order.[17]

When interpreting the miracles of the Bible, Spinoza simply reaffirms his position regarding the nature of Scripture. "Scripture, as we have shown, does not aim at explaining things by their natural causes, but only at narrating what appeals to the popular imagination, and doing so in the manner best calculated to excite wonder, and consequently to impress the minds of the masses with devotion," he writes.[18] If one reads the Bible carefully, he will find that in most cases there is no contradiction between a specific miracle and the laws of nature, Spinoza points out. The Bible is concerned to emphasize the activity of God directly rather than through the natural causes, but not necessarily to oppose the two. For example, the account (in Exodus, 14) of Moses' parting the waters of the sea for the Hebrews to cross and escape the Egyptians simply states that God told Moses to stretch forth his hand and bid the waters to part. But in the same chapter it is recorded that a strong east wind blew all night and parted the waters. According to Spinoza, a complete account of "miracles" would always indicate the natural forces through which God operated, but this

is the approach of history and science rather than of religion, which is primarily poetic, symbolic, and inspirational.

SCIENCE AND GOD

Every age has its typical ways of defending religious faith, its characteristic arguments for proving to unbelievers the existence of God. An unscientific age quite naturally makes large use of miracles for this purpose, but Spinoza saw clearly the ineffectiveness of such an approach in an age dominated by the spirit of science. He was intent, above all else, on rescuing the concept of God from its setting in a small universe, and on thinking of God in terms large enough to do justice to the new universe which science was discovering. As the power behind all things and in all things, God could not be smaller than the universe itself. But the old concept of God was smaller—it had been developed by men who lived before the modern, scientific picture of the world had been formulated —and the danger, as Spinoza well realized, was that people would begin to think that they did not believe in God, when actually what they did not believe in was an old and inadequate concept of God.

This, as a matter of fact, still happens to many university students today. They find that the early concept of God which they accepted at home in Sunday School does not fit the new world with which they are becoming acquainted at college. There is no place any longer for a benevolent and venerable old gentleman with white hair sitting on a throne somewhere up in the sky. And too frequently, instead of realizing that a new conception of God adequate to their new knowledge must replace this earlier, inadequate one, such students conclude that they do not believe in God at all. Spinoza was eager to do for the more thoughtful men of his generation what still needs to be done for many today. He undertook to restate the idea of God in terms broad enough to do justice to the new knowledge of modern science.

The real problem, in Spinoza's opinion, is not to prove that God exists but rather to find out what God is like. His first step, therefore, is a simple but very effective one. He defines God in such a way as to make his existence no longer debatable. God, Spinoza affirms, is that eternal order of things of which both the physical universe and man himself are but partial expressions. That such an eternal order of things does exist, no philosopher touched by the new scientific spirit of Spinoza's day would have thought of denying. The problem, then, is simply one of determining in some detail what the nature of that enduring order of things actually is. As a good rationalist, Spinoza is confident that this can be done by human reason. And in such an undertaking science will be of as much help to us as religion, he believes. Indeed, it is to a scientific religion that Spinoza himself turns. It is not necessary, he argues, to rely upon any special revelation to find out what God is like. The nature of God is revealed

to the eyes of reason in the picture science draws of the universe; here we find the only revelation which the rationalist can accept.

An approach in some respects quite similar achieved great popularity in religious circles not many years ago through the writings of Henry Nelson Wieman, well-known contemporary American theologian. There are fundamental differences between Spinoza's thought and that of Wieman, but the similarities at certain points are also striking. Like Spinoza, Wieman claims to be developing a thoroughly scientific idea of God and making a completely scientific approach to religion.

> My own purpose is a very earnest and a very serious one. It is so to formulate the idea of God that the question of God's existence becomes a dead issue and all our energies can be turned to seeking better knowledge about God. . . . Nothing is more important than to discuss the nature of God; but to discuss the existence of God is a waste of time. . . . Never in any of my writings have I tried to prove the existence of God except by "definition," which means to state the problem in such a way as to lift it out of the arena of debate.[19]

Although he has never found a definition of God that quite satisfies him, Wieman's earliest attempt is one of his best. "Whatever else the word God may mean," he writes, "it is a term used to designate that Something upon which human life is most dependent for its security, welfare, and increasing abundance." Later he defines God somewhat more carefully as "the one, sustaining, all-pervading character which the universe displays, the constitutive order of all being." This reminds one, certainly, of the definition of God with which Spinoza begins his *Ethics*. In moving toward more adequate knowledge of what God is like, Wieman depends as directly as does Spinoza upon the method of science. "That only is knowledge, in religion as in every other area of intellectual search," he insists, "which has been attained through the tested methods of observation and reason."[20] Beyond this point, however, the similarity between the two men does not extend. Wieman's approach to scientific method is empirical and experimental, whereas that of Spinoza is thoroughly rationalistic.

GOD AND NATURE

Spinoza's concept of God is perhaps the most difficult as well as the most important aspect of his philosophy. Deeply imbued with the spirit of the new science which ushered in our modern civilization, he did not question the underlying unity of the laws of nature which science was gradually but surely managing to catalogue. The rational order of the universe, he believed with the scientists of his age, was the expression of one consistent principle, a principle eternal and unchanging. But the religious leaders of the day, Spinoza was convinced, were failing to recognize the primary relationship of God to this un-

changing, rational order of the world of nature. The scientific picture of the universe could not be denied; it was the surest result of man's reason. Nor could God exist somewhere apart from the universe science pictured. Spinoza saw the childishness of the suggestion made by some of his contemporaries that God, like a man, had created the world and then gone off to do something else. No—in the eternal rational order of the universe, God was present. There could not be two conflicting or unrelated powers at work in the universe —not if science and reason were trustworthy. There could be only one. What science revealed to man, then, was just what religion was trying to discover: it revealed the eternal order of things upon which all else depended, and this eternal order was God.

Spinoza's most careful discussion of God's nature is found in the first book of the *Ethics* and is set in the geometrical framework which he felt most compelling for human reason. God he there defines as the *substance* upon which all things in the universe ultimately depend. The term "substance" is somewhat misleading, as the English word has a meaning quite different from the Latin *substantia* used by Spinoza. *Substantia* is literally that which "stands under" and gives support—or, better still, "being"—to everything else. For Spinoza, the rationalist, this underlying substance of all things is not anything physical or material but is the rational order by which the nature of things is determined. Spinoza's point of view may be made somewhat more intelligible if we think of the attitude of an engineer concerning the nature of a great bridge. Most of us would take the steel and stone to be its substance. But for the engineer the underlying reality is the system of mathematical laws in accord with which the bridge is constructed. Without them it is impossible to have a bridge. It is these laws—and not the steel and the stone—which determine the nature of the bridge. And these laws are grasped by human reason, not by the senses.

In some such sense as this, then, Spinoza defines God as the "substance" of all things, and he goes on to give us a scientific picture of the divine nature. "All things are in God and everything takes place by the laws alone of the infinite nature of God," he writes. "Whatever is, is in God, and nothing can either be or be conceived without God. . . . In nature there is nothing contingent, but all things are determined from the necessity of the divine nature to exist and act in a certain manner. Therefore things could be produced by God in no other manner and in no other order than that in which they have been produced. . . . From the infinite nature of God all things have necessarily flowed, or continually follow, by the same necessity as it follows from the nature of a triangle from all eternity that its three angles are equal to two right angles."[21]

From this severely scientific point of view, moreover, one cannot think of God as possessing freedom in the popular sense of the word. It is impossible in Spinoza's opinion for God to do anything that is not in accord with his own

nature. "There are some who think that God is a free cause because He can, as they think, bring about that those things which follow from His nature should not be, or should not be produced by Him," Spinoza writes. "But this is simply to say that God could bring about that it should not follow from the nature of a triangle that its three angles should equal to two right angles, which is absurd." The necessity by which God acts is the necessity of reason, Spinoza believes; and God's freedom must be understood in the only sense that freedom is possible in the universe which modern science depicts: "God alone is a free cause for God alone exists from the necessity alone of His own nature and acts from the necessity alone of His own nature. Therefore He alone is a free cause."[22]

Spinoza's God is far different, then, from the anthropomorphic deity of popular religion, different even from the God of the Christian faith. God, as portrayed by our philosopher, is not a person, very human in character but much more powerful than any man; he is not a being who lives outside the universe and directs its course, like a man who builds a great machine to smash atoms and then controls its action for his purposes. "There are those who imagine God to be like a man, composed of body and soul and subject to passions," Spinoza writes; "but it is clear enough from what has already been demonstrated how far all men who believe this are from the true knowledge of God." God actually *is* the eternal rational order upon which the natural universe and human life depend for existence. The spirit of reason, which moves through the universe, shaping its development and its destiny, is what the religious man calls the will of God. The rational laws that the scientist formulates in his description of the behavior of the universe reveal to us the nature of God's will. Although God and nature cannot be separated, however, they should be distinguished from each other. When he was accused of identifying God with nature, Spinoza indignantly denied the charge. Writing to a friend he said:

> I hold that God is the immanent, not the extraneous cause of all things. I say that all things are in God and move in God, thus agreeing with Paul and perhaps with all the ancient philosophers. It is a complete mistake on the part of those who say that my purpose is to show that God and nature, meaning by the latter a certain mass of corporeal matter, are one and the same. I had no such intention.[23]

What we are justified in saying, perhaps, is that for Spinoza God and the rational processes of nature are one and the same. His God is a lineal descendant of the Divine Reason of the Stoic philosophers; but where the Stoic concept was somewhat vague and undeveloped, Spinoza gives exact, scientific statement to the belief that God is the spirit of reason which moves through the universe and controls its behavior in accord with rational law. As Alexander Pope, representative poet of the Age of Reason, phrases the same idea:

All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
Whose body Nature is, and God the soul . . .
To Him no high, no low, no great, no small;
He fills, he bounds, connects, and equals all.[24]

HUMAN NATURE AND CONDUCT

Three essential and closely related aspects of Spinoza's rationalism should be distinguished: first, a confidence in the ability of reason, and reason alone, to supply us with accurate and dependable knowledge; second, a conviction that the universe itself is governed by rational law, that by the proper use of reason we comprehend an eternal, rational order in the nature of things; and finally, a certainty that reason is the one acceptable guide to living, that in the life of reason alone man can hope to find enduring satisfaction.

In his treatment of God and the universe, Spinoza sought to free himself from all prejudice and to provide for his readers a completely rational, objective, and scientific account. When he came to the discussion of human nature and conduct, he handled his subject in similar fashion. "I shall consider human actions and desires in exactly the same manner as if I were concerned with lines, planes, and solids," he writes.[25] Long before the era of modern "scientific" psychology, Spinoza recognized that if the rational laws of science are universal, they must be applied to the interpretation of human life and thought just as completely as to the physical universe of which man is a part. Before we can have a scientific ethics, we must have a scientific psychology. Spinoza is concerned not with telling us what we would like to hear about ourselves but with portraying for us the nature of man as accurately and objectively as he can.

Self-preservation, he finds, is in a very real sense the first law of our nature. It is the tendency in every individual thing to try to preserve its own existence. "Everything, in so far as it is in itself, endeavors to persist in its own being; and the endeavor wherewith a thing seeks to persist in its own being is nothing else than the actual essence of that thing," Spinoza writes. Man is no exception to this rule. Hence, a reasonable ethics must be based upon a recognition of this fact of human nature. "Since reason demands nothing against nature, it concedes that each man must love himself, and seek what is useful to him, and desire whatever leads him truly to a greater state of perfection; and that each man should endeavor to preserve his being so far as in him lies."[26] The basis of human conduct, then, will be a sort of reasonable egoism; in Spinoza's opinion, a philosophy of living which seeks to get men to act contrary to the basic principles of human nature would be both quite foolish and quite ineffective.

OF HUMAN BONDAGE AND FREEDOM

It makes only for confusion to talk of chance or accident in human conduct, of free will by which a man may change the direction of his life as he likes. "All our efforts or desires follow from the necessity of our nature in such a manner that they can be understood either through it alone or in so far as we are a part of nature," Spinoza points out. There is no more escape from the laws of cause and effect in human conduct than in the behavior of the world of nature, of which man is a part. We too readily think that we are free because we find frequently that we are able to do what we want to do. Actually there is no freedom in doing what we want to do; what we want is as completely determined by other preceding causes as any other aspect of experience.

> Thus the infant believes that it desires milk of its own free will, the angry child that it is free in seeking revenge, and the timid that it is free in taking flight. So also an insane man, a garrulous woman, a child, and very many others of the sort, believe they speak of their own free will when nevertheless they are unable to control their impulse to talk. Thus experience itself shows, no less clearly than reason, that men think themselves free only because they are conscious of their actions and ignorant of the causes that determine them. The passions of hatred, anger, envy and so on, considered in themselves, follow from the same necessity of nature as other things; they have certain definite causes through which they are to be understood.[27]

In this completely determined universe, good and evil must be recognized as purely relative terms. They describe our reaction to the circumstances of life, not the enduring nature of things. "Thus one and the same thing can be at the same time good, bad, and indifferent," Spinoza points out. "Music is good to a person who is melancholy, bad to one who is mourning, while to a deaf man it is neither good nor bad."[28] Closer examination shows us clearly that the goodness of things comes from their worth to us. "It is plain, that in no case do we strive for, wish for, long for or desire anything because we deem it good, but, on the contrary, we deem a thing good because we strive for it, wish for it, long for it, or desire it."[29] When viewed in a total perspective and under the aspect of eternity (*sub specie aeternitatis* is Spinoza's favorite Latin phrase), good and evil, then, are prejudices which an eternal reality cannot recognize. From the rational order of the universe, all things follow as necessarily as does the fact that the sum of the angles of a triangle equal two right angles. Things in themselves are not good or evil; they are simply necessary. It is our own reaction that determines the quality of our experience.

Pain is a fact, of course. We cannot escape it entirely, and we cannot deny its existence when it has seized us. But we can prevent the bitterness of spirit that possesses the ignorant when they suffer. For pain is one thing and hate is

another. "Let the pain of life teach you to understand and you will not hate life, but in the joy of understanding, you will love it." This is the burden of Spinoza's philosophy wrung out of the depth of his own experience. No one could comment on this truth better than he. In a world in which he was an outcast and stood alone, he found in the understanding a joy that did not depend upon others. The way to kill hate in our hearts is to connect the individual fact that is painful with the whole order of nature, which makes this fact, like every other, equally necessary. Thus Spinoza meets the problem of evil, not merely in Stoic terms but in terms of his own theory that man's greatest good lies in the understanding of life. As pain and suffering, which are evil in the popular sense, produce greater knowledge and understanding, they cease to be painful and their quality as evil is transmuted into good for the wise men.

In terms of this thoroughly "scientific" view of life Spinoza conducts his examination of human conduct; he finds, as Schopenhauer later so vigorously insisted, that most of us are in bondage to our passions and emotions. Our thought and conduct are controlled by external circumstance; life is dominated from *without* rather than *within*. "The impotence of man to govern or restrain the emotions I call bondage," Spinoza writes; "for a man who is a prey to his emotions is not his own master but he is at the mercy of fortune, so much as that he is often compelled while seeing that which is better for him to follow that which is worse."[30]

An emotion Spinoza defines as a "confused idea." Our emotions are the product of a lack of clear understanding of the situation which confronts us. We feel strongly because we understand dimly. Only an immature individual kicks the chair he stumbles over; yet we are all equally immature in blaming our troubles upon the government, the communists, and the like. Our anger at other people is simply the result of our failure to understand the forces which make them act as they do. When we understand their action, and see the necessity which caused them to do as they do, we cease to be angry with them. "A passion ceases to be a passion as soon as we form a clear and distinct idea of it," Spinoza writes, "and the mind is subject to passions in inverse proportion to the number of adequate ideas it has."[31]

We escape from the bondage of passion not by doing what we want to do but by learning to act in accord with reason. It is only the man who knows what he is doing and why he is doing it that is free in the one meaningful sense of the word. The free man is the man who controls himself, the man whose conduct is controlled by reason.

> We readily see the difference between a man who is led solely by emotion or opinion, and a man who is led by reason. The former, whether he wants to or not, does those things of which he is entirely ignorant; but the latter is his own master and only does those things which he knows are of greatest importance in life and which he therefore desires above all else. I call the

> former, therefore, a slave and the latter a free man. . . . A free man is one who lives according to the dictates of reason alone; he is not led by fear but directly desires what is good. In other words, he strives to act, to live and to preserve his being in accordance with the principle of seeking his own true advantages.[32]

THE LIFE OF REASON

As Spinoza describes the manner of life to which reason leads a man, one can hardly fail to appreciate its appeal. Knowledge and understanding give life poise, perspective and power. It is the nature of reason to perceive things under the form of eternity (*sub specie aeternitatis*). The reasonable man understands the laws at work in the universe and his own place in the vast cosmic scheme of things. He sees how trivial are the things that once disturbed him, how absurd the ambitions that agitated him and brought him into conflict with others. He recognizes that his own good is inextricably bound up with the welfare of others. "Hence men who are governed by reason—that is, who seek what is useful to them in accord with reason—desire for themselves nothing which they do not also desire for the rest of mankind, and consequently are just, faithful and honorable in their conduct," Spinoza writes. "Therefore, men in so far as they live according to the dictates of reason, necessarily live always in harmony one with another." Indeed reason at its best leads us very close to what is usually taken to be good-will. "Minds are not conquered by force but by love and generosity," Spinoza points out. "He who lives according to the dictates of reason, endeavors, as far as possible, to repay the hatred, anger or contempt of others towards him with love and kindness. Hatred is increased by being reciprocated and can only be quenched by love."[33]

This is a high principle, reminding us of the words of a greater teacher who lived more than nineteen hundred years ago; but it is not an easy one to follow. So long as we lack perfect knowledge, the best thing for us to do, Spinoza advises in quite practical fashion, is to draw up a code of right conduct, commit it to memory, and apply it so far as we can to the situations we meet from day to day.

> For instance, we have laid down among the rules of life that hatred should be overcome with love or high-mindedness, and not met with hatred in return. Now, that this precept of reason may be always ready at hand in time of need, we should often think over the wrongs commonly committed by men, and meditate upon the way in which they may best be warded off by generosity. We should always bear in mind that which is good in every individual in order that we may always be determined to action by an emotion of pleasure. For instance, if a man sees that he is too keen in the pursuit of fame, let him think over its right use, the end for which it should be pursued and the means whereby he may attain it. Let him not think of

> its misuse, its emptiness, the fickleness of mankind and things of this sort of which no one thinks unless through a diseased mind. Indeed it is certain that those who covet fame the most are the ones who cry out loudest against its abuse and against the vanity of the world. Nor is this peculiar to the ambitious but is common to all who are ill-used by fortune or are infirm in mind. For we see that a poor man who is avaricious will talk incessantly of the abuse of wealth and of the vices of the rich; whereby he merely torments himself and shows the world that he is unable to bear with equanimity not only his own poverty but also the wealth of others. So also a man who has been ill received by a woman he loves thinks of nothing but the fickleness, faithlessness and other stock failings of the fair sex—all of which he forgets completely as soon as he regains the favor of his sweetheart. [On the other hand] he who would govern his emotions and appetite solely by the love of freedom strives, as far as he can, to gain a knowledge of the virtues and their causes, and to fill his mind with the joy which arises from the true knowledge of them. He will in no wise desire to dwell on men's faults or to carp at his fellows or to delight in a false exhibition of freedom. Whoever will diligently observe and practice these precepts, which are not difficult, will assuredly be able in a short time to direct most of his actions in accord with the dictates of reason,

our philosopher—perhaps too optimistically—concludes.[34]

THE INTELLECTUAL LOVE OF GOD

In such an attitude as this not only the life of reason but also the essence of religion is to be found, Spinoza feels. Religion he defines as the knowledge we possess of our oneness with the eternal, rational order of the universe and the willing acceptance of our part therein. Here the mind rises to "the high serenity of contemplation which sees all things as parts of an eternal order." We are freed from the struggle and strife that beset the ignorant man's life, and we enjoy at last the "blessedness" which all men in their hearts desire. We learn not only to love life but to love God. To this attitude, which combines at once the best in science, in morality and in religion, Spinoza gives the name "the intellectual love of God."

"Such a doctrine not only brings complete tranquility of spirit," he writes, "but also shows us in what our highest happiness and blessedness consists, namely in the knowledge of God alone by which we are led to act only as love and piety bid us." For blessedness is not the reward of virtue, but virtue itself. When we understand this, we "understand how far astray are those who expect to be decorated by God with high rewards for their virtue as if the service of God were not in itself happiness and perfect freedom."[35]

In Spinoza's view of religion as the intellectual love of God we find the culmination of rationalism as a philosophy of living. Not only must we be intelligent in order to be good but, for the consistent rationalist, we must be

intelligent in order to be religious. Only the intelligent man can serve God aright because only he knows the will of God, which finds expression in the rational laws of the universe.

> I have completed all that I intended to show regarding the power of the mind over the emotions, and the freedom of the mind. From what I have said it is evident how much stronger and better the wise man is than the ignorant man, who is driven only by lust alone. For the ignorant man, besides being agitated in many ways by external causes without even gaining true satisfaction of the spirit, lives as it were without consciousness of himself, of God, and of things, and just as soon as he ceases to suffer, he ceases to be. The wise man, on the contrary, is little disturbed in spirit, but conscious of a certain eternal necessity in himself, in God, and in things, he never ceases to be, but always possesses a true satisfaction of spirit. If indeed the way I have shown to lead to this seems exceedingly difficult, it may nevertheless be discovered. And clearly it must be very hard since it is so seldom found. For how could it be that salvation is neglected practically by all if it were close at hand and could be found without difficulty? But all things excellent are as difficult as they are rare.

With this calm and hopeful passage Spinoza's *Ethics* comes to an end. In it the essential spirit of the book and the philosopher finds eloquent expression.

SPINOZA'S UNRESOLVED DILEMMA

The philosophy of Spinoza provides us with what is perhaps the noblest effort of the human mind to derive a satisfactory way of life entirely from the rational spirit and conclusions of natural science. Whether dealing with human conduct or with religious faith, he finds the scientific view of human life and destiny the only acceptable one. He has developed a thoroughly scientific morality and a completely scientific religion, and he will have us make no compromises, no concessions to human hope, frailty, or need. To be good, to be blessed, to be free—all mean one and the same thing. They are the outcome of a life that is lived entirely in accord with reason, a life which understands the rational laws at work in the universe, gladly conforms to them, and thus finds the blessedness we all deeply long to possess. There seems little reason to believe that from the point of view of a strictly scientific rationalism any improvement upon Spinoza's position can be expected.

Yet at the heart of Spinoza's philosophy one finds an unavoidable dilemma, a dilemma that Spinoza himself never faces adequately. Between his ethics and his metaphysics there is a conflict that he does not resolve. As Spinoza understands the universe, all things are the necessary outcome of an eternal, rational order, which is God. All things flow from the nature of God with the

same necessity that the angles of a triangle equal two right angles. Nothing could possibly be any different from what it is. The misdeeds of the sinner are just as necessary an outcome of this rational order as are the achievements of the saint. The sinner could not be other than he is, nor could the saint. Yet it is the whole burden of Spinoza's ethics that the way of the saint, the man who has brought his life into conformity with the laws of God, is far better than the way of the sinner, who is torn by conflict and desire, and that the wise man should seek to achieve the high ideal of the saint rather than to remain in ignorant bondage to desire and passion. In presenting his ethical ideal, Spinoza apparently assumes that we are free to obtain knowledge, and thus to escape the bondage of ignorance and sin although, upon his own premises, what we know is just as completely determined as what we do.

If a determinism of this sort cuts the nerve of moral endeavor, Spinoza's scientific picture of the universe, similarly, makes vital and meaningful religious faith difficult. In his effort to reconcile science and religion, Spinoza has actually surrendered the fundamental convictions of religious faith to the rationalism of science. Although he uses the term God to describe the eternal order of the universe upon which man's life and destiny depend, this rational order seems to have little in common with the religious man's idea of God. It is not a reality that one can worship because of its goodness and moral perfection, nor is it a reality to which one can pray with any hope of success. There is at the heart of Spinoza's universe no concern for the moral ideals which man takes to be so essential in the good life, nor any sympathy for suffering human beings who need a divine Redeemer. Despite Spinoza's success in removing the bitterness and misunderstanding that has too often characterized the conflict between science and religion, the religious man can hardly accept his philosophy without surrendering to science most of what religion takes to be essential in its faith in God. As we examine an able and concrete presentation of what rationalism means when adopted as a way of life today, the difficulties as well as the values in the philosophy of Spinoza become increasingly apparent

7 · RATIONAL HUMANISM

Walter Lippmann

Despite the hedonistic spirit that has accompanied an increase in wealth and luxury in our own country during the past generation or two, rationalism has not lost its appeal. It is a philosophy that is still ably and persuasively advocated today, a philosophy to which men turn now as always when strength and fortitude are needed. No more provocative popular statement of rationalism as a philosophy of living for our generation is to be found than that in the pages of Walter Lippmann's *Preface to Morals*. Published in 1929, Lippmann's book was in part a reaction against the spirit of the 1920's. In that age of jazz and bootleg whiskey, it was widely believed that happiness was to be had in a perpetual round of self-indulgence and excess, a Cyrenaic pursuit of pleasure of the most blasé and uninhibited sort. In vigorous opposition to this point of view, Lippmann insists that a philosophy of living based upon reason rather than upon passion is the only one that can meet the tests of experience and common sense.

Lippmann prefers to call his philosophy *humanism* rather than rationalism. At the time he wrote, humanism was a popular term and was being used with a number of different meanings. One enterprising commentator counted seven varieties of humanism, as a matter of fact, and no single definition of the term has been generally accepted. Despite differences in emphasis among its adherents, however, the humanism so widely advocated a generation ago was in every instance concerned with values and ideals that were distinctly human as opposed to satisfactions that were either subhuman or superhuman. In an age given over to self-indulgence and sensual enjoyment, the *literary* humanists reemphasized the enduring worth of great art, literature, and philosophy, much

as had the humanists of the Renaissance in an earlier period. To enjoy life at its best we must live, they insisted, as men—not as animals. The *theological* humanists maintained that, in the achievement of the good life, we must rely upon human values and human effort rather than upon a superhuman or divine power. If man is to improve his own life or the character of the world in which he lives, he must do it by himself, in the opinion of these humanists. He cannot count upon God to look after him; and the sooner he realizes this, the better for all concerned.

Lippmann's *rational* humanism is in large measure a synthesis of these two points of view, with a somewhat greater emphasis upon the place of reason in the good life. To be human in the best sense, he insists, man must, above all else, be rational; the life of reason alone provides for us satisfactions that are dependable and enduring. Humanism, then, is used by Lippmann to designate a philosophy remarkably similar in spirit to the rationalism of Spinoza and the Stoics. His *Preface to Morals* contains a thoughtful restatement in contemporary terms of the position adopted and given wide popularity by the Stoics, and later developed with scientific accuracy and precision by Spinoza.

Walter Lippmann is known not primarily, of course, as a philosopher but rather as one of the ablest interpreters of the contemporary economic and political scene. His syndicated column, which has appeared for many years in the best newspapers throughout the country, is widely read by the more thoughtful among us; and in recent years Lippmann has published several clear and incisive studies of current economic and political problems. His *U. S. Foreign Policy,* which appeared in 1943, is a forthright indictment of the "illusion" of American isolationism; his *Good Society* (1937) is one of the best defenses of our capitalistic economy against its fascist and communist critics. Lippmann has always, however, been more than a commentator on current events. He has approached the social order with a rather clear-cut philosophy of his own and has consistently raised issues more fundamental and more searching than those in the usual newspaper columns. In 1913, when only three years out of college, he published his first book, *A Preface to Politics,* and this work soon became the Bible of the young liberals of that period. The next year he took an active part in founding the *New Republic,* an outstanding American journal of liberal opinion for more than three decades. Indeed Lippmann's philosophical interests go back to his college days at Harvard University, where, as a member of the famous class of 1910, he majored in philosophy during the years that Royce, James, and Santayana made Harvard the most distinguished center of philosophy ever known in America.

A Preface to Morals is unique among Lippmann's books. In it he turns aside from his professional writing, as it were, to formulate his own personal philosophy of living. He gives us here an account of the things in which he believes, an interpretation of the philosophy upon which he feels a man must base his

life if he hopes to achieve happiness. The book is not the creed of a professional philosopher but the philosophy of a professional journalist, of a man whose life has been spent observing and interpreting the course of human affairs. As such, it has an appeal and a practical value to ordinary men and women which the works of more eminent contemporary philosophers frequently lack. It makes clear, in terms that all can comprehend, the meaning of rationalism as a way of life today, and it forces us to face in specific and concrete fashion the issues of living with which both the Stoics and Spinoza were largely concerned.

THE ACIDS OF MODERNITY

As background for his own philosophy of living, Lippmann undertakes a searching diagnosis of the spiritual malady of modern civilization. What distinguishes our age, he declares, is its loss of religious certainty. Men and women today cannot turn, as did their fathers, to a revealed religion that is authoritative, that answers with finality their questions about morals and provides a sure foundation for their everyday living. They are no longer sure, as their fathers were, of finding God in the Bible or in church. Indeed, they are not sure about God at all.

> Among those who no longer believe in the religion of their fathers, some are proudly defiant, and many are indifferent. But there are also a few, perhaps an increasing number, who feel that there is a vacancy in their lives. This inquiry deals with their problem. It is not intended to disturb the serenity of those who are unshaken in the faith they hold, and it is not concerned with those who are still exhilarated by their escape from some stale orthodoxy. It is concerned with those who are perplexed by the consequences of their own irreligion.[1]

THE LOSS OF RELIGIOUS CERTAINTY

Modern men have not ceased to believe in God, in name at least, Lippmann admits, but they no longer believe in him simply and literally. They have defined and refined their ideas about God until they can no longer honestly say that God exists as they would say their neighbor exists. God has become for many liberal Christians today much like the God of Spinoza—just a principle with which to explain the facts of life; and the real difficulty—for the average man, at least—is that he can no longer understand the explanation. Such a God is merely a philosopher's God, Lippmann argues; for the purposes of practical religion, he is no God at all. Certainly this intellectually respectable concept is not the God of the Bible, the God to whom man has turned in time of his extremity. This is not the God of Genesis, who walked in the garden in the cool of the evening and talked with Adam and Eve. This is not the God of Exodus, who gave to Moses the

Ten Commandments. It is not the God of Jesus, who had compassion upon men as sheep that had gone astray. "A man cannot cheat about faith," Lippmann points out. "Either he has it in the marrow of his bones, or in a crisis, when he is distracted and in sorrow, there is no conviction there to support him. Without complete certainty religion does not offer genuine consolation."[2] And for modern man that complete certainty is gone. It is gone from the teaching of liberal churchmen as well as from the lives of ordinary men and women in our urban and industrial society.

> Many reasons have been advanced to explain why people do not go to church as much as they once did. Surely the most important reason is that they are not so certain that they are going to meet God when they go to church. If they had that certainty they would go. The most worldly would be in the front pews, and preachers would not have to resort so often to their rather desperate expedients to attract an audience. . . . The common man is an unconscious pragmatist: he believes because he is satisfied that his beliefs change the course of events. He would not be inspired to worship a god who merely contemplates the universe. Religion is not disinterested speculation but a very practical matter. It is concerned with man's well-being in this world and in an equally concrete world hereafter.[3]

The authoritative religious faith of our fathers, with its solid and dependable foundation, has been eaten away, Lippmann argues, by what he so aptly terms "the acids of modernity." Two characteristic aspects of modern life are identified as largely responsible for this situation. One is the spirit of science; the other the pervasive, if less obvious, influence of an urban and industrial society. And to both these forces at work in modern civilization we in America have been peculiarly susceptible. More than any other people, we have lost the stabilizing association with old landmarks and the staying influence of great tradition. As a people, Americans have been uprooted; they have crossed an ocean, and then spread across a new continent. Moreover, the great majority of Americans have risen in the world. During the past generation or two, they have moved not only out of their former culture but out of their original social status as well. An American who still lives in his grandfather's house feels almost as if he is living in a museum.

Most of the old landmarks in our American communities have eventually been carted away, as a matter of fact, to make room for "progress." As Lippmann remarks, "it takes time to learn to love the new gas station which stands where the wild honeysuckle grew." Indeed, it takes more than time. Faith grows well only as it is passed on from parents to children amid surroundings that do not change too greatly and so bear witness to a deep permanence in the order of the world. The sidewalks of a city are, in any case, a stony soil in which to transplant and nourish religious faith.

> The deep and abiding traditions of religion belong to the countryside. For it is there that man earns his daily bread by submitting to superhuman forces whose behavior he can only partially control. He is obviously part of a scheme that is greater than himself, subject to elements that transcend his powers and surpass his understanding. The city is an acid that dissolves this piety. In a modern city it is not easy to maintain that "reverent attachment to the sources of his being and the steadying of his life by that attachment." It is not natural to form reverent attachments to an apartment on a two-year lease, and to an imitation mahogany desk on the thirty-second floor of an office building. In such an environment piety becomes absurd, a butt for the facetious, and the pious man looks like a picturesque yokel or a stuffy fool.[4]

Religion, then, has ceased to provide guidance and direction for life in the America that Lippmann knows. One after another the church has lost the provinces in which it formerly was supreme. First business and politics, then art, and finally the home and family have declared their independence of its authority and set out to govern themselves. Thus the religious synthesis, the bond that once held human life together and gave it unity, direction, and purpose, has disappeared. The outcome, as Lippmann sees it, is not encouraging:

> Men now have freedom to do as they want, but they also have anarchy. There is no authority to give order to their desires. Morality has become a sort of traffic code, designed to keep as many desires as possible moving in different directions without too many violent collisions.

ON RECONCILING SCIENCE AND RELIGION

The prestige that once belonged to the church has now apparently passed to the scientists. Ours is an age that prides itself on being scientifically minded; the popular prestige of science today is very similar, indeed, to that once held by religion, Lippmann points out. In the past, the teachers of religion turned to miracles to demonstrate the power of God and his active intervention in human affairs. Even the New Testament provides this kind of evidence of Jesus' divinity. Today the church has ceased to produce such miracles for human good, and many liberal Christians have, like Spinoza, ceased to believe in them. It is to science, not religion, that men now turn for miracles, and the miracles of science in an atomic age seem not only inexhaustible but as impressive as any that religion ever dreamed of. The scientists, of course, avoid the term "miracle" for their achievements, but to the common man the word itself is unimportant. The scientists wield a power over the forces of nature that he does not understand but whose tangible results he cannot doubt. To him it is the scientists, not the saints, who seem in touch with the superhuman forces of the universe.

The authority of the scientists has thus become well-nigh irresistible. When men want the truth in our age, it is to science they turn, not to religion, Lippmann maintains. Where there is a conflict between the two—where science teaches one

thing and the Bible another—science invariably carries the greater conviction for the popular mind. Nor is the conflict between science and religion, as Lippmann interprets it, merely a matter of misunderstanding. He is not so optimistic on this point as Spinoza was three centuries ago. To him there seems no way of reconciling religion and the scientific spirit; the two appear to be fundamentally opposed. "The radical novelty of modern science," Lippmann writes, "lies precisely in the rejection of the belief, which is at the heart of all popular religion, that the forces which move the stars and atoms are contingent upon the preferences of the human heart." Modern science does not provide an account of the universe in which human destiny is of any real significance. It enables man to realize some of his hopes more successfully, but it offers no guarantee that the things he prizes most can ever be obtained. Thus science is no substitute for religion, as some of its disciples once urged us to believe. It leaves man alone in the world to shift for himself. For there is, in the scientific view of the universe, no Christian God, no heavenly father who is concerned with man's destiny and to whom he can turn when the forces of life overwhelm him. Like Lin Yutang, Lippmann feels that the acids of modernity have left man pretty much an orphan in the universe. He has no one upon whom to depend but himself. "There is a revolution here in the realm of the spirit," Lippmann points out. "We may describe it briefly by saying that whereas men once felt that they were living under the eye of an all-powerful spectator, today they are watched only by their neighbors and their own consciences."[5]

THEOCRACY AND HUMANISM

It is in the light of this provocative analysis of man's predicament in the modern world that Lippmann formulates his own philosophy of living. He himself has been deeply affected by the acids of modernity. The religious faith of the past he finds no longer tenable. Under that faith the moral problem for each man was essentially the same: in order to live righteously, his will must conform to the will of God. Men differed as to *how* this should be done, but they all agreed that it *should* be done. Not all men tried to do this, but all agreed that they ought to try. That conduct was right which men took to be right in the sight of God, regardless of how it seemed to them.

This is the essence of *theocracy*: the "rule of God" in human life and society The distinctions between good and evil, not only in personal conduct but in all human society, are here based upon laws established by a divine ruler in heaven. They are his commandments. By obedience man can obtain happiness. It is not man's province to question *why* God has established the particular rules that he has. The only important question is *what* he has commanded. In a prescientific and preindustrial age, the church answered this question to the general satisfaction of the common man, Lippmann agrees. But it is just this ancestral order

whose foundations have, in his own case, as in that of so many of his contemporaries, been irreparably dissolved by the acids of modernity.

To what faith, then, can such men and women turn?

> Insofar as men have now lost their belief in a heavenly king, they have to find some other ground for their moral choices than the revelation of his will. It follows necessarily that they must find the tests of righteousness wholly within human experience. The difference between good and evil must be a difference which men themselves recognize and understand. Happiness cannot be the reward of virtue; it must be the intelligible consequence of it. Such a morality may properly be called humanism, for it is centered not in superhuman but in human nature. When men can no longer be theists, they must, if they are civilized, become humanists. They must live by the premise that whatever is righteous is inherently desirable because experience will demonstrate its desirability. They must live, therefore, in the belief that the duty of man is not to make his will conform to the will of God but to the surest knowledge of the conditions of human happiness.[6]

ON THE ACHIEVEMENT OF MATURITY

When a man turns from the will of God as his guide in morals, and takes his own human desires and needs as his standard of conduct, the central issue that confronts him, Lippmann feels, is a choice between the pursuit of pleasure and the life of reason. "It is a deep conviction that happiness is possible," he writes, "and all inquiry into the foundations of morals turns ultimately upon whether man can achieve this happiness by pursuing his desires, or whether he must first learn to desire the kind of happiness which is possible." In recent years those who call themselves liberals in morals and in politics have taken the position that if only the external circumstances are favorable, happiness can normally be achieved. The essence of evil, from this liberal point of view, lies in not having an economy of abundance. What we need are jobs for all, with wages high enough to provide a decent standard of living and some of the comforts men want. It is not with the reform of desire but with the provision of greater opportunities for the fulfilment of desire that such liberals have been concerned. According to Lippmann, however, those who accept this liberal theory of life, and hope to find happiness in the pursuit of pleasure, ignore the testimony not merely of their maiden aunts but also of all the great teachers of wisdom. "It is written in many languages," he maintains, "and in the idiom of many different cultures that if man is to find happiness, he must reconstruct not merely his world, but, first of all, himself."[7]

MORALITY AND THE MORALISTS

We live in an age in which there is a severe reaction against the attitudes and the morals of those whom it is customary to describe as Puritans. This reaction,

however, is against a degenerate form of Puritanism, Lippmann maintains, "a disposition to be prim, prudish and pedantic," which associated itself with the rather preposterous notion "that maidens should be wan and easily frightened, that draperies and decorations should conceal the essential forms of objects, and that the good life had something to do with expurgated speech, with pale colors, and shadows and silhouettes, with the thin music of harps and soprano voices, with fig leaves and a general conspiracy to tell lies to children." As a result of this situation, the deep wisdom deposited in our moral ideals is obscured at present. We continue to use the language of morality, because there is no other which we can use, but the words are so hackneyed and so much a matter of convention that it is very hard, especially for young people, to realize that virtue is really good and sin really evil.

> Morality has become so stereotyped, so thin and verbal, so encrusted with pious fraud, it has been so much monopolized by the tender-minded and the sentimental, and made so odious by the outcries of foolish men and sour old women, that our generation has almost forgotten that virtue was not invented in Sunday Schools but derives originally from a profound realization of the character of human life.[8]

The trouble with the moralists, Lippmann believes, is that they fail to understand their times. They act as though men and women have a strong preference for immorality, whereas men and women today simply do not know what to prefer or why. While the moralists were busy insisting that conduct must conform to a code established generations ago, what really worried most people was how to adjust their conduct to the novel circumstances in an almost entirely different world. When people discovered that conventional morality seemed to demand a "return to usages which it was impossible to follow, even if it were desirable, there was a kind of tacit agreement to let the moralists be moral and to find other ways in which to describe the difference between good and bad, right and wrong."

The acids of modernity have, as a matter of fact, almost completely undermined the traditional moral convictions and sanctions which men previously accepted. Hence it is presumptuous, Lippmann feels, for the moralists today to issue moral commandments when nobody has authority to command; it is useless to command when nobody has the disposition to obey; and it is futile when nobody really knows exactly what to command.

> Ages when custom is unsettled are necessarily ages of prophecy. . . . The moralist cannot teach what is revealed; he must reveal what can be taught. He has to seek insight rather than to preach. The disesteem into which moralists have fallen is due at bottom to their failure to see that in an age like this one the function of the moralist is not to exhort men to be good but to elucidate what the good is. He must be able to show that goodness is victorious vitality and badness defeated vitality; that sin is the denial and

virtue the fulfilment of the promise inherent in the purposes of men. The good, said the Greek moralist, is "that which all men aim at"; we may perhaps take this to mean that the good is that which men would wish to do if they knew what they were doing.[9]

THE MEANING OF MATURITY

The trouble with most men and women is simply that they fail to grow up; they never attain that maturity of spirit upon which the success or failure of life depends. We all grow older, to be sure, but too frequently we do not grow up. The achievement of maturity has little to do with the acquiring of factual information, Lippmann points out. A university degree, even accurate scientific knowledge, is no guarantee of maturity; "the critical question is whether childish habits and expectations are to persist or are to be transformed." Maturity involves "the acquiring of a different sense of life, a different kind of intuition about the nature of things." The world of a child is like an enchanted island. His every expectation is cared for by fond parents. The labor that goes into procuring his food, clothing, and toys is wholly invisible to the child at first, and then is taken for granted without question for a long time thereafter. Only gradually does the truth come home to him that it requires much effort to satisfy his wants. It takes even longer for him to realize that not only does one not get what he wants by asking for it but that he cannot always be sure to get what he wants even by working for it. "It is not easy to accept the knowledge that desire, that prayer, that effort can be and often are frustrated, that in the nature of things there is much fumbling, trial and error, deadlock and defeat," Lippmann writes.[10]

The successful achievement of maturity depends, then, upon the breaking up and reconstruction of the habits and expectations that are appropriate only to the outlook of childhood. When a childish disposition is carried over into an adult environment, the symptoms are fairly evident. Life seems to such an individual a kind of conspiracy to make him happy or to make him miserable. He has a deep feeling "that life owes him something, that somehow it is the duty of the universe to look after him, and to listen sharply when he speaks to it," Lippmann writes. "The childish pattern appears also as a disposition to believe that he may reach out for anything in sight and take it, and that having gotten it nobody must under any circumstances take it away."[11] Finally, this childish pattern becomes a deep preference for not knowing the truth, a habitual desire to think of the world as he should prefer it, a determination that the facts shall conform to his wishes, and a deep resentment when they do not.

Only as we discover that our wishes have little or no authority in the world, only as we see the necessity that is in the nature of things, do we begin to approach maturity, Lippmann maintains. The lesson of this experience is one which none of us likes to face and to which few ever wholly accommodate themselves. But when we begin to see that things no longer obey our wishes, we

realize, if we are mature, that we cannot let our wishes become too deeply involved in things. When we can no longer count on possessing whatever we may happen to want, we must learn to want what we can possess. For Lippmann, then, the mature man is the one who has ceased to expect anything of the world which it cannot give. He has what he wants because he has learned to want what he can have. He has learned to possess things not by grasping them for himself but by understanding them.

> Then he has conquered mortality in the only way that mortal man can conquer it. . . . To be able to follow what the heart desires without coming into collision with the stubborn facts of life is the privilege of the utterly innocent and the utterly wise. It is the privilege of the infant and of the sage who stand at the two poles of experience; of the infant because the world ministers to his heart's desire and of the sage because he has learned what to desire.[12]

Once we understand the meaning of maturity, it becomes clear that the life of reason demands of us a much greater control of appetite and desire than most men are willing to recognize. "Yet it is a fact, and a most arresting one," Lippmann points out, "that in all the great religions, and in all the great moral philosophies from Aristotle to Bernard Shaw, it is taught that one of the conditions of happiness is to renounce some of the satisfactions which men normally crave." With minor variations this is a common theme in the philosophy of an Athenian aristocrat like Plato, an Indian nobleman like Buddha, and a humble Jew like Spinoza.

The Christian church, in its periods of greatest vigor and influence, has always stressed the necessity of self-denial and control of one's appetites, and has persistently associated the good life with some form of ascetic discipline and renunciation. Often the asceticism enjoined by religion in the past has not been rational, Lippmann feels. The condemnation of dancing, of card playing, and of the theater, which was quite common among certain Protestant denominations a generation ago, carried with it no clear understanding of the ends to be achieved by this control of desire and, as a result, did not prove effective. When perverted and misunderstood, asceticism can, indeed, become quite unlovely and unappealing. There is this record, for example, of Bishop Asbury, the founder of American Methodism, left by a friend who knew him well:

> I never saw him indulge in even an innocent pleasantry. His was the solemnity of an apostle; it was so interwoven with his conduct that he could not put off the gravity of the bishop either in the parlour or the dining room. He was a rigid enemy to ease; hence the pleasures of study and the charms of recreation he alike sacrificed to the more sublime work of saving souls.[13]

It is against asceticism of this sort that our age has revolted, and, if it meant only this, asceticism might be dismissed as little more than an historical curiosity, Lippmann admits. The monasticism of the Middle Ages, however, provides a much better example of the demand of the church that a man must renounce his worldly desires in order to achieve the good life. Even here the moral insight was not perfect and the results were confusing.

> Yet only an uncomprehending person can fail to see that the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience proceeded from a profound, if partial, understanding of human nature and its most perfect harmony. Plainly all manner of disorder both in society and in the individual result from greed, uncontrolled sexual desire, arrogance, and imperiousness. That was so plain to the early Christians, and on the other hand it was so little plain how those powerful passions could be civilized, that the monastics in effect gave up and attempted to excise them entirely from their natures. In this they did not succeed.[14]

In the lives of all saints and heroes, of pioneers and patriots, however, we find a mature and rational asceticism which not only avoids the errors of monasticism but likewise continues to elicit the admiration of mankind. Lippmann's portrayal of the spirit of great leaders such as these is as graphic as it is discerning:

> They are poor. They live dangerously. By ordinary standards they are extremely uncomfortable. They give up ease, property, pleasure, pride, place, and power to attain things which are transcendent and rare. They live for ends which seem to yield them no profit, and they are ready to die, if need be, for that which the dead can no longer enjoy. And yet, though there is nothing in our current morality to justify their unworldliness, we continue to admire them greatly.

It is asceticism of this kind that the great teachers of wisdom, and especially men like the Stoics and Spinoza, have taken to be the foundation of morals. "When asceticism is rational, it is a discipline of the mind and body to fit men for the service of an ideal," Lippmann writes. "Its purpose is to harden and to purify, to suppress contrary passions, and thus to intensify the passion for the ideal."[15]

VIRTUE AS THE RATIONALIST SEES IT

Virtue is, in general, the kind of action that seems highly desirable yet which a man cannot be depended upon to do by himself. It is action that is esteemed by God, or urged by public opinion, or dictated by a man's own conscience. There is no virtue if a man eats when he is hungry or goes to bed when he is sick. These immediate needs he can be expected to care for of his own accord. There are also many little virtues which are simply historical accidents. Among these Lippmann

includes such things as not playing cards, or not drinking wine, or not eating meat. But the cardinal virtues, the virtues that have been held in high esteem by every great civilization, are such things as courage, honor, loyalty, justice, temperance, magnanimity, and love.

The common element of all virtue, Lippmann argues, is the ability to transcend one's ordinary impulses. "Courage, for example, is the willingness to face situations from which it would be more or less natural to run away," he points out. It is not courageous to run risks without knowing what one is doing. The drunken driver of an automobile, the boy playing with a stick of dynamite, each takes risks as great as those of the hero on the field of battle. But they do not know the risks; they do not have to conquer the natural fear of facing such risks, and their conduct is thus without courage. "Because courage consists in transcending normal fears, the highest kind of courage is cold courage; that is to say, courage in which the danger has been fully realized and there is no emotional excitement to conceal the danger." The courage of a man who faces almost certain death on the field of battle is magnificent. We are thrilled over it. But the courage of the four soldiers at Walter Reed Hospital who let themselves be used for the study of typhoid fever was certainly greater. They knew what danger they were facing, and they could have changed their minds. There was no martial music, no fervor of patriotism, no contagion of the group, no comrades to avenge. "Their courage was as near to absolute courage as it is possible to imagine."[16]

When one understands the nature of courage, he understands all the important virtues, Lippmann believes. Courage of this kind "embodies the principle of all virtue, which is to transcend the immediacy of desire and to live for ends which are transpersonal," he writes. A man may be said to be virtuous in so far as he is able to overcome the impulses of immaturity, to turn his back upon the things that he wants to do, to forget himself in the service of a rational ideal. "There are many virtues in the catalogues of the moralists," Lippmann concludes, "and they have many different names. But they have a common principle, which is detachment from that which is apparently pleasant or unpleasant, and they have a common quality, which is disinterestedness, and they spring from a common source, which is maturity of character."[17]

Here, then, is the cardinal principle of rational humanism, the principle by which the intelligent man must live if he is to meet successfully the demands of our world. The principle itself, by whatever name we know it—whether virtue, or asceticism, or maturity—is not a new one, Lippmann points out. "It has been discovered and rediscovered by shrewd observers of human nature for at least three thousand years." It is exactly what Spinoza and the Stoics insisted upon. It is what Confucius and Buddha taught.

> To become detached from one's passions and to understand them consciously is to render them disinterested. A disinterested mind is harmonious with itself and with reality. If the principle of a theocratic culture is de-

pendence, obedience, conformity in the presence of a superhuman power which administers reality, the principle of humanism is detachment, understanding, and disinterestedness in the presence of reality itself.[18]

HIGH RELIGION IN THE MODERN WORLD

This principle is, for Lippmann, the core not only of moral maturity but of high religion as well. With Spinoza, he makes a fundamental distinction in his philosophy between popular religion and what he terms "high religion"—that is, the religion of the mature man in the modern world. The acids of modernity, he believes, have eaten away the foundations of the old supernaturalism; a mature religion must be humanistic. It can no longer demand faith in God or obedience to his will; it must express, instead, the high ideals and purposes of the rational human spirit.

Popular religion has always and everywhere been theocratic in principle, Lippmann recognizes, but this popular faith does not in his opinion actually reflect the deepest insights of the greatest teachers of religion. "Their concern was not to placate the will of God but to alter the will of man," he writes. "This alteration of the human will they conceive as good not because God commands it but because it is intrinsically good for man, because by the test of experience it yields happiness, serenity, whole-heartedness." The acids of modernity have corroded popular theocratic religion, with its emphasis upon miracles and a supernatural deity, but the deeper religion of the spirit has not been affected by those forces in modern life, Lippmann maintains; indeed the enduring significance of such high religion has been made more apparent: "The real effect of modernity upon religion, therefore, is to make the religion which was once the possession of an aristocracy of the spirit the only possible kind of religion for all modern men."[19]

"I venture to suggest," Lippmann concludes, "that the function of high religion is to reveal to men the quality of mature experience, *that high religion is a prophecy and an anticipation* of what life is like when desire is in perfect harmony with reality. It announces the discovery that men can enter into the realm of the spirit when they have outgrown all childishness." This is what religion meant to Spinoza. It was what Confucius and Buddha were seeking. It is the only kind of religion that can be accepted in our scientific age, Lippmann believes. So long as it means getting one's soul to heaven, salvation cannot appeal to men trained in the sciences; they no longer accept an other-worldly outlook, in which a superhuman power controls their destiny. "To be saved, in the sense which the sages had in mind, is by conversion, education, and self-discipline to have achieved a certain quality and harmony of the passions. Then the good life is possible," Lippmann writes.[20] But this makes great demands upon us; it demands a genuine aristocracy in the spirit, a view of life that is mature, controlled by reason rather than dominated by passion.

When high religion is thus interpreted, a new attitude toward the problem of evil becomes possible. The greatest of all perplexities in theology is to explain how a good God can allow all the suffering and evil in the world—provided, of course, that he is able to do anything about it. And if he cannot, then how can such a being be thought of as God? This was the problem with which Spinoza and the Stoics wrestled, and Lippmann's approach is essentially the same as theirs. It is also, he maintains, the view of the author of the Book of Job, one of the great and profound books in the Old Testament.

Once we see, with Spinoza and the Book of Job, that the plan of the universe is not what we naïvely wish it were, there is no longer a "problem of evil." The original difficulty arises because we impute to the universe itself, or to God who rules it, purposes like our own. When our expectations are not realized, we are not only disappointed but perplexed. But the mature man no longer expects the universe to minister to his desires. He recognizes, instead, his own responsibility to understand what the order of nature is like and to make his desires conform to this reality. The problem of evil, then, becomes a practical rather than a theoretical one. "It is the problem of how to remove evil and of how to bear the evil which cannot be removed." Our concern is shifted from argument and explanation to the attempt to discover ways of equipping men better to overcome the hardships of life and to realize its desirable possibilities. This is the lesson of high religion.

In this new approach, moreover, there is also a radically different concept of the nature of evil itself. It becomes clear that "evil is not a quality of things as such. It is a quality of our relation to them," Lippmann writes. "Pain is an evil only if someone suffers, and there are those to whom pain is pleasure and most men's evil their good. For things are neutral, and evil is a certain way of experiencing them. To realize this is to destroy the awfulness of evil."[21] Secure in this understanding, the mature man is able to face life undisturbed by the pains and fears which so upset those around him.

REASON AND THE GOOD SOCIETY

The life of reason makes its greatest appeal, without any question, to men as individuals. The exponents of rationalism all point to its large social significance, but few of them have undertaken to develop in detail these social implications. A beginning in this direction was made by the Stoics and Spinoza, but only a beginning. The Stoic convictions about a rational society were commendable but vague and theoretical at best. Spinoza died just as he was outlining the political implications of his philosophy. Lippmann's major professional concern, on the other hand, has been with social issues; if any rationalist is in a position to formulate for us a concrete and practical social philosophy, surely he is. As a

newspaper columnist he for years provided a day-to-day interpretation of the contemporary economic and political scene. Some years after writing his *Preface to Morals*, he published an influential work entitled *The Good Society*, in which one finds an incisive treatment of such controversial issues as communism, fascism, and the Roosevelt "New Deal," together with a thoughtful defense of our capitalistic economy. And in such more recent works as *The Method of Freedom* and *U.S. Foreign Policy*, Lippmann continues this illuminating analysis of our current social problems. The rational premises upon which his social philosophy rests, however, are actually more apparent in the concluding section of *A Preface to Morals* than in these later works, in which a discussion of highly controversial issues inevitably tends to distract one's attention from the underlying principles involved. In *A Preface to Morals*, on the other hand, Lippmann presents much more clearly and directly the social philosophy to which as a rationalist he is committed. For our purposes, therefore, this still remains his most significant volume.

BUSINESS IN THE GOOD SOCIETY

Although one of the ablest defenders of our capitalist economy, Lippmann is keenly aware also of defects in it that need to be remedied. The naïve capitalist, he points out, is to all intents and purposes a Cyrenaic hedonist in his philosophy of living. Early capitalism in our country, for example, reflected the kind of immaturity in which a man thinks he can take anything he wants and keep it for himself. One who adopts this philosophy fails completely to see that he must actually make his desires conform to the rational laws of the world, of which he is but one small part. "The employing class in the early days of capitalism honestly believed, and indeed its less enlightened members still believe to this very day," Lippmann writes, "that somehow the general welfare will be served by trusting naïvely to the acquisitive instincts of the employing capitalist."[22] This philosophy they inherited from Adam Smith, whose *Wealth of Nations* was the gospel of modern capitalism for generations, but it has become abundantly clear that such a naïve hedonism will not work in social life any better than it does as an individual philosophy of living. Peace, prosperity, and happiness did not ensue from the unrestrained pursuit of profit by the capitalist, Lippmann points out. When natural sources of oil, coal, lumber, and the like were ruthlessly exploited to gain wealth for their possessors, the result was a shocking waste of irreplaceable social resources. When labor was treated as a commodity to be bought at the lowest price and discarded when used up, a whole chain of social evils in the form of child labor, exploitation of women, sweat shops, unemployment, and recurrent depression was the result. When each banker was permitted to do what seemed to him most immediately profitable, a succession of disastrous inflations and deflations of credit were produced.

The economic history of the last seventy-five years can in large measure, indeed,

be read as an exposure of the inadequacy of this naïve hedonism in social philosophy, Lippmann maintains. It has become more and more apparent that an intricate and delicately poised industrial machine cannot be operated successfully by immature men snatching competitively at profits. The notion that it could be was a simple-minded delusion. As soon as it passed out of the early phase of rough exploitation in virgin territory, modern industry became unmanageable when controlled by naïvely competitive and acquisitive men. We are witnessing at present the birth pangs of an industrial philosophy that will really suit the new machine technology, Lippmann feels, but it is not in the reforms advocated so passionately by the New Dealers that he sees hope for a better society. These proposals seem to be designed either to coerce or to abolish the present masters of industry, and invariably assume that the industrialists not only are unregenerate but will remain unregenerate. "The whole effort to police capitalism assumes that the capitalist can be civilized only by means of the police," Lippmann writes. "The trouble with this theory is that there is no way to be sure that the policemen will themselves be civilized. It presupposes that somehow politicians and office-holders will be wise enough and disinterested enough to make business men do what they would not otherwise do."[23] Lippmann finds no convincing evidence that such is the case.

The revolutionary programs sponsored by the socialists during the past half century provide, in his opinion, equally little hope or insight. Their basic thesis is that the capitalist-employers can not be policed effectively and should be destroyed. The command of industry is then to be transferred to socialist officials who, hired by the state and deprived of all incentive for personal profit, can be counted on to administer the industrial machine disinterestedly. The trouble with this theory, Lippmann points out, lies in its assumption that socialist officials will automatically become mature and disinterested men when the temptation of direct personal pecuniary profit is removed. Actually, human nature does not work that way. "The socialists are right, as the early Christians were right, in their profound distrust of the acquisitive instinct as the dominant motive in society," he writes. But for an immature individual, removing one temptation simply turns attention to a dozen others. Officials who have no temptation to personal profit will easily become corrupt or lethargic or officious. Corrupt, stupid, grasping officials will make at least as big a muddle of a socialistic economy as stupid, selfish, and acquisitive employers can make of capitalism. There is no escaping the elementary truth, Lippmann maintains, that the administration of industry depends finally, under any system, upon the character of the administrator. Men who are immature, who have not themselves become disinterested and informed, can produce only confusion and chaos, no matter what the system.

When he published *A Preface to Morals* (1929), Lippmann felt that there were at work forces compelling the leaders of industry themselves to evolve more adequate forms of self-control. Our industrial machine has become so

complex that it is impossible for democratic politicians to police it or for socialist government officials to run it. But this very complexity makes it unmanageable also by businessmen who have not learned to understand its fundamental laws and to work in harmony with those laws rather than in accord with their own personal desires and ambitions. "It is my impression that when machine industry reaches a certain scale of complexity it exerts such pressure upon the men who run it that they cannot help socializing it," Lippmann writes. Leaders of industry are subjected to a kind of economic survival of the fittest under which only those can survive who see the laws at work in the domain of economics and work in harmony with them. "A mature industry, because it is too subtly organized to be run by naïvely passionate men, puts a premium upon men whose characters are sufficiently matured to make them respect reality and to discount their own prejudices."[24]

The strength as well as the weakness of modern civilization lies in its complexity and its sensitiveness, Lippmann believes. "The effect of bad decisions is so quickly felt, the consequences are so inescapably serious, that corrective action is almost immediately set in action," he points out. "A simple society like Russia can let its railroads go gradually to wrack and ruin, but a complex society like London or New York is instantly disorganized if the railroads do not run on schedule."[25] Business, however, must evolve its own controls in line with the necessities of industry itself. The ideals of industry must be discovered in the necessities of industrial life, not imposed from without, Lippmann insists. Then we can consciously pursue these ideals, knowing that we are not vainly trying to impose our own prejudices and desires upon society but are working in harmony with the laws of the world in which we live. Then the businessman will be able to regain his freedom from external control and have the only kind of liberty that is possible, the freedom of the man who has transformed his desires by an understanding of the necessities of his situation.

POLITICIANS AND STATESMEN

The development of an industrial philosophy that fits modern machine industry, difficult as it has been, has proved less arduous, in Lippmann's opinion, than the discovery of a political philosophy that fits the modern state. "Even the best political thinking is notably inferior in realism and in pertinence to the economic thinking which now plays so important a part in the direction of industry," he writes. "Nobody takes political science very seriously, for nobody is convinced that it is a science or that it has any important bearings on politics."[26] The discussion of politics would be clarified by giving separate meanings to two very common words, politician and statesman, Lippmann suggests. In popular usage there is a vague distinction. To call a man a statesman is a high compliment; to call him a politician is, if not an insult, at least to some degree disparaging. The effort to clarify these implications, which are dimly to be seen in the popular

mind, throws a good deal of light upon the meaning of rationalism as a political philosophy.

The politician Lippmann defines as a man who seeks to gratify some particular interests and desires. As a leader of a political party, he may try to enlist the support of others to his cause by making specific pledges to them. If that is not possible, he may employ some form of "deception," under which Lippmann includes the whole art of political propaganda whether it be half truths, ambiguities, direct lies, calculated silence, red herrings, slogans, showmanship, hokum, or buncombe. For these, one and all, he feels, are methods of preventing a disinterested inquiry and seeking instead to further the aims of some particular group at the expense of the common good.

> When we think offhand of a politician we think of a man who works for a partial interest. At worst it is his own pocket. At best it may be his party, his class, or an institution with which he is identified. We never feel that he can or will take into account all the interests concerned, and because bias and partisanship are the qualities of his conduct, we feel, unless we are naïvely afflicted with the same bias, that he is not to be trusted too far.[27]

When, then, does a man cease being a politician and begin to be a statesman? When he stops trying merely to satisfy the momentary wishes of his constituents, Lippmann maintains, and sets out instead to help them realize that their interests must fit the facts of the political order and be harmonized with the interests of others. When a man, that is, gives up a kind of naïve political hedonism and moves over into the life of reason in politics, he begins to manifest the spirit of the statesman. The true statesman is the man whose outlook is elevated sufficiently above the conflict of party interests to enable him to see and to adopt a course of action which is in accord with the realities of the political situation.

> The politician says: "I will give you what you want." The statesman says: "What you think you want is this. What it is possible for you to get is that. What you really want, therefore, is the following." The politician stirs up a following, the statesman leads it. The politician, in brief, accepts unregenerate desire at its face value and either fulfills it or perpetrates a fraud; the statesman reeducates desire by confronting it with the reality, and so makes possible an enduring adjustment of interests within the community.
>
> The chief element in the art of statesmanship under modern conditions is an ability to penetrate from the naïve self-interest of each group to its permanent and real interest. It is a difficult art which requires great courage, deep sympathy, and a vast amount of information. That is why it is so rare. But when a statesman is successful in converting his constituents from a childlike pursuit of what seems interesting to a realistic view of their interests, he receives a kind of support which the ordinary glib politician can never hope for. . . . His hold on the people is enduring because he promises nothing which he cannot achieve; he proposes nothing that turns out to be

> a fake. Sooner or later the politician, because he deals in unrealities, is found out. Then he either goes to jail; or he is tolerated cynically as a picturesque and amiable scoundrel; or he retires and ceases to meddle with the destinies of men. The words of a statesman prove to have value because they express not the desires of the moment, but the conditions under which desires can actually be adjusted to reality. . . . Often, therefore, the great statesman is bound to act boldly in advance of his constituents. When he does this he stakes his judgment as to what the people will in the end find to be good against what the people happen ardently to desire. This capacity to act upon the hidden realities of a situation in spite of appearances is the essence of statesmanship. It consists in giving the people not what they want but what they will learn to want. It requires the courage which is possible only in a mind that is detached from the agitations of the moment. It requires the insight which comes only from an objective and discerning knowledge of the facts, and a high and imperturbable disinterestedness.[28]

Few can quarrel with the political implications of rationalism as here outlined so effectively. What we need is more leaders for whom reason, not desire, is the guiding principle. Yet Lippmann himself is forced to admit that the way of the statesman is difficult in a democracy. It is not certain that anyone can be elected to office without employing some of the tricks of the politician. A man may have to be something of a politician to be successful when all the adult population has the right to vote. "It may be," Lippmann writes, "that statesmanship, in the sense in which I am using it, cannot occupy the whole attention of any public man. It is true at least that it never does." This statement was made before Franklin D. Roosevelt had come to occupy the White House; there were many who later defended Roosevelt's shrewd combination of the able statesman and the practical politician on essentially the same grounds.

LOVE AS THE RATIONALIST SEES IT

Business and politics seem unlikely soil in which to cultivate the spirit of reason, but one must admit that thus far Lippmann has done a remarkably successful job in building a social philosophy upon the foundations of rationalism. Love and matrimony, however, appear an even less promising area. If Lippmann can succeed in defending with conviction the life of reason here, he will certainly justify his place among the abler exponents of the rationalistic philosophy. It is worth noting, therefore, that some critics have suggested that the best section in *A Preface to Morals* is the one devoted to "Love in the Great Society." Lippmann himself admits that never before has hedonism as a principle governing the relation of the sexes had conditions so favorable for its successful expression.

> To be a successful hedonist a man must have the opportunity to seek his pleasures without fear of any kind. Theodorus of Cyrene, who taught about 310 B.C., saw that clearly, and therefore to release men from fear openly denied the Olympian gods. But the newest hedonism has had an even better

> prospect than the classical: it finds men emancipated not only of all fear of divine authority and human custom but of physical and social consequences as well. If the pursuit of pleasure by carefree men were the way to happiness, hedonism ought, then, to be proving itself triumphant in the modern world.[29]

This favorable situation for the spirit of hedonism in the field of love and the relation of the sexes has arisen, Lippmann feels, largely because of circumstances inherent in our modern ways of living.

> Until quite recently, the main conventions of sex were enforced first by the parents and then by the husband through their control over the life of the woman. The main conventions were: first, that she should not encourage or display any amorous inclinations except where there was practical certainty that the young man's intentions were serious; second, that when she was married to the young man she submitted to his embraces only because the Lord somehow failed to contrive a less vile method of perpetuating the species. There is ample testimony in the outcries of moralists that even in the olden days these conventions were not perfectly administered. But they were sufficiently well administered to remain the accepted conventions, honored even in the breach. It was possible, because of the way people lived, to administer them.
>
> The woman lived a sheltered life. That is another way of saying that she lived under the constant inspection of her family. She lived at home. She worked at home. She met young men under the zealous chaperonage of practically the whole community. No doubt, couples slipped away occasionally and more went on than was known or acknowledged. But even then there was a very powerful deterrent against illicit relationships. This deterrent was the fear of pregnancy. That in the end made it almost certain that if a secret affair were consummated it could not be kept secret and that terrible penalties would be enacted. In the modern world effective chaperonage has become impracticable and the fear of pregnancy has been virtually eliminated by the very general knowledge of contraceptive methods.[30]

The revolution we have witnessed during the past generation in the field of sex morality turns largely upon the fact that the external control of the chastity of woman is becoming impossible, Lippmann believes. "Nobody knows whether the conversation about sex [today] reflects more promiscuity or less hypocrisy," he writes. "But what everybody must know is that sexual conduct, whatever it may be, is regulated personally and not publicly in modern society. If there is restraint, it is, in the last analysis, voluntary; if there is promiscuity, it can be quite secret."[31]

THE NEW HEDONISM

Accepting what they consider the logic of birth control, the advocates of the new hedonism are contending that the main purpose of sex is the pursuit of pleasure.

With this in mind, they attempt "to distinguish between parenthood as a vocation involving public responsibility, and love as an art, pursued privately for the sake of happiness." Their actual proposals go by a great variety of names—free love, trial marriage, companionate marriage, and the like. When these proposals are examined, however, it is evident that they all take birth control as their major premise, and then deduce from it some or all of the logical consequences. Few of the new hedonists have been as forthright and uncompromising as Bertrand Russell, but he has stated clearly the conclusion implicit in their position.

> My own view is that the state and the law should take no notice of sexual relations apart from children, and that no marriage ceremony should be valid unless accompanied by a medical certificate of the woman's pregnancy. But when once there are children, I think that divorce should be avoided except for very grave cause. I should not regard physical infidelity as a very grave cause and should teach people that it is to be expected and tolerated but should not involve the begetting of illegitimate children—not because illegitimacy is bad in itself, but because a home with two parents is best for children. I do not feel that the main thing in marriage is the feeling of parents for each other; the main thing is cooperation in bearing children.[32]

At this point Lippmann believes the new hedonism to be most vulnerable. "It is, I think, to the separation of parenthood as a vocation from love as an end in itself that the moralist must address himself," he writes. "For this is the heart of the problem: to determine whether this separation, which birth control has made feasible and which law can no longer prevent, is in harmony with the conditions of human happiness."[33] For a generation the new hedonists have been able to carry on their pursuit of pleasure unimpeded either by the convictions of religion or the conventions of society. It is desirable, therefore, to examine the outcome in their own experience and in their philosophy of living. That outcome is most clearly and unmistakably reported, Lippmann feels, by those novelists, such as Aldous Huxley, Ernest Hemingway, and James Joyce, who describe the conduct of the more advanced set that is experimenting with life. Do these writers say that the new hedonists have found happiness in their freedom? Well, hardly. Instead of the gladness which was promised by such men as Bertrand Russell, Havelock Ellis, and C. E. M. Joad, the characters in their novels seem to have found the disillusionment and boredom which Schopenhauer so clearly saw as the outcome of the unrestrained satisfaction of desire.

Joseph Wood Krutch writes of these individuals,

> Absorbed in the pursuit of sexual satisfaction, they never find love, and they are scarcely aware that they are seeking it, but they are far from content with themselves. In a generally devaluated world they are eagerly endeavoring to get what they can in the pursuit of satisfactions which are

> sufficiently instinctive to retain inevitably a modicum of animal pleasure, but they cannot transmute that simple animal pleasure into anything else. They themselves not infrequently share the contempt with which their creator regards them, and nothing can be less seductive, because nothing could be less glamorous, than the description of the debaucheries born of nothing except a sense of the emptiness of life.[34]

If you start with the belief that love is no more than the pleasure of the moment, is it really surprising, Lippmann asks, that it yields only a momentary pleasure? The trouble with this new hedonism, as with hedonism in the past, lies in its failure to read aright the nature of human life and the conditions of human happiness. The art of love, as described by the hedonist, is supposed to stimulate and liberate all our finer activities, both physical and psychic. "I take this to mean," Lippmann writes, "that when a man and a woman are successfully in love, their whole activity is energized and victorious. They walk better, their digestion improves, they think more clearly, their secret worries drop away, the world is fresh and interesting, and they can do more than they dreamed that they could do. Love of this sort can grow: it is not, like youth itself, a moment that comes and is gone and remains only a memory of something which cannot be recovered. It can grow because it has something to grow upon and to grow with; it is not contracted and stale because it has for its object, not the mere relief of physical tension, but all the objects with which the two lovers are concerned."[35]

What most men and women are necessarily concerned with, however, is earning a living, managing a household, rearing children, finding recreation. If the art of love is to stimulate and enrich their lives, it is these prosaic activities which it must stimulate. If you make parenthood a separate vocation, isolate love from the hard realities of living, and say that it must be spontaneous and carefree, what have you done? You have separated it from all the activities that it ought to stimulate and liberate.

> You have made love spontaneous but empty, and you have made home-building and parenthood efficient, responsible and dull. . . . Mates who are not lovers will not really cooperate, as Mr. Bertrand Russell thinks they should, in bearing children; they will be distracted, insufficient, and worst of all they will be merely dutiful. Lovers who have nothing to do but love each other are not really to be envied; love and nothing else very soon is nothing else. The emotion of love, in spite of the romantics, is not self-sustaining; it endures only when lovers love many things together, and not merely each other. It is this understanding that love cannot successfully be isolated from the business of living which is the enduring wisdom of the institution of marriage.[36]

Our ideas about love and marriage have been too largely shaped, Lippmann feels, by the popular romantic outlook of the nineteenth century, according to which marriages are made in heaven, compatibility is instinctive, and happy

unions are in the final analysis fortunate accidents in which two people who happen to suit each other also happen to meet each other. This romantic view of love has, in Lippmann's opinion, been the cause of much unhappiness.

> The mysterious glow of passion is accepted as a sign that the great coincidence has occurred; there is a wedding and soon, as the glow of passion cools, it is discovered that no instinctive and preordained affinity is present. At this point the wisdom of popular romantic marriages is exhausted. There is nothing left, then, but to grin and bear a miserably dull and nagging fate, or to break off and try again. The deep fallacy of the conception is in the failure to realize that compatibility is a process and not an accident, that it depends upon the maturing of instinctive desire by adaptation to the whole nature of the other person and to the common concern of the pair of lovers.[37]

THE ENDURING WISDOM OF MARRIAGE

In the eyes of the rationalist, the romantic theory of love is actually an indication of immaturity. It reflects the infantile belief that the success of love depends upon satisfactions which the other person provides. In childlike fashion, the lover expects his mistress to supply him with happiness. But the mature man knows that in the adult world such an expectation is false. It is what lovers themselves do about their marriage, not whom they happen to marry, that is decisive for their happiness. The wisdom of marriage, as a matter of fact, reflects an extremely unsentimental view of lovers and their passions. Its assumptions, when frankly recognized, are apt to be horrifying to those brought up in the romantic tradition. "The convention of marriage rests on an interpretation of human nature which does not confuse the subjective feeling of the lovers that their passion is unique, with the brutal but objective fact that, had they never met, each of them would in all probability have found a lover who was just as unique," Lippmann writes.[38] It assumes that, given an initial attraction, a common social background, common responsibilities, and the conviction that the relationship is permanent, compatibility in marriage can normally be achieved. Yet it would be not only foolish but cruel to underestimate the enormous difficulty of achieving successful marriage under modern conditions.

> For with the dissolution of authority and compulsion, a successful marriage depends wholly upon the capacity of the man and the woman to make it successful. They have to accomplish wholly by understanding and sympathy and disinterestedness of purpose what was once to a very large measure achieved by habit, necessity and the absence of any practicable alternative. It takes two persons to make a successful marriage in the modern world, and that fact more than doubles its difficulty.[39]

Indeed it takes two mature persons—so there is little wonder that the divorce rate continues to climb.

It is the convention of marriage, however, and not the proposals of the new hedonism, that correctly interprets human experience, Lippmann maintains. The ideal which would separate love as an art from parenthood as a vocation is bound to be self-defeating; it does not provide the conditions under which lasting happiness can be achieved. In the understanding that love cannot successfully be isolated from the business of living lies the enduring wisdom of the institution of marriage. Those who uphold the ideal of marriage as a full partnership maintain that "in the home made by a couple who propose to see it through, there are provided the essential conditions under which the passions of men and women are most likely to become mature, and therefore harmonious and disinterested."

> The convention of marriage will survive in the modern world not as a rule of law imposed by force, for that is now, I think, become impossible. It will not survive as a moral commandment with which the elderly can threaten the young. They will not listen. It will survive as the dominant insight into the reality of love and happiness, or it will not survive at all. That does not mean that all persons will live under the convention of marriage. As a matter of fact in civilized ages all persons never have. It means that the convention of marriage, when it is clarified by insight into reality, is likely to be the hypothesis upon which men and women will ordinarily proceed. There will be no compulsion behind it except the compulsion in each man and woman to reach a true adjustment in his life.[40]

THE LIMITATIONS OF HUMANISM

Few writers have depicted what the life of reason involves with the concreteness and appeal that characterizes *A Preface to Morals.* Its relevance to the problems of our own age is inescapable; here are principles that no sound philosophy can overlook. Lippmann, moreover, has carefully avoided the mistake of the orthodox moralists. He has sought not to exhort or to condemn but to reveal to men and women how they must reform their desires in a world which is not concerned with making them happy. It is, he feels, in the personal issues of living which are faced by men and women, rather than in the domain of politics or business, that our moral problems are most urgent, vivid, and inescapable. Here more than anywhere else, modern men and women are compelled by immediate need, rather than by laws or moral preachments, to transcend naïve desire and reach out toward a mature and disinterested partnership with reality if they are to find happiness. As they bring their desires into harmony with reality, they become able, with Confucius, "to follow what the heart desires without transgressing what is right"; they learn to want what they can have and so to have what they want, and thus they achieve maturity.

Even in Lippmann's humanism, however, one still finds the limitations which

beset a strictly rational and impersonal view of life. He has done an unusually good job of applying to modern situations the insights contained in the philosophy of Spinoza and the Stoics, but he has not been able to avoid the difficulties which beset the consistent rationalist. For Lippmann, as for Spinoza, the only enduring value left in life is the understanding of life. All the warmth and richness which affection and emotion can contribute to living are conspicuous by their absence. The driving force of ambition, the urge of progress and achievement, are not to be found here. The inspiration which one can derive from religious faith at its best has been sacrificed to a coldly scientific view of human destiny. Like Spinoza, Lippmann seems to have been willing to accept at its face value the scientific account of the universe and to discount the claims of religion too readily.

These limitations stand out unmistakably in the last paragraphs of *A Preface to Morals*, where Lippmann draws for us his clearest picture of the life of reason.

> And so the mature man would take the world as it comes, and within himself remain quite unperturbed. When he acted, he would know that he was only testing an hypothesis, and if he failed he would know that he had made a mistake. He would be quite prepared for the discovery that he might make mistakes, for his intelligence would be disentangled from his hopes. The failure of his experiment could not, therefore, involve the failure of his life. For the aspect of life which implicated his soul would be his understanding of life, and, to the understanding, defeat is no less interesting than victory. It would be no effort for him to be tolerant, and no annoyance to be skeptical. He would face pain with fortitude, for he would have put it away from the inner chambers of his soul. Fear would not haunt him, for he would be without compulsion to seize anything and without anxiety as to its fate. Since nothing gnawed at his vitals, neither doubt nor ambition, nor frustration, nor fear, he would move easily through life. And so, whether he saw the thing as comedy, or high tragedy, or plain farce, he would affirm that it is what it is, and that the wise man can enjoy it.[41]

A philosophy such as this will undoubtedly enable a man to withdraw from the turmoil and strife of life, to become a disinterested spectator, and so escape the dangers of strenuous living. But can rationalism, despite its enduring appeal, meet the deeper needs of the human spirit or provide the power and inspiration that men must have to achieve the best of which they are capable? In the world in which we live today, will not the insights of the rationalist have to be combined with some more dynamic faith to bring out the noblest traits in human nature and to save our civilization from disintegration and destruction?

III

The Urge of Progress

Man is something to be surpassed. What have you done to surpass man?

All things before you have created something beyond themselves: and would you be the ebb of that great tide?

Would you rather go back to the animal than surpass man?

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

Happiness is found only in success; but success means succeeding, getting forward, moving in advance. It is an active process, not a passive outcome.

JOHN DEWEY

8 · RADICAL NATURALISM

Friedrich Nietzsche

The publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859 marked a revolution in the intellectual outlook of the modern world. Darwin's detailed account of the development of life from lowest to highest forms as a result of such purely natural forces as the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest was read widely; within a decade almost everyone was talking about evolution. During the next half century men looked more and more to the biological sciences rather than to physics or mathematics for an understanding of nature, and a vigorous reaction set in against rationalism and determinism in the realm of philosophy. The universe portrayed by Darwin was no impersonal, rational order like that of Spinoza and the mathematicians, moving eternally in accord with principles that never change; it was a universe in which life, struggle, and development were the characteristic features. Evolution meant growth, progress, achievement; the urge of progress appealed to men with new force and to this rather than to the life of reason they turned with increasing enthusiasm.

In the moral philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), the logic of Darwinian evolution finds its clearest and most uncompromising expression. If life is a struggle for existence in which only the strong survive, then strength becomes the ultimate virtue and weakness the only sin, Nietzsche asserts. What we need in the battle of life is not goodness but strength, not humility but pride, not altruism but unrestrained egoism. Equality and democracy are contrary to the spirit of natural selection and the survival of the fittest; the goal of evolution is not the welfare of the masses but the creation of genius; it is power, not reason, by which the destiny of men and nations is determined. So Nietzsche argues in words that strike us as surprisingly contemporary although he died more than half a century ago.

Because Nietzsche is generally considered a radical in his thinking, many fear or avoid his philosophy. His earliest disciples, moreover, were all intellectuals whose battles were academic and apparently of little practical consequence. Few of these early Nietzscheans paid the master the compliment of assuming that he meant what he said. But with the rise of the Fascist movement in Italy and the Nazi party in Germany a generation ago, Nietzsche and his philosophy became no longer a matter of merely academic interest. The German Nazis in particular turned directly and specifically to the writing of Nietzsche to give respectability to their own contention that might makes right and to their rejection of the Christian virtues as decadent influences upon our civilization.* Today we need hardly argue the fact that Nietzsche's philosophy is profoundly relevant to the problems of the world in which we live, much more relevant, indeed, than it seemed to his fellow Victorians. Nietzsche speaks directly to the most disturbing moral and social issues of our age. Concern with his philosophy is an inescapable necessity as it confronts us on every hand in the political, economic, and social conflicts of our world.

DEVELOPMENT OF NIETZSCHE'S THOUGHT

All his life Nietzsche wanted what he did not have and exalted in his philosophy the qualities of living which he did not possess. His father was a minister; his mother was noted for her piety; a long line of Lutheran clergymen appear in his ancestry. His family background was of sturdy, industrious, middle-class folk, respectable and undistinguished. He himself was reared in a deeply Christian and thoroughly feminine atmosphere. Yet it was just these things he later condemned and sought to escape—in his writing as he could not in his life.

Nietzsche was born in the little village of Röcken, Prussia, on October 15, 1844, which happened to be the birthday of the reigning king of Prussia, Frederick William IV. His father, pastor of the Lutheran Church of the village, was moved to joy by this coincidence and christened his new son Friedrich Wilhelm. The boy grew up as Fritz to his family and friends; in later life he called himself simply Friedrich Nietzsche. When Nietzsche was only five years old, his father died after a year of illness and he was left in the care of five women—his grandmother, his mother, his two aunts and his sister. They were all good women—too good, indeed, to distinguish between love and possession. Fritz, as the only man left in the house, was worshiped and petted with all the fervor that German women feel for the man of the family. His sister, Elizabeth, who was three years younger than he, became almost a devoted slave.

As a little boy Fritz was studious, well-behaved, and highly esteemed by his

* The use made of Nietzsche's philosophy by the German National Socialist Party is described in detail by Crane Brinton, *Nietzsche*, pp. 206-220. See also pp. 220-221 below.

teachers. He disliked the bad boys of the neighborhood and did not associate with them; they reciprocated his feeling and referred to him as "the little minister." At fourteen, Nietzsche was finally separated from the adoring women of his family and entered a boys' school five miles from his home. The school was run by Lutheran pastors and teachers and maintained a strictness, sobriety, and devotion to classical education quite different from the typical American "prep" school. Fritz was already precocious and something of a young intellectual. He kept a diary, wrote long letters to his friends as well as his family, tried his hand at essays and sonatas and other bits of music, and even talked of his plans for a novel that was not taking shape to suit him. He was clearly a bright, somewhat bookish boy, reading widely and already bitten with the desire to write. The normal pleasures of the adolescent boys in the school do not seem to have had much appeal to him or to have disturbed him seriously. Neither here nor during the rest of his life was he able to live comfortably and without self-consciousness with his fellows.

UNIVERSITY LIFE

At Easter in 1861, when he was sixteen, Nietzsche was confirmed. In his own mind, as well as in that of the women who looked after him, he was clearly destined for the Lutheran ministry. But in another year or two something began to go wrong. The model pupil lost interest in his classes; he even slipped off one Sunday and got quite drunk on beer, for which he contritely begs his mother's forgiveness in a long letter. He was disturbed by doubts about the existence of God and seems to have given up the idea of the ministry even before entering the university. When, at the age of twenty, he matriculated at the University of Bonn, he made a determined effort to be one of the boys. Revolting against the coddling of childhood and the long domination of his womenfolk, tired of the high seriousness of his years at school, Nietzsche set out to sow his wild oats.

German university life of the mid-nineteenth century, like the Hollywood picture of American college life today, can easily be made to seem a little ridiculous. But its appeal to the adolescent mind is still unquestioned. Beer, song, and young love, with the manly touch of the duel, gave the university its romantic appeal in Nietzsche's day, and Nietzsche tried his best to find such experiences satisfying. He joined a student corps—the Franconia—at Bonn; he drank beer with his fellow students at noisy gatherings, and even made one pathetic attempt to fight a duel. But beer, women, and tobacco actually disgusted him. As time went on, he more and more frequently dropped out of the jolly excursions of the Franconia. Finally he admitted that all he could see was "the coarse, Philistine spirit, reared in this excess of drinking, of rowdyism, of running into debt." Bonn became unbearable; he composed a somewhat too self-righteous letter of resignation from the Franconia and left for the University of Leipzig.

At Leipzig he made no attempt to take part in "university life," but found a new field, classical philology, to absorb his interests and an able university pro-

fessor, Ritschl, to challenge his best effort. For three years he devoted himself with industry and unquestioned ability to his studies; he became the favorite pupil of Professor Ritschl and a very promising young philologist. But, more important for the development of his thought, soon after entering Leipzig, Nietzsche discovered Schopenhauer.

For years religion had been the very center of Nietzsche's existence; then he lost his faith in the god of his fathers. He tried the pursuit of pleasure but found it vain and futile; life for him was now empty and meaningless. Schopenhauer seemed to the young student to have the only acceptable answer. At twenty-one Nietzsche became a pessimist. In one of his many autobiographical comments he describes how, while rummaging in a Leipzig book shop during the lonely and disillusioned days after he had broken with his comrades of the Franconia, he came across Schopenhauer's *The World As Will and Idea*, took the book home, and read every word of it with increasing excitement.

> It seemed as if Schopenhauer were addressing me personally. I felt his enthusiasm, and seemed to see him before me. Every line cried aloud for renunciation, denial, resignation. Here I saw a mirror in which the world, life, my own mind were reflected in fearful grandeur. Here the wholly disinterested and heavenly eye of art looked at me; here I saw illness and salvation, banishment and refuge, hell and heaven.[1]

It is impossible, Nietzsche decides, to make sense of human life. Will—the blind striving of millions of living creatures—and not reason is what really makes life what it is. And it is cruel, stupid, futile. All that is left for a thoughtful man is resignation and renunciation—the extinction of the will to live, which is the source of the evil of life. How deeply the philosophy of Schopenhauer impressed Nietzsche is to be seen in a letter of his to a friend whose brother had just died.

> You too have felt and lived through the enlightening, deep quieting and settling power of pain. It is a time in which you can yourself try out the teaching of Schopenhauer. If the fourth book of his masterpiece now has on you an ugly, disturbing, depressing effect, if it has not the power to uplift you, to carry you through outer violent grief to that chastened yet serene mood that comes over us as we listen to noble music, that mood in which one feels the earthy shell to have dropped from him,—then I too will have no more of the philosophy. Only those who suffer deeply can and may speak the final word on such matters. The rest of us standing in the current of things, only longing for that denial of the will as for the blessed isles, cannot judge whether the solace of such philosophy is adequate to times of deep sorrow.[2]

Such pessimism did not interfere, however, with the seriousness of Nietzsche's studies. A short and uncomfortable period of military service in the Prussian

cavalry was ended when a fall from a horse tore his chest muscles and fractured his ribs. He returned to Leipzig and was a candidate there for the degree of doctor of philosophy when, in 1868, a chair in classical philology at the University of Basle, in Switzerland, fell vacant. Ritschl managed to have his brilliant young student appointed to this chair without benefit of the doctorate, and Leipzig at once conferred the Ph.D. degree upon Nietzsche on the strength of his previous record. At twenty-four he became *Herr Professor*. In the German eyes of that day, as someone has aptly said, "a university professor was even higher perhaps in the hierarchy of virtue and respectability than a Lutheran pastor." Nietzsche's womenfolk at home were in ecstasy. After all his trials and sorrows, their little Fritz had justified their loving care.

NIETZSCHE AND BISMARCK

As a university professor Nietzsche, unhappily, was not a success. He did not like the few requirements which his position imposed upon him; teaching soon became a burden and a waste of time, in his eyes. Nor did he get along at all well with his colleagues. His life at Basle from the beginning was lonely and harassed, brightened only by his writing, his ambitions, and a few close friendships. He had a kind of neurotic dislike for mingling with people he did not know, a dislike heightened, no doubt, by his fear of being ridiculed. To those who knew him casually he seemed an oversensitive young professor, timid and just a bit peculiar.

In 1870, Bismarck led Germany to war with France. For a brief time, at least, this brought Nietzsche back into direct contact with his fellows. In order to teach at Basle he had become a naturalized citizen of Switzerland and therefore could not join the German army. At first he held himself proudly aloof from the struggle in which his country was engaged, but soon the call to take part in "the redemption of the Teutonic race from Latin vice and rationalism" stirred him too deeply. "Here," he wrote, "you have the state, of shameful origin; for the greater part of men a well of suffering that is never dried, a flame that consumes them in its frequent crises. And yet when it calls, our souls become forgetful of themselves; at its bloody appeal the multitude is urged to courage and uplifted heroism." On his way to the front Nietzsche saw a troop of cavalry passing with impressive pageantry and power. Then and there came the vision, he says, out of which his entire philosophy was to develop. "I felt for the first time that the strongest and highest Will to Life does not find expression in a miserable struggle for existence, but in a Will to War, a Will to Power, a Will to Overpower."*

* Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche, *The Young Nietzsche*, p. 235. The part played by Nietzsche's sister Elizabeth in presenting his philosophy is a highly controversial matter. Recent publication of an explosive volume entitled *My Sister and I*, purporting to have been written by Nietzsche himself about 1890 and until now suppressed, will undoubtedly cause re-examination of this whole issue.

Nietzsche himself did not get very far in the war which Bismarck was waging. Not being qualified as a soldier, he enlisted in the German ambulance service and after a short period of training was sent out to the battlefields. There he fell sick almost immediately with dysentery and diphtheria and had to be invalided out of service. Thus Nietzsche never really knew the brutality of those conflicts which his sensitive spirit was later to idealize with the intensity of inexperience. For a time he took a patriotic pride in the German victories, and even though he later began to feel that this new empire of Bismarck's was, after all, a little too vulgar and materialistic, Bismarck left an indelible impress upon his philosophy. Here was a man who had faced the realities of life, who had said bluntly that "there is no altruism among nations," who had set out to decide issues not by votes and rhetoric but by "blood and iron." In a few months Bismarck had brought a once powerful Austria to her knees and humbled a proud France, where the legend of Napoleon still persisted; in these months he had likewise fused all the little German principalities into a mighty empire with Prussia and Bismarck at its head. Here was the symbol of a new morality of strength and power, and Nietzsche more clearly than anyone else in his day saw its meaning and undertook to give it statement.

From Schopenhauer Nietzsche had learned that life was strife, and so was pain, hardship, and suffering. For a time this view of life left him a pessimist with only a sense of the meaninglessness and futility of all the pain and suffering he saw. But now Bismarck's will to power and the Darwinian concept of evolution rescued him from the pessimism of Schopenhauer. Life was strife and suffering, as Schopenhauer saw so clearly but, as he had not seen, it was a struggle for existence in which the fittest and strongest can survive. This fact gave it meaning and purpose, saved it from futility; and this was the contribution to philosophy which Darwin had to make, Nietzsche came to feel. A new view of life gradually took shape in his mind. Pessimism now seemed to him a sign of decay, optimism a sign of superficiality. "Tragic optimism" is the mood of the strong man, Nietzsche writes—the man who seeks to live fully and intensely, who is delighted to accept strife as the law of life because in this strife he sees the will to power at work, and out of this strife and suffering he sees new strength and greatness emerging.

NIETZSCHE AND WAGNER

In 1872, soon after his return from the Franco-Prussian War, Nietzsche published his first and only complete book, *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music*. The ideas that had gradually been taking form in his mind are here shaped by a new passion—his friendship and admiration for Richard Wagner.

Of all the personal relationships of Nietzsche's life, that with Wagner was perhaps the most significant. The brief but intense friendship between the two men extended over Nietzsche's early years at the University of Basle. Soon after

coming to Basle, Nietzsche learned that Wagner and his wife Cosima were living at the near-by Swiss village of Triebschen. He went to call on the great man, whom he had met casually at Leipzig. Wagner had not yet fully established himself, even in Germany, and welcomed a new disciple who could lend to his cause something of the prestige that goes with scholarship and the universities. Soon the young professor was spending most of his spare time at Triebschen, listening to Wagner's music, discussing the magnificent synthesis of Western culture that Wagner was creating, running errands for the household, and falling in love himself, in his own queer and awkward way, with Cosima.

The Birth of Tragedy grew directly out of this association with Wagner. Under the spell of the composer, Nietzsche undertook to interpret Greek life and Greek art as a conflict between two forces: on the one hand, the primal strength of nature, the turbulent instinct and passion in man which drive him to conquest, to love, to mystic ecstasy, symbolized by Dionysus, the god of wine and revelry; on the other hand, man's attempt to find peace, harmony, and repose in aesthetic order and philosophical understanding, symbolized by Apollo, the god of reason, of wisdom, of beauty. In the noblest Greek art Nietzsche finds a union of these two conflicting ideals—the restless, masculine power of Dionysus and the quiet, feminine beauty of Apollo.

Originally, both Greek art and Greek life were clearly Dionysian; the days when the Dionysian mood begot the Homeric epic, the drama of Aeschylus, and the pre-Socratic philosophy were "the tremendous days of Greece," Nietzsche maintains. Gradually, however, the spirit of Apollo triumphed over that of Dionysus, and its victory was too conclusive. The living strength of Dionysus was destroyed; Greek culture became restrained, reasonable, beautiful—and dead. The critical philosophy of Socrates and Plato replaced the philosophical poetry of the pre-Socratics; science replaced art, intellect replaced instinct. On the temple of Apollo at Delphi were inscribed those words of passionless wisdom: "NOTHING IN EXCESS." Socrates and Plato taught that intelligence is the only virtue, and Aristotle praised the golden mean. In the strength of its youth the Greek spirit produced mythology and poetry; in the decadence of its old age it produced science and philosophy. So, at least, Nietzsche believed.

But perhaps the spirit of Dionysus may return, our philosopher suggests. Did not Schopenhauer stress once more the deep and moving power of instinct and the superficiality of reason? And is not Richard Wagner another Aeschylus, restoring in his music the tragic myth of the Greeks and uniting music and drama in the creative spirit of Dionysus? By Nietzsche and the fervent disciples around Wagner, his music was taken, indeed, to be the supreme experience of life. The *Ring of the Nibelungen* was at once an interpretation of the German spirit and a prophecy and program for Germany. The Wagnerian opera achieved a synthesis of all the arts which was to these disciples all of life worth having. The German spirit had too long been content to reflect the Apollonian art of Italy

and France, Nietzsche urges. Let the German people realize that their own instincts are sounder than these decadent cultures; "in some inaccessible abyss the German spirit still rests and dreams, undestroyed, in glorious health, profundity, and Dionysian strength, like a knight sunk in slumber," he writes. "Someday the German spirit will find itself awake in all the morning freshness following a deep sleep; then it will slay the dragons, destroy the malignant dwarfs, waken Brunhilde—and Wotan's spear itself will be unable to obstruct its course."[3]

German music, in its vast orbit from Bach to Beethoven, from Beethoven to Wagner, Nietzsche sees as a new expression of the Dionysian root of the German spirit, a new creative power which has nothing in common with the rationalistic spirit of a decadent Greek culture. In Wagner's music "the eternal and original artistic force" is once more at work. It is quite possible, Nietzsche writes, that out of the spirit of such music tragedy may again be reborn—the "tragic optimism" of the strong man who faces life as it is and rejoices in the conflict which tries his strength and destroys the weaklings about him.

Quite understandably, *The Birth of Tragedy* was praised by the followers of Wagner; but the general public paid no attention to it, and Nietzsche's colleagues in the field of philology condemned it almost unanimously. It contained, they pointed out, not the exact scholarship of the philologist but the enthusiasm of the prophet and the unverified assertions of the propagandist. Serious students at the university began to avoid the young professor. He continued to give public lectures from time to time, but his health grew worse, his absences from teaching more frequent, and his general unfitness for his work more apparent. He always took full advantage of vacations and holidays; he was frequently in ill health; and gradually he managed to escape from most of the actual teaching he was supposed to do. Finally, in 1879, when he was only thirty-four and had been at Basle but ten years, the university very generously retired him with a pension of 3000 Swiss francs (about $1500) a year.

Even at this time, however, Nietzsche was deeply conscious of a sense of mission, a mission to do something great, something of lasting effect upon the world. He projected a series of lectures on all the important issues of the day and actually published four such essays in a volume which he called *Considerations Contrary to the Spirit of the Age.** As the title suggests, everything in the nineteenth century seemed wrong to Nietzsche. The age was vulgar, corrupt, materialistic. All greatness of mind and spirit was lost in the mediocrity bred by democracy. European civilization was doomed to perish unless such forces could be successfully challenged. The aim of life, Nietzsche writes is "not the betterment of the majority, who taken as individuals are the most worthless type," but "the creation of genius, the development and elevation of superior personalities."[4] In order for this new understanding of life to prevail, morality as well

* The official English translation is entitled *Thoughts Out of Season.*

as theology must be reconstructed in terms of the theory of evolution, he maintains.

The most enthusiastic of Nietzsche's four essays, entitled "Richard Wagner in Bayreuth," hailed Wagner's music drama as the greatest of the arts, and called on the German people to support a magnificent Wagner festival at Bayreuth. By the time Bayreuth was completed, however, and the first festival opened in 1876, the enthusiasm of Nietzsche had already cooled considerably. Wagner, instead of proving superior to the spirit of the age, was also succumbing to it. More and more people—people who were rich, worldly, and vulgar—kept discovering him. They took up his time, and he did not mind them. Indeed, he seemed to like them. It was they who were building Bayreuth, and Nietzsche was of less and less consequence. He could hardly refuse to be present for the festival, but he was soon lost in the crowd. Coming to Bayreuth with high purpose, Nietzsche found there only a summer resort, a watering place for the idle rich. Even the dress rehearsals were more than he could stand. "I should be insane to stay here," he wrote. "I await with terror each of these long musical evenings. . . . I can bear no more." Without a word to Wagner, who was in the midst of his greatest triumph, Nietzsche fled. The friendship between the two could not survive such a blow. They never met again on the old terms.

THE DECADE OF OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT

When Nietzsche retired from his post at the University of Basle in 1879, he had twenty years of life still ahead of him—one decade of extraordinary literary activity, during which all his greatest works were written, and one decade of hopeless invalidism, during which he was completely broken in mind and body. His great decade was spent mostly in Italy and Switzerland, with an occasional brief visit to Germany. During the summers he lived in the Engadine region in Switzerland, at the little village of Sils-Maria, where the cool, clear air and the quiet made possible the sustained effort needed for his writing; the long winters he spent on the Italian Riviera.

His habit was to think out his ideas carefully, while he was walking through the Swiss mountains or by the shore of the Mediterranean; and when deeply stirred he could walk hour after hour at a rapid pace without apparent effort. Back in his room, he would put his thoughts on paper in a short essay or a series of aphorisms. A few weeks, sometimes even a few days, of such high-strung activity would leave him exhausted. An attack of headaches and insomnia would incapacitate him until a measure of health was restored by the sedatives upon which he became dependent; then, in time, the urge to creativity would seize him once more.

Under these conditions, Nietzsche could not write in orderly and systematic fashion. Most of his books are collections of brief essays or of short aphorisms. He repeats himself frequently, and there is little real unity or systematic develop-

ment in his thought. The average reader is able to take Nietzsche in small doses only.

Three volumes of short epigrams, *Human, All Too Human* (1878), *The Dawn of Day* (1881), and *The Joyful Wisdom* (1882), celebrate Nietzsche's emancipation from teaching, his new enthusiasm for the brilliant wit of the French, and his discovery of the warm sunshine of Italy. The first is dedicated to Voltaire; the other two, the most cheerful of Nietzsche's books, were composed during the years when his spirit was being warmed also by the company of Lou Salome, a brilliant young intellectual with whom he fell deeply in love. When she left him for another man, however, his old bitterness, loneliness, and intensity returned. Loving neither man nor woman, he fled to the Swiss Alps and there, near Sils-Maria, received the inspiration for the volume that was to become his best-known work, *Thus Spake Zarathustra.* It is an enigmatic book, a collection of parables, sermons, and poems, written in a sort of poetic prose, and giving an account of the mission of Zarathustra, who brought to mankind a new gospel of salvation.

That his volume on Zarathustra was an inspired one Nietzsche had no doubt. Few prophets have spoken with a stronger sense of cosmic direction.

> If one had the smallest vestige of superstition in one, it would hardly be possible to set aside completely the idea that one is the mere incarnation, mouthpiece or medium of an almighty power. The idea of revelation in the sense that something becomes suddenly visible and audible with indescribable certainty and accuracy, which profoundly convulses and upsets one—describes simply the matter of fact. One hears—one does not seek; one takes—one does not ask who gives: a thought suddenly flashes up like lightning, it comes with necessity, unhesitatingly—I have never had any choice in the matter. There is an ecstasy such that the immense strain of it is sometimes relaxed by a flood of tears, along with which one's steps either rush or involuntarily lag, alternately. Everything happens quite involuntarily, as if in a tempestuous outburst of freedom, of absoluteness, of power and divinity. This is *my* experience of inspiration. I do not doubt but that one would have to go back thousands of years in order to find some one who could say to me: It is mine also!—[5]

The gospel of Zarathustra was Nietzsche's gospel, but for an appropriate mouthpiece he turned back to the old Persian prophet whom we know as Zoroaster. His explanation of this choice is a revealing one.

> Zarathustra was the first to see in the struggle between good and evil the essential wheel in the working of things. Zarathustra *created* the most portentous error, *morality*; consequently, he should also be the first to *perceive* that error, not only because he has had longer and greater experience of the subject than any other thinker—all history is the experimental refutation of the theory of the so-called moral order of things:—the more important point is that Zarathustra was more truthful than any other thinker. In

> his teaching alone do we meet with truthfulness upheld as the highest virtue—*i.e.*: the reverse of the *cowardice* of the "idealist" who flees from reality. . . . The overcoming of morality through itself—through truthfulness, the overcoming of the moralist through his opposite—*through me*—: that is what the name Zarathustra means in my mouth.[6]

Zarathustra was Nietzsche's message to the world; his later works are but commentaries upon it. In them he set himself the task of bringing its poetry down to earth, of presenting in plain prose the gospel which set the soul of his prophet on fire. His next two books are undoubtedly the most lucid and convincing statements of his philosophy. *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886) and *The Genealogy of Morals* (1887) are, like his earlier works, composed of short essays and aphorisms, but they are built around a clear and definite thesis. Nietzsche is here seeking to destroy the old morality of the masses and to establish his new aristocratic ideal, to reveal the role of Christianity and to break its influence, to accomplish the "transvaluation of all values" which the doctrine of evolution necessitated. These two works contain some of the most discerning comment upon the behavior of human beings to be found in the literature of philosophy. It is upon their insight that the significance and influence of Nietzsche's philosophy actually rests.

THE FINAL YEARS

Nietzsche's final years were lonely ones. He had quarreled with all his friends; his sister, Elizabeth, when almost forty, had married Bernhard Förster, a prominent figure in the German antisemitic movement of that period, and gone off to Paraguay with him to found a Teutonic colony there, despite Nietzsche's efforts to prevent the match. Innkeepers, servants, and a few casual acquaintances provided his only contact with his fellows. Left thus alone, he gave himself unsparingly to intense literary activity. Undoubtedly the intensity of his effort, his unremitting battle against the mediocrity of his age, his increasing loneliness and sense of being unappreciated, all helped bring on a mental breakdown. Disease and approaching blindness certainly contributed. During his last year of sanity he produced a series of small volumes, *The Case of Wagner, The Twilight of the Idols, The Antichrist,* and *Ecce Homo.* Unmistakable signs of mental derangement are to be seen in all these books.

The fall of 1888 Nietzsche spent in Turin, intending to go to Nice for the winter. He never got beyond Turin, however, and in January 1889, he broke down completely. His terrified landlord was about to turn him over to the Italian authorities when his friend Overbeck arrived to rescue him. Nietzsche, in a fortunate period of docility, allowed himself to be placed in a hospital for the mentally deranged Soon his aged mother took him back to Germany with her. When Elizabeth's husband died, in 1890, she came home from Paraguay to take care of her mother and brother. After their mother's death, Elizabeth moved her

brother to Weimar, which she hoped would become his shrine. After all, had not Goethe and Schiller already given the place the right atmosphere for such genius? Here in a large, airy room, looking out on the sunset, Nietzsche's few remaining years were spent. The paralysis which had struck him at Turin now incapacitated his whole right side. He simply lay for hours looking out the window. A statue of him in Weimar shows the once restless and brilliant man now quiet, broken, and resigned. Perhaps nature was kind to him when she brought peace to his restless spirit. On August 25, 1900, he died quietly.

"My time is not yet; only the day after tomorrow belongs to me," Nietzsche wrote in 1888. His faith in himself, when no one else would believe, has been amply justified. Now his memory is honored in such fashion as even he would approve. Canonized by the Nazis, he has had disciples quite as devoted and for a time even as numerous as those of his former idol, Richard Wagner. And hated though he may be by those who reject his gospel, Nietzsche is quite generally regarded today as a master of German prose, a philosopher of unquestioned ability, a sensitive poet, a man who may rightly be included among the makers of modern Europe.*

MORALS FOR A NEW AGE

Nietzsche's two most mature and balanced books, *Beyond Good and Evil* and *The Genealogy of Morals*, contain what is in many ways the ablest statement of the evolutionary point of view in morals. Nietzsche did not think of himself as a disciple of Darwin. Indeed, he was a disciple of no one, in his own mind, and he consistently condemns in most bitter fashion those to whom he owes the most. Christianity, which meant much to him as a boy, he attacks in *The Antichrist*, when his taut nerves are about to break, with great intensity and skill. A trained student of the classics and a professor of philology himself, he directs some of his most cutting invective against the temper of his learned colleagues. The academic mind is devoted to the process of embalming, he remarks sarcastically; it does not have the strength and energy to kill. University professors are hopeless conservatives, hostile to change, to adventure, to daring in thought as well as action.[7] Schopenhauer and Wagner were, of course, the two great masters of Nietzsche's young manhood. As he himself admits, they were the men who rescued him from the safe but dull study of philology and opened to him instead the delights as well as the dangers of high thinking and strong feeling. Yet he damns them both in later years with what, to any but an ardent disciple of his, must seem base ingratitude.

* See Crane Brinton, *op. cit.*, a sane and thoughtful study, to which the present account is much indebted. The best recent defense of Nietzsche against his critics is Walter A. Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist.*

NIETZSCHE AND DARWIN

So also with his relation to Darwin and the Darwinian concept of evolution. Nietzsche did not study science, and he apparently had no first-hand or comprehensive knowledge of Darwin's *Origin of Species.* He may have read a German translation of the book; certainly he read critical reviews and discussions of Darwin's theories which appeared in the German periodicals. In any case, he knew enough about Darwin to know that Darwin's theories of evolution were wrong—that the theory had a suspiciously British flavor about it: "struggle for existence" and "survival of the fittest" were not processes by which the new age would come, Nietzsche felt. Darwin and his followers were not aristocratic enough; they were men of the herd. They "belong to the people, their forefathers have been poor and humble persons, who knew too well by immediate experience the difficulty of making a living," Nietzsche writes; "over the whole of English Darwinism there hovers something of the suffocating air of over-crowded England, something of the odor of humble persons in need and in straits."[8] Darwin's doctrine of evolution, moreover, is no call to battle to prepare the world for a better and stronger race of men, or for a new and superior individual; it is more like a mild sedative which lulls one into inactivity with the belief that the process of evolution will take care of itself, that natural selection will ensure progress despite our own folly and weakness.

Despite his insistence, however, that his age was one of mediocrity and materialism, that his own spirit was contrary to that of the age, Nietzsche was essentially a child of the nineteenth century. The idea of organic evolution was the dominant scientific idea of the last half of the century, and upon this idea Nietzsche seized with that uncanny genius which marks much of his thought. What Darwin failed to realize—but Nietzsche saw clearly—was that the development of man is no mere process to be analyzed and dissected by "scientific method." It is something that must be apprehended by the poet and the prophet, who recognizes a new meaning and purpose in the struggle to which Darwin directed general attention.

As a matter of fact, it is difficult to overestimate the importance of the Darwinian theory to a disciple of Schopenhauer. As portrayed by Darwin, the essential mechanism of evolution is a struggle, a war between race and race, between individual and individual. That this struggle is a necessary expression of the will to live which pervades all nature, Schopenhauer had recognized. But to him the strife and struggle were useless and irrational, cruel, and directed to no end. What the evolutionary hypothesis seems to suggest to the philosopher, however, if not to the scientist, is just such meaning and purpose in life's incessant strife. Why is not life's cruelty and strife justified as the indispensable means to a higher goal—the goal of producing a new and stronger being, greater than any of those who take part in the process of bringing him into being? Does not the

survival of the fittest mean that the struggle of life is leading to something better? And if the superior can be produced only at the expense of the inferior, is there not in this sacrifice more than the wanton and senseless cruelty seen by the pessimist? Indeed, is it not actually good as well as necessary? Thus Darwin rescues Nietzsche from the pessimism of Schopenhauer and provides the foundation for his new message. This fact shines unmistakably through the poetic words with which the gospel of Zarathustra begins:

> Man is something to be surpassed. What have you done to surpass man?
>
> All things before you have created something beyond themselves: and would you be the ebb of that great tide? Would you rather go back to the animal than surpass man?
>
> What is the ape to man? A laughing-stock, a thing of shame. And just that shall man be to the Superman: a laughing-stock, a thing of shame.
>
> You have made your way from the worm to man, and much within you is still worm. Once you were apes, and even yet man is more of an ape than are any of the apes.
>
> Even the wisest among you is only a disharmony and a hybrid of plant and phantom. But do I bid you become a phantom or plant?
>
> Lo, I teach you the Superman!
>
> The Superman is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: The Superman *shall be* the meaning of the earth![9]

Nietzsche, to be sure, is no Darwinian in the strict sense of the term. It is not environment, he maintains, which shapes life and the destiny of man. Rather, with Schopenhauer, he looks to the force at work within man himself—the will, the inner drive or compulsion which urges him ahead—for the explanation of the process of evolution. But he does not follow Schopenhauer in his interpretation of this inner drive. It is not the will to live, as Schopenhauer suggested, nor is this a struggle for existence, as Darwin, with his middle-class English prejudice, had described it. The dominant, driving force behind life, behind the process which shapes our destiny and that of mankind, is the will to power. The will to power drives the animal world on to prepare the way for man; it lies behind the conflict of man with man, and race with race, the conflict out of which something greater than man as we know him is destined to come. In terms of the will to power our whole interpretation of morality, of good and evil, of the purpose of life, must be revised, Nietzsche insists. As the will to power is fundamental in nature and in life, so it must be made central in our moral ideals. This was the new insight of Nietzsche—the foundation of his effort to revolutionize moral theory in terms of the doctrine of evolution.

"Here one must think profoundly to the very basis and resist all sentimental weakness," he writes: "life itself is *essentially* appropriation, injury, conquest of the strange and weak, suppression, severity, obtrusion of peculiar forms, incorporation, and at the least, putting it mildest, exploitation." Any organism which

is living and not dying "will endeavor to grow, to gain ground, attract to itself and acquire ascendancy not owing to any morality or immorality, but because it *lives*, and because life *is* precisely Will to Power." "*Exploitation* does not belong to a depraved, or imperfect and primitive society: it belongs to the *nature* of the living being as a primary organic function; it is a consequence of the intrinsic Will to Power, which is precisely the Will to Life.—Granting that as a theory this is a novelty—as a reality it is the *fundamental fact* of all history: let us be so far honest with ourselves!"[10]

THE GENEALOGY OF MORALS

Our moral ideals have a dual ancestry, Nietzsche points out. On the one hand, our notions of good and evil originated with a ruling aristocracy, pleasantly conscious of its superiority, of its difference from those it ruled; this is the "morality of the masters"—the *Herrenmoral.* Here "good" and "bad" mean practically the same thing as "noble" and "despicable." The cowardly, the timid, the insignificant, those who think merely of utility, are despised as "bad." The nobleman honors the man of power, the man who has power over himself as well as over others, who knows how to command, "who takes pleasure in subjecting himself to severity and hardness, and has reverence for all that is severe and hard." "Faith in oneself, pride in oneself, a radical enmity and irony toward 'selflessness,' belong as definitely to noble morality, as do a careless scorn and precaution in the presence of sympathy and the 'warm heart,' " Nietzsche writes. The nobleman helps the unfortunate, not out of sympathy but rather from a plenitude of power which simply overflows. The morality of the masters, the aristocratic morality, is furthest removed from the moral ideal which sees sympathy, disinterestedness, or the good of others as the characteristic of moral action. It accepts, rather, the principle that one has duties only to one's equals, that one may act toward beings of a lower rank, toward all that is foreign, just as seems good to one, just as one desires. "The ability and obligation to exercise prolonged gratitude and prolonged revenge—both only within the circle of equals—a certain necessity to have enemies (as outlets for the emotions of envy, quarrelsomeness, arrogance—in fact, in order to be a good friend): all these are typical characteristics of the noble morality."[11]

Quite a different notion of morality, on the other hand, has come down to us from among the classes that were dependent and lived under subjection to others as slaves. Suppose, Nietzsche asks,

> that the abused, the oppressed, the suffering, the unemancipated, the weary, and those uncertain of themselves, should moralize, what will be the common element in their moral estimates? The slave has an unfavorable eye for the virtues of the powerful; he has a scepticism and distrust, a *refinement* of distrust of everything "good" as there honoured—he would fain persuade himself that the very happiness there is not genuine. On the other

> hand, *those* qualities which serve to alleviate the existence of sufferers are brought into prominence and flooded with light; it is here that sympathy, the kind, helping hand, the warm heart, patience, diligence, humility and friendliness attain to honour; for here these are the most useful qualities, and almost the only means of supporting the burden of existence. Slave-morality is essentially the morality of utility.[12]

In such slave morality Nietzsche sees the origin of the conventional contrast between "good" and "evil." According to the morality of the herd, that which is powerful and dangerous is taken to be evil; the evil man arouses fear. According to the aristocratic morality, it is precisely the good man who arouses fear and seeks to arouse it. For the servile mode of thought the good man must be the *safe* man, the man who is "good-natured, easily deceived, perhaps a little stupid." Wherever the slave morality has gained ascendancy the words "good" and "stupid" tend to have much the same meaning, Nietzsche avers.

Egoism, on the other hand, belongs to the essence of the strong man, the man who is powerful. He has an unalterable belief that to a being such as he others should naturally be in subjection and for his good sacrifice themselves. "The noble soul accepts the fact of his egoism without question, and also without consciousness of harshness, constraint or arbitrariness therein, but rather as something that may have its basis in the primary law of things:—if he sought a designation for it he would say: 'It is justice itself.' " Here, indeed, is what Nietzsche regards as the *essential* quality in a good and healthy aristocracy; namely, "that it should accept with a good conscience the sacrifice of legions of individuals, who *for its sake* must be suppressed and reduced to imperfect men, to slaves and instruments. Its fundamental belief must be precisely that society is *not* allowed to exist for its own sake, but only as a foundation and scaffolding, by means of which a select class of beings may be able to elevate themselves to their higher duties, and in general to a higher existence."[13] In this mood of the healthy aristocracy, the *essential* nature of life itself is finding expression, Nietzsche maintains. The morality of the masters, of the powerful and noble, is not contrary to the pulse and movement of life but in fundamental accord with its inner spirit.

THE MORALITY OF OUR AGE

As Nietzsche looks around the European world of his day, however, he finds that on every hand the slave morality has somehow managed to gain control of men's minds—and most completely in the democratic and Christian outlook of his own age. "The gregarious European man nowadays assumes an air as if he were the only kind of man allowable; he glorifies his qualities such as public spirit, kindness, deference, industry, temperance, modesty, indulgence, sympathy, by virtue of which he is gentle, endurable and useful to the herd, as the peculiarly human virtues," Nietzsche writes.[14] And it is just here that he finds himself so

"contrary to the spirit of the age." Its mediocrity, its essential herd-mindedness, its ignoble and mean character, must be attacked without compromise, he urges. The strong and dangerous instincts, such as love of enterprise, revengefulness, astuteness, rapacity, love of power—these instincts, which have been honored in the past and have contributed to the development of a strong aristocracy in Europe, are now generally branded as immoral, whereas the contrary instincts and inclinations possess moral prestige. The gregarious instinct now determines our moral perspective; fear is again the mother of morals. We ask only how much or how little danger to the community or to the equality of all men is contained in an opinion, an emotion, an attitude. "Everything that elevates the individual above the herd, and is a source of fear to the neighbour, is henceforth called *evil*; the tolerant, unassuming, self-adapting, self-equalizing disposition, the *mediocrity* of desires, attains to moral distinction and honour." The conscience of present-day Europe is diseased, degenerate, effeminate. Morality in Europe is the morality of the herd, and this is what is nowadays called "progress," Nietzsche complains bitterly.[15]

Nowhere is this sad state of affairs more apparent and more willingly admitted than in nineteenth-century England, he finds. Against the English and their Utilitarian philosophy, therefore, Nietzsche turns his sharpest invective. Actually what they want is to make "English morality" authoritative, he contends;

> inasmuch as mankind, or the "general utility" or "the happiness of the greatest number,"—no! the happiness of *England*, will be best served thereby. They would like, by all means, to convince themselves that the striving after English happiness, I mean after *comfort* and *fashion* (and in the highest instance, a seat in Parliament), is at the same time the true path of virtue. Not one of those ponderous, conscience-stricken herding-animals (who undertake to advocate the cause of egoism as conducive to the general welfare) wants to have any knowledge of the fact that there is a distinction of rank between man and man, and consequently between morality and morality. They are an unassuming and fundamentally mediocre species of men, these utilitarian Englishmen.[16]

Why is it, then, that these men and their ideas have been so influential? Nietzsche has an answer ready at hand. "There are truths which are best recognized by mediocre minds, because they are best adapted for them, there are truths which only possess charm and seductive power for mediocre spirits:—one is pushed to this probably unpleasant conclusion, now that the influence of respectable but mediocre Englishmen—I may mention Darwin, John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer—begins to gain ascendancy in the middle-class region of European taste." There is in the thought of such men, Nietzsche finds, "a certain narrowness, aridity, and industrious carefulness (in short something English)." "Finally, let it not be forgotten," he writes, "that the English, with their profound mediocrity, brought about once before a general depression of European intel-

ligence." For it was the English who were responsible for introducing the notion of democracy—"that mania for counting noses"—with all the trappings of parliamentary government.[17]

CHRISTIANITY AS SLAVE MORALITY

Nietzsche has a culprit even more guilty, however, of undermining the aristocratic spirit of modern Europe than are the English with their ideas of democracy and utility. Above all else it is the church and Christian religion which have been responsible for the triumph of the slave morality of the herd: "the *democratic* movement is the inheritance of the Christian movement." When properly understood and used, religion may have an important educational and disciplinary function in society, Nietzsche admits; when misinterpreted, it is one of the forces that lead to degeneracy and mediocrity.

> For those who are strong and independent, destined and trained to command, in whom the judgment and skill of a ruling race is incorporated, religion is an additional means for overcoming resistance in the exercise of authority—as a bond which binds rulers and subjects in common, betraying and surrendering to the former the conscience of the latter, their inmost heart, which would fain escape obedience. . . . to ordinary men, to the majority of the people, who exist for service and general utility, and are only so far entitled to exist, religion gives invaluable contentedness with their lot and condition, peace of heart, ennoblement of obedience, additional social happiness and sympathy, with something of justification of all the commonplaceness, all the meanness, all the semi-animal poverty of their souls.[18]

But this desirable social function has not been performed by Christianity. Instead, Christianity has reversed the aristocratic values of living and worked for the "deterioration of the European race," Nietzsche asserts. All the instincts which are natural to an aristocracy—the manly, conquering, imperious instincts, delight in beauty and in joy of the senses—have been broken down; in their place has come uncertainty, distress of conscience, self-destruction. The Christian church has made "brotherhood" and "unselfishness," sympathy for the weak and for the suffering, its cardinal virtues and so has helped preserve the sick and weak, whom the evolutionary process would eliminate.

> Men, not great enough, nor hard enough, to be entitled as artists to take part in fashioning *man*; men, not sufficiently strong and farsighted to *allow*, with sublime self-constraint, the obvious law of thousandfold failures and perishings to prevail; men, not sufficiently noble to see the radically different grades of rank that separate man from man:—*such* men, with their "equality before God," have hitherto swayed the destiny of Europe; until at last a dwarfed, almost ludicrous species has been produced, a gregarious animal, something obliging, sickly, mediocre, the European of the present day.[19]

This "transvaluation of all the ancient values" which Christianity has accomplished, Nietzsche condemns with all his energy and biting invective. It was for him the work of Jewish cunning; the revenge of the slave against his master. "It was the Orient, the *profound* Orient, it was the Oriental slave who thus took revenge on Rome, and its noble, light-minded toleration," he writes. It was the Jews, a people "born for slavery," as Tacitus rightly observed, whose prophets

> fused into one the expressions "rich," "godless," "wicked," "violent," "sensual," and for the first time coined the word "world" as a term of reproach. In this inversion of valuations (in which is also included the use of the word "poor" as synonymous with "saint" and "friend") the significance of the Jewish people is to be found; it is with *them* that the slave-insurrection in morals commences. . . . [All other attacks] against the "aristocrats," the "mighty," the "masters," the "holders of power," are negligible by comparison with what has been accomplished against those classes by *the Jews*. . . . It was the Jews who, in opposition to the aristocratic equation (good = aristocratic = beautiful = happy = loved-by-the-gods), dared with a terrifying logic to suggest the contrary equation, namely, "the wretched are alone the good; the poor, the meek, the lowly, are alone the good; the suffering, the needy, the sick, the loathsome, are the only ones who are pious, the only ones who are blessed, for them alone is salvation—but you, on the other hand, you aristocrats, you men of power, you are to all eternity, the evil, the horrible, the covetous, the insatiate, the godless; eternally you shall be the unblessed, the cursed, the damned."[20]

NIETZSCHE'S VIEW OF WOMEN

Feminism for Nietzsche is a natural corollary of democracy and Christianity, a further unmistakable sign of the degeneracy of modern Europe. With another of his striking "transvaluations," Nietzsche takes the position of Schopenhauer and reverses it. Woman at her best and by nature is a creature of emotion and passion. The maternal instinct is her strongest instinct and she is true to her destiny only when she fulfills her mission in life by rearing children. Although the "modern" woman now talks of independence, and the feminist seeks the "emancipation of women" and claims her right to equality with men, there is nothing but stupidity in this movement, Nietzsche insists:

> . . . to neglect exercise in the use of her proper weapons; to emphatically and loquaciously dissuade man from the idea that woman must be preserved, cared for, protected and indulged, like some delicately, strangely wild and often pleasant domestic animal,—what does all this betoken, if not a disintegration of womanly instincts, a de-feminizing? . . . That which inspires respect in woman, and often enough fear also, is her *nature*, which is more natural than that of man, her genuine, carnivora-like cunning flexibility, her tiger-claws beneath the glove, her *naïveté* in egoism, her untrainableness and innate wildness, the incomprehensibleness, extent and

> deviation of her desires and virtues. . . . Fear and sympathy: it is with these feelings that man has hitherto stood in the presence of woman, always with one foot already in tragedy, which rends while it delights.—What? And all that is now to be at an end? And the *disenchantment* of women is in progress? The tediousness of women is slowly evolving?[21]

For Nietzsche this is simply another unhappy result of democracy. Democracy is leading men to treat women with too much respect. She is unlearning her *fear* of man; she wants more, demands more—she is losing her modesty, her taste, her most womanly instincts. "This is what is happening nowadays: let us not deceive ourselves about it," Nietzsche asserts. And women are doing this because the *man* in man is no longer finding expression in a democratic society. Actually there is by nature, and must always be, a profound antagonism between man and woman, an "eternally hostile tension" which makes all dreams of equal rights, equal training, equal obligations but shallow-minded delusion. The only man a woman really admires is a *strong* man; only as she recognizes him as her master, and obeys him, does she find happiness. Likewise "a man who has depth of spirit as well as of desires, and has also the depth of benevolence which is capable of severity and harshness, can only think of woman as *Orientals* do: he must conceive of her as a possession, as confinable property, as a being predestined for service and accomplishing her mission therein—he must take his stand on this matter upon the superiority of the instinct of Asia, as the Greeks did formerly."[22]

The whole movement to "enlighten" women is, therefore, a great mistake, Nietzsche feels. Almost everywhere, as a result, woman "is daily being made more hysterical and more incapable of fulfilling her first and last function, that of bearing robust children." Enlightenment has hitherto been man's concern; there is good reason to doubt that woman even wants enlightenment about herself.

> What does woman care for truth? From the very first nothing is more foreign, more repugnant, or more hostile to woman than truth—her great art is falsehood, her chief concern is appearance and beauty. Let us confess it, we men: we honour and love *this* very art and *this* very instinct in woman. We who have the hard task, and for our recreation gladly seek the company of beings under whose hands, glances, and delicate follies, our seriousness, our gravity, and profundity appear almost like follies to us.

If this seems severe, look at what women think of each other, Nietzsche suggests. "Did a woman herself ever acknowledge profundity in a woman's mind, or justice in a woman's heart?" he asks. "And is it not true that on the whole 'woman' has hitherto been most despised by woman herself, and not by us at all?"[23]

THE NEW ARISTOCRACY

Despite the degeneracy of modern Europe—despite its capitulation to democracy, Christianity, and feminism and its seduction by the Utilitarianism of the

English—Nietzsche saw unmistakable signs of a new age. And he considered himself the prophet of its coming, a voice crying in the wilderness. "The conditions of Europe in the next century will once again lead to the breeding of the manly virtues," he writes with prophetic insight, "because men will live in continual danger. Universal military service is already the curious antidote which we possess for the effeminacy of democratic ideas, and it has grown up out of the struggle of the nations." A Europe composed of small struggling states was becoming economically untenable, Nietzsche pointed out.

> Money is even now compelling European nations to amalgamate into one Power. In order, however, that Europe may enter into the battle for the mastery of the world with good prospects for victory (it is easy to perceive against whom this battle will be waged), she must probably "come to an understanding" with England. The English colonies are needed for this struggle, just as much as modern Germany, to play her new role of broker and middleman, requires the colonial possessions of Holland. For no one any longer believes that England alone is strong enough to continue to act her old part for fifty years more.[24]

Fifty years ago Nietzsche saw in Russia the strongest and most menacing resurgence of the will to power—in Russia, "that immense middle empire where Europe as it were flows back to Asia." There the will to power had been long stored up and accumulated, and waited threateningly to be discharged. Uprisings in Asia—in India and in China—might be necessary, he realized, to free Europe from its greatest danger, "the shattering of the empire into small states, and above all the introduction of parliamentary imbecility, together with the obligation of every one to read his newspaper at breakfast. I do not say this as one who desires it," Nietzsche writes, with remarkable anticipation of the contemporary situation; "in my heart I should rather prefer the contrary—I mean such an increase in the threatening attitude of Russia, that Europe would have to make up its mind to become equally threatening—namely, *to acquire one will,* by means of a new caste to rule over the continent, a persistent, dreadful will of its own, that can set its aims thousands of years ahead. . . . The time for petty politics is past; the next century will bring the struggle for the dominion of the world—a *compulsion* to great politics."[25]

Another and complementary process was also at work, Nietzsche saw, to produce the strong race, the "superman," whom he envisioned as the goal and justification of human strife and suffering. Democracy carried within itself the seeds of its own destruction.

> Whether we call it "civilization," or "humanity," or "progress," which now distinguishes the European,—behind all the moral and political foregrounds pointed to by such formulas, an immense *physiological process* goes on, which is ever extending: the process of the assimilation of Europeans, their

> increasing detachment from the conditions under which, climatically and hereditarily, united races originate; their increasing independence of every definite *milieu*;—that is to say, the slow emergence of an essentially *supernational* and nomadic species of man, who possesses, physiologically speaking, a maximum of the art and power of adaptation as his typical distinction. This process of the *evolving European* will probably arrive at results on which its naïve propagators and panegyrists, the apostles of "modern ideas," would least care to reckon. The same new conditions under which on an average a levelling and mediocritising of man will take place—a useful, industrious, variously serviceable and clever gregarious man—are in the highest degree suitable to give rise to exceptional men of the most dangerous and attractive qualities. For, while the collective impression of such future Europeans will probably be that of numerous, talkative, weak-willed and very handy workmen who *require* a master, a commander, as they require their daily bread; the *strong* man will necessarily in individual and exceptional cases become stronger and richer than he has perhaps ever been before. I mean to say that the democratising of Europe is at the same time an involuntary arrangement for the rearing of tyrants—taking the word in all its meanings, even in its most spiritual sense.[26]

Among these good Europeans, men who have risen above the limitations of nationalism and of vulgar patriotism, and who in spirit belong to the new age, Nietzsche lists Goethe, Beethoven, Heinrich Heine, Schopenhauer, and, with proper reservations, Richard Wagner. He also includes Napoleon, Frederick the Great, and Frederick the Second, "the first of Europeans according to my taste." In the group, too, of course, Nietzsche includes himself—not by name, that was a bit too crude for his tastes as yet (1886), but by implication, speaking always of "we" good Europeans.

When the new age in Europe has been brought into being, when the Will to Power has triumphed as it must—if it express the inner spirit of man and of nature—when men are proudly living beyond good and evil, when the democratic and Christian virtues which bring mediocrity have been successfully disposed of—what will the new race be like? Can Nietzsche give us a picture of his Golden Age, his Utopia, which will live up to the expectations he has sought to arouse? He does give us the picture—more by accident than intention, perhaps—but nonetheless clearly and with his accustomed honesty. But it is not a pretty picture nor an appealing one—hardly a prospect that would tempt any but the most confirmed disciple of Nietzsche.

Nietzsche prides himself upon his own superior *historical sense*. It is upon his reading of history, past and present, and his ability to perceive the deeper significance of historical events and to interpret them symbolically that he has built his own moral philosophy.* And so he turns to history for a symbol to describe the

* See Nietzsche's essay "On the Use and Disadvantages of History for Life," (*Thoughts Out of Season*, II). See also W. A. Kaufmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-131.

men of power, the old aristocracy, the master races of the past—and in the pr
ess he reveals all too clearly what life dedicated to and shaped by the will
power has meant and will mean. One must not have any humanitarian illusic
about how an aristocratic society originates, Nietsche writes. "The truth is har
but let us face it.

> Let us acknowledge unprejudicedly how every higher civilization hithe
> has *originated*! Men with a still natural nature, barbarians in every terri
> sense of the word, men of prey, still in possession of unbroken strength
> will and desire for power, threw themselves upon weaker, more moral, m
> peaceful races (perhaps trading or cattle-rearing communities), or up
> old mellow civilizations in which the final vital force was flickering out
> brilliant fireworks of wit and depravity. At the commencement, the no
> caste was always the barbarian caste: their superiority did not consist fi
> of all in their physical, but in their psychical power—they were more *co*
> *plete* men (which at every point also implies the same as "more compl
> beasts").[27]
>
> It is impossible not to recognize at the core of all these aristocratic ra
> the beast of prey; the magnificent *blonde brute*, avidly rampant for sp
> and victory; this hidden core needed an outlet from time to time, the be
> must get loose again, must return into the wilderness—the Roman, Arab
> German, and Japanese nobility, the Homeric heroes, the Scandinavi
> Vikings, are all alike in this need. . . . They enjoy there freedom from
> social control, they feel that in the wilderness they can give vent w
> impunity to that tension which is produced by enclosure and imprisonm
> in the peace of society, they *revert* to the innocence of the beast-of-pr
> conscience, like jubilant monsters, who perhaps come from a ghostly bc
> of murder, arson, rape, and torture, with bravado and a moral equanimi
> as though merely some wild student's prank had been played, perfec
> convinced that the poets have now an ample theme to sing and celebrate

Here we find the "morality of the masters" revealed in all its innocence a
wickedness! But is it really good? Is this not the morality of the animal—the be
in man—rather than the expression of man's more genuinely and distinc
human nature? Nietzsche's "transvaluation of all values," his radical naturalis
certainly raises such a problem in our minds.

THE PREJUDICES OF THE PHILOSOPHER

One's first impulse, of course, is to point out the obvious inconsistencies a
rational defects in Nietzsche's philosophy—to demonstrate conclusively its ba
irrationality. But this is simply to play into the hands of so shrewd a strategi
There is no such thing as objective or rational truth in philosophy, Nietzsc
maintains. The greater part of the conscious thinking of the philosopher, like th

of all other people, is secretly shaped by his instincts and prejudices. Behind all our logic are enduring values and beliefs which we accept because they are necessary for the maintenance of beings such as we are. The reason that philosophers are regarded half distrustfully and half laughingly is not because they make mistakes so frequently and lose their way; this happens to all men. But the philosophers refuse honestly to admit their dilemma, Nietzsche insists.

> They all pose as though their real opinions had been discovered and attained through the self-evolving of a cold, pure, divinely indifferent dialectic; whereas, in fact, a prejudiced proposition, idea, or "suggestion," which is generally their heart's desire abstracted and refined, is defended by them with arguments sought out after the event. They are all advocates who do not wish to be regarded as such, generally astute defenders, also, of their prejudices, which they dub "truths."[29]

Every great philosophy up to now has consisted, in Nietzsche's opinion, simply of the confessions of its originator; it is a sort of involuntary and unconscious autobiography. Thus the Stoics, in their pride, talked of living "according to Nature," but actually, while pretending to read with rapture the laws of nature, they were dictating their own convictions to nature, insisting that nature shall be like the Stoics. Even more clearly, Nietzsche asserts, "the hocus-pocus in mathematical form" by means of which Spinoza tried to make the universe fit his own desires and prejudices gave expression actually to the "love of *his* wisdom, to translate the term fairly and squarely." This is the old and everlasting story: it happened in the past; it happens again today. As soon as ever a philosophy begins to believe in itself, it always creates the world in its own image; it cannot do otherwise. Philosophy is thus the most spiritual expression of the Will to Power; it is the will to "creation of the world."[30]

An idea or belief is good if it succeeds, and this is the only sense in which it can be called "true"; any other use of the term is but a retaining of the old moralistic concept of truth as something "good" or ideal, Nietzsche declares. He sees the implications of an evolutionary philosophy clearly, and he admits them gladly; indeed, he glories in the paradox that this view of truth involves. What we need is a new order of philosophers—philosophers who are not afraid to face the realities of the evolutionary position, he insists.

> In spite of all the value which may belong to the true, the positive, and the unselfish, it might be possible that a higher and more fundamental value for life generally should be assigned to pretense, to the will to delusion, to selfishness and cupidity. . . . The falseness of an opinion is not for us any objection to it; it is here, perhaps, that our new language sounds most strangely. The question is, how far is an opinion life-furthering, life-preserving, species-preserving, perhaps species-rearing; and we are fundamentally inclined to maintain that the falsest opinions are the most indispensable to us; that without a recognition of logical fictions, man could not live—that

> the renunciation of false opinions would be a renunciation of life, a negation of life. *To recognize untruth as a condition of life*: that is certainly to impugn the traditional ideas of value in a dangerous manner, and a philosophy which ventures to do so, has thereby alone placed itself beyond good and evil.[31]

This much must be conceded: there could have been no life at all except on the basis of semblance, of deception, of *fiction,* Nietzsche argues. Indeed, may it not be that the world we make for ourselves, the world in which we live, is actually such a *fiction*? Is not the "desire for Truth" simply one of man's desires, which must be dealt with like the rest of his desires? "It is nothing more than a moral prejudice that truth is worth more than semblance," Nietzsche writes: "it is, in fact, the worst proved supposition in the world." As we examine reality, do we not find, as a matter of fact, "that nothing else is 'given' as real but our world of desires and passions, that we cannot sink or rise to any other 'reality' but just that of our impulses—for thinking is only a relation of these impulses to one another?"[32]

Behind all life, all effort and striving, beyond logic and beyond good and evil, there is for Nietzsche an ultimate force by which all these are conditioned. "Psychologists should bethink themselves before putting down the instinct of self-preservation as the cardinal instinct in an organic being," he writes. "A living thing seeks above all to *discharge* its strength—life itself is *Will To Power*; self-preservation is only one of the indirect and most frequent *results* thereof." We are able, then, ultimately to explain "our entire instinctive life as the development and ramification of one fundamental will—namely, the Will to Power," Nietzsche believes. Indeed, we have the right to define all active force in the universe unequivocally as *Will To Power*. "The world seen from within, the world defined and designated according to its 'intelligible character'—it would simply be 'Will To Power' and nothing else."[33]

THE APPEAL OF NIETZSCHE

It is not difficult, of course, to discover contradictions in Nietzsche's thought, to refute his exaggerated condemnation of Christian faith and Christian morality, to show the impracticality of his own aristocratic and naturalistic gospel—yet, despite this fact, the philosophy of Nietzsche has had and continues to have an enduring appeal. Hated as deeply by some as he is admired by others, he has established a place for himself in the Western world.

Nietzsche appealed most strongly to his own generation as an apostle of freedom. His was an age overcome by the tyranny of scientific determinism. A depressing chill was taking hold of men's minds, and they wanted an escape from it. Nietzsche, with all the vigor and boldness of the prophetic spirit, demands of

his disciples originality, newness of life, creativity. He calls men to live as though nothing were inevitable; to live as the master, not the slave, of the universe, enslaved neither to priest nor to philosopher nor to scientific dogmatist. It is not in the coldly logical or the intellectual attitude but in the free creativity of will and instinct that fullness of life and achievement is to be found, Nietzsche urges. In this attack upon the scientific rationalism of the late nineteenth century, he is part of a larger movement of thought in which such philosophers as William James and Henri Bergson are also outstanding figures. The approach of each of these men is his own, of course, but each is a great champion of freedom and creativity, a representative of the "anti-intellectualism" that appealed so largely to the spirit of the age.

CREATIVE CONFLICT

Creativity—the creation of something higher and better—the *creative spirit*—this is the major emphasis in Nietzsche's evolutionary philosophy; and such creativity comes at best through conflict, struggle, and the development of the Will to Power, he maintains. As Nietzsche describes it, this creative struggle out of which strength and greatness emerge may sound a little alarming, even dangerous, in our democratic ears. But actually it is not entirely foreign to our own experience. There is perhaps no institution in modern life that so nearly exemplifies Nietzsche's notion of creative struggle, exhibiting its virtues without its vices, as does that of sport among equals, in the American and British sense. Football as played between American universities is a game one plays to win. To spare one's opponent or to be spared by him simply destroys the sport. Who ever heard of the quarterback of a winning team taking pity on his opponents and tossing them the ball? Such a thing simply is not done. In the joy of conflict, one hates one's opponent with a holy hatred. Here is an adventurous spirit that has for its joy the joy of battle, for its reward the sense of strength that grows out of conflict, for its delight the admiration of brother warriors who can give and take blows fearlessly. It is only among the many who weakly look on and tremble before the spectacle of a great strength that one finds the desire for pity and for peace. And even among these, indeed, does not the love of conflict usually arouse a fierce enthusiasm and joy?*

Nor do we find this ideal and this spirit of creative conflict only in the realm of sports. Is it not also the underlying principle of our American competitive economy? Have we not emphasized the principle that competition is the life of trade?—that every man must look out for himself, and that success, strength, power are the things to be commended? Weakness, inability to meet the dangers and the stress of the economic struggle—this is the chief sin. And nothing is more to be condemned than a bungling governmental bureaucracy which interferes to provide a "new deal" for the common man, a "fair deal" for the underprivileged

* See E. A. Singer, *Modern Thinkers and Present Problems*, pp. 204, 205.

who cannot take care of themselves in the struggle which constitutes economic life. Nietzsche was contemptuous of the middle-class businessman, but perhaps he would have revised his estimate had he known the spirit that dominated the great American masters of finance—Carnegie, Morgan, Vanderbilt.

"What is good?" Nietzsche asks. "To be brave is good. . . . All that heightens in man the feeling of power, the desire for power, power itself."

"What is bad? All that comes from weakness. . . . The weak and the ineffective must go under."

"What is more harmful than any vice? Pity for the condition of the ineffective and the weak—Christianity."[34]

"Courage is the one virtue which Nietzsche leaves untouched," writes one of his admirers. "His disciples are to have the courage of their suffering and of their sins. They are to risk the depths that they may attain the heights. Far from seeking serenity and the pensioned dull existence of the safely insured, they must court danger and adventure, ever driven by one thought, the newness of the moment and the self-affirmation of life. No weak sympathy for themselves is to deter them. What they need not for themselves, they are not to dishonor their fellows by offering to them."[35]

Here, then, is to be found a second major source of appeal in Nietzsche. His moral philosophy strikes one as honest and uncompromising. He speaks with bitterness but with sincerity. He will countenance none of the conventional hypocrisy and pretense with which so much religion and moralizing is wrapped up. He is a disturbing thinker, a rebel who cannot be lightly dismissed. There is in him none of that quality to which Walter Lippmann refers when he says that morality has become so encrusted with pious fraud, so prim, prudish and pedantic, "that our generation has almost forgotten that virtue was not invented in Sunday Schools." Nietzsche calls upon us, rather, to look at life as it is and base our moral ideals upon it. "Repent," he seems to say, "of your absurd morality. Rend all your garments and live naked to the real wind of life. Rid yourself of sham; away with your conventional lies, your worship of comfort, your domestic pettiness, and above all your wallowing in pity. Be something. Look down, down on the herd which you disown. Kill all this sentimental culture, this passion of the past, and join in the great gamble for the future, when every valley shall be a gulf and every hill a Himalaya; when the crooked shall be twisted round, and the rough places become rocks."[36]

There is a realism here and an appeal to the heroic in man that may well be taken as Nietzsche's greatest ethical contribution. No one can long find happiness or enduring satisfaction in the self-seeking mediocrity of hedonism. Even the tame and uninspired calmness of the life of reason is apt to pall upon him. Nietzsche calls us to something greater, something more deeply appealing in life than pleasure; he calls us to something more vital and more challenging than scientific rationalism. This note of the heroic, this urge to create something su-

perior, something greater than ourselves, this attack upon mediocrity and upon hypocrisy will always have an understandable appeal.

Ever since he wrote, moreover, Nietzsche's philosophy has held an undeniable charm for bright and sensitive young men who are just coming to see how dull, muddled, and mediocre their elders really are. Communion with Nietzsche brings to such emancipated spirits consolation in the midst of a routine and conventional society. With delight they find in Nietzsche the freedom of spirit that is beyond good and evil. Secure in the transcendent wisdom of Zarathustra, such young intellectuals of every generation can look down serenely upon the browsing herd —among which they are apt, indeed, to find their teachers along with their elders. For some the *Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyam, for others the pessimism of Schopenhauer performs a similar function, but neither Omar Khayyam nor Schopenhauer can quite take Nietzsche's place. In his poetry, as in his new gospel, there is a condemnation of pretense and sham, a call to the heroic which is not duplicated elsewhere.

A third and somewhat less easily defined source of Nietzsche's appeal is aesthetic rather than moral or intellectual. He speaks as a prophet and as a poet rather than as an academic philosopher. His works have great literary charm; they are literally the expression of a soul on fire. He would not write, indeed, until he had fused his brooding thought into a unity of feeling. A lover of art and music, Nietzsche consciously strove for the rhythm, the movement, and the color of these arts in his own literary composition. His is essentially the art of the poet; but his ideas came to him as visions to the prophet, not as the cold calculations of scientific reason. It is this fusion of the spirit of the prophet with that of the poet that makes *Thus Spake Zarathustra* one of the great prose poems of the last century. Nietzsche's other books are collections of striking epigrams and brief essays in which his superb ability to coin a neat and biting phrase is best reflected. Even an admirer of Nietzsche must admit that his brilliance is built largely upon paradox, however, and sheer paradox eventually proves exhausting. It refuses to satisfy the demand of the mind for meaning. Nietzsche does not prove; he announces and reveals.

NIETZSCHE AND THE NAZIS

One of the dangers which every poet and prophet must face is the danger of misunderstanding and misinterpretation. This danger in Nietzsche's case is especially great. The noblest dreams of the prophet sometimes look like nightmares when they are taken too literally. As Crane Brinton, in his able study of Nietzsche, has said,

> Nietzsche called for the Superman. Mussolini and Hitler answered the call. It does not much matter that in all probability Nietzsche would have scorned them as perverters of his doctrine, would have opposed them bitterly. It does not even matter that had Nietzsche never written these men would in

all probability have come to power much as they did. They have found a use for Nietzsche, a use he probably never intended his words to provide.[37]

During the 1930's a determined effort was made to enlist Nietzsche as one of the prophets of the new religion which National Socialism sought to develop for the German people; and it was not difficult to find in his philosophy almost all the tenets in the creed to which the Nazis subscribed. In their interpretation of Nietzsche and the use to which they put his philosophy we see most clearly its dangers and limitations. These Nazi disciples simply took at face value Nietzsche's most violent and bitter attacks upon conventional morality, upon parliamentary government, upon the mediocrity which comes with democracy—"that mania for counting noses"—and upon Christianity, with its gospel of pity and kindness. They accepted Nietzsche's praise of war and of warriors as well as his suggestion that the new society should be authoritarian, militant, heroic, using without hesitation cruelty, hardness, and immorality for its purposes. And then they did what none of his other disciples had done—they actually put these principles into practice.*

"Peace and letting other people alone—this is not a policy for which I have any respect whatever," Nietzsche wrote. "War and courage have done more things than charity. Not your sympathy but your bravery hath hitherto saved the victims." "You shall love peace as a means to new wars—and the short peace more than the long. You I advise not to work, but to fight." These sentiments fitted easily into the Nazi code, as did also Nietzsche's comment that "it is impossible not to recognize at the core of all aristocratic races the beast of prey; the magnificent *blonde brute*, avidly rampant for spoil and victory."[38]

Beyond question also the general tone of Nietzsche's writing is like the spirit of the Nazi leaders. The unrelieved tension, the feverish emotional tone, the bitter invective, the mad hatred, that characterize his books—all these make what the Nazis had to say about the kinship between them and the philosopher sound very convincing. There are those who claim that Nietzsche did not really mean what the Nazis took him to mean.† But if this is true, one can hardly excuse him and blame them for the misinterpretation. In the end, does not Nietzsche's emphasis upon the Will to Power appeal, despite his own efforts to prevent it, to the lowest, not the highest, in the human spirit? When carried to its logical conclusion, does it not call into being the brute in man rather than the superman? As one watched Hitler and the Nazis in action, there could be little doubt about the answer to such questions.

* There is in Brinton, *op. cit.*, Chap. 8, a judicious examination of the widespread effort made by Nazi propagandists during the 1930's "to enlist Nietzsche as one of the pillars of the Nazi society."

† The most recent effort is that by Kaufmann, *op. cit.*, Chap. 10. The facts, it seems, are such that one can demonstrate to his own satisfaction whichever position his general estimate of Nietzsche leads him to prefer.

A FINAL ESTIMATE

When one looks, then, at what Nietzsche's philosophy means when put into practice, what it leads to when men actually try to live by it, its inadequacies become too obvious to be denied. There is a vicious individualism about his notion of the will to power that is all too apparent. The strong man can justify almost any breach of social obligation by an appeal to Nietzsche's principles. Indeed this is just what Mussolini and Hitler did. Social morality Nietzsche interprets as little more than mere herd instinct. The rule of the strong justifies itself by its strength; might makes right. Nietzsche has no other moral criterion. This has been the philosophy of every militaristic state, however, and society certainly faces no graver danger to its existence today than an unbridled will to power which recognizes no moral restraint upon the exercise of its ambition.

The will to power clearly does not represent the highest principle at work in human nature. We have seen too many dictators in our own day to think that they are the great men. Napoleon and Alexander the Great appear in true perspective when they come in the company of Hitler and Mussolini. In spite of Nietzsche's insight into human nature, in spite of the intensity of his quest, his philosophy suffers from the fact that he knew too little at first hand of other human beings. He was not, it is true, entirely wrapped up in himself. He read widely, he traveled a good deal, he had, in his earlier years at least, friends with whom he talked and quarreled. But even his best friends found Nietzsche somewhat sensitive, self-centered, and neurotic, an awkward figure in society, impatient of criticism, overassured, and intolerant. His reading of nature and of human nature is profound and disturbing, but also partial, contradictory, and finally unacceptable.

The crux of the issue—one which Nietzsche's philosophy brings into clear focus—is simply this: What is power *good* for? What ends should it serve? Might or power in itself is not enough. The right should determine its use and expression, should limit and direct it for the good of the individual or of society. This fact Socrates pointed out with irrefutable logic to the Sophist Thrasymachus.[39] Nietzsche's account of Christianity reveals unmistakably the central paradox in his philosophy. His notion that Christianity began as a kind of Jewish conspiracy to gain power over its Gentile conquerors is, of course, not defensible historically. Nietzsche was not writing history but stating a thesis. But is not his major thesis in this case largely self-refuting? Christianity he interprets as a weapon by which the weak defeat the strong, the slave conquers his master. But if the slaves are thus victorious, are they not really the strong after all? Have they not given successful expression to the will to power? What Nietzsche implies throughout his discussion is that this will to power of the Christians is not the right kind of will to power, it is not a *good* thing. But if there are good and bad kinds of power, then are there not higher moral standards than success by which the will to conquer must be judged?

Nietzsche has portrayed in bold and challenging fashion the fundamental place of the Will to Power in human conduct. He has made it impossible for us to be as naïve as we once were in our social and political philosophy. He has made it clear that we cannot expect reason or good will to triumph unaided over the Will to Power either in our personal or our political life. But to find a sound and constructive insight into the enduring values upon which the good life is based, we must look elsewhere. On this point Nietzsche's philosophy has little contribution to make.

9 · PRAGMATISM

William James

William James was the first great American philosopher. In the history of American thought, there are, before him, other figures of unquestioned distinction—such men as Jonathan Edwards in theology and Emerson in literature—whose achievement was philosophical in the larger sense of the word; and there are numerous lesser figures in the field of philosophy proper. In recent years Charles S. Peirce, a contemporary of James at Harvard, has been recognized as a philosopher of more than ordinary ability. But James was the first American to be accepted in England and in Europe as a philosopher of stature comparable to that of his contemporaries in these countries; he was the first American to develop a philosophical point of view that took its place among the positions bidding for the common allegiance of scholars as well as laymen both in America and abroad. It is true that James's pragmatism was essentially American in spirit, but his sympathies and the formative influences which shaped his thought were more than provincial or national. The broad evolutionary and anti-intellectual forces at work in the late nineteenth century touched his mind and were caught up in his pragmatic philosophy as surely as they were in the thought of Nietzsche in Germany and Henri Bergson in France. It was in large measure, indeed, because James gave clear and forceful expression to the inner spirit of the age that he achieved popularity and influence such as no American philosopher had known before him and as none have since, with the possible exception of John Dewey.

The appeal of James's thought for the ordinary reader is greatly enhanced by the way in which it is presented. James writes not with the scholarly detachment or the formidable technical vocabulary of a Spinoza but with the

force and directness of the popular speaker. Except for his great two-volume work on *Psychology,* most of his books are made up of lectures or essays which were first read to university and lay audiences. And James, true to his own principles, was convinced that a lecture, to be good, must succeed—that is, people must understand it and be moved by it. The central concern of his pragmatic approach, as a matter of fact, is to make philosophy practical—usable in everyday life. Only that which will work when put into practice, only that by which men can live successfully, is entitled to be called good or true, James insists. Hence we can expect, when we turn to his philosophy, to find him dealing with problems that are real to ordinary men and women and speaking a language that is not only intelligible but also genuinely appealing.

THE EDUCATION OF WILLIAM JAMES

Among the philosophers we have considered thus far, some were child prodigies and many were men whose genius came to expression early and easily. John Stuart Mill was reading Latin and Greek when he was eight; Schopenhauer published his volume on *The World as Will and Idea* when only twenty-eight; both Spinoza and Nietzsche had completed their contribution to philosophy before the end of their forty-fifth year. William James, on the other hand, was well past thirty before he reached any kind of certainty concerning his major work in life. He was forty-eight before his first book, *The Principles of Psychology,* was completed, and fifty-five before his initial essays in philosophy, entitled *The Will to Believe,* were published. His early years, however, were rich in breadth of experience and in maturing insight; indeed, education was for William James more obviously than for most men a matter of the kind of life he lived and the interests and associations he pursued rather than a formal experience to be catalogued in terms of years of study in one institution or another.

James's father and his grandfather were both unusual men, and both had a marked influence upon the course of his life. His grandfather, an able and dynamic Irishman, came to this country as a youth, settled in Albany, New York, and built an increasingly successful career for himself in business. Extending his interests from merchandising to commerce, real estate, and banking, he accumulated one of the great fortunes of his day (estimated at $3,000,000); became one of the first citizens of his city and his state, and a leading member of the Presbyterian Church; and in the course of a long life had three wives and fourteen children. Few philosophers can boast of a heritage so obviously "successful."

Despite the efforts of James's grandfather to maintain both his material and his spiritual estate intact, money-getting and money-keeping soon ceased to be

a family concern, and even orthodox church attendance appreciably declined in the family. Money for the James family gradually became a means to the cultivation of good taste and pleasant living or to the study and pursuit of letters. William James's father, Henry, with several other members of the family, attended Princeton; but Henry James found the orthodox Calvinism of Princeton Seminary unsuited to his more inquiring mind, and he gave up the ministry for a career of literary and philosophical activity. Throughout his life, however, a very genuine religious interest and devotion played the major role. A few years before William James was born (in 1842), his father took up residence in New York City, where he wrote and lectured frequently, gradually drawing about him a circle of the distinguished men of the day. Among these the most important unquestionably was Emerson, but Thoreau, Carlyle, Holmes, and Hawthorne were also acquaintances of Henry James, and their ideas as well as their personalities permeated the spirit of the James home.

The elder James impressed his friends as something of a "character"—convivial and somewhat eccentric, with a noble and rather dubious philosophy which he felt it his mission to proclaim as vigorously and frequently as possible. Indeed, his *truths* were his *life*; for in Henry James living and thinking were almost completely fused. There was about him, however, nothing of the ascetic. He was constantly engaged in animated talk with someone, and when with his family he thoroughly enjoyed an elaborate nonsense and uninhibited playfulness which delighted them as much as it did him.

William James resembled his father in many ways. Both were fond of laughter; both were men of great spontaneity, with a tendency to embellish and exaggerate; both of them, unhappy in harness or in carefully organized activity, were constantly seeking something new. Both were "talking writers," with a gift for picturesque epithets, highly descriptive language, and great freedom of manner. Both men also were essentially sociable, but William James knew better than his father how to meet men on their own terms, how to make himself understood, how to retain his own independence without offending the canons of good taste.

William James's most characteristic habits of thought can be traced to his father's influence. Henry James constantly found himself in disagreement with the popular and established convictions of his day, and he never concealed his opinions of men or of ideas. His son throughout his life showed the same distaste for orthodoxy: as soon as an idea became established or was proclaimed with an air of authority, it became repugnant. Closely associated with this was a disposition on the part of both men to champion the weak and attack the strong—almost as a matter of principle. This attitude led William James to a defense of such beliefs as psychic research and personal immortality, both of which the more orthodox psychologists of his day were disposed to dismiss. It led him also to attack with unabating zeal the prevailing rational scientific spirit of the late nineteenth century.

EARLY YEARS AT HOME AND ABROAD

Henry James, like his son after him, was also a restless man. Life somewhere else always seemed to hold charms greater than those at hand. Much of William James's youth was spent in periodic trips to Europe or in efforts to find a more congenial spot for the family home in America. The most obvious characteristic of his education was constant change. In 1844, when he was only two years old, William spent his first year abroad. After their return to New York, his father became increasingly dissatisfied with the New York schools. There seemed to him something very desirable about the schools of Europe which the American schools as yet did not possess. So in June 1855, the whole family sailed for Europe once more and, after some time, William and his younger brother Henry were nicely established in a private school in Geneva. But the Swiss schools in the abstract looked much better than the Swiss schools in the concrete; by October their father had become so unhappy that the family was on its way back to England for the winter.

The next year was spent in Paris, and in the summer of 1857 the family moved to Boulogne, where the boys attended the local *college*. William, now sixteen, had here for the first time a solid year of sound and uninterrupted instruction. His chief interest lay in the sciences, especially in biology. As he wrote to a young friend at the time, "If I followed my taste and did what was most agreeable to me, I'll tell you what I would do. I would get a microscope and go out into the country, into the dear old woods and fields and ponds. There I would try to make as many discoveries as possible."[1]

He had little opportunity, however, to develop this inclination. The following spring, as by now had become its custom, the whole family moved bag and baggage, this time back to Newport, Rhode Island, where William and Henry attended another private school. William had been eager to attend Union College with a friend but found his father much opposed to the idea of his going to any American college. "He says that colleges are hot-beds of corruption where it is *impossible* to learn anything," William wrote his friend in disappointment. After a year and a half at Newport, William's father again settled on Switzerland as the ideal spot to educate his "ingenuous" boys. In due time the family was established once more in Geneva and William was enrolled in the University of Geneva. Here his achievements seem to have been largely social. He joined the important student organizations at the university, began to dedicate youthful sonnets and odes to all the family, and further developed an interest in sketching which had been discovered at Newport. A summer in Germany convinced him, much to his father's disappointment, that he really wanted to study art rather than science. To Henry James, art seemed frivolous, narrow, and parasitic when compared with the glory of religion or the usefulness of science. But he was sound enough in his educational philosophy to see that he ought not to interfere when his son was convinced that his talent and

interest lay in art. So in September the James family set out for Newport again in order that William might study painting with William Morris Hunt, who had first stimulated his interest in this field. From the father's point of view, this educational experiment proved a complete success. William found that his interest in art was much less compelling than he had imagined and that his talent, although not altogether lacking, was certainly not outstanding enough to justify painting as a vocation. At the end of a year he turned from art to science without further question and without serious regret.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY AND LATER STUDIES

In the fall of 1861, William James began the study of chemistry in the Lawrence Scientific School at Harvard, and for the next forty-six years Harvard University played an important role in his life. He soon passed from the study of chemistry to that of biology and anatomy. Here he wrestled with the problem of evolution, just then being given great prominence by the work of Darwin and by Herbert Spencer's philosophy; and he also came under the influence of Louis Agassiz, by far the most distinguished figure at Harvard in science.

The appeal of Agassiz to the young student was so great that a few years later James joined an expedition to Brazil which Agassiz headed; eight months in the Amazon away from civilization convinced him, however, that he had little interest in collecting and classifying fish or in natural history as such. He felt the need of people, of friends and family, of religion, philosophy, love, and the like. He wrote to friends at Harvard, "When I get home I'm going to study philosophy all my days." But when he did get back, he went ahead with studies in the Harvard Medical School which had been begun some time before his expedition with Agassiz.

Actually, James had no interest in the practice of medicine. He had been led to enroll in medical school by his interest in experimental physiology and psychology; and upon the completion of his medical course, instead of seeking a hospital appointment, he arranged to spend a year in Germany to acquaint himself with scientific developments there. Germany, at this time, had a widespread appeal to all American scholars as the home of the newest and most exciting ideas in science and philosophy. James was immediately caught up in the spirit of things and began to look back at his own country and countrymen with a new objectivity. Upon reading several copies of a home-town newspaper some months after reaching Germany, he wrote to his family: "I never should have believed that in these months the tone of a Boston paper would seem so outlandish to me. The boisterous animal good-humour, familiarity, reckless energy and self-confidence, unprincipled optimism, aesthetic saplessness and intellectual imbecility, made a mixture hard to characterize, but totally different from the tone of things here."[2]

Most of the winter he spent at the University of Berlin, attending lectures

in physiology and beginning to see in the borderland between physiology and psychology a field of much interest to him, but also doing some serious study of the philosophy of Kant—for he found himself in a situation in which no intelligent student could admit his ignorance of the great philosopher of Königsberg. During this year in Germany, James also made a more careful study of Darwin's work and gradually came to feel that Agassiz' opposition to Darwin's theories, which he had encountered at Harvard, was not very significant. He sent a review of one of Darwin's later books to an American journal and also wrote his brother: "The more I think of Darwin's ideas the more weighty do they appear to me, though of course my opinion is worth very little—still, I *believe* that that scoundrel Agassiz is unworthy either intellectually or morally for him to wipe his shoes on, and I find a certain pleasure in yielding to that feeling."[3]

Despite the fact that he had been in poor health for several years—this, as a matter of fact, was one of the reasons that led him to go abroad—James took his medical degree soon after returning to Cambridge, and in 1872, when thirty years old, he began his teaching career at Harvard as instructor in physiology. The very prospect of teaching had a decidedly beneficial effect upon him; his health improved and he entered into his work with his old zest and enthusiasm. When three years later he was promoted to an assistant professorship, he was definitely established professionally. Gradually but surely he began working his way from physiology through psychology to philosophy.

The year 1878, when James was thirty-six, in many ways marks a turning point in his life. Perhaps the most important event of that year was his marriage to Miss Alice Gibbens, a young woman distinguished in beauty, wit, and character. As one examines the lives of great philosophers, it is impressive to note how few of them are married at all, and that fewer still are happily married. It further bespeaks the human quality of William James to find him happily married to a charming wife and with her rearing a family of normal children. Indeed, James's wife brought into his life a composure and a steadying sense of purpose which his high-strung and mobile nature greatly needed. She shared his intellectual and professional interests with understanding and sympathy; she cared for his health with untiring devotion; and she protected him time after time from the consequences of his own rash generosity.

A few months before his marriage, James signed a contract with a publisher to write a textbook on psychology. It was twelve years before his work was actually completed, but this publishing commitment initiated one of his most fruitful and influential undertakings. The next decade he devoted primarily to work on his *Principles of Psychology,* which finally appeared in 1890, when the author was forty-eight years old. The book immediately attracted wide attention and marked James as one of the most gifted and original men in the field. Because of his unusual background—with a devotion to science, on the

one hand, especially biology and physiology, and a very deep and genuine interest in philosophy, on the other—James's work was unique in its day, and even today, after sixty years, it remains one of the most instructive, readable, and absorbing discussions of psychology. The brilliance of James's style and the richness of concrete illustration in his book also add to its appeal. His chapter on "Habit," for example, has become a classic in its own right, widely reprinted and read. Indeed James's *Principles of Psychology* was successful in a sense unusual for such books. It was read not only by students in psychology but by thoughtful laymen as well and was soon translated into the major European languages. Two years later he prepared a one-volume edition for general college use which remained for many years the most popular English textbook in the field.

COMMITMENT TO PHILOSOPHY

Upon the publication of his text, James experienced a profound sense of relief, the feeling of a job completed. The year 1890 actually marks the culmination of his active interest in psychology. He continued, of course, to lecture and to write brief articles and reviews in the psychological journals, but his major concern and achievement henceforth were to center in philosophy. He did not, to be sure, become a philosopher overnight. His interest in philosophy had been deep and abiding through most of his life, but philosophy was never for him a detached and dispassionate inquiry, a matter of mere academic theory or debate. It was rather a matter of personal conviction, a set of beliefs by which a man must live; and in his later life he proclaimed his own philosophy in much the same way that his father had proclaimed his, as one preaching a way of salvation.

As a matter of fact, James learned philosophy much as his father had done —not by taking courses in college but by talking through with his friends the important issues of living that confronted them, by reading the works of philosophers who had something to say to him, and, finally, by lecturing to others who had a similar concern. Among his early friends in college, the most original and stimulating was Charles S. Peirce, whom he knew intimately for forty years, with whom he corresponded regularly, and from whom he borrowed the term "pragmatism," which he made famous as the new name for his own philosophy. It is true that Peirce disowned the pragmatism which James later developed, claiming that James did not understand him, but he certainly was largely instrumental in delivering James from the spell of Herbert Spencer's thought and turning him toward a philosophy that was more concrete and practical in spirit. As a student at Harvard, James spent many long evenings with Peirce, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., and other congenial friends, arguing through the philosophical problems which science was then posing to the more intelligent uni-

versity students and in general "twisting the tail of the cosmos," as he liked to describe it.

The depth and genuineness of James's early interest in philosophy is recorded in several places. Just before completing his medical studies, he had a severe mental and physical crisis. For many years he had brooded upon the nature of the universe and the destiny of man. In the scientific picture of the universe, he could find no on-going purpose to inspire him, and for a while life did not seem worth while to the young student. During this time he read the *Essays* of Charles Renouvier, a celebrated French philosopher, and from them gained a new sense of freedom and a faith in free will. "My first act of freedom will be to believe in free will," James asserted. Thereafter he never relinquished his will to believe; it became the permanent foundation of his own philosophy of living.

Because of his own deep personal commitment to the faith he lived by, however, James for many years doubted the wisdom of making the teaching of philosophy his profession. "Philosophical activity as a *business* is not normal for most men, and not for me," he wrote, during his early years on the Harvard faculty.

> My strongest moral and intellectual craving is for some stable reality to lean upon, and as a professed philosopher pledges himself publicly never to have done with doubt on these subjects, but every day to be ready to criticize afresh and call in question the grounds of his faith of the day before, I fear the constant sense of instability generated by this attitude would be more than the voluntary faith I can keep going is sufficient to neutralize.[4]

MATURE ACHIEVEMENT

It was not until 1897, when James was fifty-five, that his first book in philosophy, *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*, was published. The volume was dedicated "To my old friend, Charles Sanders Peirce, to whose philosophic comradeship in old times and to whose writings in more recent years I owe more incitement and help than I can express or repay." Running through these essays is a moral earnestness, a conviction that, if there is to be anything valuable in living, it must come as one is free to believe in a moral ideal and to serve it without enervating doubt. It was in somewhat different form the gospel of Carlyle, with which James had become acquainted in his youth. The only escape from evil for James, as for Carlyle, is a practical one: "Stop your sniveling complaints, and your squalling sniveling raptures! Leave off your general emotional tomfoolery, and get *to work* like men."[5]

The following year James was invited to deliver the Gifford Lectures in Edinburgh, a signal distinction which has come to few American philosophers; and his lectures were published immediately upon delivery (in 1901-1902) under the title *Varieties of Religious Experience*. In the midst of his preparation

for this task, however, James suffered a severe physical collapse. After a fatiguing year, he went to the Adirondack Mountains for a vacation and there, walking ten hours a day with a heavy pack, he so strained his heart that he was in bed for most of the next three years. It was under these conditions that the *Varieties of Religious Experience* was written, but the book was one of James's best. He here sets himself the task of defending "experience" rather than theology as the real backbone of religion and of showing that religious experience, rather than any particular creed or church, is the most important concern of mankind. Like his *Principles of Psychology,* his volume on religion has continued to be read by all interested in the subject.

In 1906 James delivered the Lowell Lectures at Harvard and repeated these lectures the following spring at Columbia University. In 1907 they were published in the volume entitled *Pragmatism* and provide the most direct popular statement of the philosophy for which James has become famous. The audience at Columbia University numbered more than a thousand persons, and James's book attracted widespread attention. James himself felt that he was now giving the most effective statement to his philosophy and was greatly heartened by its reception. "I shouldn't be surprised," he wrote his brother Henry about the volume, "if ten years hence it should be rated as 'epoch-making,' for of the definitive triumph of that general way of thinking I can entertain no doubt whatever—I believe it to be something quite like the protestant reformation."[6] To another friend, James wrote: "I want to make you all enthusiastic converts to 'pragmatism.'" The pragmatic philosophy is the "philosophy of the future." "Every sane and sound tendency in life can be brought under it."

Of James's immediate disciples the most enthusiastic was F.C.S. Schiller, of Oxford University, who championed the cause of "pragmatism" in England—though he preferred the name "humanism" for the school of philosophy he and James hoped to found. In the United States, the leadership of the pragmatic movement James shared with John Dewey. Dewey was at Columbia University when the lectures on *Pragmatism* had been delivered there, and he and James were in close touch with each other for the last six or seven years of James's life.

In Italy, a small but vigorous "pragmatist" movement was established in Florence. For about five years it published a monthly journal of its own in which James's articles were reprinted, his books reviewed, and the pragmatic philosophy defended. Giovanni Papini, who later became an ardent Roman Catholic and whose *Life of Christ* was widely sold in this country some years ago, was perhaps the leading member of this group. A German translation of *Pragmatism* appeared a year after the volume was published in this country, but its spirit had much less appeal to the German temperament than to the French and English. In France, James's philosophy was read eagerly, and in 1910 he was elected to the French Academy of Moral and Political Sciences. Henri Bergson, ablest French philosopher of the twentieth century, was likewise

an outspoken admirer of James, although not in any sense a disciple of the pragmatic movement.

In America, James's influence can hardly be overestimated. He was constantly called upon to speak, both to university and to lay audiences. He continued to write and publish frequently. Although he did not by any means make pragmatists of all the younger philosophers in the country, he gave expression to a spirit and point of view that has definitely colored American thought. The pragmatic approach, if not the principles of pragmatism, characterized American philosophy for a generation after James's lectures on *Pragmatism* were delivered.

The year his book on *Pragmatism* appeared, James retired from teaching at Harvard. Realizing that his health and strength were gradually failing, he was anxious to devote all his remaining energy to the more systematic statement of his philosophy. Two years later he published *The Meaning of Truth,* a collection of essays developing this aspect of pragmatism, and *A Pluralistic Universe,* lectures given at Oxford University in 1908. The last serious enterprise of James's life was the preparation of a college textbook in philosophy. He was working upon this when he died, in 1910, and it was published unfinished the next year under the title *Some Problems in Philosophy.* A year later another collection of his essays appeared, entitled *Essays in Radical Empiricism.*

In these volumes James was striving desperately to provide the kind of scholarly and systematic statement of pragmatism which none of his earlier and more popular works contained. With the growth of his reputation and influence, he became increasingly aware of the criticism that was directed against him on this score and was anxious to meet it. "I live in apprehension lest the Avenger should cut me off before I get my message out," he wrote to his brother. "I hate to leave the volumes I have already published without their logical complement." But he was aware, also, that he never quite managed to accomplish his aim successfully. He died with the task incomplete; perhaps it was an impossible task. On his desk when he died lay a paper on which James himself had written his last word in philosophy—a revealing and characteristic comment: "There is no conclusion. What has concluded that we might conclude regarding it? There are no fortunes to be told and there is no advice to be given. Farewell."

JAMES AS MORAL PHILOSOPHER

Philosophy, for William James, was always a very practical concern; it was never a detached or dispassionate search for some "abstract" truth, never a pastime or form of amusement. As a young man James felt the need to work out for himself a philosophy to live by, a creed that would give his life purpose and direction. "There are some people—and I am one of them—" he observes with G. K. Chesterton, "who think that the most important and most practical

thing about a man is still his view of the universe. We think that for a landlady considering a lodger it is important to know his income, but still more important to know his philosophy." In his opinion,

> the philosophy which is so important in each of us is not a technical matter, it is our more or less dumb sense of what life honestly and deeply means. It is only partially got from books; it is our individual way of just seeing and feeling the total push and pressure of the cosmos. It works in the minutest crannies and it opens out the wide vistas. It "bakes no bread," as has been said, but it can inspire us with courage; and repugnant as its manners, its doubting and challenging, its quibbling and dialectics often are to common people, no one of us can get along without the far-flashing beams of light it sends over the world's perspectives.[7]

As a consequence of this approach, a moral earnestness permeates James's philosophical thinking. The major issue we face in life, he feels, is the conflict of good and evil; and he is eager to discover a moral ideal which one can not only *believe in* but also follow. He has a strong distaste, therefore, for anything that seems superficial, mediocre, decadent. James is also a vigorous exponent of the contemporary. There is something to be done *now* to make the world better. This is well illustrated by his reactions to travel in Italy. A brief visit was enough. "Italy is a very *delightful* place to dip into but no more," he wrote to his sister from Rome. "The weight of the past world here is fatal,—one ends by becoming its mere parasite instead of its equivalent. The ancients did things by doing the business of their own day, not by gaping at their grandfathers' tombs,—and a normal man today will do likewise."[8]

The inner spirit and particular quality of James's moral philosophy has been well stated by Ralph Barton Perry, his student and friend at Harvard:

> Optimism was as impossible for him as pessimism. He was too sensitive to ignore evil, too moral to tolerate it, and too ardent to accept it as inevitable. To his temperament the counsel of resignation could never be more than a temporary anaesthetic, and he was too profoundly human to find consolation in heaven. No philosophy could possibly suit him that did not candidly recognize the dubious fortunes of mankind, and encourage him as a moral individual to buckle on his armor and go forth to battle. . . . His power in philosophy and over philosophers was due in no small measure to his teaching that in theory as in practice a man must take his part, believing something, fighting for what he believes, and incurring the risk of being wrong.[9]

WHAT MAKES LIFE WORTH LIVING?

What makes life worth living? was a question with which James was deeply concerned, and his final answer is direct and clear. It is courage, struggle, risk—in a word, heroism, that makes life significant. What is needed is a "real fight,"

actual risks and genuine obstacles. If one feels that the risks and difficulties are put there merely for their moral effect, the spirit of adventure and achievement is lost. No more apt portrayal of this approach to living is to be found than James's vivid description of a week he spent at the well-known Assembly Grounds on Lake Chautauqua.

> The moment one treads that sacred enclosure, one feels one's self in an atmosphere of success. Sobriety and industry, intelligence and goodness, orderliness and ideality, prosperity and cheerfulness, pervade the air. It is a serious and studious picnic on a gigantic scale. You have a first-class college in full blast. You have magnificent music—a chorus of seven hundred voices, with possibly the most perfect open-air auditorium in the world. You have general religious services and special club-houses for the several sects. You have perpetually running soda-water fountains, and daily popular lectures by distinguished men. You have the best of company, and yet no effort. You have no zymotic diseases, no poverty, no drunkenness, no crime, no police. You have culture, you have kindness, you have equality, you have the best fruits of what mankind has fought and bled and striven for under the name of civilization for centuries. You have, in short, a foretaste of what human society might be, were it all in the light, with no suffering and no dark corners.
>
> I went in curiosity for a day. I stayed for a week, held spell-bound by the charm and ease of everything, by the middle-class paradise, without a sin, without a victim, without a blot, without a tear.
>
> And yet what was my own astonishment, on emerging into the dark and wicked world again, to catch myself quite unexpectedly and involuntarily saying, "Ouf! What a relief! Now for something primordial and savage to set the balance straight again. This order is too tame, this culture is too second-rate, this goodness too uninspiring. This human drama without a villain or a pang; this community so refined that ice-cream soda-water is the utmost offering it can make to the brute animal in man; this city simmering in the tepid lakeside sun; this atrocious harmlessness of all things, —I cannot abide them. Let me take my chances again in the big outside worldly wilderness with all its sin and sufferings. There is more hope a thousand times than in this dead level and quintessence of every mediocrity."
>
> Such was the sudden right-about-face performed for me by my lawless fancy. There seemed to be a paradox and self-contradiction somewhere, which I, as a professor drawing a full salary, was in duty bound to unravel and explain, if I could. So I meditated. And, first of all, I asked myself what the thing was that was so lacking in this Sabbatical city, the lack of which kept one forever short of the higher sort of contentment. And I soon recognized the element that gives to the wicked outer world all its moral style, expressiveness and picturesqueness—the element of precipitousness, so to call it, of strength and strenuousness, intensity and danger. What

> excites and interests the looker-on at life, what the romances and the statues celebrate and the grim civic monuments remind us of, is the everlasting battle of the powers of light with those of darkness; with heroism, reduced to its bare chance, yet ever and anon snatching victory from the jaws of death. But in this unspeakable Chautauqua the ideal was so completely victorious already that no sign of any previous battle remained, the place just rested on its oars. But what our human emotions seem to require is the sight of the struggle going on. The moment the fruits are being eaten, the thing becomes ignoble. Sweat and effort, human nature strained to its uttermost and on the rack, yet getting through alive, and then turning its back on its success to pursue another more rare and arduous still—this is the sort of thing which inspires us and which all the higher forms of literature and art bring home to us.[10]

This quality of human life is frequently lost sight of also, James feels, in the academic enterprise. There is something too tame and conventional about university courses. While he was on the Harvard faculty, a proposal was made to shorten the time required for the B.A. degree from four to three years. This plan James championed with characteristic spirit. Writing in the *Harvard Monthly,* he pointed out that most university students, although probably *intelligent,* are not interested primarily in what is *theoretical.*

> These excellent fellows need contact of some sort with the fighting side of life, and with the world in which men and women earn their bread and butter and live and die; there must be the scent of blood, so to speak, upon what you offer them, or else their interest does not wake up; the blood which is shed in our electives, fails to satisfy them very long. The A.B. degree should be accommodated to the needs of students of this second category, and for them the three-year course is long enough.[11]

THE MORAL EQUIVALENT OF WAR

Like Nietzsche, James was deeply moved by the ideas of Darwin and the evolutionary spirit which so profoundly influenced the intellectual outlook of the late nineteenth century. He had no more patience than Nietzsche with mediocrity, with passivity, with a failure to meet squarely the moral issues of our day. Even the martial spirit which so appealed to Nietzsche also seemed to James to contain a quality essential to the good life. But James saw, as Nietzsche did not, the limitations and dangers in the naked will to power. He set himself to find a moral equivalent for it which would preserve that which was ethically valuable in Nietzsche's aristocratic radicalism but which would avoid its glaring defects. The heroic struggle to which we give ourselves must be a struggle with evil and the forces of evil, James felt, not a battle of the strong to conquer the weak. In 1910, he published his famous essay *The Moral Equivalent of War,* in which he developed this position at length. The treatise was immediately successful and

widely influential. Thousands of reprints were distributed, and it was twice republished in popular magazines before being included in a volume of James's essays. Men in nonacademic circles, among them many army officers, were attracted by its candid contention that the horrors of war "are a cheap price to pay for our rescue from a world of clerks and school teachers, of coeducation, associated charities and feminism. No scorn, no hardness, no valor any more. Fie upon such a cattle-yard of a planet," James wrote.

But the purpose of the essay was to support the cause of peace—in intelligent fashion to gain the moral fruits of war without its horror and destruction. "We must make new energies and hardihoods continue the manliness to which the military mind so faithfully clings," James urged. "Martial virtues must be the enduring cement; intrepidity, contempt of softness, surrender of private interest, obedience to command, must still remain the rock upon which states are built." To this end James proposed a conscription of the youthful population to form an army enlisted to conquer Nature for the good of society. In this army every young man would serve for a limited period. Thus James hoped that "the military ideals of hardihood and discipline could be brought into the growing fibre of the people, without the callowness, cruelty and degradation that are the inevitable accompaniment of war."[12]

As he recognizes also, it is the cause for which one fights that ultimately determines the value of the fight, not simply the combat itself. "We are all ready to be savage in some cause," James writes. "The difference between a good man and a bad one is the choice of the cause." This point he makes with telling effect in a comment upon Theodore Roosevelt's famous address on "The Strenuous Life." As a fighter for ideals, Roosevelt was a man after James's own heart. But James sharply criticized this popular speech even while it was being widely acclaimed by others. Governor Roosevelt is here still mentally in the period of adolescence, James complains, gushing over war for the manly strenuousness it involves with "not a word of the cause,—one foe is as good as another, for aught he tells us; not a word of the conditions of success. He swamps everything together in one flood of abstract bellicose emotion."[13]

THE WILL TO BELIEVE

The causes to which we give ourselves, James points out, are directly related to our own needs, desires, and past experiences. They are not the result of abstract, rational reflection. Most of us do not believe in Buddhism, but we probably would, had we grown up in certain parts of the Orient instead of in America. "If one should assume that pure reason is what settles our opinions, he would fly in the teeth of the facts," James writes. "As a rule we disbelieve all facts and theories for which we have no use." We customarily find reasons for believing what we want to believe, as Schopenhauer so clearly demonstrated. The will comes first, not the intellect. This is particularly true in the matter of

moral conviction. "If your heart does not *want* a world of moral reality, your head will assuredly never make you believe in it," James maintains. "Some men (even at the student age) are so naturally cool-hearted that the moralistic hypothesis never has for them any pungent life, and in their supercilious presence the hot young moralist always feels strangely ill at ease. The appearance of knowingness is on their side, of naïveté and gullibility on his. Yet, in the inarticulate heart of him, he clings to it that he is not a dupe, and that there is a realm in which (as Emerson says) all their wit and intellectual superiority is no better than the cunning of a fox."[14]

Two attitudes toward belief are possible. On the one hand we can determine not to believe anything unless we have sufficient evidence to make it completely certain. This is the position of science: "Believe nothing, keep your mind in suspense forever, rather than by closing it on insufficient evidence to incur the awful risk of believing lies." James is emphatic in insisting that the scientist, who is dealing with nature and can wait as long as necessary before making a decision, accept only those beliefs for which he has such convincing evidence. But there are other situations in life, he points out, in which decisions must be made, in which we must accept one alternative or another, whether we are entirely ready to do so or not. A judge, for example, must decide whether a man is guilty or not in the light of the evidence at hand. He cannot simply postpone the matter for another six or eight months, as can the scientist who may—indeed, who often must—wait years before making up his mind just how the atom is constructed or how it can be smashed.

Now the moral and religious decisions which we have to make in life are, in the main, what James calls *forced options*, matters about which a decision has to be made one way or the other; and—even more important—in such moral and religious decisions, what we believe actually helps determine the future facts, James points out. The man who says to himself, "I will have no friends until I am absolutely sure of the worth and loyalty of my acquaintances," will have no friends. But the man who shows himself a friend to others will *make* friends of them. If you *will* believe well of your fellow men, you may well create the good you believe in. This was a favorite maxim, and James practiced as well as preached it. As a result, his presence usually raised the general temperature of good will in any company.

> There are, then, cases where a fact cannot come at all unless a preliminary faith in its coming exists. And where faith in the fact can help create the fact, that would be an insane logic which should say that faith running ahead of scientific evidence is the "lowest kind of immorality" into which a thinking being can fall. Yet such is the logic by which our scientific absolutists pretend to regulate our lives.[15]

The greatest possibilities of good in this life as well as the next, James feels, are offered to us by religion, provided, of course, we accept its tenets of belief

and conduct. Now religious belief neither is scientifically and rationally demonstrable nor can it be disproved by science or reason. We have to make up our minds on the basis of the best evidence we have. But if we are skeptical and withhold our judgment, James points out, we are actually rejecting the religious hypothesis—for we lose the good which religion offers whether we reject it outright or simply withhold our decision on the matter. Furthermore, religious truth may well be like truth in other personal relationships; for it is essentially and at heart personal. Conceivably, then, unless we are willing to do our part—to believe in the possibility of friendship with the divine Personality and act upon that belief—we are no more likely to come to know that reality is of this personal, friendly, and dependable sort than is a man to discover the friendliness and dependability of other human beings whom he steadfastly refuses to trust as friends. The emphasis of religion upon faith is, therefore, quite legitimate when properly understood.

> I, therefore, for one cannot see my way to accept the agnostic rules for truth-seeking, or willfully agree to keep my willing nature out of the game. I cannot do so for the plain reason that a rule of thinking which would absolutely prevent me from acknowledging certain kinds of truth if those kinds of truth were really there, would be an irrational rule. That for me is the long and short of the formal logic of the situation. . . . If we had an infallible intellect with its objective certitudes, we might feel ourselves disloyal to such a perfect organ of knowledge in not trusting to it exclusively. But if we are empiricists, if we believe that no bell in us tolls to let us know for certain when truth is in our grasp, then it seems a piece of idle fantasticality to preach so solemnly our duty of waiting for the bell. Indeed we *may* wait if we will,—I hope you do not think I am denying that—(we ought, on the contrary, delicately and profoundly to respect one another's mental freedom) but if we do wait, we do so at our own peril as much as if we believed.[16]

THE DILEMMA OF DETERMINISM

James's doctrine of the "will to believe" or, as he later terms it, the "right to believe" assumes, of course, the possibility of freedom in human thought and conduct; and to the belief in freedom James commits himself with characteristic vigor and candor. "I disclaim openly on the threshold all pretension to prove to you that the freedom of the will is true," he writes in a discerning essay on *The Dilemma of Determinism*. "The most I hope is to induce some of you to follow my own example in assuming it to be true, and acting as if it were true." The very fact of freedom of thought implies indeed that no conclusive demonstration of freedom is possible, James observes. Otherwise, we would *have* to believe in it, and we would not then be free.

What does determinism really mean? It means, as Spinoza so clearly pointed out, "that those parts of the universe already laid down absolutely appoint and

decree what the other parts shall be. The future has no ambiguous possibilities hidden in its womb." Everything that happens must happen as it does; it could not be otherwise. The translator of the *Rubaiyat* has aptly expressed the idea poetically:

> With Earth's first clay They did the Last Man knead,
> And there of the Last Harvest sowed the seed:
> And the first Morning of Creation wrote
> What the Last Dawn of Reckoning shall read.

It is this position that James finds unacceptable. Picking up the morning newspaper, he reads in it the account of a cruel and wanton murder: a husband kills his wife, seemingly untouched by her cries for mercy, and hacks her body to pieces. What man in his right senses is not moved by a profound sense of *regret* as he reads of this deed? James asks. Yet look at what such regret involves, for the determinist. "The judgment of regret calls the murder bad. Calling a thing bad means, if it means anything at all, that the thing ought not to be, that something else ought to be in its stead. Determinism, in denying that anything else can be in its stead, virtually defines the universe as a place in which what ought to be is impossible,—in other words, as an organism whose constitution is afflicted with an incurable taint, an irremediable flaw."[17]

If we are deterministS, and are wise, we do not, then, regret the murder, James points out. "It is absurd to regret the murder alone. It could not be different. What we should regret is the whole frame of things of which a murder is one member." But does this not lead the determinist inevitably to pessimism? For it means that world is not and cannot be the kind of world it ought to be. Even his pessimism, however, poses for the determinist a curious logical predicament, James insists.

> Our determinism leads us to call our judgments of regret wrong, because they are pessimistic in implying that what is impossible yet ought to be. But how then about the judgments of regret themselves? If they are wrong, other judgments, judgments of approval, ought to be in their place. But as they are necessitated, nothing else could be in their place; and the universe is just what it was before;—namely, a place in which what ought to be appears impossible.[18]

What James is here so skillfully portraying, of course, is the paradox produced by genuine moral conviction, by our inner certainty of right and wrong, in the kind of completely deterministic universe accepted by modern science and so ably depicted by Spinoza. Our moral convictions, along with everything else, must have been produced necessarily, if we accept a scientific determinism, and yet they are senseless and absurd in such a deterministic scheme of things. The rationalist is thus led to accept a universe which is irrational and so in the end refutes his own position, James maintains. The moral life demands for its very

existence a belief in freedom and indeterminism, and this for James becomes an essential element in a sound philosophy.

> What interest, zest or excitement can there be in achieving the right way, unless we are enabled to feel that the wrong way is also a possible and a natural way,—nay more, a menacing and an imminent way? And what sense can there be in condemning ourselves for taking the wrong way, unless we need have done nothing of the sort, unless the right way was open to us as well. I cannot understand the belief that an act is bad, without regret at its happening. I cannot understand regret without the admission of real, genuine possibilities in the world.[19]

INDETERMINISM AND DIVINE PROVIDENCE

James is as strongly opposed, moreover, to a religious as to a scientific determinism, and for the same reason. The religious belief that the course of human life is completely predestined by a sovereign deity seems to him to destroy genuine moral responsibility as effectively as does the scientific determinism which was so popular in his day. If man is made by God to act as he does, then he cannot be commended for the outcome. But neither can he be condemned. For a deterministic philosophy, sin is as meaningless as is virtue.

Is it possible, then, to reconcile a belief in freedom and in moral responsibility with the religious doctrine of divine providence? James believes that it is. "Chances may be there," he writes, "uncontrolled even by God, and the course of the Universe be really ambiguous; and yet the end of things may be just what God intended from all eternity."[20] To illustrate his conception of how this is possible, James uses the analogy of a game of chess played between an expert chess player and a novice. The expert plans to win the game and will win, even though he does not know in advance just what moves the novice will make. His superior wisdom and ability simply enable him to meet any emergency successfully. So, James argues, the divine providence of God may well accomplish its purpose in the world without in any way limiting the freedom of each man to conduct his own life as he wishes, even to the extent of opposing the will and purpose of God.

Life offers us *real* possibilities for good as well as for evil. This is one of James's fundamental convictions. His emphasis upon the "will to believe" is an outgrowth indeed of his acute awareness of the difficulties which we face when we try to find a pathway that will lead in the *right* direction in life. Our predicament he describes in the following graphic fashion:

> Each man must act as he thinks best; and, if he is wrong, so much the worse for him. We stand on a mountain pass in the midst of whirling snow and blinding mist, through which we get glimpses now and then of paths which may be deceptive. If we stand still we shall be frozen to death. If we

> take the wrong road we shall be dashed to pieces. We do not certainly know whether there is any right one. What must we do? "Be strong and of a good courage." Act for the best, hope for the best, and take what comes.[21]

PRAGMATISM

This quest for the morally desirable and practical dominated James throughout his life. He wanted a philosophy that would redeem him from abstractions and double dealing, from carrying on his bookkeeping in two accounts, like Sunday Christianity; he wanted to restore to philosophy something of the empirical temper of science and of practical life; he wanted a philosophy concerned with the present as well as the future, a philosophy of progress. It was this concern that led him to become a pragmatist. The word "pragmatism" is derived from the Greek term πρᾶγμα, meaning "action," the same word from which "practice" and "practical" come. Both the name and the philosophical method were suggested to James by an article which Charles Peirce published in 1878 in the *Popular Science Monthly*, entitled "How to Make Our Ideas Clear." To find the meaning of an idea, we must examine the consequences to which it leads in action, Peirce there maintains. These consequences are for us its positive significance. If we want to understand the meaning of democracy, look at what we do in America, not what we say. If we want to understand Christianity, follow the same procedure. This is, for Peirce, the principle of pragmatism, and upon this principle James develops a full-blown philosophy.

One's philosophy, James believes, is basically a matter of temperament. Here again he agrees with Nietzsche, though he does not use quite so strong a word as "prejudice."

> Of whatever temperament a professional philosopher is, he tries when philosophizing, to sink the fact. Yet his temperament really gives him a stronger bias than any of his more strictly objective premises. It loads the evidence for him one way or the other, making for a more sentimental or a more hard-hearted view of the universe, just as this fact or that principle would. He *trusts* his temperament. Wanting a universe that suits it, he believes in any representation of the universe that does suit it. He feels men of opposite temper to be out of key with the world's character, and in his heart he considers them incompetent and "not in it," in the philosophic business, even though they may far excel him in dialectical ability.[22]

This underlying temper, or sense of values, by which a man's preference and convictions are shaped finds expression in every sphere of life. In government there are the authoritarians and the democrats; in economics there are the believers in free enterprise and in government regulation; in art there are the classicists and the romanticists. "In philosophy we have a very similar contrast expressed

in the pair of terms 'rationalist' and 'empiricist,'" James writes, "'empiricist' meaning your love of facts in all their crude variety, 'rationalist' meaning your devotion to abstract and eternal principles." The empirical temper is scientific and skeptical; the rational temper is idealistic, monistic, and optimistic. In his customary graphic fashion, James describes these two attitudes as *tough-minded* and *tender-minded*. The history of philosophy, he believes, can be written largely in terms of the clash between these two views of life, and certainly the present conflict of thought is to be located here. James takes his stand vigorously, confidently with the empiricists.

> Pragmatism represents a perfectly familiar attitude in philosophy, the empiricist attitude, but it represents it, as it seems to me, both in a more radical and in a less objectionable form than it has ever yet assumed. A pragmatist turns his back resolutely and once and for all upon a lot of inveterate habits dear to professional philosophers. He turns away from abstraction and insufficiency, from verbal resolutions, from bad *a priori* reasons, from fixed principles, closed systems, and pretended absolutes and origins. He turns toward concreteness and adequacy, toward fact, toward action and power. That means the empiricist temper regnant, and the rationalist temper securely given up. It means the open air and the possibilities of nature, as against dogma, artificiality and the pretense of finality in truth.[23]

THE PRAGMATIC METHOD

Pragmatism is, for James, first of all a method, a method primarily of getting away from metaphysical abstractions and bringing philosophy back into close contact with life and with conduct. If a philosophical dispute is serious, if it has real meaning for our living, it ought to make some practical difference whether one side or the other is right. The pragmatist, James points out, simply insists that in every controversy or argument we ask what difference in practice it makes if this notion rather than that notion is true. He insists that we try a thing out, act upon it, and see what happens. If no practical differences whatever can be discovered as between two notions, then the alternatives mean practically the same thing, and all dispute is idle.

It is astonishing, James observes, to see how many philosophical disputes collapse into insignificance the moment you subject them to this simple test of tracing the concrete consequences involved. Here, for example, is a man who says that he believes in God; here is one who says that he does not. Here is a man who professes to be a Christian, here is one who is not. Here is a man who claims to be an advocate of democracy, here is one who is said to be a communist. Examine the concrete conduct to which each of these beliefs leads and the institutional and historical practices of which it approves and you will find its positive meaning for the individuals concerned, James maintains. If there is

no discernible difference in such conduct, then for all practical purposes the words mean the same thing.

> The serious meaning of a concept lies in the concrete difference to someone which its being true will make. Strive to bring all debated conceptions to that "pragmatic" test. The whole function of philosophy ought to be to find out what definite difference it will make to you and to me at definite instants of our life, if this world-formula or that world-formula be the true one.[24]

What anything means, as a matter of fact, is, to the pragmatist, just such an individual and positive thing, a matter of experience. There is no such thing as general and universal meaning. We let ourselves be too easily deceived by names, by words, by ideas. We call ourselves Christians or Democrats or Republicans, and feel that we have achieved something significant. Actually these are only verbal solutions, abstractions, which enable us to deceive ourselves and to forget the practical problems of life that need to be met.

> But if you follow the pragmatic method, you cannot look on any such word as closing your quest. You must bring out of each word its practical cash value, set it at work within the stream of your experience. It appears less as a solution, then, than as a program for more work, and more particularly as an indication of the ways in which existing realities may be *changed.* Theories thus become instruments, not answers to enigmas in which we can rest. We don't lie back upon them, we move forward and, on occasion, make nature over again by their aid. Pragmatism unstiffens our theories, limbers them up and sets each one at work.[25]

This pragmatic approach was not new in philosophy, James pointed out. As a subtitle for his own volume on *Pragmatism*, he chose "A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking." Socrates had used the pragmatic method constantly and adeptly; Aristotle had seen its importance; the British empiricists, Locke, Berkeley and Hume, had developed its implication. In the field of logic, Peirce had already stated the pragmatic principle clearly, and Dewey and Schiller were developing a pragmatic account of what truth signified. James believed that pragmatism would bring into philosophy the most important aspects of scientific thought: its experimental method, its tentativeness, its concern with the concrete and specific. At the outset at least, pragmatism stood only for a method. "It has no dogmas and no doctrines save its method," James writes. "No particular results then, so far, but only an attitude of orientation—the attitude of looking away from first things, principles, 'categories,' supposed necessities; and of looking towards last things, fruits, consequences, facts. . . . All that the pragmatic method implies then is that that truth should have practical, i.e. particular, consequences."[26]

THE MEANING OF TRUTH

But ultimately more was involved in his pragmatism than a method, and this James realized clearly enough. An entirely different view of truth from that accepted by the rationalist was the inevitable outcome of the pragmatic emphasis. As the pragmatist examines human experience and asks what "truth" means in a pragmatic sense, he finds that ideas are themselves but parts of his experience, and that they become true for him just in so far as they help him get into satisfactory relation with other parts of experience. "Any idea upon which we can ride, so to speak; any idea that will carry us prosperously from any one part of our experience to any other part, linking things satisfactorily, working securely, simplifying, saving labor, is true for just so much, true in so far forth, true instrumentally," James writes.[27]

The important thing for James as a pragmatist is that ideas *become* true for us. We do not accept a new opinion as true when we first meet it; indeed we are often shocked by the idea. But in time we find that we have come to regard this opinion as true. James's description of how any individual settles into new opinions is an excellent example of his acute psychological insight and power of analysis.

> The process here is always the same. The individual has a stock of old opinions already but he meets a new experience that puts them to a strain. Somebody contradicts them; or in a reflective moment he discovers that they contradict each other; or he hears of facts with which they are incompatible; or desires arise in him which they cease to satisfy. The result is an inward trouble to which his mind till then had been a stranger, and from which he seeks to escape by modifying his previous mass of opinions. He saves as much of it as he can, for in this matter of belief we are extreme conservatives. So he tries to change first this opinion, and then that (for they resist change very vigorously), until at last some new idea comes up which he can graft upon the ancient stock with a minimum of disturbance of the latter, some idea that mediates between the stock and the new experiences and runs them into one another most felicitously and expediently.
>
> This new idea is then adopted as the true one. It preserves the older stock of truths with a minimum of modification, stretching them just enough to make them admit the novelty, but conceiving that in ways as familiar as the case leaves possible. An *outrée* explanation, violating all our preconceptions, would never pass as a true account of a novelty. We should scratch around industriously till we found something less eccentric. The most violent revolutions in an individual's beliefs leave most of his old order standing.

What, then, is the meaning of truth when examined in this empirical fashion?

> A new opinion counts as "true" just in proportion as it gratifies the individual's desire to assimilate the novel in his experience to his beliefs in

> stock. It must both lean on old truth and grasp new fact; and its success (as I said a moment ago) in doing this, is a matter for the individual's appreciation. When old truth grows, then, by a new truth's addition, it is for subjective reasons. We are in the process and obey the reasons. That new idea is truest which performs most felicitously its function of satisfying our double urgency. It makes itself true, gets itself classed as true, by the way it works; grafting itself then upon the ancient body of truth, which thus grows much as a tree grows by the activity of a new layer of cambium.[28]

One has only to look at this process at work in the minds of students in the early years of their university education to recognize the accuracy of James's description. Coming from varied backgrounds with different ideals and convictions, their reactions to the new ideas and changed situation of university life are equally varied and individual. Some accept with little difficulty the scientific, economic, and political ideas they find defended by their friends or discussed in their classes. For others such views are too much of a shock to underlying religious or social convictions to function as "true" in their thinking. Some make compromises to suit their needs; others refuse steadfastly to do so, keeping their religious and their scientific ideas in separate, watertight compartments as long as possible. But everywhere new ideas *become* true by the way they work, as they help each of us get into more satisfactory relations with our total experience, as they satisfy needs, intellectual or social, that are deeply felt.

TRUTH AS HUMAN VALUE

"Purely objective truth, truth in whose establishment the function of giving human satisfaction in marrying previous parts of experience with newer parts plays no role whatever, is nowhere to be found," James insists. Examine the most ancient truths we know. "They also once were plastic. They also were called true for human reasons. They also mediate between still earlier truths and what in those days were novel observations. . . . *The reason why we call things true is the reason why they are true, for 'to be true' means only to perform this marriage-function.*"[29]

The rationalist, to be sure, argues that truth is independent of our own needs and desires: we "find" truth and do not help create it; truth is not the servant of human need but the arbiter of human destiny, he maintains. But the truth with which the rationalist is concerned, turns out, upon examination, to be only "the dead heart of the living tree," James insists. We need only formulate, with Nietzsche, a *genealogy of truth* and we will find that all this supposedly independent and objective truth came into being in just the same fashion as ideas now become true—to meet human need, to bring order and unity into human experience—that is, because of its value in enabling men to live more satisfying or successful lives. For James, the conclusion to which this points is clear: "truth is one species of good, and not, as is usually supposed, a category distinct

from good and co-ordinate with it. The true is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief, and good, too, for definite assignable reasons." The notion that truth is divine and precious, and its pursuit a duty, is evidence enough, James argues, that "true" ideas are those that are of use in life. If false ideas were the useful ones, then we would feel it our duty to shun truth rather than seek it. Actually in this world, "just as certain foods are not only agreeable to our taste, but good for our teeth, our stomach, and our tissues; so certain ideas are not only agreeable to think about or agreeable as supporting other ideas that we are fond of, but they are also helpful in life's practical struggles."[30]

Writing in this vein, James is led to his most relativistic comment upon the nature of truth. "The true," he concludes, "is only the expedient in our way of thinking, just as 'the right' is only the expedient in our way of behaving. Expedient in almost any fashion; and expedient in the long run and on the whole, of course; for what meets expediently all the experiences in sight won't necessarily meet all further experiences satisfactorily."[31] This empirical and pragmatic approach to truth involves a real change of heart, James urges—a break with our absolutistic hopes, our desire for certainty and unchangeable conviction. Truth is a process; ideas become true as they perform a needed function in human experience. What is true may change and does change as our needs and satisfactions move on, but at no time, James insists, is it ever possible to get outside our own human experience and need, or measure truth by any other standard.

Philosophy, as a rule, has been rationalistic, James recognizes, and each philosopher has insisted upon the reasonableness and truth of his own position; but there have been few who were able to agree with one another. This very fact helps confirm James in his empiricism, his denial of any one absolute and unchanging truth. Science, on the other hand, is at best experimental and tentative, empirical in spirit rather than rationalistic, seeing no infallible way to tell *that* we do know the truth or *when* we know it. It is this spirit that philosophy must cultivate in order to meet the practical demands of our day and become a guide to successful living.

PRAGMATISM AND RELIGION

Religious experience and religious faith were always matters of deep concern to James. He was especially interested, of course, in the more practical approach to religion. Religion, he felt, was good and desirable when it did something for the individual, when it enriched his life, gave him greater strength and courage to meet the demands of existence more successfully. The common man has always believed in a god who did things, James points out. Both the Bible and the sacred writings of non-Christian religions are full of accounts of divine intervention in human life. Perhaps, James shrewdly suggests, the reason why many people today do not believe in God is that God is not doing anything in their lives.[32]

The strongest argument for belief in God is of this practical, empirical kind, he maintains. Does God's existence make any immediate and observable difference in experience? Does He *do* anything? The classical arguments for the existence of God—rational attempts to prove that God is the creator of the universe or that there is a divine purpose and plan in the development of life—James discards as futile. No practical test of their truth, no concrete consequences that follow from the arguments, can be found. As a result, such arguments have never convinced anyone of the reality of God. They have simply seemed like good reasons to those who already believed in God on other grounds. The atheist has found nothing in them that he could not refute to his own satisfaction. Actually people believe in God, once they have begun to think for themselves and give up second-hand ideas, because of their own experience, because they have found that God's existence made a difference to them in the way they live and feel, James insists.

Pragmatism actually widens the field of search for God. She is willing to follow any logic, to take into account the humblest and most personal experiences.

> She will take a God who lives in the very dirt of private fact—if that should seem a likely place to find him. Her only test of probable truth is what works best in the way of leading us, what fits every part of life best and combines with experience's demands, nothing being omitted. If the notion of God, in particular, should prove to do it, how could pragmatism possibly deny God's existence? She could see no meaning in treating as "not true" a notion that was pragmatically so successful. What other kind of truth could there be than all this agreement with concrete reality?[33]

DOES IT WORK A FINAL COMMENT

Without question James performed a great service to the cause of philosophy. He urged the philosopher to come down from his ivory tower and deal with the practical realities of life in terms that the average man could understand. He made it clear that until a philosophy of life would work successfully, it could not hope to gain or hold the allegiance of mankind. He turned the attention of the philosopher to the concrete consequences of what he believed, rather than to a concern with logical consistency. Philosophy became a program for action, not merely a source of sentimental or aesthetic satisfaction. James frankly recognized also what Nietzsche and Schopenhauer before him had perceived as to the primary place of will in human nature and human life. Our beliefs and convictions, as surely as our conduct, are motivated by will and desire rather than by reason. We think in order to live; thinking is primarily a guide to action, and our beliefs are essentially tools or instruments for living. "We live our way into think-

ing; we do not think our way into living," as Kierkegaard earlier had insisted. The best beliefs, without question, are those which are conducive to the best life.

These are convictions emphasized by both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche; they are facts that the evolutionary doctrine of Darwin has validated beyond serious question. In the pragmatism of James these insights become the dominant principles of philosophy. James is interested in avoiding the life-destroying agnosticism which seemed to him the outcome of nineteenth-century rationalism and in building a philosophy to live by. Hence his emphasis upon the importance of the will-to-believe in the affairs of everyday life, where our knowledge is always limited and where successful action usually depends upon our confidence in ourselves or in God. The great religious leaders of every age, from St. Paul to Gandhi, have been men who accomplished the impossible simply because they refused to believe that it was impossible. James, as a discerning psychologist, recognizes the fundamental place of faith in life, and he refuses to allow the nerve of a great faith to be severed by the skeptical spirit of science. His pragmatism takes its place with Bergson's doctrine of creative evolution and Nietzsche's emphasis upon human freedom as a necessary reaction against the scientific determinism of the late nineteenth century.

In dealing with the nature of truth, James stresses another important consideration. His description of the way in which our beliefs are *accepted* as true shows rare psychological insight. Perhaps, indeed, it is as a psychologist rather than as a philosopher that James makes his greatest contribution. We reach our conclusion that certain beliefs are true out of our own experience and in the light of our general body of convictions. There is no other standard by which we can judge. James indicates clearly the fallibility of all our beliefs, even the most precious, and in highly effective fashion warns us against undue dogmatism. He has shown the dependence of truth as we know it, as well as of goodness, upon our own enduring needs and convictions. And thus he has brought into philosophy the tentativeness and open-mindedness of the scientific spirit—qualities which seem to him most needed there.

But it is in James's pragmatic theory of truth that the most serious weakness of his philosophy is to be found. He is guilty here, it would seem, of confusing the truth of an idea with our knowledge of its truth. An idea which is true provides for us, we are convinced, some valid understanding of a reality beyond ourselves and independent of our desires. We can find out whether or not it is true only by acting upon it, by fitting it into our body of established convictions, to be sure. Our knowledge of truth can never be absolute. This James saw so clearly that he vigorously opposed absolutism in every form. But is not truth itself, the goal toward which we are moving but which we never quite achieve, something objective and independent? And the nearer we come to it the truer our ideas are. James's relativistic theory of truth leads him to the confusing and contradictory position that ideas which worked in the past but no longer work for us—such, for

example, as the idea that the earth is flat—were once true but are no longer true. His essentially subjectivistic approach to truth makes him admit that two mutually contradictory ideas may be true at the same time, as, for example, that of the atheist, for whom disbelief in God proves most useful, and that of the theist, for whom belief in God works best. Despite his persistent effort during his last years to escape these dilemmas, James was never able to do so. When he talked of truth as that which worked *in the long run* and *on the whole*, was he not actually admitting that utility and truth cannot be treated as identical?

It is not unfair, certainly, to apply to the pragmatic philosophy which James developed his own criterion of truth and value. Will it work as a practical guide to life? We find, in the end, as one of James's admirers regretfully admits, that the pragmatic doctrine of truth "fails to work except in the direction of destroying our practically necessary conception of truth."[31] The suspicion of subjectivity tends actually to destroy belief. If we think that our reason for believing in God, in immortality, or the like is simply that these beliefs are of value to us instead of that they are *true*, the beliefs lose their conviction and their value for us. We are faced with the strange situation in which an idea can become true for us pragmatically only if we disbelieve in the pragmatic theory of truth. Yet this is the dilemma in which pragmatism places us. Only a nonpragmatic truth seems to offer an escape. The pragmatic *test* of truth which James proposes is undoubtedly the best way to test the truth of an idea. If a proposition will not work, it is not true. It needs to be re-examined and revised. But it is false conversion of the proposition "All true beliefs work" to conclude that "all beliefs that work are true." Many beliefs may work for our particular purposes without being true. Truth, we are convinced, is that which we discover in the nature of things, not that which we like or find useful. Is the rationalist not right in insisting that "Truth is the truer the more it is discovered and the less man has anything to do with the making of it"?

Despite the large influence, then, of James's pragmatic philosophy upon American life and thought during the past half century, there have been few philosophers who were willing to accept his position without qualification. What we find in James is not so much a satisfactory answer to our moral and religious problems as a stimulating suggestion about how to face them. He urges us to meet life as an eager participant who feels deeply on all important issues and courageously supports what he considers right. But the valuable insights and suggestions in pragmatism must be presented in more defensible and convincing fashion before they can serve as the foundation for a consistent and acceptable philosophy of living.

10 · NATURALISTIC HUMANISM

John Dewey

William James, as he himself was well aware, was never quite able to provide a thoroughly satisfactory statement of his pragmatic philosophy. To the end he talked much of science and the scientific temper, but in fact his was a highly moralistic philosophy which betrayed at every turn the spirit of its author. James began with a healthy reaction against metaphysics and a concern with practical results and matters of fact; but where one might have expected him to discuss life and nature in terms of human experience, we find instead a persistent interest in religious faith and the nature of truth—actually another epistemology. Moreover, although James was our first great American philosopher, he was not quite American after all. Much of his life was spent in Europe. He was accustomed to wealth, to leisure, and to travel, and he knew little at first hand of the spirit of democracy and belief in the common man which was the heritage of the American frontier.

By background and early experience, as well as by temperament and training, John Dewey was much better fitted to develop the empirical and scientific spirit of pragmatism. Circumstances left nothing undone to prepare him as a spokesman of the deep-seated American belief in democracy and progress; and in his philosophy we find the most important contemporary effort to base logic, morals, and education directly upon human experience and scientific method.

FORMATIVE INFLUENCES ON DEWEY'S THOUGHT

Dewey was born in Burlington, Vermont, on October 20, 1859—the third son of a local grocer, whose literary tastes far exceeded his formal education. John's father, with only a little schooling, read Shakespeare and Milton, not for culture

but for enjoyment, and was fond of quoting long passages of Burns to his children. He had an extraordinary memory but not very much business ability; it was said that he sold more goods and collected fewer bills than any other merchant in town. None of the Dewey family had a college education until John and an elder brother attended the University of Vermont, which was near at hand and charged little tuition. Even this step was taken largely as a result of the influence of their mother, who came of a somewhat more prosperous and better educated family. Her grandfather had been a Congressman from Vermont, and her father a local magistrate, or lay judge, familiarly known as "Squire" Rich. She was more deeply religious, also, than her husband, whom she married rather late in his life, and much more ambitious for her sons than he was.

Although the Dewey family was never in financial need, its resources were always quite limited, and the boys shared as a matter of course in the household responsibilities. Simple industrial and agricultural activities were likewise accepted as the normal thing by John Dewey and all his companions. On the other hand, he and his friends were bored with their school work. What they were given to read was of little interest or use to them, as far as they could see, and the only pleasure of school came when an occasional teacher encouraged discussion of topics outside the prescribed school curriculum. Such boyhood experiences played a large part in forming Dewey's later educational theories. He never forgot that the most important parts of his own early education were obtained outside the classroom, and his caustic comments on the stupidity of the ordinary school recitation reflect in no small manner the memory of the dull hours he spent in the schoolroom as a youth in Burlington. To this school, however, went almost all the boys and girls of the town, whatever their home background might be, whether well-to-do or poor, of established American families or immigrant parentage. The limited number who attended private schools were regarded by the rest as "stuck up." In spite of the prestige enjoyed by the few wealthy families of the town, life was still essentially democratic—not consciously so but democratic in that deeper spirit in which the essential equality of all is simply taken for granted as both natural and right.

Dewey's early contacts with nature were also such as to enhance the appeal of a life that was natural and spontaneous. Set on a hill rising from Lake Champlain, Burlington possessed an unusual natural beauty. Across the lake to the west were the Adirondacks; on the horizon to the east were the Green Mountains. John and his brother tramped through the Adirondacks; they outfitted their rowboats with a tent, blankets, and cooking utensils, and explored Lake Champlain from one end to the other. Later they took longer trips up the St. Lawrence and into the beautiful lakes of French Canada, where they found use for the French they had picked up at home and began to read French novels before studying the language in school.

UNIVERSITY TRAINING AND EARLY TEACHING

When John Dewey entered the University of Vermont, in 1875, it was a small institution. His graduating class four years later had only eighteen members; the students were well acquainted with each other and with the entire faculty of eight professors. Little in the way of class distinction or prejudice existed. All studies were required: in the first two years Greek, Latin, history, and mathematics were taken; during the junior year the natural sciences were stressed; and during the senior year philosophy. The year of Dewey's birth, 1859, was also the year in which Darwin's *Origin of Species* was published. The young student was much impressed by the theory of evolution as taught in his courses in geology and zoology at the University of Vermont; one of the books which particularly aroused his interest was a text on *Physiology* by T. H. Huxley. The university library at the time also subscribed to English periodicals, in which the new theory of evolution was frequently discussed, and these discussions by Huxley, Tyndall, and Herbert Spencer influenced Dewey more deeply than did his regular senior courses in philosophy.

Encouraged by his professor of philosophy at Vermont, Dewey decided to continue his studies in this field. Borrowing five hundred dollars from an aunt, he entered the Johns Hopkins University, in Baltimore, in the fall of 1882 and two years later received his doctorate there. These two years at Johns Hopkins proved to be quite pleasant and rewarding. The university had been open for graduate study only a short time, but an unusually able group of scholars and teachers had already been brought together. Original research was being particularly emphasized by President Gilman, who hoped to develop an American graduate school comparable in quality to those in Germany, to which most young American students had been going whenever they were able, and the atmosphere of the new university was exceedingly stimulating. The very possibility of doing something new and original was an exciting thought to most of the young men gathered at Johns Hopkins, and Dewey came into contact there with many men who took a leading role in American education during the next three or four decades.

Upon completing his work at Johns Hopkins, Dewey accepted a position at the University of Michigan and, with the exception of a year at the University of Minnesota, he spent the next ten years at Ann Arbor. These were years during which President James B. Angell was making Michigan one of the great universities of the Midwest. In addition to an emphasis upon creative scholarship, Angell was fostering a genuinely democratic spirit among both students and faculty and was encouraging the freedom and individual initiative that are essential for all genuine educational achievement. Even the weekly faculty meetings were lively and stimulating discussions of vital educational problems rather than routine, cut-and-dried affairs. Dewey's early unconscious faith in democracy

gradually became a direct and conscious conviction which underlay much of his later thought.

The influence of the Midwest upon Dewey's philosophy of living can hardly be overemphasized. The Vermont community in which he had grown up had been a settled one, in which traditions from the past largely set the pattern of men's thinking. But in Michigan and Minnesota seventy years ago, "social customs had not yet had time to cake into the familiar Eastern molds," as Sidney Hook aptly expresses it. "Problems were newer, more urgent. Changes and chances were greater; rewards for intelligent adaptation higher; the costs of ignorance and blundering more fateful. Nowhere was living so undeniably problematic. Nowhere did thinking and informal action make such an observable difference in their impact upon problems. The past was something to use here and now rather than a tradition to enjoy; the future something to create; the present a challenge to creation and construction. Tomorrow took shape as the consequence of what was done or left undone today."[1] It was in this atmosphere that Dewey's own philosophy of living was gradually given its initial formulation.

Perhaps the most important influence on Dewey during his early years at Ann Arbor came, however, from another source. During his first winter there, he lived in a boarding house in which two "co-eds" also had rooms. That his interests were not all academic is indicated by the fact that one of them became Dewey's wife two years later. A native of Michigan, Alice Chipman had grown up in a household in which memories of pioneer days were still strong and the spirit of adventure was a living force. She had courage, energy, intellectual integrity, and a clear mind, which cut through sham and pretense to the heart of a problem. Matters of theory seemed to her important only as they took on a vital and direct human significance. Her influence on the young philosopher from the conservative East was stimulating and far-reaching. Having developed a critical attitude toward accepted social attitudes and injustices, she helped turn Dewey's concern from historical and classical philosophy to the issues of contemporary life. She had a deeply religious spirit but did not accept the dogmas of any specific church. Her husband gradually came to share her belief that a religious attitude was a natural aspect of human life which theological doctrine and ecclesiastical institutions more frequently weakened than promoted. In view of his own experience, it is not difficult to understand why Dewey was an early enthusiast for the cause of coeducation.

As a result of these influences, Dewey became increasingly attracted to ethics and to educational psychology and philosophy during his later years at Ann Arbor. He read William James's *Principles of Psychology* when it appeared in 1890 and was deeply impressed by its point of view. The more objective and functional strain in James's approach, his concern that psychology be based so largely and directly upon biology, particularly interested Dewey. This insight "worked its way more and more into all my ideas and acted as a ferment to

transform old beliefs," he tells us. The chapters in James's *Psychology* that had bearing on morals and on education were also appealing to Dewey. He had become convinced in his work at Michigan that existing educational practice, especially in the elementary schools, was not in harmony with what the psychologists knew about normal development and learning; and he was even then turning over in his mind the idea of starting an experimental school in which the best psychological principles of learning could be put into practice.

DEWEY AT CHICAGO

In 1894, Dewey was offered the chairmanship of the Department of Philosophy and Psychology at the recently established University of Chicago; one of the factors which led him to accept this position was the inclusion of pedagogy in the department. Within a few years he had got together a group of parents interested in an educational experiment which very much appealed to him, and with their financial aid he started a "Laboratory School" at the university. For seven and one half years, this school, popularly known as the "Dewey School," supplied a powerful impetus to the critical examination and improvement of educational philosophy and practice. Some of Dewey's most influential and widely popularized work was done as, a matter of fact, in connection with this Laboratory School at Chicago. The year it was founded he published an article on "Interest and Effort," which was perhaps his first distinctive contribution to educational psychology. Education, Dewey here maintains, must grow out of self-directed interests of students, interests that develop naturally and inspire their own effort. Interest and effort are not two different things, he argues, but are simply different aspects of the same on-going activity. This was revolutionary in 1896; in some quarters it still is, almost sixty years later.

In the following year Dewey published a small monograph, entitled *My Pedagogic Creed*, which was even more unorthodox and disturbing. Republished half a dozen times in various American educational journals, the essay has also been translated into a number of foreign languages. Here Dewey states for the first time his fundamental thesis that education "is a process of living and not a preparation for future living." The school, therefore, must represent real life, allowing the child to learn by his own guided experience. "There is no succession of studies in the ideal school curriculum," Dewey writes. "If education is life, all life has, from the outset, a scientific aspect, an aspect of art and culture, and an aspect of communication. It cannot, therefore, be true that the proper studies of one grade are mere reading and writing, and that at a later grade, literature or science may be introduced. The progress is not in the succession of studies, but in the development of new attitudes towards, and new interests in, experience." It is the social life of the child which supplies the curriculum, not history, or geography, science or literature, Dewey maintains. Here, indeed, moral philosophy and the philosophy of education join hands. Training in morals is not a

matter of memorizing precepts or rules. "The best and deepest moral training is precisely that which one gets through having to enter into proper relations with others in a unity of work and thought," he insists.[2]

These were the principles upon which the Laboratory School at Chicago was operated. In order to gain support, financial and otherwise, for the school, Dewey gave a series of lectures on education which were published in 1900 under the title, *The School and Society*. This volume, which summed up Dewey's educational thought at that time, has been among the most popular and widely read of any of his books. Published in London the same year, it has appeared at various times in later years not only in French, German, Spanish, and Dutch translations, but also in Russian, Bohemian, Bulgarian, Polish, Turkish, Arabic and Japanese. Twelve years after he left Chicago, Dewey published a more comprehensive and careful statement of educational philosophy, entitled *Democracy and Education*. Its influence on educational theory and practice in America has been far-reaching. And the influence has not been confined to this country. It is safe to say that there are few countries in the world today that have not felt the effects of Dewey's educational philosophy.

Dewey gradually gathered about him at Chicago a group of able and distinguished men in psychology and philosophy. In 1903, this group published a volume of essays entitled *Studies in Logical Theory*, which was dedicated to William James and which James himself hailed as marking the birth of a "Chicago School" in general accord with his own pragmatic philosophy. Thus there began a rewarding personal friendship between Dewey and James that lasted until James's death in 1910. When James's major work on *Pragmatism* appeared in 1907, Dewey published a careful analysis of the book in which he indicated his own general acceptance of its point of view but noted also that the ambiguity in James's concept of "practical" seriously weakened his position. As Dewey here suggests, "predicative" is a more desirable term than "practical" to designate that aspect of experience with which James is concerned. Dewey's article concludes, however, with the following revealing paragraph:

> As for the book itself, it is in any case beyond the critic's praise or blame. It is more likely to take its place as a philosophical classic than any other writing of our day. Even those who dislike pragmatism can hardly fail to find much profit in the exhibition of Mr. James's instinct for concrete facts, the breadth of his sympathies, and his illuminating insights. Unreserved frankness, lucid imagination, keen perceptions of human nature in the concrete, a constant sense of the subordination of philosophy to life, capacity to put things into an English which projects ideas as if bodily into space till they are solid things to walk around and survey from different sides—these things are not so common in philosophy that they might not smell sweet even by the name of pragmatism.[3]

Two other personal contacts during Dewey's years at Chicago are worthy of note. Both of these were with women of exceptional vision and ability. Soon after

he came to Chicago, Dewey met Mrs. Ella Flagg Young, a district superintendent of city schools. Beginning as a grade-school teacher, Mrs. Young made her way by marked ability to positions of prominence and responsibility. She was the first woman to be superintendent of the school system of any large American city, the first to be president of the National Educational Association, and the first to serve as a university professor of education. Dewey was much impressed by her character and ability; he learned more from her practical educational procedure than from anyone else during his early years at Chicago and later was able to endorse her appointment as professor of education at Chicago.

Another rewarding friendship was that with Jane Addams at Hull House. Miss Addams, certainly one of the remarkable women of her day, had made of Hull House a social settlement in the best sense of the word. It was a place where people of all sorts and all beliefs met on a common footing. One of Miss Addam's main convictions was that the associations at Hull House were as important for those from more privileged homes as for those from the poorer districts around the settlement house. She was interested not in letting people "see how the other half lived" but in a joint process of learning how to live together, learning especially that democracy is a way of life, not merely a political creed. Dewey and his wife were regular visitors at Hull House. They became warm personal friends of Jane Addams, and Dewey became a trustee of the settlement when it was incorporated. His faith in democracy as a guiding force in education was strengthened and given a deeper meaning as a result of this association with Jane Addams and Hull House. Dewey's regard for the character and intelligence of Jane Addams, Ella Young, and his wife has led him to support with marked enthusiasm any cause that enlarged the freedom and opportunity of women—in marked contrast to the attitude of such philosophers as Schopenhauer or Nietzsche, whose views were derived from a far different and less happy experience.

DEVELOPMENT OF DEWEY'S SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

In 1905 Dewey joined the faculty of Columbia University and for more than forty-five years has been connected with that institution first as professor of philosophy, then as head of the department, and finally as professor emeritus. In this new environment Dewey's social philosophy gradually matured and broadened, and his years at Columbia were remarkably productive, both in scholarship and in active support of causes which promised to promote the common welfare. In his early years, Dewey shared the rather common faith that American democracy in its normal evolution would in time do away with serious economic injustice as it had with political inequality. But residence in New York hastened a change in his outlook that had already begun before he left Chicago; he found it impossible to keep alive, in this center of American financial interests, his earlier Midwestern faith in the manifest destiny of democracy. Active effort was necessary to make political and social democracy a reality. Dewey now

realized, and he gave himself unhesitatingly to those causes which held most promise in this regard. His long support of the women's-suffrage movement was based on the belief that the enfranchisement of women was a necessary part of political democracy. He was chairman for a number of years of the League for Independent Political Action, which seemed to offer an opportunity for bringing intelligence more actively into politics. He interested himself in the democratic administration of schools and universities and helped organize the Teachers Guild, which, as part of the American Federation of Teachers, is affiliated with the A. F. of L. He was active also in founding the American Association of University Professors and was its first president.

Trips to the Orient and to Russia also played a part in the evolution of Dewey's social philosophy. In 1919 he was invited to lecture at the Imperial University at Tokyo and had an opportunity there to become acquainted with the more liberal elements in Japanese life and culture. His Tokyo lectures, entitled *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, provide one of the clearest general statements of his own philosophy. While in Japan, Dewey was visited by a number of his former students from China, many of whom had attained places of influence in their own land, and he was urged to spend the following year lecturing in China. What he saw and found in China so interested him that he ended by staying two years instead of one. Not only did he lecture at the National Universities at Peking and Nanking but he visited all the provinces on the Pacific coast and many in the interior as well. Dewey's empirical and practical approach to the problems of philosophy and of life had a great appeal to the Chinese—in many ways, it reflected the spirit of their own great sage, Confucius.

His stay in China had a deep and enduring influence upon Dewey. Here he found the oldest culture of the world struggling to meet new social conditions; he saw democracy in a new light in this situation, and he was especially impressed with the important part being played by education. Nowhere had Dewey seen students and teachers exerting greater power than in China. Soon after he arrived, university students at Peking were arrested for vigorous demonstrations against the government, which they considered pro-Japanese. The student strike aroused so much popular sympathy that when the Cabinet offered to release the students, they refused to leave the prison until a formal apology was made to them. The leadership of the movement to modernize China, free it from Japanese control, and reform the republic along genuinely democratic lines lay at that time in educational circles. These experiences in China acted to rekindle Dewey's own intellectual and social enthusiasms; upon his return to the United States he wrote frequently and spoke vigorously urging a more enlightened American policy in the Far East.

In 1928 Dewey spent a short time in Russia. His contacts here were with educators, in the main, and his visit to Russia was too short for any investigation of economic or political conditions. But he did meet a large number of Russian

men and women, both students and teachers, who believed that only education with broad social vision and cooperative methods could make secure the purposes of the revolution. They were enthusiastically engaged in building a new and better world for themselves and their countrymen, and although there was much political propaganda in the schools in Russia, Dewey found at that time what seemed to him a genuine opportunity for personal judgment and constructive cooperation for the common good. The sympathy he expressed for the Russian experiment led him to be branded as a "red" in the conservative press in America when he returned.

An increasing regimentation of the schools under the Stalin regime, however, and their use as tools by the politicians, greatly disappointed Dewey. Gradually he became convinced that by its very nature the method of violent revolution and dictatorship is incapable of establishing a desirable social order, no matter what particular set of leaders are in power. After the Moscow trials of the old Bolsheviks, and the Stalin-Trotsky feud, Dewey was asked to serve as chairman of a Commission of Inquiry into the whole affair. In this connection he made a careful study of the revolutionary movement in Russia, and his own early belief "in the intimate and indissoluble connection of means used and ends reached" was completely confirmed by what he learned. He became as unalterably opposed to revolutionary Bolshevism as to Fascism and was now called a reactionary by the left-wing press.*

Social philosophy, in Dewey's opinion, is not a separate area of philosophy but rather the goal and culmination of all philosophical thought. His philosophy as a whole, that is, is social in intent and direction. It is the function of philosophy, he writes, "to free men's minds from bias and prejudice and to enlarge their perceptions of the world about them." Philosophy should clarify men's "ideas as to the social and moral strifes of their own day," and should "become so far as is humanly possible an organ for dealing with these conflicts."[4] With this in mind, Dewey consistently works out the social and political implications of his thought in each area with which he deals. Thus, in *Democracy and Education* (1916), he indicates clearly the larger social significance of his philosophy of education. In *Human Nature and Conduct* (1922), one of the classics in this field, and a book which has had wide and enduring influence, he outlines the principles of social psychology upon which his treatment of all social issues is based. In *The Public and its Problems* (1927), he develops the more concrete political implications of his thought. *Characters and Events* (1929), composed largely of articles written for the *New Republic*, provides a direct application of Dewey's social philosophy to the concrete and living issues of our own day. His *Individualism—*

* The conclusions reached by Dewey as a result of this investigation appeared in two books, *Not Guilty* and *Freedom and Culture*. His own strong condemnation of all varieties of communism is to be found in his *Liberalism and Social Action*.

Old and New (1930) indicates his continuing commitment to the principle that all philosophical concepts must be constantly re-examined and revised in the light of new social conditions and to meet new social needs.

OTHER INTERESTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Throughout his long years of active philosophical endeavor, Dewey was deeply interested in problems of conduct and in the principles by which human conduct should be directed. During his years at Ann Arbor, he prepared two brief, incomplete texts for use in his ethics classes. In 1908, while still at Chicago, he published a text in *Ethics*, in collaboration with Edgar Tufts, which was one of the most influential books in the field for a generation. In *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (1920), *Human Nature and Conduct* (1922), and *The Quest for Certainty* (1929), his empirical approach to ethics is further developed and its implications worked out in detail.

Dewey's empiricism leads him to a basic agreement here with Socrates: Before we can be good, we must know what we are doing. Intelligence is the one enduring virtue. It is the one instrument by which all human experience is to be regularly re-examined and improved; and this instrument we must sharpen as carefully and thoroughly as possible. The need in morals, as in the natural sciences, is for specific methods of inquiry to clarify particular situations and problems, Dewey insists; an empirical and inductive logic is as essential in the field of ethics as in every other branch of philosophy. By far the most popular and practical of Dewey's studies in logic is *How We Think* (1910), a volume which established problem solving as the only "respectable" method of educational thinking. For more than forty years he continued to publish works in this field and finally, in *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (1938), when almost eighty years old, he drew together the whole of his penetrating analysis of logical theory in what is certainly one of the more significant works of his long career.

Perhaps enough has been said to suggest the range, the extent, and the significance of Dewey's achievement. He stands like Aristotle, whom he resembles also in philosophical point of view, a philosopher who has written extensively in every field and illuminated all with which he has dealt. A bibliography of Dewey's writings fills sixty-five pages and includes twenty-nine major books of his own, together with innumerable articles, essays, and reviews. To this the interested student is referred.[5]

THE INFLUENCE OF DARWIN ON PHILOSOPHY

Dewey's initial approach to philosophy, like that of Nietzsche, is essentially naturalistic in spirit. Indeed, the fact that Dewey was born in the year that Darwin published his *Origin of Species* may well be given a symbolic significance.

For what particularly distinguishes Dewey among contemporary philosophers is the undisguised completeness with which he adopts the evolutionary hypothesis. His starting point in every field is Darwinian, and with unusual insight he undertakes the reconstruction in philosophy necessitated by the scientific theory of Darwin. Both Herbert Spencer and Nietzsche, it is true, had in a different fashion attempted this same task; but Dewey saw much more clearly than either Spencer or Nietzsche the far-reaching implications of Darwinian evolution, and he developed these implications over a full life of remarkable achievement with a thoroughness that even Spencer's renowned volumes on the philosophy of evolution cannot rival.

The great impact of Darwinian evolution upon Dewey's thought is already apparent in an early volume of essays he published in 1910, entitled *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy*. These essays make it clear that the empirical temper of Dewey's philosophy as a whole as well as his naturalistic outlook finds its source in the Darwinian revolution in the field of science.

> That the publication of the *Origin of Species* marked an epoch in the development of the natural sciences is well known to the layman. That the combination of the very words origin and species embodied an intellectual revolt and introduced a new intellectual temper is easily overlooked by the expert. In laying hands upon the sacred ark of absolute permanence, in treating the forms that had been regarded as types of fixity and perfection as originating and passing away, the *Origin of Species* introduced a mode of thinking that in the end was bound to transform the logic of knowledge, and hence the treatment of morals, politics, and religion. No wonder, then, that the publication of Darwin's book, a half century ago, precipitated a crisis.[6]

The habit of pre-Darwinian philosophy was to underestimate and be scornful of ordinary things around us in life, and to seek instead for sweeping generalizations that would explain the universe as a whole, Dewey contends. This kept the philosopher from looking the facts of experience in the face; it prevented a serious concern with the evils of life as well as with the specific good which an intelligent philosophy might achieve. As a result of the influence of Darwin, however, there is a growing recognition of the futility of this type of philosophy.

> When Henry Sidgwick casually remarked in a letter that as he grew older his interest in what or who made the world was altered into interest in what kind of world it is anyhow, his voicing of a common experience of our day illustrates also the nature of that intellectual transformation effected by the Darwinian logic. Interest shifts from an intelligence that shaped things once and for all to the particular intelligences which things are even now shaping; shifts from an ultimate goal of good to the direct increments of justice and happiness that intelligent administration of existent conditions may beget and that present carelessness or stupidity will destroy or forego.[7]

To improve our education, to better our morals, to advance our politics, we must deal with the specific conditions that influence conduct, and not with vague generalities. This important implication of Darwin's position was concealed for a time, Dewey feels, by the religious controversy which the theory of evolution aroused. In his opinion, however, the battle between science and religion over the Biblical account of creation had relatively little significance for philosophy. But the Darwinian principle of natural selection cut straight into the philosophy of science generally accepted in Darwin's day. Prior to Darwin, the scientist as well as the philosopher was looking for a rational truth beyond the flux of experience, permanent and unchanging. Darwin's theory of evolution made it clear that the task of science was to explore specific changes and the specific conditions that bring them about, not to seek absolute truths or transcendent purposes in the universe. Gradually the philosopher is coming to realize that his task is quite similar, if Dewey is right.

The pragmatic temper of this approach to philosophy is at once apparent. A philosophy that concerns itself with what is absolute and unchanging, with the constitution of the universe rather than with the affairs of human life, is able to escape all practical or experimental tests of its conclusion. "But a philosophy that humbles its pretensions to the work of projecting hypotheses for the education and conduct of mind, individual and social, is thereby subjected to test by the way in which the ideas it propounds work out in practice," Dewey writes. As a result of the influence of Darwin, "Philosophy must in time become a method of locating and interpreting the more serious of the conflicts that occur in life, and a method of projecting ways for dealing with them: a method of moral and political diagnosis and prognosis. In having modesty forced upon it, philosophy also acquires responsibility."[8]

THE BIRTH OF INTELLIGENCE

Dewey's interpretation of mind and intelligence are likewise direct outcomes of his evolutionary philosophy. Man's mind was produced by nature as the biological organism sought to adjust itself better to its enviroment, he maintains. At the lower levels of life anything that can be called mind is at a minimum, of course; the adjustment of the organism to the environment is determined largely by unconscious forces within or without. But gradually, with the development of consciousness, the activity of the living organism becomes more complex, and intelligence is demanded in the choice of certain types of behavior rather than others; it is here that what we like to call the mind comes into existence. "Mind is not a name for something complete in itself; it is a name for a course of action in so far as that is intelligently directed; in so far, that is to say, as aims, ends, enter into it, with selection of means to further the attainment of ends," Dewey writes. "Intelligence is not a peculiar possession which a per-

son owns, but a person is intelligent in so far as the activities in which he plays a part have the qualities mentioned."[9]

When considered in this Darwinian fashion, the evolutionary process reveals no transcendent design or purpose that points beyond evolution to Nature or to God. It is true that all the goods of life arrive, so to speak, as natural results of evolution, but so also do all the evils of life and all the various grades of good and evil. Our human preferences lead us to select the good and to fight for it.

> It is putting the cart before the horse to say that because Nature is so constituted as to produce all types of value, therefore Nature is actuated by regard for value. Nature, till it produces a being who strives and who thinks in order that he may strive more effectively, does not know whether it cares more for justice or for cruelty, more for the ravenous wolf-like competition of the struggle for existence, or for the improvements incidentally introduced through that struggle. Literally it has no mind of its own.[10]

But when man as a conscious organism becomes aware of what nature and evolution provide, both good and bad, and begins to prefer the good and to battle for his preference, picking out what is favorable to his aims and what is hostile, "then and there Nature has at last achieved significant regard for good," Dewey writes.

> And this is the same thing as the birth of intelligence. For holding an end in view and selecting and organizing out of the natural flux on the basis of this end, conditions that are means, *is* intelligence. Not, then, when Nature produces health or efficiency or complexity does Nature exhibit regard for value, but only when it produces a living organism that has settled preferences and endeavors. When Nature produces an intelligence—ah, then, indeed Nature has achieved something. Not, however, because this intelligence impartially pictures the nature which has produced it, but because in human consciousness Nature becomes genuinely partial.[11]

HOW WE THINK

Dewey's evolutionary approach to the birth of intelligence leads him to a new view of *how* and *why* men think. Here, as elsewhere, he insists that a *genetic* approach is essential; that is, we must understand the *origin* of thinking before we can understand its nature. Dewey's earliest and perhaps clearest discussion of thinking as a practical and functional activity is found in the volume *How We Think*. Published originally in 1910, it was reprinted a number of times, widely read, and finally rewritten and brought up to date in 1933.

As a biological organism, man began to think in order to survive and to improve life, Dewey points out. "Thinking follows striving and doing follows thinking." Men do not, in their natural state, begin to think when they have no troubles to cope with, no difficulties to overcome. A life of ease, or of success without effort, would be a thoughtless life. As long as our activity glides

smoothly along from one thing to another, or as long as we permit our imagination to entertain fancies at pleasure, there is no need for reflection. It is because of difficulties or obstructions in our way that we are forced to pause and to think reflectively in order to go ahead on our way again. Thinking begins in what may be called a *forked-road* situation—that is to say, a situation that presents a dilemma, and proposes alternatives between which we must choose.

> A man traveling in an unfamiliar region comes to a branching of the road. Having no sure knowledge to fall back upon, he is brought to a standstill of hesitation and suspense. Which road is right? And how shall his perplexity be resolved? There are but two alternatives: he must either blindly and arbitrarily take his course, trusting to luck for the outcome, or he must discern grounds for the conclusion that a given road is right. Any attempt to decide the matter by thinking will involve inquiring into other facts, whether brought to mind by memory, or by further observation, or by both. The perplexed wayfarer must carefully scrutinize what is before him and he must cudgel his memory. He looks for evidence. He may climb a tree; he may go first in this direction, then in that. He wants something in the nature of a signboard or a map, and *his reflection is aimed at the discovery of facts that will serve his purpose.*[12]

Even in so simple an illustration several important characteristics of reflective thinking are to be seen. First, the origin of thinking is found in some perplexity, confusion, or doubt. Thinking is not a matter of spontaneous combustion; it does not occur just in general. There is some specific need or interest on our part that occasions and invokes it. The measure of its success is precisely the degree to which thinking actually disposes of the difficulty that confronts us and allows us to proceed with whatever we want to do. When a man finds the right road, he continues his journey to the destination he has in mind.

Secondly, then, thinking is not random and purposeless. Reflection not only *grows out* of a particular need or problem; it constantly refers back to it. The "demand for the solution of a perplexity is the steadying and guiding factor in the entire process of reflection," Dewey writes. "A question to be answered, an ambiguity to be resolved, sets up an end and holds the current of ideas to a definite channel." What enables us to concentrate is not keeping quiet and still, but rather by moving toward an object. "Holding the mind to a subject is like holding a ship to its course; it implies constant change of position combined with unity of direction." This need to straighten out some particular perplexity likewise controls the kind of thinking we do. A traveler who is looking for a beautiful path will not be interested in the things that concern a man who wishes to discover the way to a given city. Thus *the nature of the problem fixes the end of thought, and the end controls the process of thinking.*

Thirdly, the primary function of thinking is to resolve the difficulty we face, clear away the confusion, answer the question in our mind. We cease to think—

about this matter, at least—as soon as the problem before the mind is settled. There is nothing to cause us to think further until a new bothersome or doubtful situation arises. "The function of reflective thought is, therefore, to transform a situation in which there is experienced obscurity, doubt, conflict, disturbance of some sort, into a situation that is clear, coherent, settled, harmonious," Dewey concludes.[13] Thinking is a practical activity. It has something to do, and our ideas and inferences can be constantly checked by the results achieved. There is no better way to decide whether genuine thinking has taken place than to ask whether it has produced a clear, orderly, and satisfactory situation in place of a perplexed, confused, and discordant one.

INSTRUMENTALISM IN LOGIC

In this functional analysis of thinking, it becomes clear that ideas are actually *instruments* by which we accomplish certain desired results. They enable us to do something, or do something better, more intelligently, more successfully, than we could do it by instinct or impulse.

> Ideas are not genuine ideas unless they are tools with which to search for material to solve a problem. An idea, logically speaking, is not a faded perception of an object, nor is it a compound of a number of sensations. A savage might be able to form an image of poles and wires. But unless the savage knew something about telegraphy, he would have no idea, or at least no correct idea, of the poles and wires. The fact is that an idea, intellectually, cannot be defined by its structure, but only by its function and use. Whatever in a doubtful situation or undecided issue helps us to form a judgment and to bring inference to a conclusion by means of anticipating a possible solution is an idea, and nothing else is. It is an idea because of what it *does* in clearing up a perplexity or in harmonizing what is otherwise fragmentary, not because of its physical make-up.[14]

In his own early thinking, Dewey adopts the term *instrumentalism* to describe what he calls "the logical version of pragmatism," and he prefers to call his philosophy by this name rather than to identify it with the pragmatism of James. His instrumentalism has often been misinterpreted and given too narrow a meaning, Dewey feels. To this he objects vigorously:

> No misconception of the instrumental logic has been more persistent than the belief that it makes knowledge merely a means to a practical end, or to the satisfaction of practical needs—practical being taken to signify some quite definite utilities of a material or bread-and-butter type. But I again affirm that the term "pragmatic" means only the rule of referring all thinking, all reflective considerations, to *consequences* for final meaning and test. Nothing is said about the nature of the consequences; they may be aesthetic, or moral, or political, or religious in quality. Anything you please. All that

> the theory requires is that they be in some way consequences of thinking; not indeed of it alone, but of it acted upon in connection with other things.[15]

When thinking is approached in this practical and experimental fashion, we get quite a different notion, moreover, of the nature of truth. If our ideas and theories are instruments to remove some specific trouble and perplexity, then the test of their value to us lies in how they accomplish this work.

> If they succeed in their office, they are reliable, sound, valid, good, true. If they fail to clear up confusion, to eliminate defects, if they increase confusion, uncertainty and evil when they are acted upon, then they are false. Handsome is as handsome does. By their fruits shall ye *know* them. That which guides us truly is true—demonstrated capacity for such guidance is precisely what is meant by truth.[16]

In this pragmatic concept of truth, Dewey is clearly in general agreement with William James, but he places an emphasis upon the concrete consequences of ideas as plans of action which one does not find in James's philosophy. Until an idea is acted upon, it is of no practical value to us. When it is acted upon, it guides us either truly or falsely; it leads us to our desired aim or away from it. This active, dynamic function of thinking is the all-important thing about it "The hypothesis that works is the *true* one," Dewey states unequivocably. Why does this conception of truth give so much offense? he asks. In part, no doubt, because it makes truth appear too subjective, a sort of temporary comfort, meeting a purely personal need. Truth seems to become no more than the means to some satisfaction upon which an individual has set his heart.

> So repulsive is a conception of truth which makes it a mere tool of private ambition and aggrandizement, that the wonder is that critics have attributed such a notion to sane men. As a matter of fact, truth as utility means making just that contribution to experience that the idea or theory claims to be able to make. The usefulness of a road is not measured by the degree in which it lends itself to the purposes of a highwayman. It is measured by whether it actually functions as a road, as a means of easy and effective public transportation and communication. And so with the serviceableness of an idea or hypothesis as a measure of its truth.[17]

EMPIRICISM—OLD AND NEW

The philosophical movement of which James and Dewey were recognized leaders during the first decade of the twentieth century was called pragmatism, instrumentalism, humanism, or empiricism—depending largely upon which aspect of their thought was being emphasized. Because of the primary importance given to experience in his philosophy, Dewey himself gradually came to prefer the term empiricism rather than pragmatism, humanism, or instrumentalism. Realizing that in the history of philosophy the term "experience" had had a bad

connotation, however, he felt it necessary to clarify his own position rather carefully. The influence of evolution upon our thinking has radically altered our view of experience today, Dewey points out. In the past, the man who learned by trial and error rather than by reason was called an empiricist and his knowledge was not considered very valuable by the philosopher. Thus a physician, from the multitude of particular illnesses he treated, learned to class some of them as indigestion, and he learned also to handle these cases in a common way. He formed the rule of recommending a particular diet and prescribing certain other remedies. This was usually called learning by experience. But the physician who was an empiricist of this sort was bound to make mistakes, because his experience was necessarily defective and limited.

> Even today to speak of a physician as an empiricist is to imply that he lacks scientific training, and that he is proceeding simply on the basis of what he happens to have got out of the chance medley of his past practice. The empiric easily degenerates into a quack. He does not know where his knowledge begins or leaves off, and so when he gets beyond routine conditions he begins to pretend—to make claims for which there is no justification, and to trust to luck and to ability to impose upon others—to bluff.[18]

It was Francis Bacon who rescued empiricism from this undesirable association and gave to it a place of importance in modern philosophy. Influenced by the development of modern science and scientific method during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Bacon reacted vigorously against the philosophical outlook of the Middle Ages. In his opinion, it is false to assume that we are already in possession of truth and that our only problem is to convince or teach someone else. Actually "the universal principles of reason" which the philosophers of his day accepted were little more than dogmas imposed by the authority of the Church or prejudices which masqueraded and found protection under august names, Bacon insisted. The great need, as he saw it, was to break away from a philosophy which merely tried to impose human opinions upon nature, and to resort instead to science and to experience to find out what nature was really like.

The logic of rationalism inevitably plays into the hands of an inert conservatism, Bacon felt. It encourages men to think of truth as already known, to fall back on the intellectual attainments of the past, and to accept them without critical scrutiny. In contrast to this point of view, Bacon eloquently proclaimed the importance of discovering new facts and new truths. There is only one road to such discovery, he insists, and that is the penetrating inquiry into the secrets of nature which is provided by scientific method. Scientific laws do not lie on the surface of nature to be seen by the casual observer. They must be wrested from nature by an active technique of inquiry. Neither logical reasoning nor that passive accumulation of information which the ancients called experience is

sufficient to lay hold on them. Active experimentation must be used to force nature to reveal to us the knowledge that we seek. Dewey writes:

> Pure reasoning as a means of arriving at truth is like the spider who spins a web out of himself. The web is orderly and elaborate, but it is only a trap. The passive accumulation of experiences—the traditional empirical method —is like the ant who busily runs about and collects and piles up heaps of raw materials. True method, that which Bacon would usher in, is comparable to the operations of the bee, who, like the ant, collects material from the external world, but unlike that industrious creature attacks and modifies the collected stuff in order to make it yield its hidden treasure.[19]

For Bacon, the appeal to experience, then, was an act of liberation. It marked a breach with authority; it meant openness to novel impressions, eagerness in discovery of new facts and truths; it made possible the knowledge of things as they really were. Faith in experience produced endeavor for progress instead of devotion to past custom.

> Ever-renewed progress is to Bacon the test as well as the aim of genuine logic. Where, Bacon constantly demands, where are the works, the fruits, of the older logic? What has it done to ameliorate the evils of life, to rectify defects, to improve conditions? Where are the inventions that justify its claim to be in possession of truth? Beyond the victory of man over man in law courts, diplomacy and political administration, they are nil. . . . When William James called Pragmatism a New Name for an Old Way of Thinking, I do not know that he was thinking expressly of Francis Bacon, but so far as concerns the spirit and atmosphere of the pursuit of knowledge, Bacon may be taken as a prophet of a pragmatic conception of knowledge.[20]

THE CONTRIBUTION OF DARWIN

As a result of Darwin's work, the close relationship between psychology and biology has been generally recognized; and this biological approach made it possible to develop the empiricism of Bacon one step farther. We see man today as a living organism, Dewey points out; and wherever there is life, there is activity. In order that life may persist, the organism adapts its behavior to its environment, and this adjustment is never wholly passive; it is not a mere matter of the environment's molding the organism. Even a clam acts upon its environment as well as has something done to it. In a living creature there is no such thing as mere conformity, and the higher the form of life, the more important is the active reconstruction of the environment. This fact is well illustrated by contrasting the behavior of savage and civilized man. With the savage there is a maximum of accommodation to given conditions; a minimum of what we may call hitting back. In general, the savage takes things "as they are"; by using caves and roots and occasional pools he is able to eke out a meager and precarious existence. The civilized man, on the other hand, actively and deliberately remakes his environment. He builds reservoirs, digs channels, and conducts the

waters to what has been a desert. He searches the world to find plants and animals that will thrive. He takes native plants and, by selection and cross-breeding, improves them. He introduces machinery to till the soil and care for the harvest.

These facts are so familiar that we overlook their meaning, Dewey maintains. "Note what a change this point of view entails in the traditional notions of experience," he writes. "Experience becomes an affair primarily of doing." When we experience something, we act upon it; we do something to it, and it does something to us in return. It is not experience when a child merely sticks his finger into a flame; it is experience when this act is connected with the pain which he undergoes in consequence. Henceforth the sticking of the finger into a flame *means* a burn. It is the function of intelligence to make clear this connection between things which is revealed by experience. For Dewey, then, "experience is no longer a mere summarizing of what has been done in a more or less chance way; it is deliberate control of what is done with reference to us and what we do to things as fertile as possible of suggested meanings. When trying, or experimenting, ceases to be blinded by impulse or custom, when it is guided by an aim and conducted by method, it becomes reasonable—rational."[21]

The old antithesis between rationalism and empiricism is no longer, therefore, valid. The empiricist today finds a new relationship between reason and experience. In the past, the philosopher thought of knowledge as primarily intellectual; it was the result of rational thought and contemplation. This idea that knowledge is a matter of merely beholding or viewing reality, Dewey terms the "spectator conception of knowledge." Modern science, he maintains, has given us an entirely different approach to knowledge, an approach that is essentially active and empirical. The progress of experimental science, if it has demonstrated anything, has made it clear "that there is no such thing as genuine knowledge and fruitful understanding except as the offspring of *doing*. Men have to *do* something to things when they wish to find out something; they have to alter conditions under which labor may become intellectually fruitful and not merely externally productive," Dewey writes. "Nowadays if a man, say a physicist or a chemist, wants to know something, the last thing he does is merely to contemplate. He does not expect any amount of aloof scrutiny to reveal him any secrets. He proceeds to *do* something." He performs experiments, he creates a situation in which something begins to happen; and from these changes he not only accomplishes the results he seeks, but in so doing he discovers the laws which govern the process in which he is interested. The scientist, as a matter of fact, never learns what things *are*. "They *are* what they can do and what can be done with them."[22] This is all he can hope to learn but it is also all that he needs to know.

THE TASK OF PHILOSOPHY

The nature and the task of philosophy need to be re-examined in the light of this radical change in our interpretation of experience, knowledge, and truth, Dewey believes. In past centuries, philosophy too often has sought some abso-

lute truth far removed from human need and experience. Too frequently it has been concerned with "a metaphysics that is vain and an epistemology that is idle." But this was not the original spirit of philosophy. "Wherever philosophy has been taken seriously, it has always been assumed that it signified achieving a wisdom which would influence the conduct of life," Dewey writes. Almost all ancient schools of philosophy, the Epicurean and the Cyrenaic, the Stoic and the Cynic, were also organized ways of living. Those who accepted their doctrines were committed to certain distinctive modes of conduct. "One of the popular senses of philosophy is calm and endurance in the face of difficulty and loss; it is even supposed to be a power to bear pain without complaint. This meaning is a tribute to the influence of the Stoic philosophy," Dewey points out. In so far, however, as it suggests "a power to learn, or to extract meaning, from even the unpleasant vicissitudes of experience and to embody what is learned in an ability to go on learning," it is justified as a description of the spirit of philosophy. "Philosophy is thinking what the known demands of us—what responsive attitude it enacts. It is an idea of what is possible, not a record of accomplished fact. Hence it presents an assignment of something to be done—something to be tried. Its value lies not in furnishing solutions but in defining difficulties and suggesting methods of dealing with them."[23]

It is quite understandable, therefore, that there should be varied and conflicting philosophies of living, that philosophies should change from age to age and from one civilization to another.

> If there are genuine uncertainties in life, philosophies must reflect that uncertainty. With respect to what has happened, sufficient evidence is all that is needed to bring agreement and certainty. The thing itself is sure. But with reference to what it is wise to do in a complicated situation, discussion is inevitable precisely because the thing itself is still indeterminate. One would not expect a ruling class living at ease to have the same philosophy of life as those who were having a hard struggle for existence. A community devoted to industrial pursuits, active in business and commerce, is not likely to see the needs and the possibilities of life in the same way as a country with a high aesthetic culture and little enterprise in turning the energies of nature to mechanical account. Even if the same data were present, they would be evaluated differently. But the different sorts of experience attending different types of life prevent just the same data from presenting themselves, as well as lead to a different scheme of values.[24]
>
> If one will commence without mental reservations to study the history of philosophy not as an isolated thing, but as a chapter in the development of civilization and culture, the history of philosophy will take on a new significance. Instead of the disputes of rivals about the nature of reality, we have the scene of human clash of social purpose and aspirations. Instead of impossible attempts to transcend experience, we have the significant record of the efforts of men to formulate the things of experience to which

> they are most deeply and passionately attached. Instead of impersonal and purely speculative endeavors to contemplate the nature of absolute things-in-themselves, we have a living picture of the choice of thoughtful men about what they would have life to be, and to what ends they would have men shape their intelligent activities.[25]

Although pretending to deal with some ultimate reality, philosophy has actually been occupied with the precious values embedded in our social life, Dewey believes. Philosophical differences have sprung from a clash of social values, from a conflict between inherited institutions and beliefs, on the one hand, and the changed outlook and needs of modern life, on the other. What philosophy has been unconsciously, without knowing or intending to be, it must henceforth be openly and deliberately, Dewey maintains. It is the task of philosophy to make full use of human intelligence in improving man's life both individually and socially. Drop the presupposition of the rationalist that we are dependent upon something beyond and above us, and the facts of human life just stare one in the face. We find a multitude of goods about us, but also, unfortunately, a multitude of evils—and pretty much all grades of both. Philosophy must face the great social and moral ills from which humanity suffers, concentrate its attention upon the causes and the exact nature of these evils, and develop a clear and practical concept of the better society which we are now able to achieve for all men and women.When rightly understood, "its aim is to become as far as is humanly possible an organ for dealing with these conflicts." Its outcome should be a contribution to man's attainment of "a more ordered and intelligent happiness."[26]

Even religion seems to Dewey open to serious criticism when it calls men away from the task of improving human life in this world and tries to interest them in another world instead. "To invite us, ceasing struggle and effort, to commune with Being through the moments of insight and joy that life provides, is to bid us to self-indulgence—to enjoyment at the expense of those upon whom the burden of conducting life's affairs falls," he writes.[27]

It is interesting to see how this approach to religion and philosophy changes one's attitude toward optimism and pessimism, Dewey points out. "Pessimism is a paralyzing doctrine," he writes. "In declaring that the world is evil wholesale, it makes futile all efforts to discover the remediable causes of specific evils and thereby destroys at the root every attempt to make the world better and happier." But the point of view of optimism, when clearly understood, is even worse. The optimist says that the world is already the best it can possibly be. He not only feels that nothing needs to be done to make things better; he even pretends that things are all right when they are manifestly evil. Thus he is really a cynical pessimist. Optimism, Dewey feels, "becomes too readily the creed of those who live at ease, in comfort, of those who have been successful in obtaining this world's rewards. Too readily optimism makes the men who hold it callous and

blind to the sufferings of the less fortunate. It thus co-operates with pessimism, in spite of the extreme nominal differences between the two, in benumbing sympathetic insight and intelligent effort in reform."[28]

Hence, Dewey is led to defend the position known as meliorism. "Meliorism," he writes, "is the belief that the specific conditions which exist at one moment, be they comparatively bad or comparatively good, in any event may be bettered. It encourages intelligence to study the positive means of good and the obstructions to their realization, and to put forth endeavor for the improvement of conditions. It arouses confidence and a reasonable hopefulness as optimism does not."[29] The meliorist, moreover, is able to take a positive and constructive attitude to the evil in human life which has disturbed moral philosophers so much in the past. The problem of evil is for him the practical problem of reducing, alleviating, as far as may be removing, the specific evils of life. He does not feel that he must have elaborate schemes for explaining evil away or ingenious methods of proving that evils are only apparent and not real, as rationalistic philosophers such as the Stoics have undertaken to do, or, what is even worse, that he must justify evil as an act of God, as some religious philosophies do. The task of the philosopher, as the meliorist sees it, is simply that of contributing, in however humble a way, to the discovery of what causes the ills of human life, and helping as best he can to remove the causes of suffering and thus to bring greater enjoyment and happiness into life.

NATURALISM AND HUMANISM

In origin and in spirit, Dewey's meliorism is thoroughly naturalistic, however. Man is a product of the natural forces at work in the process of evolution; human intelligence developed in this evolutionary process as naturally as did man's arms or his hands, and for precisely the same reason: it provided the biological organism with improved means of meeting its needs, getting the things done that primitive man wanted to do. The higher values of human life were achieved in essentially the same fashion. This evolutionary approach to philosophy leads Dewey to insist, therefore, that the usual opposition between humanism and naturalism is a false one. "In truth, experience knows no division between human concerns and a purely mechanical physical world," he writes. "Man's home is nature; his purposes and aims are dependent for execution upon natural conditions. Separated from such conditions they become empty dreams and idle indulgences of fancy. This philosophy is vouched for by the doctrine of biological development which shows that man is continuous with nature, not an alien entering her processes from without."[30] It is reinforced by the experimental method of modern science, which makes our knowledge of nature the best means of obtaining human progress and well-being.

In general terms, a humanistic philosophy is one committed to what is best in human life and best for human welfare. Humanism should increase our con-

cern for the values of living; it should produce greater sensitiveness to social well-being and greater use of human intelligence to promote that well-being.* The true humanism, then, must be a naturalistic humanism—a view of man and of human values which emphasizes the close relationship of both to their source in nature, Dewey insists. The concept of evolution and the thought of Darwin, when properly understood, make clear the fallacy of the old antitheses between man and nature, between human values and their natural setting, between reason and experience, between science and morals.

Like so many other aspects of our philosophical heritage, humanism had its origin in the classic age of Greece. The humanistic spirit of the Greeks was native and intense, but it was narrow in scope, Dewey points out, and essentially aristocratic. Greek culture was based upon a substratum of slavery and economic serfdom. There were large classes of people necessary to the existence of the Greek city state and yet not genuine parts of it, not sharing in the values which were recognized by the Greeks as essential for human life at its best. Even the humanism of the Renaissance, which ushered in our modern age, was one-sided. It omitted economic and industrial conditions from its concern; its values reflected the intellectual and moral outlook of the privileged classes, which were in direct social control; its standards were in the past, and its aim was to preserve what had been gained rather than to extend as widely as possible the range of culture. This state of affairs was not radically altered until the industrial revolution. Then agricultural serfdom was abolished at last and a class of workers created with political and social rights that have been gradually recognized and implemented with the development of democracy.

A new concept of humanism is essential, therefore, for our age. Our democratic way of life, our industrial age, and the scientific spirit of our day all make this necessary, Dewey feels. And the new humanism must be scientific and naturalistic in spirit, if his analysis is sound. "At the outset the rise of modern science prophesied a restoration of the intimate connection of nature and humanity," he writes. Human progress and well-being have become more and more dependent upon scientific knowledge and control of the forces of nature. Every step forward in the social sciences, every advance in furthering the public good intelligently, illustrates the direct dependence of our important social concerns, and of the human values that lie behind them, upon the methods and results of the natural sciences. "When the consciousness of science is fully impregnated with the consciousness of human value, the greatest dualism which now weighs humanity down, the split between the material, the mechanical, the scientific and the moral and ideal will be destroyed," Dewey concludes.[31] The vexatious and wasteful conflict between naturalism and humanism will then be terminated.

* See Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, pp. 336, 337.

EDUCATION AS A WAY OF LIVING

Dewey's philosophy of education holds a central place in his thought as a whole; it is this aspect of his philosophy, indeed, that is most generally known and most widely influential. Perhaps it is not too much to say that until one understands his philosophy of education one cannot understand Dewey,—and that when one does understand this he has the key to the rest.

Wherever any philosophy is alive and vital, its connection with some concrete program of social living is always to be found, Dewey maintains. When a philosophy makes no difference in the way men live, it can be dismissed as merely verbal or artificial, a sentimental indulgence for a limited few. Thus the intimate connection between philosophy and education becomes clear. For it is through the process of education that social ideals and practices are established. Here we meet philosophical problems "where they arise and thrive, where they are at home, and where acceptance or rejection makes a difference in practice," Dewey writes. "Education is the laboratory in which philosophic distinctions become concrete and are tested."[32]

THE SOCIAL FUNCTION OF EDUCATION

When he published *Democracy and Education*, in 1916, it was with the social function of education that Dewey was primarily concerned. Civilization can exist only as the beliefs, the ideals, the hopes, and the practices of one generation are passed on to the next, he points out. Every individual, whether in a modern city or in a savage tribe, is born immature, helpless, without language, beliefs, or social standards. Even among savages, the accomplishments of adult men and women, whether in hunting, in warfare, in primitive types of agriculture, or in weaving and in preparing food, are far beyond what immature boys and girls would be capable of if left to themselves. In our highly complex civilization the gap between the achievements of those who are well read or scientifically trained and what an uneducated person knows or can do is tremendous. "Beings who are born not only unaware of, but quite indifferent to the aims and habits of the social group have to be rendered cognizant of them and actively interested," Dewey writes.[33] Education, in its broadest sense, is the means by which this is accomplished. Hence education is not a luxury for a privileged few; it is a matter of social necessity.

Understood in this sense, most education is, of course, informal and natural. It is the very process of living together which educates. Among savage tribes, children naturally and inevitably learn the customs of the adults and at the same time acquire their emotional set and stock of ideas *by sharing in what the elders are doing*. But as civilization advances, the gap between the capacities of the young and the concerns of the adult widens. It is no longer possible for a child

to be educated by his parents and companions. The task of teaching is gradually delegated, therefore, to a special group of persons, and schools and courses of study become necessary. Formal education of this kind is essential to preserve and pass on the great cultural achievements of mankind. But there are likewise conspicuous dangers attendant upon this change from indirect to formal education, Dewey feels, dangers which undermine the effectiveness and vitality of the educational process. Learning in school easily loses the personal and vital quality of informal education. It becomes remote from life and artificial—"abstract and bookish, to use the ordinary words of depreciation." In informal education knowledge is immediately put into practice; it meets the urgent daily needs of the individual or the group. A boy learns to hunt in order to go hunting; knowledge of cooking enables a girl to do the work she is expected to do The material of formal education, on the other hand, is isolated from the subject matter of life. It is stored up in books, and it easily becomes only the subject matter of the schools. Students do not see any use for most of what they learn. "Thus we reach the ordinary notion of education," Dewey writes: "the notion which ignores its social necessity, and which identifies it with imparting information about remote matters and the conveying of learning through verbal signs: the acquisition of literacy."[34]

THE INFLUENCE OF ENVIRONMENT

Even after education has become a matter of "going to school," however, much of our learning takes place outside the classroom. It is impossible for a normal human being to live without taking into account at every turn the activities, the expectations, the approval, and the condemnation of others. We have to get along with our family at home; we want the social approval of our contemporaries—our gang or our group. We do the things that they do, and we think as they think, without being aware that we are doing so or why we are doing so. Our *social environment*, then, becomes as important a factor in the growth of the human individual as is the physical environment in the growth of the biological organism at an earlier stage, Dewey maintains. And we see clearly that here example is more potent than precept, that we learn most effectively from what we see other people do and what we, ourselves, are called upon to do.

Our social environment shapes our lives, then, by engaging us in activities that arouse and strengthen certain impulses and, at the same time, neglect others. A child growing up in a family of musicians will have his interest in music stimulated—stimulated more than other capacities he might have. Unless he takes an interest in music and develops a certain competence in it, he is left out of the life of the family. Similarly, a child growing up in Russia or China naturally and inevitably has an entirely different outlook on life from that of a child who grows up in England or America. He does different things; he believes in different things; he wants different things. Every social group in this way influences the

development and the attitudes of its members. "A clique, a club, a gang, a Fagin's household of thieves, the prisoners in a jail, provide educative environments for those who enter into their collective or conjoint activities, as truly as a church, a labor union, a business partnership, or a political party," Dewey writes. One code of behavior prevails in the family; another, on the street; a third, in the workshop or store; a fourth, in our religious associations. The way in which our group or class does things shapes the direction and nature of our own interests. What is accepted by our group, we accept as good and true. "What is strange or foreign (that is to say outside the activities of the group) tends to be morally forbidden and intellectually suspect."[35] The main texture of our lives —indeed, every fibre of character and mind—is thus largely determined by the unconscious influence of our social environment, quite independently of what we are taught in school.

Seldom has the informal and natural molding of disposition, attitude, and conviction—that is, of one's underlying philosophy of living—been portrayed more convincingly than by Dewey. No philosophy of education that fails to come to terms with this aspect of human life is defensible, he insists.

> We rarely recognize the extent to which our conscious estimates of what is worthwhile and what is not, are due to standards of which we are not conscious at all. But in general it may be said that the things which we take for granted without inquiry or reflection are just the things which determine our conscious thinking and decide our conclusions. And these habitudes which lie below the level of reflection are just those which have been formed in the constant give and take of relationships with others.[36]

The only way, then, in which adults can control the kind of education which children get is by controlling the environment in which they act, and hence think and feel, Dewey insists. We can never educate children directly by urging them to believe certain things or to do certain things which we think they ought to. We have to educate indirectly, by means of the social environment in which we place a child. It is the business of the school, then, to create the kind of environment in which the desired growth and development will take place, Dewey maintains; and this can be done only by enabling an individual to participate in the common activities of a group which will naturally inculcate the skills, insights, and attitudes desired. We learn by doing, and by doing with others, things that appeal to us as worth while. Such a theory of learning involves, of course, a very radical change in our whole traditional educational procedure, and this change Dewey set out resolutely to accomplish. The "Progressive Education" movement was one of the results.

EDUCATION AS GROWTH

As Dewey regards human life from his evolutionary point of view, he finds that the most important thing about man is his capacity for *growth*. To be alive, a

thing must grow; when it ceases to grow, it soon ceases to live. Life is essentially development and growth, and, conversely, to develop and grow is to live. From the viewpoint of the individual, then, the cardinal concern of education is with growth—the growth of an individual who has the capacity to develop. Its major aim is to provide the conditions under which native endowments and capacities can be properly developed. Without this inherent capacity for growth in human beings, education would be impossible; when properly understood and made use of, it is this that gives vitality to the whole process of learning. "We do not have to draw out or educe positive activities from a child, as some educational doctrines would have it," Dewey writes. "Where there is life, there are already eager and impassioned activities. Growth is not something done to them; it is something they do."[37]

The educative process, then, is seen by Dewey as "a continued process of growth, having as its aim at every stage an added capacity of growth." Such a concept of education involves a drastic revision of our accepted educational procedures; and it gives us the criterion we need to determine when our teaching is successful and when it is a failure. The task of education is not to provide students with an abundance of information, for the possession of knowledge is never an end in itself. Formal education, to be successful, must become a way of living that stimulates and inspires learning by active effort as naturally as does informal education. Otherwise growth of the right sort—growth which involves the full development of all the capacities of the individual—will not take place.

The fallacy of the old concept of education as a process of preparation, of getting ready for something that still lies in the future, is at once apparent. This point of view has had a most undesirable effect upon education, in Dewey's opinion. Youth lives in the present, he points out, not in the future. To be constantly told to get ready for something in which one is not particularly interested destroys the motive power of learning. It places a premium on procrastination. The future is a long way off; plenty of time will intervene before it comes. Why be in a hurry to get ready for it? There are so many more interesting things to be done now. These are the natural reactions of students to an educational program that undertakes to prepare them for life in the future rather than to offer them a stimulating way of living.[38]

It is as a result of this emphasis upon getting ready for the future that our vicious system of artificial rewards and punishments has taken so strong a hold on education, Dewey points out. When a pupil can see no value in what he is told to do, we try to stimulate effort by rewarding him with a good "grade" if he does it well. There is small wonder that students soon become more interested in grades than in an education. Healthful work done for its own sake is not generally regarded as laborious. We do such work because its value to us is immediately apparent. A person who is planning a trip to Mexico learns about the people and the country because he wants to know; he recognizes the value

of this information to him, and he plans to use it. He may even set about learning Spanish with the same enthusiasm. When diplomas and degrees take the place of the satisfactions that should come from genuine intellectual and social achievement, education loses its natural appeal and vitality. The test of successful learning should be the individual's ability to use what he has learned to meet his own particular needs, Dewey insists. There is small wonder that most students in college and university rebel against the meaninglessness of the conventional grading system—at least whenever they get poor grades—and insist that it provides no satisfactory measure of what the year's work in some particular field has meant to them.

In education as in other aspects of living, our appreciation of what is good is immediate. When we are enjoying ourselves, we know it. No one else has to tell us. Nor do we have to be able to prove to someone else that we are enjoying ourselves. The experience speaks for itself. The same is true in education: "as long as any topic makes an immediate appeal, it is not necessary to ask what it is good for," Dewey writes.

> Some goods are not good *for* anything; they are just goods. Any other notion leads to an absurdity. To a hungry, healthy child, food is a good of the situation; we do not have to bring him to consciousness of the ends subserved by food in order to supply a motive to eat. The same thing holds of mentally eager pupils with respect to many topics. Neither they nor the teacher could possibly foretell with any exactness the purposes learning is to accomplish in the future; nor as long as the eagerness continues is it advisable to try to specify particular goods which are to come of it. The proof of the good is found in the fact that the pupil responds; his response *is* use. His response to the material shows that the subject functions in his life.

In so far, then, as any study effects a definite enrichment of life, its worth is intrinsic and not a means to something else, Dewey argues. "Since education is not a means to living, but is living a life which is fruitful and inherently significant, the only ultimate value which can be set up is just the process of living itself. And this is not an end to which studies and activities are subordinate means; it is the whole of which they are ingredients."[39]

EDUCATION AS PREPARATION FOR THE FUTURE

There is no question, of course, that education should prepare one for the future. This fact Dewey recognizes clearly enough. But "preparation" is a treacherous idea, he feels. It is a mistake to suppose that a person who has learned a certain amount of arithmetic or geography is prepared to use this information intelligently in later life. "The mistake is not in attaching importance to preparation for future need, but in making it the mainspring of present effort," Dewey writes. "The way to enable a student to apprehend the value of arithmetic is not

to lecture him upon the benefit it will be to him in some remote and uncertain future, but to let him discover that success in something he is interested in doing depends upon ability to use number."[40] Actually it is not those individuals who are always thinking of the future and finding no satisfactions in present achievement, but rather those who take full advantage of their present opportunities who are being best prepared to meet the demands of the future. "It is imperative that every energy should be bent to making the present experience as rich and significant as possible. Then as the present merges insensibly into the future, the future is taken care of. . . . We always live at the time we live, and not at some other time, and only by extracting from the present the full meaning of each present experience are we prepared for doing the same thing in the future. This is the only preparation which in the long run amounts to anything."[41]

Education, then, is not, except as a by-product, a preparation for something coming later. "Getting from the present the degree and kind of growth there is in it is education," Dewey writes. "This is a constant function, independent of age."[42] The best thing that can be said about any educational experience is that it makes students more aware of the conditions under which growth takes place and better able to take advantage of such conditions. Usually the attitudes developed in the process of learning are far more important than the information acquired. We retain these attitudes long after we have forgotten the arithmetic or the Latin. "The most important attitude that can be formed is that of desire to go on learning." If this is not accomplished, the student is not really prepared. It is commonplace to say that education should not cease when one leaves school, but the way to see that it does not cease is to make learning and continued achievement a natural way of living. "The inclination to learn from life itself and to make the conditions of life such that all will learn in the process of living is the finest product of schooling," Dewey concludes.[43]

THE CULTIVATION OF INTELLIGENCE

This emphasis upon growth as the end and aim of education does not mean, however, that Dewey is less concerned than the traditional schools with the cultivation of intelligence. Actually it leads him to a greater concern with this aspect of education because he understands better what it involves, he insists. Only the cultivation of intelligence can make possible the continued growth of an individual, and only when seen in this functional fashion is intelligence properly interpreted. Being intelligent has little to do, as a rule, with possessing a vast amount of information or even with getting good grades or advanced degrees. Intelligence is rather, for Dewey, the capacity to deal successfully with the concrete situations that we must face in living. It is a practical thing—which one gets from experience and not from books except quite indirectly. It is active, not passive; it means the ability to think and to act intelligently. In his early volume, entitled *How We Think*, Dewey places major emphasis, as a matter of fact, upon

the responsibility of the school to inspire and develop this capacity in its students. When it fails to do this, it fails to educate them, no matter how much information they may acquire, he insists.

From this point of view, the trouble with the traditional school, of course, has been its failure to understand how men actually learn to think. Thinking, Dewey points out, is always an outcome of the demands of experience. It is something that one does in order to act more intelligently, in order to get what he wants or what he feels that he needs. The initial stage in thinking must always, then, be the kind of experience which makes reflection necessary. "Hence the first approach to any subject in school, if thought is to be aroused, should be as unscholastic as possible," Dewey writes. "Probably the most frequent cause of failure in schools to secure genuine thinking from students is the failure to insure the existence of an experienced situation of such a nature as to call out thinking in the way in which out-of-school situations do."[44] We are usually so eager to get at intellectual distinctions without "waste of time" that we try to pass on to the student our own "ideas" without letting him think through for himself the problems involved. Too seldom do we take pains to see that he confronts situations where his own activities generate and clinch ideas—that is, meanings or connections between things that are perceived in experience.

When the teacher has provided the sort of conditions which stimulate thinking and has taken a sympathetic attitude toward the activities of the learner, he has done all that he can do. "The more a teacher is aware of the past experiences of students, of their hopes, desires, chief interests, the better he will understand the forces at work that need to be directed and utilized for the formation of reflective habits."[45] But the rest lies with the learner himself. A student must do his own thinking before he can learn anything. "Only by wrestling with the conditions of the problem at first hand, seeking and finding his own way out, does he think." If he cannot do this, he will not learn—even if he is able to recite any number of "correct answers" with one-hundred-percent accuracy. Careful inspection of educational practices which have been permanently successful in whatever field —arithmetic, geography, language, or science—"will reveal that they depend for their efficiency upon the fact that they go back to the type of situation which causes reflection out of school in ordinary life," Dewey maintains. "They give the pupils something to do, not something to learn; and the doing is of such a nature as to demand thinking; learning naturally results."[46]

When we realize that thinking intelligently is a matter of finding out for ourselves the way to deal with concrete situations and so meeting our own problems successfully, we see, Dewey points out, that there are no subjects which are inherently "intellectual," none that possess any magical power to train the mind. As the body grows through the assimilation of food, so the mind grows through the logical analysis and organization of the subject matter with which it deals. "Accordingly, any subject, from Greek to cooking, and from drawing to mathe-

matics, is intellectual, if intellectual at all, not in its fixed inner structure, but in its function—in its power to start and direct significant inquiry and reflection What geometry does for one, the manipulation of laboratory apparatus, the mastery of musical composition, or the conduct of a business affair, does for another."[47] The worth of any subject depends upon the situation, upon the needs and abilities of the particular students, and upon the way in which it is taught. Liberal studies are studies which actually liberate the minds of those studying them. We cannot give students a liberal education just by making them take a prescribed course of studies. It is the way in which their study is conducted that makes the difference.

To illustrate this point, Dewey chooses a most unlikely subject.

> Gardening, for example, need not be taught either for the sake of future gardeners, or as an agreeable way of passing time. It affords an avenue of approach to knowledge of the place farming and horticulture have had in the history of the race and which they occupy in present social organization Carried on in an environment educationally controlled, they are means for making a study of the facts of growth, the chemistry of soil, the role of light, air, and moisture, etc. There is nothing in the elementary study of botany which cannot be introduced in a vital way in connection with caring for the growth of seeds. As students grow mature, they will perceive problems of interest which may be pursued for the sake of discovery, independent of the original direct interest in gardening—problems connected with the germination and nutrition of plants, the reproduction of fruits, etc., thus making a transition to deliberate intellectual investigations.[48]

Before any subject can be of genuine intellectual worth, moreover, a student must see its relation to his own experience and his own problems. The only way in which he can develop the mature ability to think logically and systematically is by thinking alertly and carefully at his own *present* level, Dewey insists, not merely by reading textbooks on logic or mathematics. That which is strictly logical from the standpoint of subject matter really represents the conclusions of an expert, fully trained mind. "It is absurd to suppose that the beginner can commence where the adept stops." The intellectual organization required of the beginner must be that of which he is capable, or else habits of vagueness, disorder, and incoherent thinking will be formed. And this organization need not be that which would satisfy the mature expert. For the immature mind is still largely occupied in gaining intellectual skill that the expert has already achieved In the process of education, logical thinking is, then, initially an *art* to be cultivated; it is not a science to be mastered.

TRADITIONAL *VS.* PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION

Dewey's educational philosophy was so challenging and so widely influential that it inspired a vigorous movement of reform in the field of educational prac-

tice. In time this reform movement became known as "progressive education" and its adherents were so enthusiastic and so numerous that grade-school education throughout the United States has been quite generally affected by it. Progressive schools are to be found in almost every community of any size; the kind of training in education provided by the so-called teachers' colleges, patterned largely upon Teachers College at Columbia University, has been shaped by the philosophy of Dewey, and even at the college and university level, especially in current programs of "general education," the influence of Dewey is becoming more and more apparent.

It was only natural that Dewey's philosophy would be attacked by those committed to the traditional approach in education. Perhaps the most frequent criticism of progressive education has been that it placed too much emphasis upon freedom and self-expression and failed to provide the discipline necessary for the development of mind and character. The graduates of progressive schools have been widely pictured as thoroughly undisciplined and uninhibited individuals who not only do not know how to read, spell, or do mathematics, but who also do not know how to behave themselves. The children of parents who believed in Dewey's philosophy of education have been portrayed as not only a social nuisance but a real liability because of their tendency to destroy anything within reach. These criticisms have aroused Dewey to a rather vigorous indictment of what he considers the misconception of discipline in traditional education.

It has been argued, for example, that training the mind of the student meant a careful and systematic exposure to such subjects as mathematics, grammar, or Latin, which themselves possess a high degree of logical organization. The assumption behind this, Dewey points out, is that the natural operations of the mind are indifferent or even averse to logical activity, and that the mind becomes logical only by learning to conform to principles contained in some external subject matter. Actually, *discipline* in education is here too easily identified with military discipline. It becomes largely a matter of drill, a sort of mechanical routine by means of which raw recruits are trained to soldierly bearing and habits of life that are by nature wholly foreign to them. But discipline of this sort is not *mental* discipline, Dewey insists. "Its aims and results are not *habits* of thinking, but uniform external modes of action. Many a teacher, as a result, mistakenly supposes that he is engaged in disciplining the minds of pupils, when in reality he is creating an aversion to study and a belief that using the mind is a disagreeable, instead of a delightful, operation."[49]

As a matter of fact, mental discipline at best is always positive and constructive, not routine or mechanical. It is the power to achieve the things we want. Practice and exercise are involved in the acquisition of such power, of course, but they do not take the form of meaningless drill. They occur naturally as part of the task of attaining a desired end when the mind is engaged in activities that

are worth while for their own sake. A boy who wants to play baseball practices batting, catching, and throwing the ball because he sees that these skills are essential in the thing he wants to achieve. But his desire to play baseball provides the necessary motivation. A great painter is disciplined in his art, Dewey points out, to the degree in which he can manage and use effectively all the elements essential in painting, whether these be color and brushes or the power of vision and imagination. These abilities are developed by him, however, as means to an end which he recognizes as highly desirable. The man who is put through a mechanical and largely meaningless drill in such activities seldom emerges as an able and disciplined painter.

Exactly the same thing is true with regard to the power of logical and systematic thinking, Dewey believes. The disciplined mind is a mind with the power to think logically and to act independently, and this power is achieved by actually thinking for ourselves, by facing intellectual problems and mastering them. It is not the inevitable outcome of working problems in arithmetic or translating Latin sentences when these tasks have no particular significance to the student.

> All genuine education *terminates* in discipline, but it *proceeds* by engaging the mind in activities worth while for their own sake. . . . A person who is trained to consider his actions, to undertake them deliberately, is in so far forth disciplined. Add to this ability a power to endure in an intelligently chosen course in face of distraction, confusion, and difficulty, and you have the essence of discipline. Discipline means power at command; mastery of resources available for carrying through the action undertaken. To know what one is to do and to move to do it promptly and by the use of the requisite means is to be disciplined, whether we are thinking of an army or a mind. Discipline is positive.[50]

Discipline and freedom, then, are not opposed or contradictory aspects of education; they are rather two aspects of the same process. Without freedom and responsibility, it is impossible to think independently or to act intelligently. The person who simply does what he is told to do, no matter how important the thing may be, is actually learning to do what he is told. He is not developing a well-disciplined mind. Only the man who has developed the power to think independently is free. Only such a man can escape bondage to ignorance, to custom, and to authority. Freedom, in the end, is something that the student must achieve for himself; it cannot be conferred upon him by a teacher. "The discipline that is identical with trained power is also identical with *freedom*," Dewey writes "For freedom is power to act and to execute independent of external tutelage. It signifies mastery capable of independent exercise, emancipated from the leading strings of others, not mere unhindered operation. . . . Genuine freedom, in short, is intellectual; it rests in the trained *power of thought*, in ability to 'turn things over,' to look at matters deliberately, to judge whether the amount and kind of

evidence requisite for decision is at hand, and, if not, to tell where and how to seek such evidence. If a man's actions are not guided by thoughtful conclusions then they are guided by inconsiderate impulse, by unbalanced appetite, caprice or the circumstances of the moment. To cultivate unreflective activity is to foster enslavement, for it leaves the person at the mercy of appetite, sense and circumstance."[51]

Because they did not understand the importance of freedom and self-discipline the traditional schools too frequently turned out students who were trained to accept ideas imposed upon them by others, not students capable of thinking for themselves when faced with the more perplexing problems of modern civilization. That the progressive schools still have a long way to go in working out successfully the principles to which they are committed, Dewey admits freely. In their attack upon traditional practices, as a matter of fact, they have often swung to the opposite extreme and so opened themselves to legitimate criticism. The task of education is not easier but much more difficult when interpreted in functional and pragmatic terms. Many years of serious effort and intelligent cooperation on the part of its advocates will be necessary before the progressive movement in education can hope to succeed, Dewey feels. "The greatest danger that attends its future is, I believe, the idea that it is an easy way to follow," he writes, "so easy that its course may be improvised, if not in an impromptu fashion, at least almost from day to day or from week to week."* Actually there are definite and difficult conditions which must be met if progressive education "is to have the successful career which by right belongs to it," and these conditions Dewey himself carefully describes in his half dozen volumes on educational theory and practice.

MORALS FOR A SCIENTIFIC AGE

When he first began to consider the pressing moral problems of our day and to examine what was being taught about ethics, Dewey concluded that there was no moral philosophy which an intelligent man today could accept—none that was in keeping with the scientific, democratic, and industrial forces at work in contemporary life. Among the traditional philosophies, the Utilitarianism of Bentham and John Stuart Mill seemed to him the best approach to morals he could discover. He liked its emphasis upon consequences rather than motives in moral conduct, and he agreed with the Utilitarians that an individual must derive his own happiness from pursuits that are conducive to the welfare of others. But Utilitarianism, Dewey felt, had not adequately taken into account the implica-

* *Experience and Education*, p. 116. In this volume, published in 1938, Dewey discusses in detail the contrast between traditional and progressive education and restates his own point of view so as to correct misinterpretations that have arisen.

tions of the democratic way of life, nor had it felt the full impact of Darwinian evolution upon scientific thought. So he set himself the task of writing a clear and consistent moral philosophy from this contemporary scientific and democratic point of view.

INTELLIGENCE AND MORALS

The early Greek philosophers saw clearly that the chief business of man is pursuit of the good, and that intelligence is the central factor in this quest, Dewey points out. It was Socrates who brought philosophy to earth and taught that morals and philosophy are one and the same thing, "namely, a love of that wisdom which is the source of secure and social good." And in the *Republic* of Plato philosophy achieved some sense of its social basis and mission, for Plato recognized that the organization of a just social order is the chief business of the philosopher. But this was as far as philosophy progressed for many centuries, Dewey feels. Soon it got lost in dreams of another world. Human reason, which set out to take the place of custom as a guide to the good life, began, instead, to insist on rules that were as fixed, final, and unalterable as those of custom, and even the philosophers themselves became fascinated with the afterglow of custom. Thus Aristotle yielded almost completely to the besetting sin of all philosophers, "the idealization of the existent," accepting the social distinctions of his day between men and women, between master and slave, between the learned and ignorant, as ordained and justified by nature. It was not long before the essential function of intelligence in morals was completely lost sight of.

As a result, men have accepted for almost twenty-five hundred years the notion that it is the task of philosophy to discover some one ultimate moral good or moral law, Dewey points out. Hedonists, from Epicurus and Aristippus to John Stuart Mill and Lin Yutang, have insisted that pleasure is the supreme good, and a life of pleasure the natural and right aim in life. Rationalists, from the Stoics to Spinoza and Walter Lippmann, have urged upon men a devotion to reason as the only path to the good life. The authoritarians in morals have held that loyalty or obedience to a higher power, whether the will of God, the laws of the State, or the dictates of conscience, is the one acceptable principle of moral conduct.

On the surface these moral theories seem to differ rather sharply from one another. But actually they all agree in assuming that there is one single, fixed, and final good; they disagree only in their idea of what it is. It is just at this point that Dewey, as an empiricist and pragmatist, challenges the whole traditional approach to morals. The only way out of the moral conflict and confusion of our day, he feels, lies in getting at the root of the matter and rejecting this idea which all traditional moral theories have had in common. Hence Dewey begins by asserting bluntly and unequivocally that there is no one single, fixed, and final moral good. What we find when we look to experience, he insists, is a large number of changing, individual goods and ends in the moral life. For some men

in some situations health is the most important thing in life; for others honesty or temperance is essential in meeting successfully the temptations of modern life. For the university student the development of his mental capacities may well be the primary concern.

"Moral goods and ends exist only when something has to be *done*," Dewey writes. "The fact that something has to be done proves that there are deficiencies, evils in the existent situation. This ill is just the specific ill that it is. It never is an exact duplicate of anything else. Consequently, the good of the situation has to be discovered, and attained on the basis of the exact defect and trouble to be rectified."[52] What actually happens in life is that we are faced with specific perplexities, where the aid of intelligence is required to decide upon the right way to achieve the results we desire. "We cannot seek or attain health, wealth, learning, justice or kindness in general. Action is always specific, concrete, individualized, unique," Dewey insists. "To say that a man seeks health or justice is only to say that he seeks to live healthily or justly. These things, like truth, are adverbial. They are modifiers of action in special cases. How to live healthily or justly is a matter which differs with every person. It varies with his past experience, his opportunities, his temperamental weaknesses and abilities. Not man in general but a particular man suffering from some particular disability aims to live healthily, and consequently health cannot mean for him exactly what it means for any other mortal."[53] It is part of wisdom, of course, to gain as much information as possible about the ills from which humanity suffers, as well as about health, wealth, temperance, patience, and a multitude of other acknowledged goods. But the value of this information is to suggest methods of action to be tried in a particular case. It provides us with tools of insight, not with universal moral principles.

To assert bluntly that every moral situation is unique and different from every other situation may seem not merely blunt but preposterous, Dewey admits. Let us, however, follow the pragmatic rule and, in order to discover the meaning of an idea, ask for its consequences, he suggests. Then, surprisingly enough, it turns out that what we have done is to transfer the weight and burden of morality to intelligence. A man cannot do what is right unless he is intelligent—unless he examines the particular situation and acts in such fashion as to meet its requirements. Should a doctor tell his patient that he is about to die, when the truth will almost certainly seriously upset him? Should a college student devote his time largely to study or to social and political activities? The right action in such cases is not self-evident. There are conflicting desires and alternative apparent goods. What is needed is to find the right course of action, the best results in the particular situation, Dewey maintains.

This means that in order to do what is right we have to be intelligent, just as surely as we have to be in order to succeed in any of our other undertakings. We need intelligence and scientific method in morals as much as we do anywhere

else. We cannot be good simply by following approved social conventions or traditional moral standards, Dewey insists. "Morals are not a catalogue of acts nor a set of rules to be applied like drugstore prescriptions or cook-book recipes," he writes. "The need in morals is for specific methods of inquiry and of contrivance: methods of inquiry to locate difficulties and evils; methods of contrivance to form plans to be used as working hypotheses in dealing with them."[54] After all, he is pleading only for the adoption in morals of the logic that has proved so successful in the field of science, Dewey argues. And the reason is exactly the same. The old approach actually discouraged the use of intelligence and even hindered the operation of scrupulous and unremitting inquiry. When men were taught to accept certain universal moral principles as fixed and final, and to adopt these without further thought no matter what the particular situation, they soon ceased to be intelligent in dealing with the problems of life. The recognition that each individual case is unique and must be handled as such stimulates the painstaking inquiry into facts and examination of principles which we must have for successful living.

AN EMPIRICAL MORALITY

His empirical and pragmatic approach to morals has changed moral philosophy in several important ways, Dewey points out. First, it has given to inquiry and discovery the same central place in morals that they have come to occupy in the natural sciences. It makes clear the fact that we do not know in advance the right answers in moral conduct any more than we do in science. In most cases, no doubt, it is right to tell the truth; but in some it may not be. Only as we examine any particular situation intelligently can we hope to discover the right thing to do. From this point of view, also, mistakes in morals are no longer either merely unavoidable accidents to be mourned or moral sins to be expiated and forgiven. They are lessons in wrong methods of using intelligence, and suggestions for laying out a better course of action in the future. If we are intelligent, we learn to act better just as we learn to think more clearly by profiting from our mistakes.

Secondly, every case in which moral action is required becomes of equal importance and urgency with every other. If it is clear that what we need in a specific situation is to improve our health, then for that situation health is the ultimate and supreme good. It is not a means to something else more important morally. The same holds true for making an adequate living, doing one's job in college well, and the like. Not preparing one's work may be quite as immoral as lying or getting drunk. The empirical approach does away once and for all with the traditional distinction between moral virtues, on the one hand, and natural good, such as health, economic security, and scientific knowledge, on the other. It is no longer possible to deal with morals in terms of drinking, honesty, sex problems and the like. The choices we make in business, our political activities,

the attention we pay to our health or our studies, are as definitely moral as any other decisions we face. Thus it becomes much more difficult to be good than it was when one had only to obey certain fixed rules or commandments.

This change in point of view has another important consequence, Dewey feels. It removes the opposition between morals and natural science. When physics, chemistry, biology, or medicine enables us to discover the causes of concrete human suffering, and when they help us to remedy human ills, then science becomes moral; it becomes a part of the apparatus of an empirical moral inquiry. As a result, our morals are no longer so didactic and pedantic, so removed from the important issues of living. But the gain is not confined to the side of morals. Natural science is no longer divorced from our basic human concerns; it becomes humanistic in quality. "It is something to be pursued not in a technical way for what is called truth for its own sake, but with the sense of its social bearing. It is technical only in the sense that it provides the technique of social and moral engineering."[55]

Thirdly, the empirical approach to morals destroys the roots of Phariseeism. We can no longer complacently take pride in the fact that we are better than other people, as the Pharisees are pictured as doing in the New Testament. When moral problems are dealt with concretely and intelligently, more will always be expected of a person of trained mind and large resources than of a person of backward mind and little opportunity. We in America cannot consider ourselves as better than people in less privileged areas unless we are actually making better use of our opportunities. "The absurdity of applying the same standard of moral judgment to savage people that is used with civilized groups will be apparent," Dewey writes. "No individual or group will be judged by whether they come up to or fall short of some fixed result, but by the direction in which they are moving. The bad man is the man who no matter how good he *has* been is beginning to deteriorate, to grow less good. The good man is the man who no matter how morally unworthy he *has* been is moving to become better. Such a conception makes one severe in judging himself and humane in judging others."[56] One is reminded here of Jesus' attitude toward the Pharisees and the publicans, or social outcasts, in his day. The good man was not the Pharisee who prided himself upon his past achievement and regularly took a front pew in the synagogue, but the publican who prayed, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," and wanted to become better.

It is the process of growth—of improvement and progress—rather than the static outcome and result of what we do that is the significant thing in morals. A man does not become good by reaching some specific standard; he becomes good by constantly improving himself—in whatever ways he most needs to improve. It is to this end that he must use his intelligence and direct his conduct. "Not health as an end fixed once and for all, but the needed improvement in health—a continual process—is the end and good to be sought. Not perfection

as a final goal, but the ever enduring process of perfecting, maturing, refining is the aim in living," Dewey writes. "Growth itself is the only moral 'end.' "[57] Thus an empirical account of morals makes it clear that the educative process and the moral process are one and the same. For the moralist, as for the educator, growth is the aim and the end of life. There is no way in which education can escape concern with morals. This, indeed, is its major concern.

An empirical philosophy also makes clearer the relation between goodness and happiness. The moralist has often spoken of happiness with contempt, as if a good man ought not to be concerned about whether he is happy or not. But actually goodness without happiness would be intolerable. The trouble, in Dewey's opinion, is simply that we do not understand the source and nature of happiness. We think of it as something that we can possess; we strive to become happy; we picture happiness as a millennium of ease in relief from struggle, when we feast on milk and honey and listen to angels playing delicate music on golden harps. Such a life "could satisfy only the most delicate of molly-coddles," Dewey writes. "Happiness is found only in success, but success means succeeding, getting forward. It is an active process, not a passive outcome."[58] Hence the man who is good, the man who is growing and getting things done, is also the only man who is really happy.

THE MORAL MEANING OF DEMOCRACY

Dewey is never willing, of course, to define growth in any final fashion. Growth means something different to each person in terms of his own capacities and needs as well as in terms of the particular situation in which he happens to be. It means one thing to the young, another to those who are mature—one thing to the ignorant, another to those who are intelligent. When he is discussing democracy, however, Dewey does give us an excellent description of what growth means to him. Actually he is one of the relatively few great philosophers who have championed democracy with enthusiasm. Democracy is the best form of government, he believes, not because it is the most efficient; dictatorships are too frequently more efficient, as we have learned to our sorrow. In a democracy we make mistakes; we fail to act promptly and decisively when we should; we frequently elect the wrong men to public office and we tolerate both stupidity and graft on the part of our public officials. But in a democracy alone do we preserve the freedom and opportunity for growth which is essential, Dewey believes, to the good life. Democracy means much more, as a matter of fact, than a special form of government. Democracy is a way of life, both social and individual, and the opportunity that the democratic way of life offers to every mature human being to take part in determining the conditions under which he must live is, for Dewey, its most significant feature.* For it is this opportunity and this activity

* See J. Ratner, *Intelligence in the Modern World. John Dewey's Philosophy*, p. 400.

which make possible the growth of all men and women in a democracy as in no other form of government.

The foundation of democracy is faith in human intelligence, faith in the capacity of men to grow, faith in their ability to meet the demands which are made upon them if they have the opportunity to do so, Dewey points out. And here lies its greatest source of strength, in the opinion of our philosopher. Every authoritarian scheme has given to a few gifted individuals the responsibility of directing the lives and destinies of their fellow men; for the great mass of its citizens there is no opportunity for growth and development, and so no chance of enjoying the good life.

Dewey's enthusiasm for democracy is not an uncritical one, however. The very empirical and pragmatic basis upon which his philosophy rests provides him with an effective criterion for judging the success of our American experiment in the democratic way of life.

> Government, business, art, religion, all social institutions, have a meaning, a purpose. That purpose is to set free and to develop the capacities of human individuals without respect to race, sex, class or economic status. And this is all one with saying that the test of their value is the extent to which they educate every individual into the full stature of his possibilities. Democracy has many meanings but if it has a moral meaning, it is found in resolving that the supreme test of all political institutions and industrial arrangements shall be the contribution they make to the all-around growth of every member of society.[59]

Because the moralist has become unsure of himself and does not know what to do about economic and political problems, morals have too often withdrawn from an active concern with social issues and concentrated upon personal character instead. "And while saints are engaged in introspection, burly sinners run the world," Dewey observes.[60] This dangerous separation between morals and politics can be abolished at its roots, however, once we are willing to test the moral value of all social institutions by their contribution to the all-round growth of the men and women whose lives they influence. It is upon this principle that Dewey works out his own provocative social philosophy.

A SCIENTIFIC AND EXPERIMENTAL VIEW OF MORALS

There is, then, no separate body of moral rules, no moral absolutes, no separate subject matter of moral philosophy, and no such thing as an isolated science of ethics, Dewey insists. The business of morals, he feels, is not to speculate about some ultimate standard of right and wrong or to search for any one unique moral motive. Its business is to utilize physiology, anthropology, and psychology in discovering all that can be known about man, and then to make full use of education, of economics, and of political science in improving the common lot of men and women. Morals become desirable working hypotheses by which the causes

of evil in human life may be better understood and diminished, and the sources of good identified and expanded—working hypotheses which may be tested in experience and revised to meet new conditions. Moral philosophy thus returns to its first love: "the love of wisdom that is nurse, as nature is mother, of good." But it returns to this Socratic position equipped with scientific methods of inquiry and with scientific knowledge of the arrangements by which industry, law, and education may further the participation of all men and women up to their full capacity in the attained goods of human life.

This idea of an experimental basis and career for morals has proved quite disturbing to many of his more conservative colleagues, Dewey admits. "Some shiver in the fear that morals will be plunged into anarchy and confusion. Others are apprehensive lest the progress of scientific method will destroy the freedom of man by its insistence upon the iron necessity of natural law," he writes. Neither fear seems to him justified. The notion that there are unchangeable laws which govern human thought and conduct is really without foundation, Dewey insists. "Nature is not an unchangeable order, unwinding itself majestically from the reel of law under the control of deified forces. It is an indefinite congeries of changes. Laws are not governmental regulations which limit change, but are convenient formulations of selected portions of change followed through a longer or shorter period of time, and then registered in statistical forms that are amenable to mathematical manipulation." The idea that this shorthand device used by science to describe the changes in nature can destroy human freedom and leave human thought subject to the fixity of law is interesting only as a cultural survival, in Dewey's opinion. It is not important for moral theory. "Knowledge of nature does not mean subjection to predestination, but insight into courses of change," he points out. Such knowledge gives man greater freedom, not less; it gives him "increase of power to direct natural change, and increased responsibility for its equitable direction toward fuller good."[61]

As a matter of fact, many sincere but timid souls of an earlier generation were afraid that scientific knowledge itself would be destroyed when the eighteenth-century concept of a universe governed by unchangeable, rational law was given up. "The rival conception of a wide open universe, a universe without bounds in time or space, without final limits of origin or destiny, a universe with the lid off," seemed a menace to such people, Dewey observes. "We now face in moral science a similar crisis and a like opportunity as well as share in a dreadful suspense." It is worth noting, therefore, that the abolition of fixed and final laws controlling the operation of the natural universe did not render rational conviction less important in science nor less attainable. It produced, instead, a persistent and detailed inquiry in all fields of scientific knowledge and led to the discovery of many unsuspected forces and the revelation of undreamed of uses for our scientific knowledge. In like fashion we may anticipate that the abolition of *the* final goal and *the* single motive in morals will quicken inquiry into the

many specific goods of experience, Dewey insists, fix our attention upon the conditions of their realization, and thus enrich human life beyond anything we now imagine.

IS IT ENOUGH TO BE PRACTICAL?

The impact of Dewey's philosophy, both in America and throughout the world, has already been noted. His books on education have been widely read and have been translated into a dozen or more foreign languages—even into such tongues as Turkish, Arabic, Japanese, Polish, and Bohemian. School systems in all these areas have at one time or another undergone to some extent a reform of traditional practices in line with Dewey's suggestions, and in America the progressive-education movement has become one of the most powerful forces in secondary education. Rarely, if ever, has one man during his own lifetime seen his efforts crowned with such success.

Although not so obviously influential in shaping contemporary thinking, Dewey's work in logic and in ethics has also had large influence. The naturalistic approach to life, which was given a new impetus by Darwin's theory of evolution and by the philosophy of Nietzsche and of William James among others, has found in Dewey its ablest spokesman, and a host of disciples have carried forward the reconstruction he began in both logic and ethics. In two other important books, *Art As Experience* and *A Common Faith*, Dewey has dealt with the problems of aesthetics and religion in the same empirical and humanistic spirit that characterizes his other work. No informed thinker today can fail to come to grips with this position. In its flexibility and its experimental attitude, in its emphasis upon an intelligent and tentative approach to every problem, in its insistence that ideas are only significant as they influence life and conduct, Dewey's philosophy has given expression to a fundamental aspect of the American spirit. America's "romance with practicality," as a distinguished historian has recently reminded us, is not an isolated feature in our tradition but the expression of a very complex and enduring aspect of Western civilization itself.[62]

The most serious limitation in Dewey's philosophy seems, however, to grow directly from its sources of greatest appeal. Dewey is a reformer who has called our attention vigorously to neglected truths in philosophy and, like James, he has been carried by his enthusiasm to an extreme position. One cannot help feeling that his emphasis upon the practical has been taken too far. As a recent critic points out, what Dewey has done, in large part at least, has been to bolster up and confirm tendencies which were already strong and well-established in American life, but he has not recognized nearly so clearly the limitations in these tendencies which need correcting.*

Man's eagerness for security has led to a quest for certainty and a desire for

* See Lewis Mumford, "The Pragmatic Acquiescence," in *The Golden Day*.

universal principles and absolute truths. The results of this have seemed to Dewey most unfortunate, and he has insisted instead upon a search for answers to specific problems as the only way to make progress in social life or in individual achievement. But there seem to be some enduring principles to which both Dewey and his disciples are committed. A loyalty to the social good, for example, would seem universally desirable. And would Dewey not agree that our approach to life should always and everywhere be concrete, specific, "practical" in the best sense, and that every concrete problem should without exception be met with intelligence and if possible experimentally? If one goes this far in the recognition of principles which are universal, is it not quite possible that we may find other enduring values and ideals to which men perhaps ought always to give their loyalty?

After all, does Dewey not remain a naturalist and a humanist only by insisting that the spiritual ideals and values by which human life at its best are inspired must be included among our natural human capacities? And does he not remain an empiricist only by recognizing that our devotion to ideals is an essential aspect of human experience? In his emphasis upon the importance of intelligence in the reconstruction of society and of morals—as desirable and necessary as it is—has he not failed to recognize the inevitable limitations from which intelligence suffers when it confronts the will to power at work both in the life of the individual and in our larger economic and political relationships. Without some faith that his moral and spiritual ideals have an enduring place in the nature of things and are not mere instruments for a better adjustment of the organism to its environment, will man ever be able to devote himself patiently and courageously to the realization of the best that he knows and the best of which he is capable?

Is that which proves to be good and true in human experience only so indeed because of this fact? Or must we not recognize an abiding source of goodness and truth independent of our own desires and efforts? Truth, beauty, and goodness seem to have a significance in human experience which the naturalist and the empiricist have never been quite able to comprehend or interpret adequately. Dewey has been eager to make *inquiry* the essential thing in logical thought as well as in moral conduct. He has been concerned primarily with the concrete and practical results of such inquiry, its observable outcome in behavior, and, as a result, he has, in the opinion of many of his critics, neglected other important contributions of philosophy to the good life. With Charles S. Peirce, Dewey has been willing to agree that "truth is the opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate." Is there not a sort of "cosmic impiety," to use an expressive phrase of Bertrand Russell's, in such an interpretation of truth or goodness? Do we not have to recognize larger forces at work in the universe upon which human life and destiny ultimately depend and with which man must learn to cooperate? It is at this point that the philosophy of Dewey seems in need of modification and reinforcement before it can achieve the results which he himself recognizes as desirable.

IV

The Compulsion of the Ideal

Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and the more steadily we reflect upon them: *the starry heavens above and the moral law within.*

IMMANUEL KANT

The religious interpretation of the world is essentially an insistence that the ideal is real and that the real can be understood only in the light of the ideal.

REINHOLD NIEBUHR

11 · RATIONAL IDEALISM

Plato

During our journey through the works of the great philosophers, we have sought to discover a sound and satisfying philosophy of living. Many points of view have been discussed; many philosophies by which men live have been examined. All have made their appeal to us; all have valuable insights to contribute; but none has proved to be completely satisfying. In each system, even as its ablest exponents have presented and defended it, there have been difficulties, inadequacies, shortcomings. The enjoyment of living is essential to a satisfying philosophy, but the pursuit of pleasure advocated by the hedonists somehow fails to provide the enjoyment it promises. Reason is surely necessary as our guide to successful living; but the rationalists tend to strip life of all satisfactions except those of the understanding, and in understanding alone man does not find the full meaning of life. Without the urge of progress, existence would become dead and lifeless; the invigorating quality and zest of life would disappear. But the effort to find an enduring meaning and purpose for living in the mere fact of continued progress, with no certainty of where one is going or why, has proved as inadequate by itself as has the pursuit of pleasure or the life of reason.

At its best, human life has always felt the compulsion of an ideal which somehow lifted man above the ordinary and commonplace and gave to his effort an enhanced significance in the nature of things. Before completing our quest for the good life, we must undertake some consideration, therefore, of philosophers who have been aware of this fact. Among the exponents of idealism we may perhaps find someone who provides a successful synthesis of the points of view that have appealed to us thus far in our study of philosophy.

ON IDEALISM AND REALISM

In recent years it has been common for the more sophisticated and cynical—those who with pride call themselves realists—to refer with amusement to anything that goes under the banner of idealism. Who, they ask, can be an idealist, but the most naïve and unlearned beginner in philosophy? Isn't the barest acquaintance with the hard facts of life in business and politics enough to disillusion youth of its brave ideals? Isn't a year in college usually enough to make of an idealistic freshman a hardened and sophisticated sophomore? As Dorothy Parker has written,

> When I was young and bold and strong,
> Oh, right was right, and wrong was wrong!
> My plume on high, my flag unfurled,
> I rode away to right the world.
> "Come out, you dogs, and fight!" said I,
> And wept there was but once to die.
>
> Now I am old; and good and bad
> Are woven in a crazy plaid.
> I sit and say, "The world is so;
> And he is wise who lets it go.
> A battle lost, a battle won—
> The difference is small, my son."[1]

Many and varied, of course, are the philosophies that have paraded under the banner of idealism. Best known is the idealism of the *metaphysician*, who says that reality itself is basically such stuff as ideas are made of, that the rational is the real, and the real is rational. According to the proponents of metaphysical idealism, it is to the mind of man rather than to the world of nature that we must turn for an understanding of what our universe at heart is really like. Unfortunately, the defense of idealism as a metaphysical theory easily becomes abstract and theoretical—a scholarly and necessary debate among professional philosophers but too often a fruitless one for the ordinary reader.

Equally important, but quite different in spirit and emphasis, is the *ethical* idealism that finds direct expression in the philosophy by which we live. It is only in the highest ideals of the human spirit, in man's rational, moral, and religious aspirations, the ethical idealists maintain, that a man can find the full meaning of life and so enjoy enduring happiness. Only as he guides his life by such ideals can he achieve that complete self-realization without which he must live, in large part at least, as an animal rather than as a man. In ethical idealism one actually finds no fanciful flight from the hard facts of life and reality, its defenders claim. Rather one finds an awareness of those elements in reality which alone can save us from cold and barren weariness, from the disillusion and pessimism to which those who pride themselves upon being realists are so frequently driven.

It may well be, indeed, that the *realist*, so-called, does not comprehend the enduring and sustaining realities of life. Too often he sees in experience only the unpleasant, the grim, and the sordid. He grasps only one side of life—its worst side—as any thoughtful observer recognizes at once as he reads the pages of such popular "realistic" interpretations of life as John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* or Richard Wright's *Native Son*. The person who goes to the opposite extreme and sees in human experience only the bright, the pleasant, and the honorable is equally unrealistic. But if he sees, as do the philosophers whom we shall discuss, alongside or beneath the ruthless, the base, and the callous, those achievements of the human spirit which reveal man's high ideals and courageous hopes, which are capable usually of remaking the hard and sordid into something far better, he perhaps can claim to have a more adequate and acceptable view of life as it *really* is. Let us turn, then, to philosophies which recognize the compulsion of the ideal in human life and which undertake to interpret it in this fashion.

PLATO AND THE *Republic*

No single figure in the history of philosophy is so definitely identified with the position of idealism as Plato, and in no single book is there so classic a statement of a man's philosophy as in Plato's *Republic*. If we have put off our study of Plato for so long in this quest of life's meaning, it has been not because of a lack of appreciation of his importance but rather because in Plato's *Republic* we find a remarkable grasp and synthesis of those elements in philosophy which one after another we have been examining in the thought of the hedonist, the rationalist, and the empiricist. No work in philosophy has exerted a greater influence upon the minds of men than the *Republic* of Plato. In its breadth and depth of insight, it is timeless; and hence, perforce, it is ever timely. The *Republic* has stood through the ages as the greatest masterpiece in the literature of philosophy, with no serious rival to date. Until one reads and masters the *Republic*, one has not really begun the study of philosophy. In our concern for what is immediate and practical, we too easily overlook the lasting pattern that underlies the passing scene. We forget that there may be enduring principles to which any sound design for living must conform. These principles the *Republic* undertakes to present in appealing as well as convincing fashion.

The *Republic* is the work of Plato's mature years. It breathes the spirit of Socrates, but the spirit of Socrates remade by the genius of Plato. No influence upon the thought of Plato was so pervasive and formative as that of Socrates; nor has any scholar been able to say with authority just where Socrates stops speaking and Plato begins, for Socrates is the central figure and spokesman in all but the latest of Plato's dialogues. By the time he wrote the *Republic*, how-

ever, Plato was speaking as a philosopher in his own right, not simply as the most distinguished pupil of a great master. And into his mature view of life which we find here had gone the very best that the brilliant Athenian civilization of the fifth century B.C. had to offer.

PLATO'S YOUTH

In 427 B.C., the year in which Plato was born, Pericles, the greatest leader that Athenian democracy produced, had been dead but two years and the dreary Peloponnesian war had just begun. Athens itself at this time was little more than an armed camp Into it each summer were crowded the farmers from the surrounding plains of Attica, watching helplessly while their crops were burned by the invading armies of Sparta. Plato grew to manhood amid the dangers, the turmoil, and the hatreds bred by war. War is never healthy for democracies, and during these years the Athenian democracy began to crack under the strain. Money ran short, the standard of living fell, the democratic leaders became more and more militaristic. In an endeavor to recoup the losses of war, Athens organized an expedition to conquer Sicily, the richest island of the Mediterranean. The failure of this daring enterprise—due in part to the misconduct of Alcibiades, a favorite pupil of Socrates—led to the downfall of Athens. In 404 B.C. she capitulated. Plato was just twenty-four when this took place.

As is so frequently the case, defeat in war brought revolution. An aristocratic regime in Athens overthrew the democratic government and, with the aid of Sparta, established itself in power. Plato was a member of one of the most distinguished families in the city. His father was descended from Codrus, reputedly the last king of Athens; his mother belonged to the family of Solon, the great Athenian law giver. In aristocratic circles, during Plato's youth, democracy was only another name for mediocrity and corruption, and Plato grew up in an atmosphere of intrigue as his family and friends laid their plans to wrest control of the government from the uneducated proletariat, whom they considered both incompetent and unworthy.*

Despite the political turmoil, Plato was raised in comfort, perhaps in wealth. He read Homer with the eagerness and enthusiasm of the abler Greek youth of his day, and he early displayed the mind and the interests of a poet. There were verses from these early days of which the philosopher in later years was not very proud, but there is also the spirit of the artist and the poet in Plato's philosophical dialogues which has given them an appeal far greater than that of many more scientific but less inspired works. Plato seems to have been not only handsome and intelligent but vigorous and athletic as well. According to one tradition, the name Plato was given him by a gymnasium instructor who noted his broad shoulders He is reputed also to have won prizes at the Isthmian games in athletics and wrestling, and much of his early life must have been spent in military service

* See R. H. S. Crossman, *Plato Today*, pp. 91, 92.

during the trying years of the Peloponnesian war. His association with Socrates, however, proved the turning point in Plato's life. Nothing so fascinated him as to behold this master of dialectic at work in the Athenian marketplace, puncturing intellectual pretense and questioning outworn dogmas. Under such stimulus Plato gave himself unreservedly to philosophy—to the love of wisdom and the search for its full meaning as a guide to life and truth. For eight years he was in almost daily association with the intrepid and invigorating spirit of Socrates, and he could not help absorbing the central concerns that dominated the life of the master.

There is good reason to believe that until Socrates was put to death Plato's chief interests and ambitions may have been political. Many years later he describes for us his feelings during those troubled days:

> My experience as a young man was by no means unusual. I thought that as soon as I became my own master I would immediately enter public life. A sudden change, however, in the political situation diverted me from my plans. The democratic regime of the time was generally detested and a revolution took place. It was headed by a supreme committee of thirty. Some of the members of this supreme committee were relations or acquaintances of mine and invited me to join them, imagining that I should find the new regime to my taste. . . . I thought the new regime would substitute the reign of justice for the reign of injustice, so I gave my closest attention to see what it would do. And I saw these gentlemen within a very short time make the democracy they had destroyed seem like a golden age.
>
> When I saw this, I was deeply disgusted and disassociated myself entirely from this deplorable government. Shortly afterwards, the thirty were turned out and their whole regime destroyed. Once again I was really, though less urgently, filled with a desire to take an active part in politics. Athens was still very unsettled and revolting incidents were not uncommon, but on the whole the restored democracy exercised considerable moderation. And yet, as ill-luck would have it, certain influential persons brought an action against Socrates. The charge was an outrageous one, of which Socrates was completely innocent,

but nevertheless he was condemned to death and executed.[2]

The tragic death of Socrates at the hands of his peers in Athens had an effect upon Plato as powerful as did their years of association together. It made him thoroughly skeptical of democracy as he knew it. Any form of government that could condemn and destroy its ablest and choicest spirit was obviously incompetent and undesirable, Plato felt. His own aristocratic lineage and breeding had certainly not predisposed him toward the democratic ideal; what sympathy he might have had was finally destroyed on the day that Socrates was forced to drink the hemlock. Central among his interests in the *Republic* is Plato's desire to fashion a society in which the rule of the wisest and best might replace the mob rule, which seemed to him forever to condemn democracy to mediocrity.

MATURE ACHIEVEMENT

After the execution of Socrates, in 399 B.C., there was every reason for a man with Plato's aristocratic connections to be under suspicion. An uncle of his had been involved in the unsuccessful revolution of the wealthy and privileged that provided the occasion for Socrates' trial. Plato himself had been among those active in the endeavor to save Socrates from the democratic leaders who sought his death, and he was perhaps the most influential exponent of the Socratic doctrines. Never could a man find a time more propitious for travel. Plato bade Athens farewell and set out to see the world.

For twelve years he traveled, visiting many lands, conversing unhurriedly with the wisest teachers, and observing the beliefs and practices of other civilizations. Unfortunately there is no reliable account of his activities during the years that immediately followed Socrates' death. He is known to have visited Italy, Sicily, and Egypt, and to have returned at least once to Athens. He spent some time in Megara with Euclid, the great mathematician and the father of geometry. He was much impressed, also, by the Pythagorean philosophers, with whom he had some contact, especially with their idea that in the rational order of mathematics one caught something of the harmony and the order of the universe. Perhaps his most fateful journey was one he made to Syracuse in 388 B.C. Here he became the friend and teacher of Dion, a brother-in-law of Dionysius, the dictator of the city, and laid the foundation for an experiment in statecraft that almost ended as tragically as did that of Socrates in Athens.

Dionysius was a typical tyrant of the day, able, ruthless, remarkably successful. Recognizing power as the only force in politics, he carelessly brushed aside the traditional liberties and moral ideals of the Greek world. Plato was deeply shocked by the ruthless tyranny and the luxurious court life that he found in Syracuse, and he did not hesitate to say so. Incensed by these comments, the dictator had a bitter quarrel with the philosopher. According to the accepted tradition, Dionysius finally had Plato thrown into chains and turned over to the Spartan ambassador at Syracuse, who was happy to do the dictator a favor by getting rid of the Athenian philosopher. Fortunately, however, Plato was ransomed by one of his friends and set free again before serious harm befell him.

In any event, Plato, at the age of forty, returned to Athens to establish his own school of philosophy. Taking its name, the Academy, from the suburb northwest of Athens in which it was located, this school became the center of the intellectual world of that day. Not only from Greece, but from Macedonia, Sicily, and Asia Minor, orators, statesmen, and artists, as well as mathematicians and philosophers, came in increasing numbers to sit at the feet of Plato.

Too little is known about the system of education developed here to produce great statesmen, scientists, and scholars. In the *Republic*, Plato outlines his ideal program of education, but it is a lifelong process, not a university curriculum

While in Italy, however, Plato had been interested in the life and discipline of the Pythagorean groups he visited, and for his own Academy he conceived the idea of something like an English college, where his pupils should come not merely for instruction but to live together under a common rule. The school was immediately a popular and successful venture, and Plato proceeded to incorporate it, following the fashion of the day, as a religious association dedicated to the Muses who were the patron deities of philosophy. A chapel was built in the garden; sacrifices and religious processions marked the appropriate occasions and became an accepted part of life here as elsewhere in Greece.

The method of instruction adopted at the Academy naturally followed the precedent set by Socrates. Friendly association between teacher and disciples, and informal talk punctured by questions and answers, constituted the normal order of life. Aristotle, the greatest of those drawn to the Academy as pupils of Plato, mentions that there were also occasional formal lectures to supplement the informal discourse of the master with his friends. One of these, a lecture on "The Good," composed in Plato's old age, was particularly well known and, it is said, much misunderstood. Mathematics and science were among the subjects stressed. According to tradition, a sign over the Academy gate read: "Let no one ignorant of geometry enter here," and among the early members of the group were numbered almost all the ablest mathematicians of the day. Plato expected hard work of his pupils as an essential ingredient in their education. "It was one of Plato's firmest convictions," writes an able contemporary disciple, "that nothing really worth knowing can be learned by merely listening to 'instruction'; the only true method of 'learning' science is that of being actually engaged, in company with a more advanced mind, in the discovery of scientific truth."[3]

Within the Academy itself, teacher and pupils enjoyed a thoroughly democratic fellowship together and ate at a common table. Plato was both friend and teacher of his associates. But it is recorded that he did not frequent the Athenian marketplace and the public meetings of the city, as Socrates had. Although Plato assumed his full responsibilities as a distinguished citizen of Athens during these troubled years, there seems to have been an aristocratic dignity in his bearing toward others as well as an aristocratic flavor in his philosophy.

Plato believed deeply, however, in the political philosophy which he was developing, and he wanted to see it at work in practice. Twice at least he left the quiet groves of the Academy to enter the turbulent affairs of political life. When Dionysius I, dictator of Syracuse, died, his son became ruler of that thriving commercial center of the Mediterranean world, the New York of its day. Plato's old friend Dion, the uncle of the young dictator, was now in an influential position, and he urged Plato to come to Syracuse as political expert and advisor to the young ruler. "Now, if ever," Dion wrote, "is there a good chance that your own ideal can be realized, and true philosophy and power over a great dominion be united in the same person." Despite Plato's personal distaste for this venture—

he was now almost sixty years old and also quite successful in his work at the Academy—he did not feel that he could reject this opportunity. "And so," he says, "I followed reason and justice as far as a man may, and went."[4]

The situation at Syracuse did not turn out to be what Plato had expected. His friend Dion was an able student of philosophy and also a man of action and practical affairs, eager to inaugurate the kind of reforms to which Plato himself was committed. But a powerful party was arrayed against him at court, a group of conservatives intent upon maintaining the old order, and these men soon gained the support of the young ruler. Four months after Plato's arrival, Dion was expelled from Sicily as a dangerous agitator; the young dictator himself refused to undertake the serious study of philosophy that Plato expected, and a new war was threatening. In these circumstances Plato felt it wise to return to Athens and resume his activities as head of the Academy. He continued to keep in touch with affairs at Syracuse, however, and his personal relations with the young Dionysius were still quite friendly. A letter of Plato's to the youthful ruler, if it is authentic, throws a pleasant light upon his experiences at Syracuse:

> Now about the commission you asked me to do for you, I have had the Apollo made and Leptines is bringing it to you. It was done by a very good sculptor, a young man called Leochares. There was another piece of work at his place which I thought very clever. I bought it because I should like to give it to your wife. She looked after me when I was well and when I was ill in a way which you and I may be proud of. So give it to her if you don't mind. I am sending also twelve jars of sweet wine and two of honey for the children. . . . Goodbye. Go on with philosophy, and encourage the younger men to do so, too.*

Affairs in Syracuse looked so promising, indeed, that, when Dionysius himself wrote Plato a long letter urging him to come back once more, the philosopher agreed to do so. But this visit was no more successful than the earlier one. Soon the reactionary group persuaded the king not only to confiscate and sell all the property of his uncle, Dion, but even to confine Plato to his house under constant guard. The old philosopher was happy to be able to regain his freedom through the efforts of friends and returned to Athens once more, where he spent the remaining years of life. Finally, in 347 B.C., at the age of eighty, he died quietly one night after attending the wedding of one of his disciples—or so tradition has it.

THE DIALOGUES OF PLATO

The most influential product of Plato's years at the Academy were his philosophical dialogues. These seem to have been written, not primarily for the members of the Academy itself but rather for the enlightened public of that day. Their

* Letter XIII. (The authenticity of this appealing note has been questioned by recent scholarship.)

effectiveness and influence even in Plato's day is well attested. The *Gorgias*, so Aristotle tells us, was read by a Corinthian farmer, who was so deeply moved by it that he sold his property and came to Athens to study philosophy at the Academy.

In the dialogues we see the artist as well as the philosopher in Plato at work. Their dramatic form makes them at once easier and more difficult to read. It is, for example, impossible for the average reader today to appreciate the passing references to issues current in Plato's day which would undoubtedly add interest for his readers at that time. Sometimes, also, Plato seems to take an unnecessarily long time to reach conclusions which become clear as soon as they are stated. And sometimes the dialogue device is too obviously only a foil for Plato's ideas as these are stated by Socrates. But with all these limitations, there is, especially about the early dialogues, a liveliness and vitality which make them far more effective in catching the spirit of philosophy for the average reader than any other of the great classics in this field.

As far as scholars can tell, all or almost all that Plato wrote has been preserved. The earliest of his works are the so-called Socratic dialogues, the *Euthyphro*, the *Charmides*, the *Lysis*, the *Laches*—dialogues in which Socrates carries on an eager but inconclusive discussion of the meaning of virtue and the good life. Just when all the conventional definitions of courage, of friendship, of piety, of temperance have been finally punctured by the Socratic dialectic, and one expects an authoritative word from Socrates himself on the matter, these early dialogues end. To this early group also belong Plato's two best-known dialogues on the trial and the death of Socrates, the *Apology* and the *Crito*. There is good reason to believe that in these early dialogues Plato is primarily a dramatist and a disciple of Socrates, portraying effectively the spirit and teaching of the master.*

Then there is a transitional group of dialogues, in which the spirit of Socrates is still to be seen but in which Plato is evidently going beyond the limits of the Socratic philosophy of life and beginning to indicate his own answers to the problems which he inherited from his revered teacher. In this group belong the dialogues which bear the names of the two ablest Sophists, the *Gorgias* and the *Protagoras*, and two other well-known works of Plato, his argument for the immortality of the soul in *Phaedo*, and the famous portrayal of Platonic love in the *Symposium*. The *Republic* follows this transitional group. A mature statement of Plato's own philosophy, it covers all the fields of philosophical inquiry: psychology, education, ethics, politics, metaphysics, theology, theory of art; and upon them all Plato sheds the light of his genius. Scholars usually date the *Republic* between 385 and 375 B.C.

In a large and important group of later dialogues, Plato undertakes a more careful and systematic statement of his thought. Here the dramatic quality of the

* A balanced consideration of this whole question is found in A. K. Rogers, *The Socratic Problem.*

early works is sacrificed to the scientific precision of the scholar as Plato deals with the more difficult issues of ethics, epistemology, political philosophy, philosophy of religion, and metaphysics. Finally there is the *Laws*, that rather extensive work of Plato's declining years, in which the more practical and conservative spirit of old age has modified the uncompromising rational idealism of the *Republic*.

Throughout these dialogues, especially the earlier ones, there is something of the vision of the prophet combined with the scientific insight of the scholar and the artistic intuition of the poet. We shall not be surprised to find that philosophy since Plato has not surpassed the remarkable achievement of this great Athenian who lived more than two thousand years ago. He set out to demonstrate by inescapable logic that truth is eternal; he has almost succeeded in demonstrating it as a fact of history. Let us examine the *Republic*, not merely as a classic to be admired but rather as a possible guide to the good life in our own day.

ON THE NATURE OF MORALITY

A major concern of the *Republic*, as its title clearly indicates, is the building of the good society. But Plato's social philosophy is neither narrow nor compartmentalized; for the Greek mind of his day, the good society and the good life are almost synonymous terms, and moral issues must always be examined in their larger social context. In the *Republic* we find Plato facing squarely the issues that have risen to perplex us thus far in our study of moral philosophy. Whether it be the moral relativism of the Sophists, the hedonists' concern with the pursuit of pleasure, the emphasis of Socrates and later of Spinoza upon the essential role of intelligence in morals, or the functional approach of men such as James and Dewey—all are to be found in the pages of the *Republic*. No matter how venerable a tradition or custom, how well established a precedent, Plato discusses each question without fear or hesitation and seeks to find the answer that reason itself would give.

The first book of the *Republic* is a little dialogue of its own, with all the characteristics of the early Socratic dialogues. It may well have been among Plato's first literary efforts, later used as an introduction to the main body of his thought in the *Republic*. The scene is laid at the Peiraeus, in the house of Cephalus, a wise, wealthy, and friendly old merchant; besides Socrates, we find Plato's two brothers, Glaucon and Adeimantus, and the Sophist Thrasymachus present. As the dialogue opens, Socrates is discussing with his friends the nature of morality* and

* The customary translation of the term used here by Plato is "justice," but justice has come to have primarily a social connotation which is too narrow to express Plato's meaning. Nor is righteousness a desirable term, although it is preferable in some ways to justice. What Plato has in mind, is "the whole sphere of moral action, both external and internal," writes B. A. G. Fuller. (*History of Greek Philosophy*, Vol. II, p. 214.)

examining with his usual dialectical skill current views on the subject. An initial definition of morality, one sanctioned by custom and common sense, is proposed by Cephalus: Morality is simply paying one's debts and telling the truth; this everyone ought to know and ought to do. Thus Cephalus expresses the common-sense point of view. When such a definition is challenged, he departs forthwith to prepare sacrifices for the festival, leaving the discussion in the hands of Socrates and his companions.

But can we count on common sense in morals? This is the initial question raised by Plato. Is it enough to know that we ought to tell the truth and pay our debts, to be satisfied with conscience as our guide in morals? Or must we know also when to tell the truth and when not to? Here is a friend who is quite ill and could be hurt by truth. He is in no condition mentally or physically to stand the shock of disaster. "A friend ought always to do good to a friend," Socrates points out; yet telling him the truth in this case may well do him harm.[5] Our debts should be paid, of course; but what do we really owe to those who have befriended us, to our parents, to society? Can we ever repay debts such as these? We must know more about what is right and what is wrong than the dictates of conscience and common sense reveal to us, Plato insists. Common sense is apt to be confused, or to have no word of direction for us just when we need it most. The consciences of equally good men disagree fundamentally upon the most important decisions in life. We must be able, Plato maintains, to distinguish between what really *is* right and what merely *seems* to be right. This is the first requirement in the moral life, and this obviously requires knowledge. Without understanding, there can be no enduring virtue. We must look, therefore, beyond common sense and conscience for our definition of morality.

DOES MIGHT MAKE RIGHT?

Plato next examines the interpretation of morals that we have come to associate with the philosophy of Nietzsche. In the *Republic* this position is adopted by the Sophist Thrasymachus. What we call right is nothing but the interests of the strong, of those in positions of power and authority, Thrasymachus maintains.[6] Anyone who doubts that might makes right has only to look about him and observe the situation that actually exists, he argues. Whether in a democracy, an aristocracy, or a dictatorship, it is the interests of the strong in each case that prevail and are accepted as right. Thus, as we have seen, in Great Britain a landed and titled gentry was in power for generations, and the laws of Britain established as right the interests and privileges of this group. In America, a wealthy middle class established itself in power and our democratic customs and institutions have given sanction to the rights of private property and free enterprise. In Russia, a communist proletariat has more recently by revolution and violence achieved for its members the same moral and legal rights.

Now what, forsooth, Thrasymachus argues, is *right* in each case but the in-

terest of the most powerful, and what makes it right but the *might* of those who have established themselves in power? Let us have no more of this naïve idealism, which suggests that some things are always right and others always wrong, when only a glance around us is enough to disprove so foolish a proposition. Surely Nietzsche is correct in insisting that beyond good and evil lies the will to power; by that, and that alone, all morality is conditioned, whether it be the morality of the masses or the morality of the masters.

Such is the contention of Thrasymachus; but Socrates, after some argument, manages to confound the blustering Sophist with words out of his own mouth. For Thrasymachus is forced to admit, under skillful questioning, that the use of power for the benefit of those who possess it necessarily requires knowledge and understanding. Thus a dictator frequently forces upon his subjects laws that are really injurious to his own interests. In our own day, for example, Mussolini forced the Italians to join the Germans in a war that they did not want. As a result, Italy came under German domination, dissension was produced among his own followers, and Mussolini himself was finally overthrown. Here obviously not the interests of the strong man but his downfall was promoted by his own use of power. Much the same fate befell Hitler in Germany. How, then, can we say that might necessarily makes right? Actually, knowledge is essential, even to those who have power, before they can further their own interests And, Plato goes on to point out, with such knowledge we may well find that the interests of the rulers and the interests of those who are ruled do not conflict but are identical.[7] What is right for one may be right for all, and vice versa. But what is right can be known only by the man with wisdom. No matter how great his power, an ignorant man cannot escape doing what is wrong.

IS MORALITY ONLY SOCIAL CONVENTION OR ENLIGHTENED SELF-INTEREST?

No sooner, however, has the position of Thrasymachus been rejected as untenable than another current interpretation of morality has to be faced. Is it not true, asks one of Socrates' friends, that "men practice the rules of right not because they choose but because they cannot help themselves"? When we look about us, do we not observe that it is the pressure of social convention that forces us to do what is accepted as right and wrong, not the insights or convictions of reason?

Suppose, for example, that we had complete freedom from all the penalties which social convention imposes upon those who defy its dictates, what, then, would our conduct be like? Plato places this issue squarely before his readers in the fable of the ring of Gyges. Gyges, a shepherd in the service of the king of Lydia, was caught in a great storm while tending his flock. An earthquake opened a cavern before him and, going in, he found a dead body with nothing on it but a gold ring. He placed the ring upon his own finger, returned to his flock,

and later rejoined the other shepherds of the king. To his surprise, he found that whenever the stone of the ring was turned inside his hand, he became completely invisible. Thereupon he contrived to be chosen one of the messengers sent to the royal court, where he seduced the queen and with her aid overthrew the king and took the kingdom for himself.[8]

Now, says Plato, can you really imagine anyone possessing a ring with such marvelous power and still always doing what is right? What would you do, for example, if such a ring were on your own finger? Let us look about us a moment before replying with complete certainty. On a college campus or in a small town, a person behaves himself fairly well, as a rule. Everybody knows him in such a situation, and he cannot get by with anything contrary to the prevailing social conventions without having it immediately known and talked about. The pressure of public opinion and convention keeps moral standards fairly high. But let this same individual leave the college campus or his home community for a visit to New York, Chicago, or Paris. When in New York, where no one knows or cares what he does, does he follow those same strict moral principles that he followed at home or at college? Or does this occasion seem like the time for a little—just a little—"moral holiday"? If there is still a question in your mind, look at what goes on at the typical convention of almost any political organization. It is easy enough to see what happens to morals when the restraints of accepted social convention are removed. Does it not begin to appear, Plato asks, that morality is really a matter of keeping up appearances, and when appearances do not matter, then morals do not seem to matter much either?

Nor is this the only problem we must face. When we examine our motives more carefully, Plato suggests, do we not find that one of the strongest incentives to do what we call right is the reward we can get by doing so? We say that "honesty is the best policy," and what does this mean? Surely that it *pays* to be honest. We get ahead faster, we make more money, if we are honest than if we are dishonest. But suppose the conditions were reversed; then dishonesty would become the best policy and an enlightened self-interest would cause us to discard the moral ideals that we now accept.

Why do parents insist upon such high moral standards for their children? Is it not because this is the surest way for them to get along well in life? One needs the reputation of having a good character for high office, for business success, for favorable matrimonial opportunity. We seem to adopt our moral ideals for the rewards they bring us, Plato points out, not because of what they are in themselves.[9] Look even at the moral precepts of religion and what do you find? Men are urged to high moral endeavor in order to get to heaven; they are warned of the tortures of hell that await the sinner and the immoral. The broad path of easy living is assumed to be the pleasanter and the more desirable, the straight and narrow path of moral idealism a much less appealing one. The

plea of religion is actually made to an enlightened self-interest. Who would not choose to give up the pleasures of a few years on earth for the eternity of bliss that rewards the righteous man? It is not what is right in itself that appeals to us, it seems, but the rewards that right conduct brings. "No one praises morality except with a view to the glories, honors, and benefits that flow from it," one of Socrates' friends remarks.

"Who would we rather be," Plato asks, in effect, "a man who by successful manipulation of dishonest financial schemes had come to be a millionaire, the mayor of his city, the pillar of the church, the ornament of the best society, the Senator from his state or the ambassador of his country at a European court; or a man who in consequence of his integrity had won the enmity of evil men in power, and been sent in disgrace to a state prison, a man whom no one would speak to; whom his best friends had deserted, whose own children were being brought up to reproach him?"[10] Until we can answer honestly that we would rather be the second of these two men, we have not denied the fact that our morality is really an enlightened self-interest. And, in facing this choice, we must not introduce any consideration of future rewards and punishments, Plato insists. We must suppose that death ends all and that there is no God to reward the good man or punish the evil one. Otherwise we are but evading the issue and deceiving ourselves.

IS VIRTUE ITS OWN REWARD?

This issue, then, is Plato's major concern in the early pages of the *Republic.* Is right conduct right for its own sake? Are our moral ideals enduring and universal principles of rational conduct, or are they simply the dictates of enlightened self-interest, the pressures of social convention, the interests of the powerful? One can hardly deny that in this discussion Plato has faced the issue squarely. He has marshaled all the evidence against his own position, and presented it in uncompromising fashion. He has not stacked the cards in his own favor, nor set up a straw man to be knocked down at will, as most of us do when presenting arguments with which we disagree. Virtue must be stripped of all external rewards—indeed, it must even be dressed in the usual garments of vice and immorality—and still be shown to be preferable to vice, Plato insists. Only then can we be sure that virtue is its own reward, that right is right for its own sake.

How, then, does Plato meet the issue that he has so pointedly raised concerning the nature of morality? In what at first seems a surprising and disconcerting move, he shifts the discussion sharply from the question of personal morals to a consideration of social philosophy, and justifies this by saying that the state is but the individual writ large. Is it intelligent, he asks, for a man to strain his eyes to read very fine print when the same information is right before him in large letters on a billboard? Let us examine the nature of social morality, of

justice in the state; then the nature of personal morality will become clear, Plato promises us.[11] Perhaps we should not reject this analogy too hastily. There are many and obvious differences between the individual and the state, but the basic premise of Greek thought seems sound: It is impossible for an individual to live the good life alone. Man is a social being and must find the good life in a good society. There is an essential relationship between personal and social morality. Plato's approach is without question superior to one in which either of these is considered in isolation from the other. Let us at least give him the benefit of the doubt and see how well he succeeds in handling the problem that he has set for himself.

A FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE STATE

Plato begins his social philosophy by turning away from the complexities of political life even in his own day and asking a simple but searching question: what is a state good for; what need does it meet; how can it best meet this need? Let us look at the state in its simplest terms, in terms of origin and function, he suggests. Only in such terms, in terms of needs met and of functions performed, can we talk intelligently about right and wrong in the life of either the state or the individual, Plato assumes.

"A state arises out of the needs of mankind," he writes; "no one is self-sufficient but all of us have many wants. Now the first and greatest of necessities is food, which is the condition of life and existence. The second is a dwelling, and the third clothing and the like."[12] These basic human needs will be satisfied at first by each man and each family as best each one can, of course. But as an ordered society develops, a specialization of function inevitably appears. The herdsman, the husbandman, the carpenter, the smith, the baker, the merchant, and the tradesman gradually form a natural class of citizens engaged in supplying these common needs. In time, even salesmen are needed, Plato points out, so that goods do not lie idle in the marketplace. His estimate of salesmen is understandably lower than ours today. "In well-ordered states," he comments, "they are commonly those who are the weakest in bodily strength, and therefore of little use for any other purpose."[13]

These citizens who supply the basic needs of mankind in the state, Plato calls *artisans.*

> Let us consider first of all, what will be their way of life, now that we have thus established them. Will they not produce corn, and wine, and clothes, and shoes, and build houses for themselves? And when they are housed, they will work, in summer, commonly, stripped and barefoot, but in winter, substantially clothed and shod. They will feed on barley-meal and flour of wheat, baking and kneading them, making noble cakes and loaves; these they will serve upon a mat of reeds or on clean leaves, themselves reclining the while upon beds strewn with yew or myrtle. And they and their children

> will feast, drinking of the wine which they have made, wearing garlands on their heads, and hymning the praises of the gods, in happy converse with one another. And they will take care that their families do not exceed their means; having an eye to poverty or war.[14]

This idyllic and simple life is but a passing phase, however, in the development of the state. Man's desire for things, for wealth and luxury, will soon produce an expanding economy. New needs must be met by additional activities. Poets, actors, dancers, even doctors and servants, will be required in this enlarged and more affluent society. Even more significant, as Plato clearly saw, will be the conflict between one nation and another which this new way of life will bring. "Then we must enlarge our borders; for the original healthy state is no longer sufficient. A slice of our neighbors' land will be wanted by us for pasture and tillage, and they will want a slice of ours if, like ourselves, they exceed the limit of necessity, and give themselves up to the unlimited accumulation of wealth. And so we shall go to war. And our state must once more enlarge; and this time the enlargement will be nothing short of a whole army which will have to go out and fight with the invaders for all that we have as well as for the things that we were describing above."[15] Thus another important class of men is required in the state—the *warriors*, who defend it from its enemies without and maintain order within its own boundaries.

As society becomes more complex, and man's relation to his fellows more difficult to arrange, a third need must also be met. There must be a class of rulers, or *guardians*, as Plato calls them, whose function it is to guide the destiny of the state, directing their attention to the common good of all citizens and avoiding the confusion and anarchy that accompanies the effort of each man to follow his own desires without regard for the interests of others.

These, then, are the three basic needs to be met in the state: it must be *nourished*; it must be *defended*; it must be *governed*. Likewise three classes of citizens must be distinguished, each performing an essential function as it meets one of the enduring needs of the state. There must be *artisans* to nourish the state; *warriors* to defend it; and *guardians* to rule it.*

THE CARDINAL VIRTUES

On the basis of this functional approach, it is not difficult for Plato to determine what constitutes the just state or the good society: it is the state or society that functions well, the state whose basic needs are well met. Goodness, he assumes with the Greek world of his day, expresses itself in four cardinal virtues: wisdom, courage, temperance or self-control, and justice. These virtues will be found alike in the life of the good society and of the good man, Plato

* Initially Plato groups the warriors and rulers together, using the term "guardians" to apply to both. Later the warriors are distinguished from the rulers and given the name auxiliaries (Book III, §414B).

believes, and their meaning in each case should be essentially the same. Now *wisdom* is found in the state only when it has rulers who know what is needed for its welfare and are devoted to the common good. Without this the state will inevitably become corrupt, a prey to enemies who strive to gain power and seek to profit from it. The wisdom that good rulers must have is no mere accumulation of information; nor is it the sort of skill required for vocational or economic success. It is not possessed by the man of war or the man of business, whose concerns are by necessity limited and particular. It is the possession only of the philosopher, who sees things whole, who understands what is needed for the common good, and who is willing to work for its achievement.We do not find wisdom in a state, therefore, until it has rulers with such philosophic vision and insight. Plato makes this the cornerstone of political philosophy, the dominant principle of his *Republic*. "Until philosophers are kings," he writes in a famous passage, "or the kings and princes of this world have the spirit and power of philosophy, and political greatness and wisdom meet in one, and those commoner natures who pursue either to the exclusion of the other are compelled to stand aside, cities will never have rest from their evils—no, nor the human race as I believe."[16]

As wisdom is the virtue of the rulers of the good state, so *courage* is the virtue of its warriors. Courage is found in the state, however, not when its army is powerful or even fearless but only when its warriors know what to fear and what not to fear, what things to fight for and what are not worth fighting for, Plato maintains. This higher form of courage is nearer what we would call "moral" courage. It does not come from physical strength or with the military might of a totalitarian nation. When asked, "I suppose you mean to exclude mere uninstructed courage, such as that of a wild beast or a slave—this in your opinion ought to have another name," Socrates replies, "Most certainly."[17] Courage of this higher sort among the warriors of the state is not easy to obtain. Great care must be exercised in selecting and training young men to secure a picked and disciplined army, possessing an unshrinking but likewise an intelligent commitment to the common good.

Temperance, the third of the cardinal virtues, is normally taken to be "the ordering or controlling of certain pleasures and desires," Plato points out. For the individual, it is a matter of self-mastery. When the better element in the human soul has control of the weaker, we say that a man is his own master. Similarly in the state temperance will mean that self-mastery in which the wisdom of the rulers controls and directs the strength of the warriors as well as the ambition of the businessmen. Unlike courage and wisdom, which are virtues of one class only, temperance "extends to the whole and produces a harmony of the weaker and the stronger and the middle class, whether you suppose them to be stronger or weaker in wisdom or power or numbers or wealth, or anything else," Plato writes.[18] But this harmony can be achieved only with a mutual

understanding and agreement on the part of all three classes that the state is rightly organized and ruled. In the state in which temperance is found, no group will by force compel any other group to accept its domination or authority.

And now we will have not only wisdom, courage, and temperance but likewise justice itself in our state, Plato concludes. For justice is not a thing distinct and separate from the other virtues; it is constituted by these virtues and consists in them. The just state is the state that possesses wisdom, courage, and temperance. In its larger social context, justice is essentially a matter of the proper functioning of each part for the good of the whole. It may be defined, then, as that harmonious functioning of the whole in which each group performs effectively the activity for which it is fitted and thus the good of the whole is achieved. "Our aim in founding the state," Plato remarks in another connection, "was not the disproportionate happiness of any one class, but the greatest happiness of the whole; we thought that in a state which is ordered with a view to the good of the whole we should be most likely to find justice, and in the ill-ordered state injustice."[19]

Injustice, that is, means the failure of any group to do its own job well, the effort of any group to usurp the functions of another or to put its own welfare above the common good.

> When the cobbler or any other man whom nature designed to be a trader, having his heart lifted up by wealth or strength or the number of his followers, or any like advantage, attempts to force his way into the class of warriors, or a warrior into that of legislators and guardians, for which he is unfitted; or when a man is trader, legislator, and warrior all in one, then I think you will agree with me in saying that this interchange and this meddling of one with another is the ruin of the state. This then is injustice; and on the other hand when the trader, the auxiliary [warrior], and the guardian each do their own business, that is justice, and will make the city just.[20]

PLATO TODAY

Let us make Plato's social philosophy somewhat more specific by an analogy from our own situation today. Justice, he would point out, is not found in the state when labor unions use their power to control the industrial life of the nation for their own benefit with no regard for the common welfare. Most of us have felt this rather keenly in times of national crisis when the coal miners or the steel workers have called strikes that seriously endangered our war effort and jeopardized thousands of American lives on the battlefront. But neither is justice found in the state when the owners of industry seek to turn the profits of business almost exclusively into their own pockets and show no concern for the interests of workers or consumers. A time of national crisis brings out clearly social injustice of this sort, which, according to Plato, is equally undesirable but more easily overlooked in less critical times.

Nor do we find justice, as Plato defines it, in a state in which the politicians are in politics primarily for what they can get out of it. Plato would condemn political machines which dominate local and state government for their own ends. He would condemn politicians who profit from crime and vice, along with congressmen and senators who can see no interests other than those of their own constituents or their own section of the country, men whose chief concern is pork-barrel legislation rather than the welfare of their country as a whole. But injustice also prevails, Plato feels, in a state in which the ablest and the most gifted young men do not seek a place of service in government, but "leave politics to the politicians" and seek instead to make private fortunes for themselves in business and industry, or are content to develop their own special intellectual and scientific interests without any real concern for what happens to the nation.

This, says Plato in effect, is what we mean by social immorality, by injustice in the state, and somehow it is not difficult to recognize injustice of this sort today even in our own enlightened democracy. When any one of the great classes in the state—workingmen, industrialists, politicians, or soldiers—is ready to sacrifice the common good to its own private interests, we destroy that harmony of the whole in which the greatest good of each is realized in the good of all. This latter condition alone constitutes a good society, a society that is healthy because it functions well to meet the common needs of all its members. And when we look carefully, we see in Plato's social ideal the foundation of what is strong and enduring in our own nation. The ablest members of Congress are statesmen with a broad vision of the real needs of the country, not politicians governed by party loyalty alone. In industry, enlightened representatives of capital and of labor do work together harmoniously to improve our industrial efficiency with the good of the community, not their own gain, as their guiding concern. Despite the prestige that our defeat of militarism in Germany and imperialism in Japan has now brought to the American army and navy, its leaders do not often seek to dominate the foreign policy of the country. Nor are our great universities, as a rule, ivory-tower seats of academic and theoretical scholarship. They are in many cases alive to the vital needs and interests of the nation, sending their ablest and best-trained graduates year after year into wide areas of public service.

HUMAN NATURE AND GOODNESS

As Plato's interpretation of social morality is directly dependent upon his "sociology," so in like manner his moral ideal for the individual is based on his "psychology." That is to say, for Plato there is a necessary rational or scientific foundation for morality. Accordingly, he begins his discussion of moral conduct with a consideration of human nature. There are, he points out, three basic aspects of human nature that correspond surprisingly well with the threefold functional division of the state. First, there is *appetite,* the biological aspect

of human nature which expresses itself in eating, drinking, and mating.[21] Its function, like that of the artisans in the state, is to nourish and preserve human life, and to perpetuate it by reproduction. Appetite is, for Plato, the lowest, the most elemental, aspect of human nature, but it is nevertheless essential.

Secondly, we find in human nature a rational principle, Plato points out, whose function, like that of the guardians of the state, is to distinguish the desirable from the undesirable and so to provide guidance and direction for human life. *Reason* is that aspect of human nature so dear to the heart of most philosophers, especially to rationalists like the Stoics and Spinoza, who would see in the life of reason all that is worth while in human experience. Although he obviously leans in the same direction, Plato does not quite yield to this temptation.

A third aspect of human nature must be distinguished, Plato feels, from both reason and appetite. This he terms *spirit*.[22] It is that dominant drive in the self which expresses itself in ambition, in self-assertion, in the desire to get ahead. In human life, spirit or ambition has much the same function as do the warriors in the life of the state. It is seen in man's effort to master others and to move toward a place of leadership in the group. It is seen also, Plato points out, in our indignation at suffering and at injustice, and it moves us to strive to right the wrongs that we find about us, whether they be inflicted upon us or upon others. Centuries later this aspect of human nature so impressed Nietzsche that he took the will-to-power to be man's dominant drive; to Dewey it appeared so fundamental that he made progress the chief end of the good life.

In terms of such an analysis, it is not difficult to anticipate Plato's concept of the good man. An individual achieves goodness, he maintains, in exactly the same way that the state achieves justice; the cardinal virtues in each case are the same. Wisdom belongs only to the man who has an understanding of life and a willingness to let reason guide his conduct. "And him we will call wise who has in him that little part which rules," Plato writes; "that part too being supposed to have a knowledge of what is for the interest of each of the three parts and of the whole." The man of courage resolutely devotes himself to this rational ideal. "And he is to be deemed courageous whose spirit retains in pleasure and in pain the commands of reason about what he ought and ought not to fear."[23] There can be no courage without intelligence. The soldier who refuses to surrender although hopelessly outnumbered and bound soon to be annihilated without accomplishing anything by his death is not courageous but foolhardy.

The man who is temperate orders and controls his appetites and his ambitions in accord with the dictates of reason; such a man is master of himself because the best principle in the self has the other two under control.[24] Whenever appetite or ambition has its way, regardless of the permanent interests of the self as a

whole, we find intemperance. A man cannot be temperate then unless he knows what he is doing. Temperance does not mean simply smoking a little less, drinking a little less, or not working quite so hard. For some men and women, drinking, or even smoking, in any situation may well be intemperate, but not necessarily for all. The demands of health, our relationship to parents and friends, the opportunities in life that are open to us, all these must be understood before one can determine his own best interests and act accordingly. Too frequently in our exhortations to youth, who usually appear intemperate to their elders, we have neglected this Platonic insight and defeated our own purposes.

What, then, is the meaning of moral conduct? We have, Plato affirms, not only defined wisdom, courage, and temperance but made clear the nature of morality as well. Morality is just that *inner harmony,* that *organic unity* of the *human* soul, in which each aspect of human nature—reason, spirit, and appetite —functions effectively for the good of the self as a whole. Clearly Plato has in mind that integration of personality upon which contemporary psychology has laid so much stress. The moral man, he writes,

> sets in order his own inner life, and is his own master and his own law, and at peace with himself; and when he has bound together the three principles within him, which may be compared to the higher, lower and middle notes of the scale,—when he has bound all these together, and is no longer many, but has become one entirely temperate and perfectly adjusted nature, then he proceeds to act, if he has to act, always thinking and calling that which preserves and cooperates with this harmonious condition, just and good action, and the knowledge which presides over it, wisdom.[25]

DOES IT PAY TO BE GOOD?

We are, finally, in a position, Plato believes, to return to the problem with which he began his consideration of morality: Is virtue its own reward? And the answer is now so clear that he feels no further argument is necessary. Our old question of the comparative advantage of morality and immorality "has now become ridiculous," he writes. "We know that when the bodily constitution is gone, life is no longer endurable though pampered with all kinds of meats and drinks, and having all wealth and power." But as health is the harmonious functioning of the human body, so goodness is the harmonious functioning of the human spirit; "virtue is the health and beauty and well-being of the soul, and vice the disease and weakness and deformity of the same."[26] A man will want to be good, when he understands the meaning of goodness, as naturally and inevitably as he will want to be healthy. Only ignorance can lead anyone to immoral conduct.

With a greater teacher some four hundred years later, Plato asks: What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? To this question there can be but one rational answer.

BUILDING THE GOOD SOCIETY

The desirability of justice in society is likewise so obvious to reason, once we understand justice to be the harmonious working together of all groups for the common good, that no further argument in its support is necessary either. The question we face today, as did the Greeks in the age of Pericles, is not whether we want a just society but how we can get one. In Plato's effort to answer this latter question we find him proposing his most radical social theories, and the major part of the *Republic* is devoted to this practical problem.

The achievement of the good society demands an intelligent use of eugenics, of education, and of religion, and, to a limited extent, even of communism, Plato argues. The role of each is discussed in surprisingly contemporary fashion in the *Republic.* We talk of equal opportunity for all in education, but Plato outlines a program that goes well beyond anything we have attempted, even the generous provisions of our so-called "G.I. Bill of Rights." We still argue with some heat the question of woman's place in the world; Plato, as confirmed a feminist as any graduate of Smith or Vassar, holds that women should have every opportunity given to men—in education, in government, even in the army. We are much concerned today with communism. Its dangers and its sources of strength are being analyzed daily, not only in the arena of politics and the college classroom, but from the pulpit and at the dinner table as well. Now Plato felt the appeal of communism, or something much like it, centuries before Marx and Lenin, and he may well have fallen victim also to some of the illusions that afflict contemporary communists. In our more sober moments, we wonder whether democracy may not encourage mediocrity, putting into office the best vote getter but not the ablest man. "To devise a method of barring incompetence and knavery from public office, and of selecting and preparing the best to rule for the common good": such is the avowed aim of the *Republic.*

Not only does Plato sound to many readers like a radical in his discussion of social philosophy; in the proper sense of the word, he is a radical. That is, he goes to the root of the matter under consideration in thoroughly rational and logical fashion. He does not hesitate to follow the logic of the principles he has adopted and of the facts as he sees them, being content neither with superficial analysis nor with long-accepted conventions. Like most such philosophical discussions, Plato's social theory is dangerous because it can be easily misunderstood and turned to ends other than those he had in mind.

EDUCATION FOR CITIZENSHIP

In building the good society, the most important instrument in Plato's mind, without question, is education. Here he is thoroughly modern. John Dewey himself, leading American exponent of educational reform, has not surpassed Plato in emphasis upon the social significance of education. For both, the building of a better society is the undergirding purpose of the whole educational system, and development of a common loyalty to the welfare of the group is the initial step. Plato's proposals for accomplishing this, however, are quite different from those recommended by Dewey.

How is it to be done? First, in very realistic fashion, Plato points out that we must get rid of all people who are over ten years of age. As long as young people are subjected to the conservatism, the outworn antagonisms, and the prejudices of their elders, we can expect to get nowhere with the ideals which reason prescribes, Plato argues. Those in charge of building the good state "will begin by sending out of the country all the inhabitants who are more than ten years old," he writes, "and will take possession of their children, who will be unaffected by the habits of their parents. These they will train in their own habits and laws, and in this way the State and the constitution of which we were speaking will soonest and most easily attain happiness."[27] Plato's proposal is hardly as drastic as was the action of the Russian Communists, who, upon gaining control of the government, either killed or bundled off to Siberia all those who opposed their regime, but his principle is the same. We must start with a clean slate if our new society is to escape the constant criticism and opposition of those whose habits of thought and life have been already fixed along other channels. When given this chance, the ideal we seek may become a reality. "The state, if once started well, moves with accumulating force like a wheel," Plato points out. "For good nurture and education implant good constitutions, and then good constitutions taking root in a good education improve more and more, and this improvement affects the breed in man as in other animals."[28]

Since education is designed to promote the common good, all education should be supported and directed by the state, Plato believes. The curriculum which he proposes for the first seventeen years is twofold: "gymnastics for the body and music for the soul." Plato wants no chronic invalids. The building of a strong body is as important as the development of a sound mind, but since it is not so difficult, Plato does not spend much time in describing the methods to be used. Early years will be largely given over to play and outdoor exercise. But with the health of the body must be combined the health of the soul. Every child must come to know and to accept those moral ideals upon which the achievement of the common good depends.

During their early years, therefore, the youth in Plato's Utopia will receive a thorough training in the humanities. Literature, music, and religion—these

are the media by which the young and plastic mind is molded. The important thing in these formative years is the development of taste, not the acquisition of information. At this stage what a youth admires is of more significance than what he knows. His early training must give him an admiration for noble deeds and noble character. Of the youth in his program of general education, Plato writes, "We mean them to honor the gods and their parents and to value friendship with one another."[29] Lin Yutang is right: the educated man is the man who has the right loves and hatreds. The ideal good, Plato recognizes, must likewise be made appealing at this stage. The books a youth is given to read must be interesting, the music he hears must be moving, the gods he worships must be good. "Bodily exercise when compulsory does no harm to the body; but knowledge which is acquired under compulsion obtains no hold on the mind," Plato writes. "Then, my good friend, let early education be a sort of amusement; you will then be better able to find out the natural bent. For no one will love that which gives him pain, and in which after much toil, he makes little progress."[30]

The art, the music, and the literature to which the minds of the young are exposed must be carefully censored, however. Plato is no advocate of an indiscriminate use of all sorts of literature or of all forms of entertainment. A boy of ten or twelve has as yet no pattern of values in terms of which the best may be selected. Hence this selecting must be done for him, Plato maintains: "For a young person cannot judge what is allegorical and what is literal; anything that he receives into his mind at that age is likely to become indelible and unalterable; and therefore it is most important that the tales which the young first hear should be models of virtuous thought."[31]

At times, it is true, Plato becomes a rank propagandist, as the liberal of our day will immediately point out. But his guiding principle is clear—and sound. Our thinking in later years is done in terms of the values and ideals which we actually possess. Thinking does not occur in a vacuum, but always in a specific situation in which there are some things that we desire and admire, others that we detest. Even for Plato, human reason is no transcendent arbiter, unmoved by the scene in which it operates. And our values are shaped for us by all those unconscious influences that play upon our lives during the first formative years, before reason has developed its critical faculties. The motion pictures we see, the radio programs we hear, the songs we sing—these are the influences at work in educating modern youth. Parents today might do well to take Plato to heart. Even college students may well find that the popular songs of the day, rather than their textbooks on ethics, express the philosophy of life current in their generation. He who has been educated aright, Plato points out, "will justly blame and hate the bad, now in the days of his youth, even before he is able to know the reason why; and when reason comes, he will recognize and salute the friend with whom his education has made him long familiar."[32]

An inner harmony of spirit, a personality integrated by its devotion to the common good, this is the aim of Plato's program of general education, as well as of his theory of morals. And for his purposes music is even more important than literature. "Musical training," he writes, "is a more potent instrument than any other, because rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul, on which they mightily fasten, imparting grace, and making the soul of him who is rightly educated graceful, or of him who is ill-educated ungraceful."[33] Plato has no intention of producing weaklings, however, or youth without stamina and fortitude. He seems to have had in mind about two years of universal military training, designed to provide physical strength and courage in all youth and to lay the foundation for a strong army, and there is a Spartan note in his educational philosophy which at times suggests an admiration for the customs he observed among his neighbors to the south. Soft Ionian melodies, a favorite accompaniment of drinking songs and revelries, should be suppressed, and only the sterner harmonies of martial music should be sung.

> I want to have one warlike, to sound the note which a brave man utters in the hour of danger and stern resolve, or when his cause is failing, and he is going to wounds or death or is overtaken by some other evil, and at every such crisis meets the blows of fortune with firm step and a determination to endure; and another to be used by him in times of peace and freedom of action, when there is no pressure of necessity, and he is seeking to persuade God by prayer, or man by instruction and admonition. These two harmonies I ask you to leave; the strain of necessity and the strain of freedom, the strain of courage and the strain of temperance; these, I say, leave.[34]

EDUCATION FOR WOMEN

Thus far nothing has been said about the opportunities open to women in the educational program. And in the Greek world of Plato's day this would not have seemed strange. A woman's place was in the home; there she learned the domestic and household duties, and no other career was open to her. But Plato finds no reason for this treatment of women. There is nothing in a woman's nature, he argues, that assigns her necessarily to such a life. Actually reason demands that she should have every educational opportunity that a man has, whether in the study of the humanities or in gymnastics; let her go as far as she can in any phase of life.

Plato's proposals here are, as a matter of fact, in keeping with our own recent practice. So-far as gymnastics go, he advocates what has now taken place. Let the program of physical education for women include what it does for men. Riding, swimming, baseball are as good for one as for the other. There need be no segregation of the sexes either on the athletic field or in the classroom, Plato maintains, stanchly advocating coeducation many centuries ago. Even the athletic costumes need not be different, he feels. Women should not be

bundled up in cumbersome or unbecoming garments while men perform freely and gracefully on the athletic field. A generation ago these ideas would have seemed quite radical. Today we accept most of them with Plato as dictates of reason and common sense. Indeed, Plato himself might well be a bit disturbed by the latest fashions in feminine bathing suits now on display at our beach resorts.

But what about the waging of war. Should women not be debarred from this field, and should it not be restricted to men only? And surely the rulers of the state must be men; for politics is no fit field for a woman. Not at all, says our philosopher. Women differ as individuals, just as men do. Some women have the temper of warriors, some of statesmen, some of philosophers. Some may make good doctors, some good musicians. Give equal opportunity to all. The first principle in our social philosophy is that each one is to do the work suited to his own nature. In the army, the medical profession, the government, the police force, the railroads, the shipyards, let any job open to a man be open to a woman as well. Our own recent war experiences are pushing us rapidly in Plato's direction. WAC's and WAVE's, women taxi drivers, and women shipyard workers take their place with Congresswomen and women members of the president's cabinet. We do this hesitatingly, grudgingly, as a matter of necessity, perhaps, but we move nevertheless steadily and surely toward Plato's goal.

Educational opportunities then, and the social positions to which they lead, are open to men and women alike. No champion of woman's rights could ask for more. Yet we must admit that, despite this liberal (or just) provision for women in his design for Utopia, Plato does appear to have one lingering masculine prejudice. There are no pursuits, he confesses, in which the ablest men do not excel even the ablest women. "Although many women are in many things superior to many men," yet on the whole we are justified in maintaining the general inferiority of the female sex, he writes.[35] Hence there is no real danger to the masculine ego in his generous provision that women receive complete equality of opportunity in the ideal state. In the end, men will still control the world, as they always have, Plato assures his contemporaries. Was he serious, or was he perhaps using a shrewd device to persuade those in power to give it up more willingly?

PLATO'S PHILOSOPHER-KINGS

At the age of twenty the fruits of our program of general education must be tested. Plato recommends a thorough and comprehensive examination to determine those prepared to go ahead as well as those whose formal education should be ended. The weeding-out process must be both discriminating and ruthless, no mere academic examination of information mastered or facts accumulated. What kind of men and women has our educational program produced? That is the important question, Plato believes, if able and dependable rulers

of the state are to be discovered and given the further training they need. Let us note among our youth not only those with the greatest ability but also "those who in their whole life show the greatest repugnance to do what is against the best interests of the nation. Those are the right men," Plato declares.[36] Difficult and dangerous tests must be set for these youth. They must be tempted with pleasures which deceive, and placed in situations in which they are likely to forget what they have been taught. Only those who can meet such tests, those who "preserve their resolution, and never, under the influence either of force or enchantment, forget or cast off their sense of duty to the state," are suitable candidates for higher education.

Those who do not survive Plato's first progress test now take their place in the economic and industrial life of the nation. They become the businessmen, who produce the material necessities without which the good society is impossible. And according to Plato, it is important to note, this is what they are fitted to do and want to do. For them it is the natural and desirable thing. They have shown neither the ability nor the interest to go further in formal education. Like the great majority of youth in every generation, they are now eager to marry, to get jobs, to earn a living, and to raise a family. In other words, they will consider this no hardship, no mistreatment; they are not resentful or rebellious at such a policy. Indeed, one intention of this whole program of general education, Plato points out, "was that in the case of the citizens generally, each individual should be put to the use for which nature intended him, and then every man would do his own business and so the whole city would be one and not many."[37]

For the outstanding youth, both men and women, who have successfully met his first series of tests, Plato proposes a severe ten-year discipline in mathematics and the sciences. Concerning the study of mathematics he waxes unusually eloquent. It has a double use, he points out, both military and philosophical. Quite in line with our own view today, Plato believes that a strong army must have the support of great scientists. Unless we train our ablest youth as scientists and engineers, our nation cannot survive. But higher mathematics has an even more important value for Plato. "The knowledge at which geometry aims is knowledge of the eternal, and not of aught perishing and transient," he writes. "Thus, my noble friend, geometry will draw the soul towards truth, and create the spirit of philosophy, and raise up that which is now unhappily allowed to fall down."[38]

Those who show the greatest promise in this study of the sciences will be fit candidates, therefore, for the final stage of higher education—a five-year course in philosophy. The study of philosophy demands maturity, Plato believes; every care must be taken in introducing our promising youth to reflection of this sort.

> There is a danger lest they should taste the dear delight too early; for youngsters, as you may have observed, when they first get the taste in their mouths, argue for amusement, and are always contradicting and refuting

> others in imitation of those who refute them; like puppy-dogs, they rejoice in pulling and tearing at all who come near them. And when they have made many conquests and received defeats at the hands of many, they get into a way of not believing anything which they believed before, and hence, not only they, but philosophy and all that relates to it is apt to have a bad name with the rest of the world.[39]

Actually the study of philosophy, when rightly pursued, does not lead to contradiction or uncertainty, Plato believes, but enables a man to distinguish the true from the false, and to understand the nature of the good as it is in itself rather than as it appears in other things. This is the kind of wisdom that our ablest youth must possess before they can be trusted to direct the affairs of the state. Until a person "is able to define rationally the idea of the good, and unless he can run the gauntlet of all objections, and is ready to disprove them, not by appeals to opinion, but to absolute truth, never faltering at any step of the argument—unless he can do all of this," he is not the person Plato is seeking as the philosopher-king.[40] A concentrated study of metaphysics for five years is none too much as a preparation for this task.

At thirty-five, the formal education of our future rulers is at last completed, but one final test awaits them. Knowledge by itself is not enough. A good ruler must be able to use his knowledge successfully in the practical affairs of life. Hence for another fifteen years the ability of our doctors of philosophy to deal with men and affairs—their practical leadership—must be tested. They will be given a sort of internship in government and sent out to undertake political or military tasks for which they are qualified. Finally, those who demonstrate their ability in meeting successfully the conflicts of life itself automatically become the rulers of the state.

Such seasoned philosophers make the best rulers, Plato points out, not only because they are well-trained but also because they have no interest in the petty quarrels of the politicians or the acclaim of the multitude. Their enduring concern lies in the pursuit of truth. But their devotion to the common good is such that they accept political responsibilities willingly and perform them fearlessly. Plato reveals a great deal about his own philosophy of life as he describes the spirit of his philosopher-kings.

> The time has now arrived at which they are to order the state and the lives of individuals, and the remainder of their own lives also; making philosophy their chief pursuit, but, when their turn comes, toiling also at politics and ruling for the public good, not as though they were performing some heroic action, but simply as a matter of duty; and when they have brought up in each generation others like themselves and left them in their place to be governors of the State, then they will depart to the Islands of the Blest and dwell there; and the city will give them public memorials and sacrifices and

> honor them, if the Pythian oracle consents, as demigods, but if not, as in any case blessed and divine.[41]

RELIGION AND THE STATE

Such, in broad outline, is Plato's educational program, designed to cultivate in all men a loyalty to the common good and to select and train the ablest youth as rulers of the state. But education in itself, no matter how intelligently planned, is not sufficient, Plato recognizes. A nation cannot be strong unless it believes in God. Religion has an essential contribution to make to the moral strength and the political unity of the nation. With the Greek world of his day, Plato approaches religion as a function of the state, not as a matter of individual faith or conviction. Religious traditions and beliefs, he insists, must be carefully censored to see that they contain no teachings about the gods that would undermine a high moral idealism. Plato is especially concerned with the harmful effect upon young minds of the stories of the gods that have come down from Hesiod and Homer. How can the youth of the land come to admire honesty and uprightness and faithfulness, Plato quite rightly inquires, when they find these poets picturing the gods themselves as a dishonest, licentious, violent, and pleasure-loving lot, dispensing good and evil to mankind with a careless hand? A clean sweep must be made of all these stories. God must always be represented as he truly is, our philosopher maintains:

> God, if he be good, is not the author of all things, as the many assert, but he is the cause of a few things only, and not of most things that occur to men. For few are the goods of human life, and many are the evils, and the good is to be attributed to God alone; of the evils the causes are to be sought elsewhere, and not in him. . . . Let this then be one of our rules and principles concerning the gods, to which our poets and reciters will be expected to conform—that God is not the author of all things, but of good only.[42]

A strong religious faith is of great value, also, in undergirding the morale of the warrior and removing his fear of death, Plato points out. But a religion which pictures the torments of the damned in vivid fashion obviously does not breed courage in the face of danger and death. Hence passages of this kind must likewise be removed from Homer and the other poets. Death is not terrible to the good man, and it is important that this be made clear in our religious teaching about the future world. There are indications, indeed, that Plato is willing to go even further and completely prostitute religion in the service of the state. He speaks, for example, of "royal lies" which must be told by the rulers to keep the people satisfied with their lot, although he does warn that this must be done only for the public good. A well-known instance of this is the myth that Plato would have his rulers use when the youth are informed of the results of his great elimination:

> Citizens, we shall say to them, you are brothers, yet God has framed you differently. Some of you have the power to command and in the composition of these he has mingled gold, wherefore also they have the greatest honor; others he has made of silver to be auxiliaries; others again who are to be husbandmen and craftsmen he has composed of brass and iron; and the species will generally be preserved in the children. But as all are of the same original stock, a golden parent will sometime have a silver son, or a silver parent a golden son. And if the son of a golden or silver parent has an admixture of brass and iron then nature orders a transposition of ranks, and the eye of the ruler must not be pitiful towards the child because he has to descend in the scale and become a husbandman or artisan, just as there may be sons of artisans who having an admixture of gold or silver in them are raised to honor and become guardians or auxiliaries.[43]

In this use of "royal lies," Plato is apparently practicing a deception of the most dangerous sort. But we may easily pass judgment upon his intention here too hastily. He points out, for example, that getting at the truth is a much more difficult task than most people realize. Too frequently we do not know the truth about things that matter most to us, and when we think we do, we deceive ourselves, no matter how good our intentions may be. Clearly, all falsehoods cannot be classed as reprehensible. In other cases, especially in questions of religious faith or philosophical speculation, it is sometimes impossible to discover the truth exactly or to state it rationally. In such cases, Plato suggests, we are forced to make use of allegory or myth—that is, "we make falsehood as much like truth as we can, and so turn it to account." This indeed is Plato's usual way of interpreting the great "myths of religion," its accounts of the creation of the world and the future life. These myths are not literally true for him, but neither are they false. They clothe truth in symbolic form and provide a better statement of religious truth than is possible in purely rational or scientific terms. "They are poetic creations which give a sense of the atmosphere, the beauty, the validity of some human aspiration, some human faith, some human vision which the senses cannot touch nor the methods of dialectic prove," writes a gifted contemporary interpreter of Plato.[44]

Now the rulers of the state, in their use of religion for the common good, are well aware, of course, of these difficulties in the discovery and communication of truth. They are aware also of another fundamental Platonic conviction—namely, that truth and goodness cannot be dealt with separately in matters of human conduct. Until what we take to be true makes its contribution to what we take to be good, we can be sure that we have not quite grasped the truth and have not quite understood the good. A "royal lie," then, may sometimes be our best method of presenting the "truth." In Plato's opinion, however, these are problems that the common man will never be able to understand. It is the task of the philosopher-king to deal with them for him and thus secure the welfare of the state.

COMMUNISM AND EUGENICS

One might think that Plato's rulers, so carefully prepared by education and so amply fortified by religion, are ready at last to usher in the good society. But the social resources of reason are not yet exhausted. Plato saw clearly the importance of heredity, and he recognized, with the contemporary sociologist, that the situation in which a man lives shapes his character and conduct as much as do his heredity and training. In neither case are these influences upon our rulers to be overlooked. What, Plato asks, most easily corrupts a man and overrules his loyalty to the common good? Worst of all, he recognizes, is the love of money; then the love of a woman and the love of his children. Power always enhances the appeal of wealth and luxury. And when a man might more easily resist the temptation himself, he has a natural desire to provide security and the comforts of life for his wife and family. Thus, the wife of one philosopher-king, jealous of the wife of another, might bring to bear almost irresistible pressure upon her unfortunate husband, and soon the mad and merry chase for money and power would overshadow that concern for the common good which Plato took to be essential in the lives of the rulers of the state.

How, then, is this situation to be avoided? Plato is as ruthless and radical in attacking this problem as any other. He makes no concessions to the weaknesses of the flesh. In order to be free to devote themselves to the common welfare, and not tempted by avarice, luxury, or power for themselves or their families, our rulers must have no possessions, no wives, no children of their own, he believes. Like true friends, they shall have all things in common, even their money, their wives, and their children, adequate satisfaction for all their needs being provided by the state.

> In the first place, none of them shall have any property of his own beyond what is absolutely necessary; neither should they own a private house; their provisions should be only such as are required by trained warriors, who are men of temperance and courage; they should agree to receive from the citizens a fixed rate of pay, enough to meet the expenses of the year and no more, and they will go to mess and live together like soldiers in a camp. Gold and silver we will tell them that they have from God; the diviner metal is within them, and they have therefore no need of the dross that is current among men, and ought not to pollute the divine by any such earthly admixture; for that commoner metal has been the source of many unholy deeds, but their own is undefiled. And they alone of all the citizens may not touch or handle silver or gold, or be under the same roof with them, or wear them, or drink from them. And this will be their salvation, and the salvation of the state.[45]

From the time that they are twenty years old, this will be the life of the rulers and the warriors, whether men or women. As a part of this common way of life,

Plato introduces his program of eugenics and his community of wives and children. Any good breeder of dogs knows that to provide the finest breed and offspring the best and strongest should be mated, and the weak and sickly eliminated. The rulers of the state should recognize the same principle in handling the marriage of young men and women, Plato argues. Marriage and reproduction are not matters of individual concern alone but are of primary importance to the welfare of the state. Like education and religion, both must be controlled for the common good, not left to the passing fancy or irrational desire of the individual. The most reasonable procedure, Plato suggests, is that among our gifted young men and women "the best of either sex should be united with the best as often, and the inferior with the inferior, as seldom as possible."[46] The offspring of the former unions shall be reared, those of the latter shall not. Certain festival times shall be appointed each year when the prospective brides and bridegrooms shall be brought together, and the brave and abler youth will as a reward for valor and achievement be given their choice of the best members of the opposite sex. There shall also be prescribed ages for such unions; only men and women in the prime of physical and intellectual vigor shall be permitted to have children. And all the children shall be taken at once to the community nursery, where they are kept in separate quarters by nurses especially appointed for this office. Any who are sickly or deformed, together with the offspring of illegitimate matings, shall be put away. The strong and healthy shall be reared and educated in the manner already prescribed.

This community of property and community of family, Plato concludes, will do away once and for all with the distinction between what is *mine* and what *not mine*, which causes so much dissension in our present society. As true friends, the rulers of the state should have all things in common: their wealth, their wives, and their children. Each man will think then of all the children born in a certain period as his own, each child consider all the men and women wedded at a certain date as his parents. Hence all will be loyal to all. The common welfare will be the common concern. There will be no rugged individualism, no disrupting self-interest to undermine the good of the whole, as there is in those societies in which every strong man regards whatever he can acquire for himself as his own and erects a separate home, where he has a wife and family and private interests to absorb his attention.[47]

Here, then, is Plato's Utopia. Beside it even the radical proposals of our own day appear mild and conservative. But Plato, let us remember, has set out resolutely to establish a concern for the common good as the dominant ideal in society. He has let nothing stand in his way thus far, and he has not yet finished his task. To be completely equipped for their work, the rulers of the state "must raise the eye of the soul to the universal light which lightens all things, and behold the absolute good; for that is the pattern according to which they are to order the State and the lives of individuals, and the remainder of

their own lives also."[48] Such is the goal of Plato's program of higher education, and at this point we are led in our study of Platonism from the good society to the idea of the good itself.

PLATO'S THEORY OF IDEAS

No aspect of the rational idealism of Plato is more basic or more generally associated with the Platonic philosophy than his so-called "theory of ideas." It is here that Plato develops the metaphysics upon which his moral philosophy rests. Without this enduring foundation in the nature of things, our moral ideals would lose that eternal validity which makes them true and right for Plato, whether any individual men and women happen to discover and accept them or not. The theory of ideas takes us into that aspect of rationalism particularly associated in the history of philosophy with Spinoza, but instead of the pure rationalism of Spinoza, Plato proposes a more inclusive rational idealism.

THE ALLEGORY OF THE CAVE

In the *Republic*, a dramatic and popular statement of Plato's position is found in his "Allegory of the Cave." The condition of human beings, he here suggests, is like that of prisoners who live in an underground cave. The cave has a large opening through which the light comes in and a broad wall at the back upon which shadows are reflected. Outside the mouth of the cave a fire is blazing, and between the fire and the cave there is a raised pathway over which all sorts of objects pass back and forth. All their lives these prisoners have been chained, with their legs and necks made fast, so that they can see only the broad wall at the back of the cave, on which are reflected shadows of objects that pass back and forth outside. And in the cave an echo makes all sounds seem to come from its back wall rather than from its mouth.

In such circumstances, Plato asks, what would the prisoners take to be the real world? The shadows on the wall, of course. For they have never seen or known anything else. And what would happen if one of the prisoners was able to break his chains, turn toward the mouth of the cave, go outside, and see there the real objects which were reflected within? He would at first be blinded by the light, confused and uncertain; but in time he would come to know things as they truly were. Let him, however, return to the prisoners in the cave and try to explain matters to them. In the dim shadows there, those who were prisoners would be more at home while he would be confused, uncertain. They would laugh at his story of the real world, would say he had lost his sight and his good sense, and would refuse to allow him to lead them out of their prison house. Indeed, let him try hard enough and they would have him put to death if he could be caught.[49]

Such, in a parable, says Plato, is the picture of our lives as human beings. What does it mean? It is Plato's attack upon our deep-seated materialism. The world of sense experience, which we take so much for granted, is for Plato only a world of shadows. The material and physical objects, which appeal to us as real because we touch and taste them, have no permanence, he maintains; they are merely reflections of a deeper, enduring reality that we can come to know only by reason. Reason alone can free us from the chains that imprison us in the world of sense experience and can disclose to us the real world beyond. The plight of ordinary individuals is portrayed by the prisoners in the cave. Like prisoners, most people are from birth chained by the senses to a world of physical and material things; they never discover the world of real and enduring values that philosophy reveals to the more enlightened.

Most of us, as Plato here points out, do live in the world of sense experience. The things that are real for us are things that we can feel and see, substantial things that occupy space. A real supper means steak, apple pie, and ice cream. The new automobiles, the warm sand and sunshine on the seashore—certainly these things are real, we feel, if anything is. Yet, if we consider a moment, we will see that we do not completely accept this materialistic philosophy. We speak, for example, of a *real* friend, a *real* man. Obviously we are not here referring to anything that can be seen or touched, anything physical or material. The arms and legs, the face and hands, of a real friend or a real man, are no different from those of one who only *appears* to be a friend or a man. So far as the immediate experience of the senses goes, the two are the same. But there is something beyond the senses, something grasped only by reason, in idea, that identifies the real friend and discloses the pretense of one who merely appears to be a friend. Or let us look at a scientific law, such as the law of gravity. This is not something that can be touched or seen. Nor is it, for most of us, merely an intellectual concept, something in the human mind. It is a reality of some kind beyond the physical and material objects, a reality grasped only by reason and presented to us in idea, a reality of which we must necessarily remain ignorant as long as we live only in the world of sense experience.

Plato, we must remember, was much impressed by mathematics. Mathematicians, by the use of reason, gain a knowledge of principles that are enduring and true; they deal with a reality that is neither physical nor material but rational. The multiplication table does not change; its truth is eternal. "The knowledge at which geometry arrives is knowledge of the eternal, and not of aught perishing and transient," Plato writes. "Those who see the absolute and the eternal and the immutable may be said to know."[50] The rest of mankind must be content with mere opinion, not genuine knowledge, he is convinced.

A simple illustration may help those of us who are not well versed in mathematics to understand Plato's position. Engineers today are building great suspension bridges over rivers that were once impassable. As the ordinary individual

crosses such a bridge, he assumes without much question that the steel cables and concrete reinforcements which he sees and touches, which support his automobile in safety as it crosses the dangerous water beneath, constitute the real bridge But to Plato this is simply the opinion of a prisoner in the cave, who mistakes the shadows for the reality. The real bridge, he maintains, is to be found in the mathematical laws and formulas used by the engineers in the construction of this specific suspension bridge. Without a knowledge of those laws, it would have been impossible to build a bridge at all. Unless this structure is an expression of those laws, it will be not a bridge but simply a tangled mass of steel and concrete piled up in the river bed below.

Several important aspects of Plato's rational idealism become clear in this illustration. It is apparent at once that reality for him is known only by reason. It is grasped in the minds of the mathematically trained engineers. Those of us who do not understand mathematics will never be able to know the real bridge. We can know it only as it appears to our senses in this particular structure. Furthermore, the real bridge—that is, the mathematical laws and principles that constitute reality—is an indestructible and eternal thing. It was always there; otherwise it could not have been grasped by the mind of the engineer. Likewise, it cannot be destroyed. A great flood may wash away the particular structure that we build, but the mathematical laws and principles which constitute the real bridge are entirely unaffected by this occurrence. Plato's world of "ideas"* is not something in the human mind; it is rather an eternal and unchanging reality which human reason at its best is capable of apprehending.

PLATO AND RECENT SCIENCE

Developments in the physical sciences, particularly in the field of nuclear physics, have provided unexpected scientific support for Plato's philosophy in recent years. The old, hard, substantial material world has gradually melted away in the hands of the physicists; the taste, color, hardness, and softness of material things are all supplied by our own senses, not found in the objects we see and touch, the scientists tell us. When attempting to describe the reality which science finds in the atom, the physicist today, like Plato, is led to mathematical formulas. All that we have left of the atom is a complicated mathematical equation. That is what it is in the only sense that science can ever know its real nature.

One of the best popular presentations of this scientific point of view is found in *The Mysterious Universe* by Sir James Jeans, distinguished British astronomer and physicist. We find here remarkable agreement with Plato. In bringing to a close his discussion of modern science, Jeans writes,

* "There can be no doubt that in Plato the word ἰδέα means primarily 'form' or 'figure,' and it will save a very great deal of confusion if we drop the word 'idea' altogether in discussing this doctrine." (J. Burnet, *Platonism*, p. 41.)

> The essential fact is simply that *all* the pictures which science now draws of nature, and which alone seem capable of according with observable fact, are *mathematical* pictures. . . . To speak in terms of Plato's well-known simile, we are still imprisoned in our cave, with our backs to the light, and can only watch the shadows on the wall. At present the only task immediately before science is to study these shadows, to classify them and explain them in the simplest possible way. And what we are finding in a whole torrent of surprising new knowledge, is that the way which explains them more fully and more naturally than any other is the mathematical way, the explanation in terms of mathematical concepts. It is true, in a sense somewhat different from that intended by Galileo, that "Nature's great book is written in mathematical language." So true is it that no one except a mathematician need ever hope fully to understand those branches of science which try to unravel the fundamental nature of the universe.[51]
>
> This concept of the universe implies that the final truth about a phenomenon resides in the mathematical description of it; so long as there is no imperfection in this, our knowledge of the phenomenon is complete. We go beyond the mathematical formula at our own risk; we may find a model or picture which helps us to understand it, but the making of models or pictures to explain mathematical formulae and the phenomena they describe, is not a step towards but a step away from, reality; it is like making graven images of the spirit. . . . Today there is a wide measure of agreement, which on the physical side of science approaches almost to unanimity, that the stream of knowledge is heading towards a non-mechanical reality; the universe begins to look more like a great thought than a great machine. Mind no longer appears as an accidental intruder into the realm of matter; we are beginning to suspect that we ought rather to hail it as the creator and governor of the realm of matter. We discover that the universe shows evidence of a designing or controlling power that has something in common with our own individual minds—not, so far as we have discovered, emotion, morality, or aesthetic appreciation, but the tendency to think in a way which we describe as mathematical. . . . Lapsing back again into the crudely anthropomorphic language we have already used, we may say that from the intrinsic evidence of his creation, the Great Architect of the Universe now begins to appear as a pure mathematician.[52]

THE IDEA OF THE GOOD

As a matter of fact, Jeans, in *The Mysterious Universe*, agrees more explicitly with Plato than do most contemporary scientists. But his book shows clearly how completely an able and distinguished scientist today does accept the position that the real and enduring nature of things must be interpreted in terms of mathematical principles rather than in terms of the physical and material objects we see and touch. Plato, however, does not stop at this point. His rational

idealism leads him farther than the contemporary scientist is willing to follow. Among the rational forms or principles by which reality is constituted, the basic and fundamental, Plato holds, is not a mathematical principle but an ethical or moral principle, which he terms "the idea of the good."

A thing can be called good, he maintains, only when it accomplishes the purpose for which it is intended. Thus, a good ship is one which sails well. If it cannot do this, it is not a *good* ship. Likewise a good shipbuilder is one who builds a ship in such a way that it will sail well. He fashions the parts and puts them together in the order necessary to accomplish this end. Unless a man knows what a ship is like and what its function is, he cannot build a good ship. Thus, it is quite literally true from Plato's point of view that every detail of the shipbuilder's work is determined by an "idea of the good"—that is, by what the ship as a whole is intended to be or to do.*

In similar fashion, unless we understand what human nature is like and how a man must act in order to achieve the best life, it is impossible for us to be good The idea of the good is thus both a rational and a moral principle; indeed, in the good we find the necessary synthesis of the rational and the moral. For Plato, as we have already noted, is convinced that the good and the true are inseparable. He agrees with Socrates that it is impossible to be good without being reasonable, and he makes it clear also that conduct and thought cannot be wholly reasonable without being good. Hence the moral and the scientific tend in Plato's philosophy to converge in a way that is not as a rule acceptable to the pure scientist.

In every case, moreover, the idea of the good leads Plato to a higher and more inclusive level. The good man is really a part of the good society, and human society itself is but a part of the larger universe in which we live. Hence we cannot understand completely and surely what is good for a man until we see the part he should play in a good society, and we cannot understand the good society until we understand the place and function of human society in the universe itself. Thus, for Plato the idea of the good becomes the unifying principle in an organic whole; it is this idea that makes the world intelligible. Without such a principle the universe could not exist as a rational whole; it would be a multiverse, not a universe. The idea of the good may well be likened to the sun, Plato suggests, in concluding the "Allegory of the Cave." Just as the sun throws its light upon the world and enables us to see, so the idea of the good enables us to see the meaning and purpose of the universe as a whole and to understand the part we play in it.

> You have often been told that the idea of the good is the highest knowledge, and that all other things become useful and advantageous only by their use of this. Do you think that the possession of all other things is of any value

* This point is made in the *Gorgias* (§503E); see also R. L. Nettleship, *Lectures on the Republic of Plato*, p. 223.

> if we do not possess the good? Or the knowledge of all other things if we have no knowledge of beauty and goodness? . . . My opinion is that in the world of knowledge the idea of the good appears last of all, and is seen only with an effort, and, when seen, is also inferred to be the universal author of all things beautiful and right, parent of light in the visible world, and the immediate source of reason and truth in the intellectual; and that this is the power upon which he who would act rationally either in public or private life must have his eye fixed.[53]

GOD AND THE IDEA OF THE GOOD

The nature of God and the creation of the world can never be described in exact and consistent philosophical terms, Plato feels. We can use only pictures or myths to suggest here what the human mind cannot comprehend. In the *Timaeus*, one of his later dialogues, he does portray in this pictorial, mythological fashion the creative activity of God through which the world as we know it was brought into existence. God, the Creator, is here pictured in personal form. Being perfectly good himself, He makes the world as good as possible, creating it after the pattern of those enduring forms or principles which reason reveals to us behind the physical and material objects. At the end of the *Timaeus*, moreover, the distinction between the Creator and the world of rational forms tends finally to disappear; the world as we know it is not merely the manifestation of a higher rational and moral order but the manifestation of God himself.[54]

Now in the *Republic* Plato interprets the Idea of the Good in language almost identical with that used in the *Timaeus* to portray the creative activity of God. In comparing these two passages, a distinguished interpreter of Plato makes the following comment:

> The two dialogues then agree in this, that the world as we see it is represented as revealing, though revealing imperfectly, those intelligible principles upon which it is really constructed, and that this system of intelligible forms is represented as leading up to and depending upon some creative and sustaining power. In the *Timaeus* the supreme power in the universe is described in a personal way, in the *Republic* it is described in what we call an abstract way. Of the two ways no doubt Plato thought the latter truer. Though he never hesitated to use the language of popular Greek theology to explain philosophical ideas of his own, he often lets us know that this language did not and could not embody the truth as it is. The "form of the good" in the *Republic* occupies the place in regard to morals and to science which the conception of God would occupy in a modern philosophy of morals and nature, if that philosophy considered the conception of God as essential to its system.[55]

PLATO PUT INTO PRACTICE

We now have before us, in broad outline at least, Plato's Utopia and the philosophy upon which it is based. Its influence through the centuries has been immeasurable. During the Middle Ages, for example, Europe was controlled for a thousand years by the Roman Catholic Church in a fashion considerably like that envisioned by Plato in the *Republic*. The priesthood formed an order of guardians, dedicated, as Plato would have them, to the common good rather than to self-interest or personal power. Leadership was based upon ability clearly demonstrated in a long and arduous process of education and a period of practical activity much as Plato recommends; and positions of leaderships were open to any who demonstrated such ability. The clergy likewise were freed from all egoism of family as well as of possessions, practicing a sort of Christian communism that unquestionably achieved the kind of results Plato had in mind. A clear-cut division existed also between the three main classes in society: the artisans, who were tillers of the soil, the warriors, who spent their time and energy in seeking the rewards and the spoils of combat, and the spiritual rulers of mankind, who devoted themselves without thought of self to a service of the ideal good. In the common life of all men one found the kind of order and purpose, the sense of unity and harmony, that Plato took to be the foundation of morality. Even the theology of the church had manifest similarity to Plato's doctrine of Ideas; man's spiritual concerns were generally recognized as possessing an enduring reality, whereas to the physical and material realm was attributed only a very passing and unsubstantial existence.

Most of us today do not desire a return to the Middle Ages, but whenever a small and dedicated group establishes itself in a position of power and its influence is widely felt, we see again the familiar outlines of Plato's ruling class reappearing. In the early years of Russian communism, the group which ruled Russia was held together by its dedication to the common good as these revolutionary communists interpreted it; and the party demanded of its members much the sort of denial of all lesser personal ties and family loyalties which Plato took to be essential for the rulers of his state. Even the British Empire, in its best days, drew its strength from an aristocratic class whose early indoctrination in the public schools, whose training at Oxford or Cambridge, whose long years in the foreign service, and whose sense of devotion to the welfare of the nation remind us in many ways of Plato's *Republic*. Behind the recurring crises which have beset American democracy in recent years we can see too clearly also many of the evils and weaknesses of which Plato was conscious and which he set out resolutely to avoid.

Despite the many lessons that we can learn from Plato—indeed, that we must learn if democracy is to survive—there are definite limitations in his philosophy

to make it unacceptable to many people as it stands. Plato seems to be too much a rationalist and too little interested in the full development of human nature and human society; he seems to feel that life, both individual and social, can be dominated completely by the rational good that he finds so compelling. This leads him to look down upon, and in the end almost to forget, the common man. He becomes a confirmed aristocrat—his more severe critics insist upon calling him "the father of totalitarianism." As history has shown repeatedly and convincingly, any dominant group, whether an established aristocracy or a dictatorship, in time loses its concern for the common good and becomes interested almost entirely in its own privileges and power. This has happened quickly to the group of communist leaders who now rule Russia. It happened more slowly but none the less surely to the British aristocracy, especially when its power was extended over America, India, and the Near East. It happened in time even to the dominant hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church as the ignorance, squalor, and wretchedness of the medieval serf, on the one hand, and the history of the Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation on the other, make abundantly clear. It is one of the surest insights of democracy that, if the common good is to be achieved, power and privilege must somehow be equitably distributed among all men and not left completely in the hands of an entrenched minority.

This fact Plato is unwilling to admit. Nor is he ever able to resolve fully the conflict between the social order he establishes and the ideal of the good life for the individual which he outlines. As Plato points out early in the *Republic*, life at its best demands an inner harmony of spirit in which the three basic elements in human nature—appetite, reason, and ambition—all find adequate expression. Yet in the Utopia which he sets up this seems an impossible ideal. One of Plato's fundamental convictions—upon it the whole political structure of the *Republic* rests—is that the common man is unreasonable. This, of course, is too frequently true. Human beings are often short-sighted, sentimental, dominated by passion. But Plato assumes that most men are by nature so deficient in reason that they are incapable of directing either their own lives or the state. Hence he turns to the gifted few—drawn, as a rule, from his aristocracy rather than from the general run of mankind—as the potential rulers of the state, and to them he entrusts all political power. Demanding of the large majority of mankind absolute obedience to the rule of this privileged aristocracy, Plato in effect denies to them the possibility of full self-realization. The artisans are assigned a life in which man's basic biological appetites and desires are dominant. Home, family, and sufficient possessions are theirs, but the spirit of adventure, of leadership, of ambition, has no room for expression in the life that is allotted them, nor are the satisfactions of reason open to them.

Despite the superior social status accorded to the warriors and the rulers in his society, Plato provides for them, too, only a very limited opportunity for self-development. Each group is restricted so completely to one avenue of life that its

members can hardly hope to achieve Plato's ideal of a well-developed and well-integrated person. A home and family, possessions which are one's own, these are the normal foundations for stable personal development as well as for a sound society. There are few men or women capable of such self-denial and loyalty to the common good as to find in a life devoted entirely to military duty or even to intellectual reflection that well-developed and balanced personality which Plato recognizes as the moral ideal for the individual. In later expressions of Platonism this defect in Plato's philosophy becomes more and more apparent. An increasing emphasis is placed upon the spiritual at the expense of the physical and material conditions of life until at last the self-denial of the ascetic rather than a harmonious and integrated self-realization becomes the accepted moral ideal.

What he does in ethics, Plato also does in metaphysics. His emphasis upon the reality of the world of rational forms and ideals is so great that he finally separates this transcendent world almost completely from the physical and material world around us. The world of the senses, of the things we see and feel, becomes only a world of shadows, or unreality; and the Platonist is led like the philosopher-king, in the end, to withdraw from it altogether unless his duty calls him back to rescue other lost souls from an attachment to the world, the flesh, or the devil—all three having become rather thoroughly identified with one another. Until the reality of the ideal can be established without destroying the worth of the natural, the physical, and the material aspects of life, are we not left with a dualism which will prove both frustrating and in time self-defeating?

12 · NATURALISM AND IDEALISM

Aristotle

The rational idealism of Plato stirs us to discontent with the world as it now is and suggests to us possibilities of a better life that undoubtedly prove appealing. Yet Plato, we feel, does not quite have his feet on the ground: his idealism is not firmly enough established in the nature of things. And his social philosophy has serious limitations for those of us who have enjoyed the freedom and opportunity that democracy at its best affords. Not only is this a natural reaction today; it was in large measure the reaction of Plato's ablest pupil at the Academy—an unusually promising young Macedonian named Aristotle. Although largely influenced, beyond question, by the rational idealism of Plato, Aristotle felt it essential that philosophy be presented in terms that were more practical and down to earth.

For this task he was especially well equipped both by nature and background. Whereas, Plato was an Athenian aristocrat, naturally suspicious of the outlook of the masses, Aristotle came from a provincial, middle-class background. Whereas Plato was a mathematician and in spirit a poet, Aristotle was a biologist and by temperament a scientist. His interest lay in depicting the world as it was, not in trying to see with Plato what things would be like if they were completely in accord with reason. Circumstances conspired to make Aristotle interested in individual things, in observation, analysis, and experimentation. And Aristotle succeeded so well in his undertaking that he became known to a later age as *the* philosopher, the greatest and most discerning of all those who have sought to make the love of wisdom their guide in life. Someone has said, indeed, that all men can be divided into two classes: those who are Platonists and those who are Aristotelians, so penetrating is the insight of these two great Greek philosophers.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Aristotle was born in 384 B.C. in Stagira, a Macedonian town some two hundred miles north of Athens. Stagira lay in the newer, rougher region of Thrace, the "wild west" of the Hellenic world. Life there was quite different from that in a Greek city such as Athens. The people were country-bred and cared relatively little for the amenities of city life, which so appealed to Plato's aristocratic friends. Aristotle's father, Nicomachus, was a prominent physician in Stagira, however, and a man of considerable eminence throughout Macedonia. Soon after Aristotle's birth, Nicomachus was offered the post of court physician by the Macedonian king, and the family moved to Pella, the Macedonian capital, where Aristotle spent his childhood.

Little more is known of Aristotle's youth. Both his parents died when he was still a boy, and he was sent to live with a relative. It is reasonable, however, to trace his interest in science, and above all in biology, to his father's profession. Physicians frequently trained their sons in medicine, and there is some reason to think that Aristotle even as a boy may have helped his father in his surgery.*

We next hear of Aristotle when at eighteen he appeared in Athens, following the fashion of the most promising young men of the day, to study at Plato's Academy. Here he seems to have made quite an impression, not entirely favorable. He was dressed in the latest style, lisped slightly, paid careful attention to the details of his toilet, and regarded himself as without question intellectually superior to his associates. Despite the fact that he was correct about this, his whole demeanor was not calculated to endear him to the members of the Academy. Even after he became generally recognized as the ablest of the young men there, he did not get along very well either with Plato or with his other colleagues. There is ample evidence of Plato's regard for Aristotle's ability and of Aristotle's respect for the great philosopher. But both age and temperament separated the two men from each other, and gradually something of a tension between them seems to have developed.

When Plato died, in 347 B.C., Aristotle was thirty-seven years old. He naturally had ambitions to succeed to the headship of the Academy, and when Plato's nephew, Speusippus, was selected as his successor, Aristotle was bound to be irked. Not only was he a far abler man than Speusippus, but he was particularly unsympathetic to the Platonic tendency to "turn philosophy into mathematics," as Aristotle himself phrased it, which was the point of view adopted by Speusippus.

In these circumstances Aristotle was happy to accept an invitation from a former friend and colleague at the Academy, Hermeias, to set up a school of his own at Assos and to undertake there an experiment in political philosophy

* See W. D. Ross, *Aristotle*, p. 1.

somewhat like that of Plato's at Syracuse. Hermeias, who was a self-made man, had established himself as overlord at Assos and had persuaded the Persian government to recognize him as a "prince." Like Dion at Syracuse, however, he was intrigued by Plato's idea of the philosopher-king; he had known Aristotle while he himself was at the Academy for a time, and he was quite pleased to have his old friend conduct in Assos a school like that of Plato's in Athens.

Aristotle spent three or four pleasant years in Assos, gathering about him a little group of disciples and beginning to produce some of the numerous works in science and philosophy which were later to prove influential. While at Assos he married Pythias, a niece and adopted daughter of Hermeias. An alliance of this sort with a woman of independent means naturally had its appeal to Aristotle, but he seems to have been genuinely fond of his wife. The story that he spent a good part of his honeymoon making a collection of sea shells indicates that he did not allow his scientific outlook to be unduly overcome by emotion.

ARISTOTLE AND ALEXANDER

Aristotle's prestige as a philosopher was by now so well established that Philip of Macedonia offered him the position of tutor to his son Alexander. Philip was intent upon establishing his country as one of the Greek states and was posing as a champion and protector of Hellenism against the Persian "barbarians." A man of Aristotle's prestige in Greek intellectual circles certainly appealed to him as a member of the royal household. Nor did the arrangement seem undesirable to Aristotle. During the time that his father was court physician to the Macedonian ruler, Aristotle may well have known Philip himself, who was then a young man. Philip was now the most powerful of the Greek monarchs, and Alexander the successor to his throne. Like Plato, Aristotle felt that the proper education of a future ruler, especially one with so much power ahead of him, was one of the most important practical tasks of the philosopher. Obviously, this was not an opportunity to be missed. So Aristotle returned to Pella, the capital city of Macedonia, which he had left as a boy some thirty years before.

His relations with Philip seem to have always been quite friendly, and he soon won the affection and confidence of his pupil, the young prince. But the extent to which Aristotle succeeded in influencing Alexander is a matter of dispute. Alexander was certainly a gifted youth, but also wild and headstrong. His mother, princess of a small Greek state, claimed descent from Achilles and continually reminded Alexander that the blood of the Homeric kings flowed in his veins. The boy was thirteen years old when Aristotle came to be his tutor; already he knew the *Iliad* by heart. In later years he is said to have carried a copy with him as he marched upon Asia, imagining himself a second Achilles besieging Troy. Certainly Alexander saw it as his destiny to spread Hellenic culture throughout the world, fusing the Greek and Oriental civilizations into

one. There are interpreters of Aristotle who maintain that the philosopher quite definitely envisioned the day when the whole Greek world would be united with Macedonia at its head; dreamed of the political and moral domination of the world by Greek arms and Greek ideals; and in his instruction of the young prince made this the central theme.* This is not in accord with the political philosophy which Aristotle later expounded, however, and we may well doubt that he inspired or shared the imperial dreams of his young pupil.

In any case, Aristotle did not have many years to work with Alexander. Philip's efforts to dominate the Greek city states soon led to open war; he took charge of the Macedonian troops himself, and made Alexander, now eighteen, his regent in the capital. Little time was left for lessons with the philosopher, and Aristotle may not even have remained in Pella. It was not long before all Greece was at the feet of the victorious Macedonian army. Philip made a generous peace, leaving the Greek cities their freedom as vassal states, but shortly thereafter, at the wedding of one of his daughters, he was assassinated and Alexander became king. The young ruler's days of study were now definitely over, and Aristotle's work was done.

THE LYCEUM AT ATHENS

In 334 B.C., just thirteen years after leaving Plato's Academy, Aristotle returned to Athens. Now fifty years old, he was ready to establish his own school of philosophy. Despite its political reverses, Athens was still the cultural center of the Greek world; it was certainly the most congenial place for literary and scientific study, and its climate also appealed to Aristotle far more than the harsh winters in Macedonia. He rented some buildings—as an alien he could not buy them—in a park northeast of Athens. The place, formerly a favorite spot with Socrates, was dedicated to Apollo Lyceus and known as the Lyceum. Here Aristotle began to meet informally with disciples, walking back and forth under the trees and discussing philosophical problems with them. Soon the group were nicknamed the Peripatetic ("walking about") philosophers. This term stuck and later became a widely used designation of Aristotle's entire system of philosophy.

Gradually the influence and fame of the Lyceum spread abroad, and its organization became more formalized. Morning walks and talks were still given over to informal discussions of philosophy; in the afternoons Aristotle delivered more formal lectures in rhetoric and oratory. Student life was patterned upon that of the Academy but under rules which Aristotle himself drew up for the school. One member of the Lyceum seems to have been designated its leader every ten days; there was a commons, where the students dined and held their own philosophical discussions. At a later date there is a record also of a chapel dedicated to the Muses and a colonnade which housed a display of maps.

* See W. Jaeger, *Aristotle*, pp. 121-123.

With almost unbelievable energy and thoroughness, Aristotle devoted himself to scientific and philosophical study and writing during the twelve years that he conducted the Lyceum. He seems to have had an insatiable curiosity, a thousand irons in the fire, and scientific research on almost every subject under way. Every important area of human knowledge—mathematics, physics, astronomy, biology, anatomy, politics, ethics, logic, rhetoric, art, metaphysics—was of interest to him. Never before had one man so thoroughly mastered the whole body of existing knowledge; never again was it possible for a single individual to do so.

There is a good deal of speculation, as a matter of fact, as to just how Aristotle managed to finance his various undertakings. A digest of 158 political constitutions, drawn up for his use, suggests considerable secretarial assistance. He was, by this time a comparatively wealthy man, and his wife also was a woman of wealth, but his private means could hardly have been sufficient for the projects he had under way. His scientific research in Macedonia had undoubtedly been financed in large part by Philip; and there is good reason to believe that Alexander continued to provide financial aid for Aristotle's activities. According to later tradition, the young ruler gave Aristotle the sum of 800 talents (worth a million dollars or more in our own currency today), ordered all the fish and game wardens of the empire to report anything of interest to the philosopher, and even, at Aristotle's suggestion, sent one expedition to explore the sources of the Nile. But this story should perhaps not be accepted without some reservation.

Aristotle collected a large number of maps and hundreds of manuscripts on scientific and philosophical subjects, and he set up a museum of specimens to illustrate his lectures on natural history. His was the first great university library, the model for later libraries at Alexandria and Pergamum. As the center of all this research and scholarly activity, the Lyceum became an increasingly important and busy institution. It soon overshadowed the Academy, which was still in operation but since the death of Plato and the departure of Aristotle had not retained its prestige. Many people, it appears, attended lectures at both institutions. Some jealousy between the two was inevitable, but Aristotle managed to remain on friendly terms with the leaders of the Academy, whom he knew well, of course, from his earlier days as a student there.

LATER YEARS AND DEATH

Aristotle did have enemies, however. He was by now thoroughly identified in the popular mind with the Macedonian party; he was a close friend of Antipater, the Macedonian governor, and he was the advisor of Alexander. In this position he could not escape suspicion and criticism, especially in Athens, which was intensely patriotic and never quite reconciled to its position as a vassal state. At the same time, Aristotle's relations with Alexander were becoming increasingly strained. The effect of his success in the Orient upon Alexander

was not at all to the philosopher's liking. Alexander had married one Bactrian and two Persian princesses; he had assumed the imperial throne and the titles of the fallen Persian ruler; and he was surrounding himself with all the pomp and luxury of an Oriental monarch. In keeping with this Oriental outlook, he was even insisting that he be treated as a god and that all who came into his presence prostrate themselves before him.

These things were inevitably distasteful to the Greeks, who took pride in their democratic social and political tradition. The situation was brought to a head by the death of Callisthenes, Aristotle's nephew, who, probably at the philosopher's suggestion, had accompanied Alexander in his conquest of the East as official historian of the expedition. Callisthenes was outspoken in his criticism of Alexander's pretensions to divinity and this, of course, did not increase the king's affection either for Callisthenes or for Aristotle. When a plot against Alexander's life was uncovered, Callisthenes was accused of being involved and was promptly executed, although there seems no reason to believe that he was in any way connected with it. Aristotle vigorously protested such action as this, and in the heat of the controversy, Alexander accused Aristotle of having supported Callisthenes in his disrespectful and critical attitude. Even a distinguished philosopher could be punished if necessary, he insinuated. Alexander had been living so reckless and dissolute a life, however, that nature accomplished at this juncture what his enemies were unable to do. Sick with malaria after an expedition to India, he spent two successive nights in celebration and excessive drinking, and two weeks later, at the age of thirty-three, he died. On his deathbed, he characteristically left his empire "to the strongest"; in time it was divided among his four ablest generals.

With the death of Alexander, in 323 B.C., the patriotic party in Athens immediately sounded the call to revolt against the Macedonia rule. Demosthenes, the great Athenian orator, was the leader of the patriots, and feeling in the city ran high. Most of those associated with the Macedonian party fled from Athens. Aristotle, even though he had refrained from active participation in politics, could not escape. An absurd charge of atheism, based upon a hymn and epitaph he had written for his friend Hermeias, was brought against the philosopher. Remembering the fate of Socrates, Aristotle very wisely decided to depart from the city before it was too late, not wishing, he remarked, "to give the Athenians a second chance of sinning against philosophy." Leaving one of his associates, Theophrastus, in charge of the Lyceum, he retired a safe distance to a country estate which he had inherited from his mother. He had been in ill health for some time, however, and now his malady took a turn for the worse. For months he suffered with philosophical fortitude, but in the summer of 322 B.C., just a year after the death of Alexander, Aristotle himself died at the age of sixty-two.

In addition to his outstanding intellectual power, Aristotle possessed a very genuine human sympathy. The brief will that he made during the last year of

his life is more revealing in this regard perhaps than is his influential volume on ethics:

> All will be well, but in case anything should happen, Aristotle has made these dispositions. Antipater is to be executor in all matters. Nicanor* shall take charge of the girl and of the boy Nicomachus† in all that concerns them as if he were father and brother. And if anything should happen to Nicanor (which heaven forbid!) either before he marries the girl, or when he has married her but before there are children, any arrangement that he may make shall be valid. The executors and Nicanor, in memory of me and of the steady affection which Herpyllis‡ has borne toward me, shall take care of her in every other respect, and, if she desires to be married, shall see that she be given to one not unworthy, and besides what she has already received shall give her three handmaids whomsoever she shall choose besides the maid she has at present and the man-servant; and if she chooses to remain at Chalais, the lodge by the garden. None of the servants who have waited upon me shall be sold but they shall continue to be employed; and when they arrive at the proper age they shall have their freedom if they deserve it. My executors shall see to it, when the images which Gryllion has been commissioned to execute are finished, that they be set up, namely that of Nicanor, and that of Nicanor's mother; also they shall dedicate my mother's statue to Demeter at Nemea or wherever they think best. And wherever they bury me, there the bones of Pythias§ shall be laid, in accordance with her own instructions. And to commemorate Nicanor's safe return, as I vowed on his behalf, they shall set up in Stagira stone statues of life size to Zeus and Athena, the Saviours.[1]

INTELLECTUAL ACHIEVEMENT

For sheer intellectual penetration, Aristotle stands with Plato, unequaled in the ancient world and perhaps not surpassed in the modern. Those who study his works in their entirety never cease to wonder at the range and power of his intellect. It is easy to understand why Aristotle so overawed his readers during the succeeding centuries and led them to accept his word as the final authority on almost every conceivable subject. In all his far-reaching speculation, however, the dictates of reason and experience are his sole authority. We miss, in Aristotle, the vision and the poetic charm of Plato, but his complete objectivity, his exactness, and his incisiveness stand among the best examples of scientific writing.

In the field of *logical inquiry*, Aristotle's achievement was outstanding. The very development of logic as a separate discipline owed its origin and impetus in large measure to him. His various treatises on logic were put together in one work at least as early as the sixth century A.D. and became known as the

* An adopted son.
† His son and daughter.
‡ His common-law wife.
§ His first wife.

Organon, or instrument of knowledge. The thinking of the later Middle Ages was shaped almost wholly by this Aristotelian *Organon*, and it likewise provided the foundation for the formal logic of our own day. Aristotle's chief contribution to the analysis of logical reasoning is the syllogism, but his keen analytical mind finds clear expression in his works on philosophy and natural science as well as in his studies in logic.

Aristotle's accomplishment in *natural science* is equally impressive. His books on physics and astronomy as well as his studies in biology and psychology were both extensive and influential. For centuries after his death his scientific theories were accepted as authoritative throughout the whole of the Western world. His pioneer work on *Metaphysics*, or the first principles of philosophy, contains a discussion of fundamental concepts and principles which has served as the foundation of metaphysical study ever since. His study of *Politics* is equally able, and his *Poetics* was the standard analysis of literary form for generations and is still a work of primary importance. A whole library has been written around the ideas Aristotle presents here on aesthetics, and his discussion of tragedy is a classic in this field, one that has not been surpassed in its insight, careful discrimination, and over-all competence.

Despite these important contributions to science, to metaphysics, to logic, and to aesthetics, Aristotle's greatest achievement, without question, has been in the field of ethics. Of all his works, the *Nicomachean Ethics* has had the most profound and lasting impression upon philosophical thought. Here we find what is for many not only the clearest insight but the most mature, balanced, and understanding discussion available of man's ethical problems. Of the *Nicomachean Ethics* an able contemporary interpreter writes:

> It is still the most important book on the subject. Its general points of view are those to which modern writers are increasingly turning. This is not because of its perfect adequacy or finality on any subject. But the importance of its fundamental principles becomes more and more impressive when one realizes how they are based upon an extraordinarily high ideal of human life and conduct, as well as upon views of nature (within and without) which derive their force from the evidence of science and history.[2]

Although they have had wide and continued influence, the works of Aristotle

charge of Theophrastus. Upon the death of Theophrastus, some thirty-five years later, they were taken away from Athens by another pupil and friend and were later buried in a cellar to prevent their being seized by the reigning king of Pergamum, who was building up a great royal library by the simple expedient of seizing all available books. For one hundred and fifty years, the manuscripts lay hidden in the damp cellar. In 133 B.C., when the last king of Pergamum died, the manuscripts were sold to Apellico, a wealthy Peripatetic philosopher, and were taken back by him to Athens. They were by now in terrible condition, however, mildewed, worm-eaten, torn, and disarranged. An effort—not highly successful, in any case—was made to edit them and get them in better condition, but within a short time Greece was overrun by the Roman general Sulla; Athens was conquered; and Apellico's library was taken to Rome along with other choice spoils of war. There Aristotle's manuscripts again became available to scholars, and a systematic edition of his works was made and later published by Andronicus of Rhodes. It is from this edition that the works of Aristotle which we have today largely come.

SCIENCE AND METAPHYSICS

Aristotle's approach to philosophy in general and his disagreements with Plato in particular can best be understood in terms of the divergent scientific views of the two men. Plato, as we have seen was interested primarily in mathematics; Aristotle on the other hand, was deeply influenced by the natural sciences, especially biology. As a mathematician, Plato thought in terms of laws and principles which are rational and universal; two plus two has always equaled four and always will. The laws of gravity are not something we see but something we discover by reason. Reality, as the mathematician conceives it, is rational, unchanging, eternal. By contrast, Aristotle as a biologist was aware, first of all, of change and development. To be alive, a thing has to grow, change, develop. And, secondly, he recognized the necessity of patient observation, analysis, and experimentation if one hoped to gain knowledge. It is not the universal but the particular, the concrete, and the specific that must be examined, described, classified. A fundamental difference in philosophical spirit and outlook results from the fact that Plato saw the world through the eyes of a mathematician, whereas Aristotle saw life and reality largely as a biologist sees it.

ARISTOTLE, THE FIRST GREAT BIOLOGIST

Aristotle, to be sure, made an important contribution to scientific knowledge in every field. His works on astronomy, meteorology, and physics were quite extensive and were for centuries considered authoritative; but it was in biology that his scientific interests centered. Here he conducted an extensive and pains-

taking inquiry, collecting data on five hundred or more kinds of animals and investigating in detail examples of at least fifty species which covered the whole range of the animal kingdom. His studies in the growth of chicken embryos, accomplished by breaking hen's eggs at various stages of incubation, comes close to scientific method as we know it today, and his description of the development of the chick is still regarded with admiration by embryologists. He pointed out the fact that whales are mammals; he made a careful study of the habits of bees; his theory regarding the method of reproduction in cuttlefish and other cephalopods has been confirmed by recent studies. His discussion of the mechanism of sexual reproduction is careful and thorough, and he anticipated some of the findings of modern genetics, although in general his conclusions are more fanciful and open to error here than in other areas. He also studied with care the facts of heredity, recognizing the peculiar genetic problem demonstrated by the children of a woman of Elis who married a Negro: the children of this union were all white, but Negroes reappeared in the second generation.

Aristotle made many mistakes, of course, dealing constantly as he did with new problems, but his work in biology was far in advance of the thinking of his day and many of his conclusions still hold good. As a recent interpreter has said:

> Aristotle's inquiry into the distinctive structures and activities of the organic forms of matter was not only so extended, painstaking, and discriminative as to make him the father of the biological sciences; it also shows a keenness of observation, a capacity for perceiving and inferring analogies, and an ability to classify and organize that gives him first rank among the biologists and natural historians of all time. Indeed it is his work in this field that reveals most clearly both the essential scientific disposition of his mind and his genius as a scientist.[3]

Aristotle's chief contribution to biology lies, perhaps, in his careful and accurate classification of all the infinite variety of living organisms. There is a gradual ascent here, he finds, from the lowest to the highest forms of life; at the bottom of the scale no exact line of demarcation between the animate and the inanimate is possible, and in the development from the lower animal to the human form there are no sudden breaks or jumps. It is impossible to decide where plant life merges into animal life; some forms of marine life leave us "at a loss to determine whether they be animal or vegetable," he observes, and some of the lower forms of animal life give no indication whatever of sensibility. The passage from the lower animals to man is equally gradual, both physically and mentally. The ape, the monkey, and the baboon "share the properties of man and of the quadruped," Aristotle points out. The differences are largely differences in degree. Some human knowledge and intelligence have their parallels in the conduct of the higher animals; and the child hardly differs at all for a time from the young animal.[4]

Life has progressed steadily, Aristotle concludes, in complexity and in power; there has been an increasing specialization of function in the higher forms of life; and it is possible to correlate growth of intelligence with complexity of structure and mobility of form.[5] The surprising thing is that, with all these facts before him, Aristotle did not arrive at a theory of biological evolution. That he did not is due in part at least to his dependence upon Plato. The theory of evolution regards species as mutable and some at least as the product of development, but for Aristotle all species are fixed and have been in existence from the beginning. The process of growth and development, which to him as a biologist was by far the most important thing about life, goes on within this fixed and enduring scheme. Nevertheless we must not allow limitations in his outlook to blind us to the magnitude of his achievement in biology. Aristotle was the greatest of ancient biologists. Darwin, the greatest of modern biologists, has this to say of him: "Linnaeus and Cuvier have been my two gods, but they were mere schoolboys to old Aristotle."[6]

THE DOCTRINE OF ENTELECHY

Aristotle's study of biology, however, led him directly to metaphysics. His work in science is patient, impressive, and thorough, but essentially he is a philosopher. Although he describes with detail and accuracy the biological processes, the significant thing for him is the meaning of the process as a whole. It is the discovery of goals toward which the process of life is moving, and of the way in which these goals determine the concrete phenomena about us, that most concerns Aristotle. Change, growth, development—these are the most important aspects of life at whatever stage we see it, whether animal, vegetable, or human. Life is dominated by an inner urge to grow, to become something greater, and this process of development in the living organism provides Aristotle with an answer to the major dilemma left by Plato.

The world of rational law (his world of *ideas*) Plato had set apart from the material, physical universe and he had never successfully brought the two worlds together again. For Aristotle, however, neither one is complete without the other, nor can the two really be separated. There is, he points out, within all living things an inner form or pattern which guides their growth and development. Rational form is not a separate reality grasped only by the human mind, as Plato suggests; it is an inner necessity, Aristotle insists, which molds the material world in accord with the end or design of the living organism. To this inner creative force Aristotle gives the name *entelechy*.* It is for him the most significant aspect of life and of reality. Development is not haphazard or accidental; growth does not take place at random, he points out; everything is guided naturally by a creative force within itself, its *entelechy*. "For we call anything

* The Greek term ἐντελέχεια means, literally, having its end or purpose within itself.

'natural' when by virtue of a principle inherent in itself it progresses continuously toward some goal," Aristotle writes. "Such principles do not all make for the same goal, but each inner principle always makes for the same goal of its own, if nothing interferes."[7]

A good illustration of the Aristotelian *entelechy* is afforded by examining an acorn. One cannot understand what an acorn really is simply by analyzing its physical or chemical components. By far the most important thing about an acorn is the creative force within it, which, given the proper conditions, will enable it to become an oak tree. In the very structure of the acorn there is the pattern or form of an oak which guides and directs its growth: This is its *entelechy*. This inner form is not something physical or material, but it is nevertheless very real—the most significant aspect in the reality of the acorn, but not the only aspect of its reality, Aristotle points out. To produce a great oak tree, the acorn must have good soil, water, and sunshine. Then it will grow and in time achieve the end for which it was fashioned. Without good soil and ample water, it will still grow, but it will become only a small, struggling oak—a scrub oak, not a great tree. What is true of the acorn is true of all living creatures. The egg of the hen is so designed that it will become a chicken, not a bird or a duck; the young gorilla will grow to be an animal, the young child in time will become a man.

In his theory of *entelechy*, Aristotle combines the philosophy of Plato with insights later stressed by Dewey. Plato, on the one hand, was deeply impressed with the rational form or pattern without which a thing could not be what it was; Dewey was equally impressed with the process of growth and development fundamental to life and achievement. Each is in a measure blind to the aspect of reality seen by the other. Aristotle sees both, and the necessity of both. Life is a process of growth and development, but it is growth in a definite direction, toward a clearly defined end or goal, development with a specific purpose. The rational forms that Plato recognizes are not, then, something apart from the world of matter; they are the guiding and directing principles by which the physical and material growth of the living organism is controlled. It is with Plato's inherent dualism that Aristotle disagrees fundamentally in building his own philosophy. Plato, he felt, was too out of touch with the world in which we live—especially he missed the most important aspect of reality which for Aristotle is the individual thing. The bridge is not a real bridge so long as it is only a rational pattern, existing apart by itself, Aristotle insists. It becomes a real bridge only when the pattern is realized or actualized in a specific, individual bridge. Reality, that is, involves both *form* and *matter*. The rational form Aristotle takes to be essential; without it there could be no bridge. But the *material* which is used to give body and substance to the form is equally necessary. Without it there could also be no bridge. Plato had set off the world of rational ideas

or forms too completely by itself, Aristotle felt, giving it an independent reality which it did not possess.

Aristotle's analysis of form and matter led him to see, moreover, that they were relative terms, not fixed or final aspects of reality. However perfectly any object might achieve its own particular form, it might still be only the material for some further and more developed form. The great oak is the form toward which the acorn grows and which it may finally realize. But then the oak itself may become the matter from which a group of sturdy chairs and tables are made. And these chairs and tables, once completed, are not ends in themselves but are used as the materials from which a schoolroom is designed. And even the school, however perfect in itself, is but one of the buildings which go to make up a well-planned community. So Aristotle is led to look, finally, for some pattern which shapes the nature and direction of the universe as a whole, a design in which human society, life below the human level, and the physical universe itself are all component parts. That design, of course, is God.

THE NATURE OF THE SOUL

In Christian theology we have been more influenced by the dualism of Plato than by the naturalism of Aristotle, and as a result we have tended to separate the soul almost completely from the body. For Aristotle, however, soul and body cannot be separated. They are not two different substances but, like form and matter, two inseparable elements in a single reality. "The soul," Aristotle writes, "is the 'determining principle' of the living body." It is "the essential and enduring character of a body possessing the capacity of life," the entire vital principle of any organism, the inner form which guides the life and development of the whole organism—in short, its *entelechy*. "Nature, like mind, always acts for a purpose, and this purpose is its end. In animals the soul is such an end (*telos*). That it should be so is according to nature; for every part of a living body is an organ of the soul. Evidently then all such parts are for the sake of the soul, which is their natural end."[8]

It is necessary, therefore, to recognize not only a human soul but also an animal and a vegetable soul, Aristotle points out, "The nutritive soul must be possessed by everything that is alive," he writes, "and every such thing is endowed with soul from its birth to its death. For what has been born must grow, reach maturity and decay." It is the "soul" of the carrot or the acorn—that is, its *entelechy*—which within rather narrow limits shapes its destiny and provides for the ongoing of its species. Similar functions are performed by the animal soul, but it has wider activities and higher powers as well. Animals not only live, they have sensations, they feel, and they move about at will. Movement, moreover, is not entirely haphazard. The animal moves toward certain things and away from others; its movements are directed by an inner desire and need.[9]

The soul of man, the rational soul, is for Aristotle the highest order of being

in the universe. It possesses the properties of both the vegetable and the animal soul, but its powers far exceed theirs. The power of rational thought, Aristotle believes, is confined to the human soul alone. The higher animals exhibit many human traits in their behavior; some even develop to the level of young children. Hence we cannot draw a hard and fast time between the animal and the human level. But there is a point beyond which the animal cannot go; he can never think and act rationally. Do what we will with a young gorilla, it will still grow up to be a gorilla. We can teach it to sit at a table and eat with a spoon, to sleep in a bed, to walk upright on its hindlegs, but it has the soul of the gorilla; the *entelechy* which directs its growth and development will produce a gorilla, never a rational human being. In the human soul there are the potentialities for growth and development which permanently distinguish the human infant from the baby gorilla. At the age of six or eight months, the baby gorilla is far ahead of the young child; it may take six or eight years for the child to catch up with the animal, but from that time on its capacities and potentialities enable it to outstrip the most powerful gorilla.

There is an even more significant fashion, Aristotle points out, in which the rational capacity of the human soul distinguishes man from the animals. Man is able to shape his own destiny in a way that is not possible for the animal or the vegetable soul. There is nothing that the carrot or the acorn can do about its development, about its future. Given good soil and climate, the seed will grow well; without these, it will wither away and die. The animal can do a little more to fulfill its destiny, but not much. The hungry dog can seek food; the bird can migrate from north to south to find better climate. But in either case the destiny of the animal is determined almost completely by forces within or without over which it exerts no effective control.

Appetite drives the animal inescapably toward its end, Aristotle points out, but in human conduct reason may supplant appetite as the guiding and directing force. Though prompted by desire and appetite, intelligent men "do not yield to their inclinations but follow reason," Aristotle writes. The human soul has its destiny in a very real sense within its own power. By the use of practical reason, a man can not only understand the end or purpose of his life as a human being, but also in large measure determine that end and so shape his development.[10] After examining his own abilities and interests, and analyzing the needs of his community, one youth may well decide to become a doctor, another an engineer. And the life of each is naturally altered as he intelligently chooses the means that will enable him to achieve the ends decided upon. Thus the *entelechy* that shapes the growth, the purpose, and the end of a man's life is within his own control in a way that sets him apart fundamentally from the animal world. His intelligence gives man freedom—in the only sense that freedom is possible. It is easy to see why for Aristotle reason is the crowning glory of man, why man's distinctive excellence lies in the development of intelligence.

Although he shares a number of functions with the animals, man alone can have moral character. For man's behavior alone can be determined by deliberate choice with regard to an ideal plan of conduct, and this for Aristotle is the basis of moral character. Despite the rudimentary parallels to moral conduct among such animals as dogs or horses, animals are nevertheless nonmoral. A man, moreover, who has lost his reason has lost his moral character. For such a man has a soul little different from that of the vegetable or the animal. His life is dominated by his appetites and desires, and the end of life for him is determined by these forces much as it is for the animal. Thus without intelligence a man can not act as a man; hence he can not *be* a man.[11] In this connection one should perhaps point out that Aristotle's view of women does not follow that in Plato's *Republic* but instead agrees rather largely with the position later adopted by Schopenhauer and Lin Yutang. Feminine nature is dominated by the maternal instincts; the plan and purpose of a woman's life is fixed almost completely by her desire for a home and family, Aristotle maintains. Social conditions may affect the achievement of this *entelechy* in the case of any individual woman, to be sure, and her life will differ as a result, much as the growth of the acorn is conditioned by its soil and climate. But intelligence and reason play relatively little part in shaping the ends of life for a woman, Aristotle believes.[12] In general, reason for her is still the tool of desire. It enables her to get what she wants more surely and more subtly perhaps, but it does little to modify the desires of her soul.

THE COMPULSION OF THE DIVINE IDEAL

Like his treatment of the soul, Aristotle's approach to God is thoroughly scientific in spirit. His theology is, in fact, largely an extension of his physics or, better perhaps, of his metaphysics. No study of the universe is complete, he maintains, without an adequate explanation of its cause. What made it like it is? For Aristotle the over-all process of growth, development, movement toward a given end throughout the universe has to be explained; it cannot be taken for granted. And for an explanation he turns again to his basic concept of *entelechy*. As the growth of all living organisms is determined by an *entelechy*, an inner form or purpose, which constitutes the soul of the organism, so, Aristotle argues, the initial impulse to movement, as well as the continued development of the universe as a whole, is the result of an inner creative purpose or *entelechy* of its own, which is God. Aristotle's God is the goal toward which all things move, the drive and purpose of things, and so the final as well as the first cause of nature. God is, in a very real sense, the soul of the universe, the highest order of intelligent or rational being.[13]

Is God, as the guiding force, the ideal end and cause of the universe, immanent within it as the soul is within the body? Are God and the universe really one, or is God in any sense transcendent, existing in his own right apart from the uni-

verse? Aristotle recognizes the dilemma into which Spinoza later falls, and he tries to avoid it by separating God from the universe in a way that the human soul is not separated from the body. His God is not an immanent deity, as is the God of Spinoza. It is true for Aristotle, as for Spinoza, that "divine providence coincides completely with the operation of natural causes,"* and there is no conflict between science and religion. But God must be transcendent as well as immanent, Aristotle maintains. Does the universe contain the highest good "as something separate and by itself, or as the order of its parts?" he asks. "Probably in both ways, as an army does; for its good is found both in its order and in its leader, and more in the latter; for he does not depend on the order but it depends on him."[14]

God, moreover, must be an "unmoved mover," Aristotle argues, coining a famous phrase. He must be the cause of motion, of change, and of development within the universe without himself being involved in this change. God, that is, must be pure form, Aristotle concludes, the only instance of its kind. Everywhere else both form and matter are essential for reality, but not in God. God's perfection is obtained by separating him from the material and the physical world in a way in which the soul is not separate from the body. Matter, Aristotle holds, is the cause of imperfection. An ideal form or end can never be completely realized in a physical or material medium. Here we find the source of evil in life, the limitations of the body upon the soul, the imperfections of the universe in contrast with the perfection of God.[15] The divine nature, however, is absolutely perfect, not marred, as is human nature, by the imperfections of ignorance or of failure to achieve its purposes. Hence the imperfections of human life and society cannot be a part of God. Evil and error must have another explanation.

How can such a God, removed from all involvement in the struggle of life, serve as the *entelechy*, the end and creative purpose, of the whole universe? To meet this difficulty Aristotle makes use of poetic rather than scientific language, and uses it quite skillfully. "God moves the world as the beloved object moves the lover," he writes. "The object of desire and the object of thought move in this way; they move without being moved."[16] The relation of Aristotle's God to the universe may be more clearly indicated, perhaps, by analogy from contemporary life. At a university dance an idealistic young freshman sees the current beauty queen, divinely beautiful and appealing. He falls in love with her on sight and vows to become worthy of her love. His whole life is changed by the experience. A new ideal moves him, guides his conduct, remakes his life. But—and this is the tragedy of Aristotle's theology—despite the freshman's undying devotion he is never able to meet the girl who has exerted so profound an influence upon him. She remains completely unconscious even of his existence. The struggles through which he goes, his achievements and his disappointments,

* See E. Zeller, *Aristotle*, Vol. II, p. 329.

affect her not at all. In this situation we find the God of Aristotle exemplified. As the ideal goal toward which all things move, he is the first and the final cause of the universe, its inspiration and guiding principle. But in his perfection he is completely unmoved by the toil, the effort, and the failures of man.

In this compulsion of the divine ideal, however, Aristotle finds both adequate explanation of the universe and inspiration for life at its best. The moments in which we apprehend the truth approach the life that God lives eternally; but marvelous as are these moments of experience, the divine life is even better, going beyond anything that in human experience we are capable of imagining. "Such then is the principle upon which depend the heavens and the world of nature," Aristotle concludes in a manner unusually exalted for him. "And its life is like the best that we enjoy, and enjoy for but a short time (for it is ever in this state, which we cannot be). And if then God is always in that good state in which we sometimes are, this compels our wonder; and if in a better state then this compels it yet more. And God *is* in a better state. We say, therefore, that God is a living being, eternal, most good, so that life and a continual eternal existence belong to God; for this *is* God."[17]

ON THE NATURE OF HAPPINESS

The moral philosophy of Aristotle, like his study of natural science, is empirical and practical in spirit. The function of ethics, he maintains, is to deal with the activities that befit our human estate. Its proper study is man, not God. And in his discussion of human conduct we find the same habits of observation and analysis, the same patient endeavor to get at the truth revealed in human experience—that is to say, the same scientific temper—which made his work in biology so outstanding. Of his general ethical theory, Aristotle writes:

> Such arguments then carry some degree of conviction; but it is by the practical experience of life and conduct that the truth is really tested, since it is there that the final decision lies. We must therefore examine the conclusions we have advanced by bringing them to the test of the facts of life. If they are in harmony with these facts, we may accept them; if found to disagree, we must deem them mere theories.[18]

Because of this approach, Aristotle has frequently been called the first great humanist. By a recent scholar his ethics is classified with some justification as an early scientific naturalism.[19] It seems more accurate, however, to treat his moral philosophy as an appealing synthesis of naturalism and idealism. As Aristotle interprets morals, there is no conflict between the natural and the ideal in human life. The moral ideal is not something artificial or arbitrary, imposed upon men who are at heart antagonistic to it. Instead, as Santayana has said, for Aristotle

"every ideal has a natural basis, and everything natural has an ideal development." Excellence of all kinds, both intellectual and moral, has its roots in nature, Aristotle believes. "We are just, temperate, courageous, and the like from our very birth," he writes; "natural moral states exist even in children and lower animals. . . . It is neither by nature nor in defiance of nature that virtues arise in us. Nature gives us the capacity, and that capacity is perfected by habit."[20]

THE TRUTH AND THE ERROR IN HEDONISM

The mistake of moralists like Plato lies in trying to force men to be good. A brief examination of human conduct is enough to demonstrate that it is not goodness for its own sake but happiness that men desire. Goodness and happiness must not be opposed to each other; the essential dependence of one upon the other must be demonstrated if we want men to be good, Aristotle believes. There are three more or less generally accepted views of the good life, he points out: (1) the life of enjoyment, (2) the life of honor, and (3) the life of contemplation. But in each case we find that happiness is actually the aim of life. It is what men hope to achieve whether they seek it through pleasure, through ambition, or through philosophy.

> Now happiness above all else appears to be absolutely final in this sense, since we always choose it for its own sake and never as a means to something else; whereas honour, pleasure, intelligence, and excellence in its various forms, we choose indeed for their own sakes (since we should be glad to have each of them although no extraneous advantages resulted from it), but we also choose them for the sake of happiness, in the belief that they will be a means to our securing it. But no one chooses happiness for the sake of honour, pleasure, etc., nor as a means to anything whatever other than itself.[21]

This is as far as Aristotle's agreement with the hedonists goes, however. All men want happiness, but few know how to obtain it. To say that happiness is the chief good in life is, then, something of a platitude; a clearer account of what it is is still necessary. The hedonists in particular have misled men, Aristotle feels, by their emphasis upon the pursuit of pleasure as the way to happiness. Hedonism is correct, to be sure, in insisting that all men naturally seek pleasure and desire happiness. But the error of hedonism lies in its complete failure to understand the nature of pleasure and the relation of happiness to the business of living well.[22] Hedonism encourages us to believe that by seeking to enjoy ourselves as fully as we can, we will achieve happiness. Instead, we end by being bored and disillusioned, as Schopenhauer so convincingly points out, and then we wonder what is the matter. The hedonist, Aristotle suggests, is like a man who, coming into a cool room and noticing that the thermometer only registers 60°, raises the mercury to 76° by blowing his warm breath on the bulb and then is surprised

to find that he is no warmer. In similar fashion, the advocates of hedonism, from Aristippus and Epicurus to Omar Khayyam and Lin Yutang, have gone on raising their own emotional temperature by the pursuit of pleasure; but they never succeed in achieving enduring happiness because they do not understand its cause. Rationalistic philosophers like the Stoics or Plato, on the other hand, have been equally at fault in trying to divorce the good life entirely from pleasure, Aristotle maintains. Before we can build a sound philosophy of living, we need a clear insight into the problem left unsolved by hedonism, and Aristotle provides for us one of the most illuminating discussions of this problem to be found in the literature of philosophy.

The initial error of hedonism lies in treating pleasure as an independent emotional state or an end in itself. Careful psychological analysis shows us, Aristotle contends, that this is not the case. Pleasure is actually a by-product; it is the mark and the completion of an activity which is functioning properly. "Pleasures are not really processes, nor do they result from the process of acquiring our faculties, but from their exercise," Aristotle writes. Pleasure accompanies the "unimpeded activity of our natural state."[23] Defined more exactly, *pleasure is the emotional accompaniment of the healthy exercise of function.* When we are hungry and eat a good meal, we enjoy it; that is, we find marked pleasure in the experience. And the same is true of all normal human functions. A game of tennis when we need exercise, conversation with friends when we are lonely, reading a good book in the evening—these activities are all accompanied by pleasure. One might well term pleasure the sign and seal of such healthful exercise of function. And in this sense obviously pleasure is desirable.

> An activity is augmented by the pleasure that belongs to it, since those who work with pleasure always work with more discernment and with greater accuracy—for instance, students who are fond of geometry become proficient in it, and similarly lovers of music, architecture, or the other arts, make progress in their favorite pursuit because they enjoy it.[24]

"Pleasure and life are inseparably united," however; pleasure cannot be pursued successfully as an end in itself. As Walter Lippmann observed, lovers who have nothing to do but love each other are not to be envied. Love and nothing else is soon nothing else. We must live a life with all its capacities in healthful and well-proportioned exercise to enjoy the pleasure which all men naturally desire. For activities, when not healthful, will not bring us pleasure. To the man who has just eaten a large Christmas dinner, food has no appeal. If he eats again, eating will bring not pleasure but pain. The athlete who has just played the full sixty minutes of a strenuous football game will not find a game of tennis appealing or pleasant. The student who is devoting eight or ten hours a day to serious study will not read many books for pleasure.

between the natural and the ideal; each is incomplete, as a matter of fact, without the other. Goodness is simply the full realization of our natural capacities as rational human beings. The correct approach to goodness, Aristotle maintains, is in terms of function. A carpenter or a shoemaker has a certain function—to build houses or to make shoes. A good carpenter is one who builds good houses —that is, he performs his function well. In similar fashion we can easily determine what constitutes a good man: he is one who functions well as a human being.

> If the function of a harper is to play the harp, that of a good harper is to play the harp well. If that is so, and if we declare that the function of man is a certain form of life, and define that form of life as the exercise of the soul's faculties and activities in conformity with its rational principle, and say that the function of a good man is to perform these activities well and rightly—from these premises it follows that the good of man is the active exercise of his soul's faculties in accordance with excellence. This activity, moreover, must occupy a complete lifetime; for one swallow does not make a spring, nor does one fine day; and similarly a brief period of happiness does not make a man supremely happy or blessed (*makarios*).[35]

Goodness, then, means, for Aristotle, that excellence in living which comes only with man's realization of those ideals and purposes that constitute the human soul. And in such self-realization man finds enduring happiness. "Each man has just so much of happiness as he has of virtue and wisdom, and of virtuous and wise action," Aristotle writes. "The happy man lives well and does well; for we have practically defined happiness as a sort of good life and good action."[36]

ENDS AND MEANS

If we are to achieve the happiness that accompanies self-realization, such for Aristotle are the ends toward which human life must be directed. But how are these ends to be accomplished? Again Aristotle speaks with practical wisdom. It is impossible to live the good life without the means necessary to do so, he maintains. The material, the physical, and the economic aspects of life are, as Dewey later insists, as necessary a part of self-realization as are intellectual and spiritual achievement. In fact, the two cannot be separated.

> Happiness plainly requires external goods, for it is impossible, or at least not easy, to act nobly without some furniture of fortune. There are many things that can be done only through instruments, so to speak, such as friends and wealth and political influence; and there are some things whose absence takes the bloom off our happiness, as good birth, the blessing of children, personal beauty. Happiness, then, seems to stand in need of this kind of prosperity.[37]

The larger and nobler our ends in life, the more ample, indeed, our means must be. The editor of a great metropolitan newspaper, the president of a great industrial corporation, the ambassador of our nation to a great foreign power, all must have adequate resources available if they are to accomplish successfully the tasks they have undertaken. It is in this connection that Aristotle develops his famous doctrine of virtue as the desirable mean between extremes. Since our needs vary with different circumstances and different purposes, no one right course of action for all people can be prescribed. The desirable mean between extremes is just what is needed to accomplish our purposes in any specific situation, no more and no less.

> By the mean relative to us I understand that which is neither too much nor too little for us; and that is not the same for all. For instance if ten be too large and two be too small, if we take six, we take the mean relative to the thing itself, or the arithmetical mean. But the mean relative to us cannot be found in this way. If ten pounds of food is too much for a given man to eat, and two pounds too little, it does not follow that the trainer will order him six pounds; for that also may perhaps be too much for the man in question, or too little; too little for Milo [a famous wrestler], too much for the beginner. And so we may say generally that a master in any art avoids what is too much and what is too little, and seeks for the mean and chooses it—not the absolute but the relative mean. So that people are wont to say of a good book, that nothing could be taken from it or added to it, implying that excellence is destroyed by excess or deficiency, but secured by observing the mean.[38]

To illustrate this principle in the realm of conduct, Aristotle arranges the qualities of character in his triads, which have become famous. In each such triad, the extremes of excess on the one hand and deficiency on the other are vices, the mean is virtue. So between cowardice and rashness, we find courage; between humility and pride, modesty; between quarrelsomeness and flattery, friendship; between sloth and greed, ambition; between indecisiveness and impulsiveness, self-control.* The doctrine of the mean does not imply that a moderate amount of every kind of action or emotion is good, however. On this point Aristotle is quite specific. "There are some," he writes, "whose very name implies wickedness, e.g. malice, shamelessness, and envy among the emotions, or adultery, theft and murder among actions. They are always sinful. Right or wrong in such actions does not depend upon committing them with the right person, at the right time or in the right manner; on the contrary it is sinful to do anything of the kind at all."[39]

The doctrine of the mean is as applicable to the ordinary choices of life as to those which we usually term moral. Indeed, Aristotle's definition of goodness as

* See *Ethics*, II, 8.

excellence in living removes all distinction between the peculiarly moral and the nonmoral. Good and evil apply equally to all human activities. "How much wealth should a man possess?" Aristotle asks. A mean conformable to his nature and his needs; that is, enough to enable him to realize his own powers of mind and body to the full, and no more. This mean will vary, therefore, with individuals and conditions. A dollar may be enough for a lazy or shiftless beggar, a million dollars too little for a great scientist or industrialist active in social enterprises of broad significance. The Aristotelian mean is, then, a general rather than a specific guide in conduct, but it is of real value as a description of the desirable ethical attitude. It means intelligent decisions rather than blind obedience to custom or to passion. It leaves room for continuous growth in insight and achievement; it provides the needed flexibility for different conditions and different individual needs. It forces one to deal with specific and concrete situations, not to be content with abstract principles or vague aspirations.*

Morals, then, for Aristotle, are not absolute or unchanging principles of conduct. Things become good or evil in terms of the purposes they serve, the ends for which they are used. We cannot say that a monk who takes the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience is better or worse than the man whose income is large and whose social obligations are extensive. Whether such things are good or bad depends upon how effectively they serve the purposes of the individual as well as upon what his purposes are. Conduct that is right for one man in one set of circumstances may well be wrong for another in different circumstances Here Aristotle puts himself in accord with the underlying principle of all Greek moral philosophy: a man cannot be good unless he is intelligent. Before he can achieve moral excellence of any kind, he must know what he is doing and how his full self-realization is furthered thereby.

ARISTOTLE'S MORAL IDEAL

The man whose life and conduct exhibit moral excellence is a man who in Aristotle's terms possesses greatness of spirit, or high-mindedness. Such a man he calls "magnanimous," and his description of the magnanimous or high-minded man provides an excellent over-all view of his own practical philosophy of living:

> High-mindedness, as its very name suggests, means to be occupied with great things. A person is thought to be high-minded who regards himself as worthy of great things and who is worthy of them. The high-minded man will be the best of men, for the better a man is the more he deserves, and he that is best deserves most. Therefore the truly high-minded man must be a good man.
>
> It is thought that the gifts of fortune also contribute to greatness of spirit; for people of high birth or great political power or wealth are considered to

* See J. M. Warbeke, *The Searching Mind of Greece*, p. 347.

be worthy of honor, because they are superior to their fellows, and that which is superior is always held in high honor. But in truth it is only the good man who deserves honor, although if a man possesses the gifts of fortune as well as goodness he is thought still more worthy of honor. But people who possess goods of this kind without virtue cannot rightly be called high-minded, as neither true worth nor greatness of spirit is possible without complete virtue.

The high-minded man does not run into danger for trifling reasons nor is he fond of encountering dangers, as there are few things he values enough to endanger himself for them. But he will face danger in a great cause, and in the hour of danger will be ready to sacrifice his life knowing that there are conditions under which life is not worth having. He is fond of conferring benefits but ashamed to receive them, because the former is a mark of superiority and the latter of inferiority. He will not compete for the common objects of ambition and will not engage in many undertakings, but only in such as are important and distinguished. He will, of course, be open in his hatreds and his friendships, as secrecy is an indication of fear; and he will care more for the truth than for what people think. Nor will he bear malice; for no one who is high-minded will dwell upon the past, least of all upon past injuries; he will prefer to overlook them. He will not be a gossip; he will not talk much about himself or about anybody else, for he does not care to be praised himself or to get other people censured; he will not speak evil of others, even of his enemies, except when he deliberately intends to insult them. In troubles that cannot be avoided, or trifling mishaps, he will never cry for help, since to do so would imply that he took them seriously. He is the kind of person who would rather possess what is beautiful, although it does not bring in profit, than what is profitable only, as such a preference indicates his self-sufficiency. The high-minded man will also be slow in movement, his voice will be deep and his manner of speaking deliberate. For it is not likely that a man will be in a hurry if there are not many things that he takes seriously; or that he will be excited if he regards nothing as great.[40]

POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Aristotle's political philosophy, like his ethics and his natural science, is concrete, empirical, and practical. His concern is with the specific and the individual, not the abstract or the general. Whereas Plato in the *Republic* begins with the state and then seeks to fit the individual into a larger social framework, Aristotle in his *Politics* recognizes that the purpose of the state is to make possible the good life for the individuals who compose it and insists that we never lose sight of this fact. "The good of man must be the aim of the science of politics," he writes. "He who would properly inquire about the best form of state ought first

to determine what is the most acceptable life; while this remains uncertain the best form of the state must remain uncertain."[41] Accordingly, the *Nicomachean Ethics* is designed by Aristotle as the initial section of his own later work on political philosophy.

Political philosophy, then, provides the larger social dimension of ethics. On this both Aristotle and Plato are agreed. Politics, Aristotle writes, is "the master science." "To secure the good of one person is better than nothing, but to secure the good of a nation or state is a finer and more godlike achievement."[42] In order to accomplish this task successfully, the political philosopher must understand human life; he must not only know the conditions under which happiness is achieved but he must also know why men act as they do.

> Now if this is so, it clearly behooves the political philosopher to have some acquaintance with psychology, just as the physician who is to heal the eye, or other parts of the body, must know anatomy. Indeed a foundation of science is even more requisite for the philosopher in as much as political philosophy is a higher and more honorable art than medicine. The student of political philosophy, therefore, as well as the psychologist, must study human nature.[43]

A sound psychology reveals to us that human personality is a social product, that man is by nature "a political animal." We can understand the true nature of anything only when we see what it is like after it is fully developed; and the full development of human nature is possible only in a social situation. The state, indeed, is so essential a part of man's full social development that we can properly speak of it as "a creature of nature, originating in the bare needs of life, and continuing in existence for the sake of a good life," Aristotle writes.

> The individual, when isolated, is not self-sufficing. He who is unable to live in society or who has no need to do so because he is so self-sufficient, must be either a beast or a god. A social instinct is implanted in all men by nature, and he who founded the state was the greatest of benefactors. For man, when perfected, is the best of animals, but, when separated from law and justice, he is the worst of all.[44]

REACTIONS TO PLATO'S REPUBLIC

It is easy to understand, of course, why Aristotle, with his concern for the happiness of the individual and his more empirical, practical mind, does not find the measures proposed in Plato's *Republic* appealing. A communistic ownership of goods and property such as Plato advocates for his rulers seems to Aristotle particularly undesirable. To begin with, such a scheme simply will not work. "There is always a difficulty in men living together and having all human relations in common, but especially their having common property," writes our practical philosopher. "The partnerships of fellow-travelers are an example to

the point, for they generally fall out over everyday matters and quarrel about any trifle which turns up." Moreover, what belongs to everybody will be cared for by nobody. "That which is common to the greatest number has the least attention bestowed upon it. . . . . Everyone thinks chiefly of his own, hardly ever of the public interest; and then only when it concerns him as an individual."[45]

Men make more progress when everyone is attending to his own business, Aristotle comments in strikingly contemporary vein. Remove the private ownership of property and you destroy a man's interest in achievement. When you destroy private property, you take away the means for generosity, one of the finest moral traits, and for friendship. "There is the greatest pleasure in doing a kindness or service to friends or guests which can only be rendered when a man has private property." There are dangers, of course, that the desire for wealth may promote a grasping, selfish attitude; and there are many social advantages in the common use of property. When all the relevant facts, both psychological and social, are considered, Aristotle reaches the conclusion that the ownership of property should be private but the use of it common. The special business of the legislator, then, he suggests, will be to create in men the kind of benevolent disposition that will lead to the proper use of wealth for the good of all.* In this connection Aristotle observes, with some sarcasm, that Plato does not go far enough when in the *Laws* he proposes that the wealthiest citizens of the state can possess only five times the amount possessed by the poorest. In such a situation, Aristotle points out, "the legislator who fixes the amount of property should also fix the number of children; for if the children are too many for the property the law must be broken." As Plato's *Republic* plainly shows, once the regulation of life by the state is begun it cannot be stopped short of complete regimentation. "Such legislation," Aristotle writes of Plato's Utopia, "may have a specious appearance of benevolence; men readily listen to it, and are easily induced to believe that in some wonderful manner everybody will become everybody's friend, especially when someone is heard denouncing the evils now existing, which are said to arise from the possession of private property. These evils, however, arise from quite another source—the wickedness of human nature."[46]

Plato's proposed communism of wives and children Aristotle finds even less palatable. An arrangement of this kind would destroy the very foundations of the good life, which it is the purpose of the state to provide for its citizens. "How much better it is to be the real cousin of somebody than to be a son after Plato's fashion," Aristotle writes. "In a state having women and children in common; love will be watery; the father will certainly not say 'my son' or the son 'my father.' Of the two qualities which chiefly inspire regard and affection, namely, that a thing is your own and that it awakens real love in you—neither can exist in such a state as this." It is foolish to talk of the happiness of the whole state, as

* This view became the basis of Bentham's political philosophy. See pp. 63-64.

Plato does, without realizing that "the whole cannot be happy unless most, or all, or some of its parts enjoy happiness."[47]

Aristotle is equally vigorous and direct in rejecting Plato's notion of equality for women. "The male is by nature superior," he writes, "and the female inferior; the one rules, and the other is ruled; this principle, of necessity, extends to all mankind." The superiority of a man lies in his greater rational ability, not in mere physical strength, according to our philosopher. His superior intelligence distinguishes the man who is by nature a leader or ruler from those destined to be subjects as it distinguishes the free man from the slave, and men in general from women and children: "For the slave has no deliberative faculty at all," Aristotle writes; "the woman has, but it is without authority; and the child has, but it is immature." This position will appeal, no doubt, to many today who insist that woman's place is in the home, not the office or the legislature or the army; but it leads Aristotle inevitably to a somewhat dubious defense of slavery and established privilege. There is by nature a basic difference in individuals, he maintains, which every social order must recognize. In some men the rational principle directs the soul, whereas in others it does not; "the lower sort are by nature slaves, and it is better for them as for all inferiors that they should be under the rule of a master. . . . That some should rule and others be ruled is a thing not only necessary, but expedient; from the hour of their birth, some are marked out for subjection, others for rule," Aristotle maintains, accepting without serious question the finality of those differences upon which Plato based his aristocratic social philosophy.[48]

MARRIAGE AND EDUCATION

Aristotle likewise agrees with Plato that marriage and education are of such great social significance as to require their regulation by the state for the common good, and his biological interests lead him to treat eugenics as particularly important. Children should be produced only during the period at which men are at the prime of their intelligence, he maintains: "Men who are too old, like those who are too young, produce children who are defective in body and mind. Women should marry when they are about eighteen years of age, and men at thirty and seven; then they are in the prime of life, and the decline in the powers of both will coincide."[49] The modern romantic notion that "falling in love" should have anything to do with marriage did not occur to Aristotle or to Plato.

The proper education of its children is also an important responsibility of the state, since both their own happiness and the welfare of the state depend ultimately upon the kind of opportunities they have for growth and development. For this reason Aristotle advocates a public system of education, rather than the private method "where everyone looks after his own children separately, and gives them separate instruction of the sort he thinks best." After the child has had about five years of play and physical development, directors of education,

appointed by the state, should take charge of the educational program. A careful censorship is also desirable during these early years to safeguard the development of character. "There is nothing which the legislator should be more careful to drive away than indecency of speech; for the light utterance of shameful words leads soon to shameful actions," Aristotle points out. "And since we do not allow improper language, clearly we should also banish pictures or speeches from the stage which are indecent."[50]

In his program of public education, Aristotle is willing to include the kind of knowledge useful in business and other vocations, but he maintains that the cultivation of the intellectual virtues is the primary aim of education. This constitutes "liberal" education and provides the necessary basis for moral excellence and happiness, for without such intellectual development a man cannot hope to achieve that full self-realization upon which the good life depends. "It is clear that there are branches of learning and education which we must study merely with a view to leisure spent in intellectual activity, and these are to be valued for their own sake; whereas those kinds of knowledge which are useful in business are to be deemed necessary, and exist for the sake of other things," Aristotle writes. "To be always seeking after the useful does not become free and exalted souls."[51]

It is impossible, however, to educate the youth of the land in a social vacuum. The broader social ideals and aspirations of the community must provide the framework and inner spirit of our educational program. "The citizen should be molded to suit the form of government under which he lives," Aristotle points out. "For each government has a peculiar character which originally formed and which continues to preserve it. The character of democracy creates democracy, and the character of oligarchy creates oligarchy; and always the better the character the better the government." We frequently act as though we could safeguard democracy by using the totalitarian method in education and discarding entirely the spirit of democracy. If we want to preserve democracy, our program of education must cultivate the democratic way of life in our youth, Aristotle insists. "And yet in our day this principle is universally neglected," he writes. "The best laws, though sanctioned by every citizen of the state, will be of no avail unless the young are trained by habit and education in the spirit of the constitution, if the laws are democratic, democratically, if they are oligarchical, oligarchically. For there may be a want of self-discipline in states as well as in individuals."[52]

THE GOOD SOCIETY

To find the form of government best able to achieve the good life for its citizens, Aristotle examines carefully the relative merits of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy. True to the spirit of his empirical approach, he does not accept any one form of government as best for all people in all circumstances. Monarchy

and aristocracy have both good and bad features, he points out; the best form of government for an undeveloped people will not be best for an abler group, more capable of self-government. This matter of good government must be dealt with in concrete, scientific fashion: "for the best is often unattainable, and therefore the true statesman ought to be acquainted not only (1) with that which is best in the abstract, but also (2) with that which is best relative to the circumstances," Aristotle writes.[53] It is this kind of practical insight that is essential for dealing intelligently with the problems of political philosophy, and in this spirit Aristotle is led to inquire what is the best government for most states, and the best life for most men, "neither assuming a standard of excellence which is above ordinary persons, nor an education which is exceptionally favored by nature and circumstance, nor yet an ideal state which is an aspiration only, but having regard to the life in which the majority are able to share, and to the form of government which states in general can attain."[54]

Where conditions are such as to make it practical, a constitutional government based on laws seems the most desirable alternative. The rule of law provides the kind of mean between the extremes of tyranny on the one hand and anarchy on the other, and it naturally appeals to Aristotle for this reason. The rule of law, moreover, is preferable to that of any individual for in good laws we have reason unaffected by desire. "He who bids the law rule may be deemed to bid God and reason alone to rule, but he who bids man rule adds an element of the beast; for desire is a wild beast, and passion perverts the minds of rulers, even when they are the best of men," Aristotle writes. The dictatorship of the tyrant, common in his day and in our own as well, does away entirely with the rule of law and is clearly the worst form of government. "Tyranny is just that arbitrary power of an individual which is responsible to no one, and governs all alike, whether equals or betters, with a view to its own advantage, not that of its subjects, and therefore against their will. No freeman, if he can escape from it, will endure such a government." Even good laws, however, by themselves are not enough. "We must remember," Aristotle points out, "that good laws, if they are not obeyed, do not constitute good government. Hence there are two parts to good government; one is the actual obedience of the citizens to the laws; the other part is the goodness of the laws which they obey; they may obey bad laws as well as good."[55]

In all states we find one class that is relatively wealthy, another that is poor, and a third that is the mean, or middle class. Having demonstrated in his *Ethics* the desirability of moderation and the mean in human conduct, Aristotle quite naturally finds that a strong middle class is conducive to the rule of law and order and so to good government in a state.

> The middle class is least likely to shrink from rule, or to be over-ambitious for it, both of which are injuries to the state. Again, those who have too

> much of the goods of fortune, strength, wealth, friends and the like, are neither willing nor able to submit to authority. On the other hand, the very poor, who are in the opposite extreme, are too degraded. One class cannot obey, and can only rule despotically; the other knows not how to command and must be ruled like slaves. Thus arises a city, not of freemen, but of masters and slaves, the one despising, the other envying; and nothing can be more fatal to states than this. But a city ought to be composed, as far as possible, of equals and similars and these are generally the middle class. This is the class of citizens which is most secure in a state, for they do not, like the poor, covet their neighbor's goods; nor do others covet theirs; and as they neither plot against others, nor are themselves plotted against, they pass through life safely. Thus it is manifest that the best political community is formed by citizens if the middle class is large, and stronger if possible than the other classes.*

Aristotle admits that the principle of middle-class rule is best exemplified in a democracy. Democracies are safer and more permanent than oligarchies "because they have a middle class that is more numerous and has a greater share in the government," he points out; "for where there is no middle class and the poor greatly exceed in number, troubles arise, and the state soon comes to an end."[56] But the emphasis which democracy places upon the equality of all men and upon liberty disturbs him greatly.

> In democracies of the more extreme type there has arisen a false idea of freedom which is contradictory to the true interests of the state. Men think that justice means equality, and that equality is the supremacy of the popular will; and that freedom means doing what a man likes. In such democracies everyone lives as he pleases, or in the words of Euripides, "according to his own fancy." But this is all wrong; men should not think it slavery to live according to the rule of the constitution; for it is their salvation.[57]

Because of these faults in democracy, Aristotle is not willing to accept the democratic ideal as the most desirable. But his concept of a constitutional government designed for the happiness of its citizens and safeguarded by a strong middle class has been more nearly realized in the modern democratic state than in any other; and his concrete, specific, and intelligent analysis of good government still provides insights as valuable for the "science of politics" in our day as they were in his own.

* *Politics,* IV, 11. We should be careful, of course, not to identify the middle class as Aristotle uses the term with our own use of the term today, but much that he says is applicable to both groups.

THE INFLUENCE OF ARISTOTLE

The philosophy of Aristotle has had understandable and enduring appeal throughout the ages. Perhaps it is not too much to say that it remains the most influential system of thought ever put together by any single mind; certainly no other philosopher has contributed more to the enlightenment of mankind. Every later age has drawn upon Aristotle for insight and stimulus and has been able to see truth more clearly because of its debt to him. For centuries his *Organon* shaped the thinking of the medieval world. If the *social order* of the Middle Ages was largely a reflection of the philosophy of Plato, the medieval *mind* was as clearly dominated by Aristotle. By the end of this period his works came to be for European philosophy what the Bible was for theology—an almost infallible guide in which the solution of every problem was to be found. It was Thomas Aquinas, the greatest of medieval philosophers, who rescued Aristotle from the Moslems and made his philosophy the accepted foundation for the theology of the Roman Catholic Church. Ecclesiastical assemblies soon penalized any deviation from his views. In the *Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer describes the outlook of his theological student at Oxford University in the following revealing fashion:

> For he would rather have at his bed's head
> Some twenty books, all bound in black and red,
> Of Aristotle and his philosophy
> Than rich robes, fiddle, or gay psaltery.

For another three hundred years, as a matter of fact, the *Ethics* and the *Politics* of Aristotle were the texts used at Oxford to fashion the outlook of the ruling British mind. And even in our own country in more recent years his philosophy has been used to provide the foundation for a vigorous movement of reform in higher education, in which Robert M. Hutchins and Mortimer Adler at the University of Chicago were the moving spirits.

To our undertaking in this book Aristotle has much to offer. His concept of happiness as the state which accompanies self-realization has made a significant contribution to our understanding of the enjoyment of life. He has shown clearly the error in hedonism, but at the same time he has justified that aspect of the pursuit of pleasure which has given to hedonism its persistent attraction in every age. Long before Dewey's re-emphasis of the fact, Aristotle pointed out that growth and development are essentials of the good life—that only as one is moving ahead, achieving what he is capable of, can he hope to find happiness and enduring satisfaction. And, more clearly than Dewey, Aristotle recognized that this growth and achievement must be movement toward an ideal which provides the guiding principle of the human organism itself. He did commit himself, it is true, to a fixity of species and a static view of man and society which modern

science has proved untenable. But he was able, nevertheless, without sacrificing its essential insights, to free Plato's rational idealism from the asceticism and mysticism which too frequently rendered the Platonism of later ages unacceptable.

One further limitation in his philosophy of living Aristotle never managed to surmount. It was in large part, indeed, inherent in his Greek heritage and in the Greek view of life, which he helped bring to its complete and final expression. By Aristotle as by Plato, human reason—that aspect of man's nature which is unique and which distinguishes him from the lower animals—is interpreted too largely in intellectual terms. With Plato, Aristotle seems too willing to agree that in the life of contemplation man finds full self-realization. He does not underestimate the importance of the way of life dictated by practical reason, the social rather than the philosophical life, to be sure, and it is quite possible, upon his analysis of human nature and conduct, to build a more adequate concept of self-realization. But that Aristotle failed to do justice to the moral and the deeper spiritual sources of inspiration by which human life at its best has always been guided there can be little question. This insight was simply not a part of his Greek heritage, in which man's intellectual and aesthetic capacities reached heights of achievement seldom equaled and perhaps never surpassed but in which moral conviction and religious ideals played at best a very limited role.

As a result, many people do not find in Aristotle an adequate awareness of the compulsion of the moral ideal in human life. Nor do they find in his interpretation of God as the "unmoved mover" of all things an acceptable or inspiring religious faith. To them Aristotle seems much too coldly scientific in his theology to meet the deeper spiritual needs of mankind. Even his political philosophy, despite its insight into human nature and practical politics, hardly offers to the ordinary man and woman opportunities for the kind of development that Aristotle himself recognizes as essential to the good life. If his position is modified and strengthened at these points, however, will it not provide a philosophy of living that is both practical and adequate for the needs of our age? The testimony of the past suggests that it should.

13 · THE MORAL IMPERATIVE

Immanuel Kant

In one way or another the great philosophers have with remarkable unanimity stressed the importance of human reason in the achievement of the good life. From Socrates and Aristotle to Spinoza and Dewey, they have consistently maintained that, if intelligence and virtue are not actually identical, at least there is an essential relationship between the two: Only as a man understands what he is doing can he hope to be good. Despite this impressive consensus, however, it is difficult to escape an uneasy suspicion that in the world today the "good" people are for the most part not those who are learned or of superior intelligence. Goodness seems somehow much more the concern of the ordinary and unsophisticated; it is certainly not something upon which the more clever and well-read have a monopoly. And of this fact one philosopher at least has been quite well aware. Immanuel Kant has taken it as the point of departure for his discussion of morality, and around man's awareness of the compulsion of the moral ideal he has built what is perhaps the most influential ethical philosophy in our modern era.

Those whose lives have felt the inspiration of a high moral idealism, and whose conduct has been guided by a devotion to moral principle, have almost without exception found in Kant's philosophy a convincing account of the meaning of morality. As Rufus Jones, great Quaker leader of a generation ago, has stated the Kantian point of view:

> Every man in his moral capacity comes within himself upon the power to rise above what has been achieved by himself and others, above what his instincts and propensities incline him to do, above all that is done for recompense and reward, and to take by his own creative spiritual insight a

new step forward toward *what ought to be.* That capacity for the *vision of ought* is man's distinctive mark. It links him up with a world of higher order than the world of things.[1]

Let us look then at Kant and at his moral philosophy.

THE MAN AND HIS MISSION

Immanuel Kant, greatest of German philosophers, was born in Königsberg, a city in East Prussia not far from Russia, on April 22, 1724. In this city almost all his long life was spent, and in 1804 he died there. As we look at the lives of such men as Spinoza or Schopenhauer, we discover uncommon circumstances that help us understand the philosophy of living which they adopt and defend with such ability. In the case of Kant, there is hardly a ripple on the quiet and regular current of life as it flowed on day after day for eighty years.

Kant's father was a saddle maker, and young Immanuel was the fourth of nine children. Although poor in the goods of this world, both Kant's parents were deeply religious, being members of a German Pietist congregation much like the Puritans of New England and insisting, in similar fashion, upon a rigorous religious practice and strict adherence to the orthodox faith. Kant's early training, both at home and at school, was deeply colored by the spirit of Pietism. Although he later reacted against the narrowness and dogmatism of the religion of his youth, he never ceased to feel the effects of this early moral and religious instruction. Kant's mother in particular was known for the gentleness and sweetness of her religious faith. Although she died when her son was only fourteen, the impression she made upon him was distinct and lasting. "I shall never forget my mother," he said when he was sixty. "She planted and nourished the first seeds of good in me; she opened my heart to the influences of nature; she awakened and widened my ideas, and her teachings have had an enduring, healing influence on my life."[2]

At the age of eight, Kant was sent to a school for boys which was organized and administered on strict pietistic principles. As is so frequently the case, what had once been a living and inspiring faith had, in the practices of the school, become merely a dead and mechanical routine. Of these early school experiences Kant never spoke with enthusiasm; he seems to have derived from them only a good knowledge of Latin and a dislike of institutional religion. But his respect for the simple faith of his parents was not destroyed. "People may say what they will of Pietism," he wrote in his old age. "Those in whom it was sincere were worthy of honour. They possessed the highest thing that man can have—the quiet, the content, the inner peace, which no suffering can disturb. No need, no persecution, could disturb them: no quarreller could move them to hate or anger.

In a word, even the mere onlooker must against his will have been compelled to respect them."[3]

Despite his own lack of enthusiasm, Kant's work at school attracted enough favorable attention to justify the principal in advising him to go on with his education at the small university in Königsberg. At sixteen, he matriculated at this institution, which had at the time about 300 students, and there he spent the next six years. An uncle seems to have given him some financial assistance, but in the main he had to support himself. This was done largely by coaching his more well-to-do fellow students but to some extent also, one is rather surprised to learn, by his regular winnings at billiards and cards, in both of which he excelled.

When compared to our standards today, the work in all German universities at that time was still rather elementary. Königsberg was one of the most undistinguished of the lot, and its sixteen professors likewise, with one exception, were undistinguished men. The professor of logic and metaphysics, Martin Krutzen, was the exception. An able philosopher, he was also a man of considerable attainment in science, lecturing regularly in mathematics, physics, and astronomy as well as in philosophy. He influenced Kant more than anyone else at the university, giving him free access to his own library, stimulating him to do a great deal of independent reading in science, and—most important of all, perhaps—introducing the young student to the work of Newton. The German government, which controlled all higher education, had a rule that every university student had to enroll in theology, in law, or in medicine; but in this strictly regulated educational system, Kant seems to have ignored the regulation and gone his own way unmolested. He had decided upon a life of scholarship as his goal and, in order to attain a desirable breadth of understanding, he attended lectures in all fields that interested him. "I have already set before myself the path which I will tread," he wrote in the preface to a student thesis. "I am going on my course and nothing shall stop me from persisting in it."

CAREER AS UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR

When Kant completed his work at Königsberg, he turned to the only means by which poor scholars like himself could earn a living: he became a private tutor. For the next eight years, he was employed in this capacity by three families in East Prussia. It was a thankless job, and we hear little of Kant during this time. He saved what he could of his small salary, however, read widely in philosophy and the sciences, and finally was able to return to Königsberg to finish his doctorate. This was completed when he was about thirty, and he was given a post at the university as private lecturer—approximately the status of instructor in an American university today.

From the very beginning Kant's lectures were popular and unusually well attended, and his writing soon made him the most distinguished man at Königsberg. The university was so poor, however, that for fifteen years he was not

promoted. During all this time he led a life of hard work, with no relief from the poverty that he had known from his youth and little opportunity for the research and writing in which he was deeply interested. He lectured at least sixteen hours a week and at times as much as twenty-eight hours, giving courses in mathematics, physics, and anthropology as well as in logic, metaphysics, and ethics. On one occasion he was offered the professorship of poetry at Königsberg, which he wisely refused; and for a while he served as assistant librarian at the university, a post which added something to his income. Even at forty-two, Kant could write, "I have the fortune to be a lover of metaphysics but my mistress has shown me few favors so far." Gradually, however, he was becoming better and better known. Within a few years he was offered professorships at two other German universities, and finally, at the age of forty-five, he was made professor of logic and metaphysics at Königsberg, a post which he held until he retired thirty years later. Before retiring he served for a time also as rector of the university.

Kant's life during these years was uneventful enough. An omnivorous reader with an insatiable appetite for facts, he was much interested in knowledge of all kinds, even in geography. Despite the fact that he never traveled more than forty miles from Königsberg, he talked eagerly with any visitors to the city about foreign lands and peoples, and was unusually well informed. A portrait of the philosopher at forty-four shows him to be small, spare, and rather insignificant looking. He was just over five feet tall and as he grew older he became little more than a shadow of a man, retiring more and more into the recesses of his own mind. Of frail health, he was seldom ill but was very careful about his food and his habits of life. He ate only what he thought would agree with him, and during the winter when out of doors he always breathed through his nose and refused to talk to anyone, believing that nothing invited a cold like an open mouth. There is a tradition that he twice considered matrimony, but in each case he deliberated so long about the merits of the young lady in question and the hazards of married life in general that the issue was settled for him; one lady accepted the advances of a bolder suitor, and the other moved away from Königsberg before the philosopher had made up his mind.

The unvaried routine of Kant's life has indeed become a byword. He was called at five o'clock every morning by a faithful old servant. After his morning coffee he worked methodically during the forenoon: from six to seven, he prepared his lectures; from seven to nine or ten, he lectured to his classes; for two hours he wrote. Each day he ate lunch at the appointed hour; with equal regularity he took his afternoon walk and retired by ten o'clock. The poet Heine wrote, in a well-known passage,

> The life of Immanuel Kant is hard to describe; he had indeed neither life nor history in the proper sense of the words. He lived an abstract, mechanical, old-bachelor existence, in a quiet, remote street in Königsberg, an old city at the northeastern boundary of Germany. I do not believe that the

> great cathedral clock of this city accomplished its day's work in a less passionate and more regular way than its countryman, Immanuel Kant. Rising from bed, coffee-drinking, writing, lecturing, eating, walking, everything had its fixed time; and the neighbors knew that it must be exactly half past four when they saw Professor Kant, in his gray coat, with his cane in his hand, step out of his housedoor, and move toward the little lime tree avenue, which is named after him, the Philosopher's Walk. Eight times he walked up and down that walk at every season of the year, and when the weather was bad, or the gray clouds threatened rain, his servant, old Lampe, was seen anxiously following him with a large umbrella under his arm, like an image of providence.[4]

This caricature of the typical university professor should not blind us, however, to the fact that Kant was an excellent teacher. According to the reports of students, his lectures were not only interesting but even entertaining. For a time it was quite fashionable for the more cultured townspeople of Königsberg to attend Kant's lectures on anthropology, which were particularly popular. These lectures were intended, Kant says, to guard students against the habit of theorizing without an adequate knowledge of the facts.

> I recognized at the very beginning of my career as a teacher that it was a great disadvantage to the studies of young men that they learned to reason before they possessed sufficient historical knowledge to make them understand the part played by experience. I therefore resolved to make the history of the present condition of the earth, or geography understood in the widest sense, into an agreeable and easy description which should prepare them for a practical use of their reason, and serve to inspire in them the delight of enlarging their knowledge in matters of this kind.*

It is small wonder that his students thought Kant the lecturer much greater than Kant the author of the *Critique of Pure Reason*—and far more intelligible. He disliked especially to have students carefully copy down unimportant remarks he made. "You will not learn philosophy from me, but how to philosophize—not thoughts to repeat, but how to think," he is reported to have told them. "Think for yourselves, inquire for yourselves, stand on your own feet."

INFLUENCE OF MODERN SCIENCE

The events that made a difference in Kant's life were not the external happenings—these to him were unimportant. The important things were the influences that affected his thought: his introduction to Newton and the spirit of modern science, when he was still a student at the university; his first reading of Rousseau, when he was about forty (the only time Kant missed his regular afternoon walk, so the story goes, was the day he became so absorbed in Rousseau's *Emile* that he completely forgot it); the contact with British empiricism and the philosophy

* A comment in his lecture program, 1765-1766.

of David Hume, at about the same time, which "woke him from his dogmatic slumber," Kant says, and caused him to modify drastically the rationalistic metaphysics which he had until then accepted without serious question; and finally, when he was about forty-five, a profound revolution in his own thought which led him to formulate afresh the central problem of metaphysics and to begin work on a new "critical" interpretation of philosophy.

From the time of this revolution in his own outlook, Kant was a man with a mission. To this mission he devoted all his energies and efforts. Nothing else really mattered. He organized his life so that he could accomplish it, putting out of the way everything that interfered and thus gaining for himself the kind of reputation that has already been described. Too many pictures of the philosopher of Königsberg emphasize only the latter idea and lose sight of the real force at work in the life of Kant.

Kant's first work, inspired in large part by his reading of Newton, was almost all in the field of science. Early in his academic career he became not only thoroughly abreast of the scientific developments of his age but a recognized authority on this subject. While still a student he published a paper which undertook to reconcile the conflict between Newton's views and the rationalism of the day. By the time he completed his doctorate, he had published essays discussing the age of the earth, the earth's rotation about its axis, and the nature of the atom. But by far his most important early achievement was a volume published in 1755, entitled *The General Natural History and Theory of the Heavens.* This book is best known because Kant here suggests that all planets have been or will be inhabited, and proposes a nebular hypothesis to account for their origin, the theory which was later developed with greater scientific precision by Laplace. More important in Kant's own development, however, is the clear insight into the nature of modern science which this volume reveals. It is going too far to call Kant, as one of his interpreters has done,[5] the first philosopher who really understood the principles and methods of the new sciences. That prerogative belongs to Spinoza. But Kant stands with Spinoza at the beginning of our age in recognizing clearly what modern science involves, long before it had been spelled out by the psychologists and sociologists as well as the physicists in words that all could understand. And he faces more squarely than does Spinoza the central problem of modern philosophy: how to reconcile the thoroughgoing mechanical view of the universe which modern science has adopted with the belief in human freedom and responsibility which is essential to any genuine moral conviction and purpose in life.

As Kant clearly saw, if he accepted without reservation a scientific philosophy based upon the Newtonian physics, there would be little left of the moral idealism and religious faith of his youth. The effort to base religion upon reason and science, whether in the popular deism of the age, which appealed to men like Voltaire, or in the philosophical optimism of Leibnitz and his disciples, Kant

rejected as quite inadequate and unconvincing. Science can find no place for God, for human freedom, or for belief in immortality without violating the very principles upon which it is established, he was persuaded.

KANT AND ROUSSEAU

Surprisingly enough it was the French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau who suggested the approach to human freedom and to religious faith upon which Kant build his own philosophy. No two men seem less alike than Kant and Rousseau—the one careful, meticulous, and respectable; the other brilliant but wayward. Kant saw in Rousseau, however, more than mere romantic charm. In the philosophy of Rousseau he discovered a new appreciation of the worth of ordinary men and women, people like his own parents. Until he read Rousseau, he had, with the rationalists, been accustomed to take great pride in his own superior intellectual attainments, Kant admits. At forty, he wrote:

> I am myself by inclination a seeker after truth. I feel a consuming thirst for knowledge and a restless passion to advance it, as well as satisfaction in any forward step. There was a time when I thought that this alone could constitute the honor of mankind, and I despised the common man who knows nothing. Rousseau set me right. This blind prejudice vanished, I learned to respect human nature, and I should consider myself far more useless than the ordinary working-man if I did not believe that this view could give worth to all others to establish the rights of man.[6]

What appealed so much to Kant was not the romanticism of Rousseau; it was the fact that Rousseau distinguished so convincingly between the mask that civilization places upon a man's countenance and the actual man underneath. What is truly permanent in human nature, Kant came to see as he read Rousseau, is not what man appears to be but what he *ought* to be, what he knows in his heart he can be. This insight that the "real man" is found in man's moral convictions and not in his physical nature, Kant credits to Rousseau. It proved a crucial turning point in his own development. Rousseau showed him the path which he never thereafter abandoned, and he could accord Rousseau no higher praise than to place him side by side with Newton.

> Newton was the first to discern order and regularity in combination with great simplicity, where before him men had encountered disorder and unrelated diversity. Since Newton the comets follow geometric orbits. Rousseau was the first to discover beneath the varying forms human nature assumes, the deeply concealed essence of man and the hidden law in accordance with which Providence is justified.[7]

Rousseau's view of religion, as well as his view of human nature, made a lasting impression upon Kant. Just as he himself was coming to see more and more clearly that religion could not be based upon a scientific philosophy, Kant found

Rousseau not only recognizing this fact but also pointing to conscience rather than science as the true source and foundation of religious faith. The duties of morality are the essential thing; a just heart is the true temple of God, and faith is the natural outcome of the moral life, Rousseau maintains.* When Kant late in life came to write his own philosophy of religion, these were the views upon which he seized, carrying them much further than Rousseau himself was ever able to go. Kant needed time to think through such ideas and to work out their meaning in accurate, systematic fashion. But when he finally did so, he produced as startling a revolution as the field of philosophy has ever known.

KANT'S PHILOSOPHICAL MISSION

What philosophy needed, Kant came to believe, was a "Copernican revolution" such as there had been in astronomy. By the end of the Middle Ages, the old astronomy had run into a blind alley and nothing more could be accomplished until it was given a new start in a new direction. This was the achievement of Copernicus. In the same way, the old rationalistic metaphysics had run into a blind alley in his own day, Kant was convinced. It, too, needed a new start in a new direction. In order to make possible the kind of achievement in metaphysics that Copernicus made possible in astronomy, Kant undertook to write a new "critical" philosophy. The chief error in the old metaphysics, he felt, lay in the fact that men thought they could deal directly with the universe itself and assumed that human reason was a valid instrument of knowledge. Thus Spinoza talks unhesitatingly of an eternal substance which is God, and of the rational laws by which the order of nature is directed. Actually we are not in a position to interpret the nature of the world outside us, Kant maintains, until we know how the mind itself works. The source of knowledge is not outside us; it is within our own minds. We must understand ourselves before we can understand the universe or God. Kant's mission, then, as he conceived it, was to provide a penetrating and comprehensive analysis (or "critique") of human reason which would become the foundation for all future metaphysics.

The initial, and in many ways the most famous, volume of Kant's critical philosophy is his *Critique of Pure Reason*, finally published in 1781, after he had worked on it for eleven years. The first reaction to the book was a sort of dazed wonder and incomprehension. One of Kant's friends, to whom he had sent the manuscript, returned it half read with the comment that it would drive him mad if he had to read the rest. Many felt that Kant had destroyed science, not saved it. Others said it was a dangerous book: this man doubts everything. Almost everyone complained bitterly of Kant's obscurity and his almost incomprehensible terminology. Goethe once said that when one read the *Critique of Pure Reason* it was like stepping from the darkness into a brightly lighted room; unfortunately, this was not the impression it gave the ordinary reader, who found

* See his *Profession of Faith*, pp. 273, 441.

himself bewildered, and not by an excess of light. Ever since Kant published his volume, critics have disagreed with one another as to what he meant—and they continue to do so today. But gradually people began to see what Kant was attempting; German universities took up the *Critique*, and it soon became prescribed reading for all students of philosophy. By the beginning of the nineteenth century it was generally recognized that no one could hope to understand philosophy until he had mastered Kant.

The modest author of this revolutionary work had gone ahead, meanwhile, with his own concerns, little disturbed by the reception accorded his great *Critique*. Turning from the philosophy of science, he devoted himself more directly to a consideration of the problems of morality and religion. In 1785 he published the *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals*, and in 1788 the *Critique of Practical Reason*. These works contain a searching analysis of moral conviction and conduct comparable to Kant's treatment of scientific knowledge in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Finally, in two other works, the *Critique of Judgment* and *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, Kant completed his study of the activities of the human mind with an examination of aesthetic and religious experience. It had taken him twenty years and five impressive, closely reasoned volumes to state the "critical" philosophy to his own satisfaction, but his place among the great philosophers of all time was now securely established.

OLD AGE AND DEATH

When the volume on religion was published, in 1793, Kant was sixty-nine. Frederick the Great of Prussia had died a few years earlier and his liberal policies were not continued by his successor. A strict censorship of all publications dealing with religion was established, and any teacher suspected of heresy was ordered discharged. Kant had not been molested at first, even though his views on religion had appeared somewhat unorthodox and alarming to the Lutheran clergy in Prussia. He was by now an old man, and, as someone said in his behalf, even the people who read his books did not understand them. When it became known, however, that he planned to publish a volume condemning in forthright fashion all religion based on creed and ritual, and urging a reliance on conscience and practical morality instead, his Berlin publisher was ordered to suppress the book. But Kant, with surprising determination for a man of his age, sent the manuscript to friends at Jena University, outside the jurisdiction of the Prussian king, and arranged for its publication there. As a result he received a royal order not only expressing the king's displeasure at the manner in which he was misusing his philosophy to undermine the doctrines of Christianity but stating expressly that if in the future he gave any further cause for offense he might expect unpleasant consequences.

Kant's reply reveals his own deep moral conviction and personal integrity:

> For myself, as I have always and earnestly commended to other professors of religion a conscientious sincerity in not recommending to others as articles of faith anything that they are not certain for themselves, so I have in composing my writings always pictured the sincere conscience as a judge standing at my side to keep me not only from soul-corrupting error but from every careless expression which might give offense. And now, in my seventy-first year, when I cannot help remembering that I may well have to give account shortly for all this before a Judge of the world who knows what is in men's hearts, I can candidly say that I realize with the fullest conscientiousness the responsibility I have for my teaching.

During the reign of the present monarch he agreed, however, to write no more on religion, and he explained his position to a friend as follows:

> To recant or deny one's conviction is contemptible, but to be silent in a case like the present is the duty of a subject. Though all that one says must be true, it is not necessarily one's duty to say in public all that is true.[8]

As a matter of fact, Kant's energy was now exhausted and his life work was done. He did publish a monograph on *Everlasting Peace* the following year, which has been widely read and contains a remarkable anticipation of the principles upon which the League of Nations was organized. But shortly thereafter he retired from his professorship at the University of Königsberg; gradually his mind began to fail, and finally, as he was approaching eighty, the distinguished old philosopher died as quietly and peacefully as he had lived.

THE CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE OF DUTY

Kant, as we have seen, had mastered the Newtonian physics and the new astronomy as no other philosopher of his day had done. The new provinces of the mind which modern science had opened up, the concern of the scientist to increase the extent of human knowledge, and the scientist's devotion to truth as he saw it—all made a deep impression upon Kant. But for this reason he saw more clearly than did his contemporaries the necessity of a new approach to moral and religious philosophy. For Kant's interest in science, as deep and genuine as it was, never blinded him to the profound importance of moral conviction and religious belief in human life. It was his abiding faith in the progress of science on the one hand, and in the reality of moral freedom on the other, that produced the serious dilemma which he was never able to escape. He saw the two activities he most believed in apparently at war with one another, and his tireless concern to preserve the independence and the integrity of both constitutes and pervades his entire system of philosophy.

In his brief but closely reasoned *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant undertakes to make clear the nature of morality and its claims upon the human spirit. This essay of Kant's on moral philosophy "is one of the small books which are truly great," writes one of its recent translators; "it has exercised on human thought an influence almost ludicrously disproportionate to its size. In moral philosophy it ranks with the *Republic* of Plato and the *Ethics* of Aristotle; and it shows in some respects a deeper insight even than these."[9] None of Kant's books makes easy reading; even his *Fundamental Principles of Morals* assumes more than a beginner's knowledge of the highly technical terminology which Kant found necessary to express his own position. But certainly this volume on morals is the place for the student of philosophy to begin his reading of Kant if he does not want to be so completely discouraged that he will give up the enterprise altogether. For in this essay Kant desires to write not so much for the philosopher as for the intelligent layman. "A metaphysics of morals, in spite of its forbidding title, can be in a high degree popular and suited to the ordinary intelligence," he says in explaining the purpose of his volume;[10] and this aim is always before him no matter how far he falls short at times of accomplishing it.

MAN'S ORDINARY MORAL CONVICTION

To understand what morality means, we must begin with "the simple, unspoiled moral mind of man," Kant maintains.* The influences of civilization tend to corrupt us; two years in the army, even two years in a fraternity house on the university campus, is usually enough to play havoc with such simple, unspoiled moral conviction. If we want a sound basis for our analysis of the moral life, however, we must go back, Kant insists, to that simple and unsophisticated moral conviction which all of us normally possess. Upon examining this unspoiled moral outlook, we find in every case the certainty that *we can be good if we want to*; morality, we are convinced, is within our grasp in a way that nothing else in life is. Not everyone can be a great scientist such as Einstein; not everyone can be an outstanding artist or a successful musician; not everyone can be wealthy, or famous, or even happy. But everyone can be good if he really wants to. This each of us knows immediately and surely as the firm conviction of the moral consciousness. A course or two in psychology or sociology, it is true, will often produce the kind of rationalization which places upon circumstances about us rather than upon ourselves the blame for our own wrongdoing; but until we have become thoroughly sophisticated or corrupted by the society of our day, we know well enough that when we do what is wrong it is our own fault and not anybody else's.

As a contemporary interpreter has stated it, Kant's moral philosophy springs from a very human motive. It is, in its essence, a philosophy for the ordinary

* The phrase is one suggested by J. W. Scott, *Kant on the Moral Life*, p. 43.

man. "Some things in the world, it says, are doubtless destined to be enjoyed only by the gifted and the privileged. Whether we shall be happy, influential, successful, or what not, depends always to a great extent on matters beyond our control—on natural gifts, inherited temperament, congenial circumstances." But this is not so of every kind of accomplishment. There is one achievement which is as open to the ordinary individual as it is to the man of genius or the child of fortune. "Only in certain circumstances can you be happy; but always you can be good. For to be good you only need to want to so be. If you wholly want to be good then you are so."[11]

It is the motives, then, not the consequences, that determine the good act; and for our motives we alone are responsible. The outcome of conduct does not provide a means of judging its moral worth, Kant insists. A good mother or father is the parent who wills to do what is right by a child. Circumstances may prevent such a parent from giving his child the opportunities for education and culture he would like, but he does the best he can notwithstanding. Another parent with ample means may provide abundantly for all his children's needs, but only perhaps to satisfy his own pride or desire for social prestige. It is the former not the latter, who is really a "good" parent, according to Kant. Goodness lies not in intelligence or in shrewdness: it lies in a deep disposition of the heart. "Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever," the poet admonishes. Between goodness and cleverness there is a fundamental antithesis.

But can we formulate a moral philosophy that will do justice to this basic conviction of the moral life that a man can be good if he wants to—that morality is primarily concerned with motives rather than with consequences? This is Kant's initial problem; and upon closer scrutiny he finds the answer in the ordinary knowledge of morality which we all possess. In the well-known opening passage of his essay on morals, he writes:

> There are many things which in one sense or another may be called good; talents, such as understanding, wit or judgment; temperamental gifts, such as courage, decision, resoluteness; gifts of fortune, such as power, honour, riches, health, happiness. But all of these are good only conditionally. They are good if they are used well, but not otherwise. Closely scrutinized, it is not they that are good; it is the will behind them. There is nothing either in the world or out of it which is good without qualification except a good will.
>
> It is only in his will, ultimately, that a man can be either good or bad. On the other hand, if he is good there, he is good. There is nothing farther to be said in the matter. Nothing else in that case can make him bad. Want of power, want of opportunity, or any other misfortune may interfere with the accomplishment of a good man's designs. But it cannot qualify his goodness so long as his will is good. Even if it should happen that, owing to a special disfavor of fortune or to the niggardly provision of a step-

> motherly Nature, this will should wholly lack power to accomplish its purpose, if with its utmost effort it still accomplishes nothing, and only good will is left (not, to be sure, as a mere wish but as the summoning of all means in our power), then, like a jewel it would still shine by its own light as a thing which has its whole worth in itself.[12]

THE CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE OF DUTY

Even if we agree, tentatively at least, that moral conduct and character are determined by the good will and by the good will alone, we are still left with the problem of just what the good will is. What are the motives which can be accepted as right? Amiability, generosity, unselfishness—all these have been highly prized by good men, but none, Kant maintains, will serve as our criterion. At the very heart of the moral life, we find an inescapable sense of obligation to do what is right, no matter what the consequences, he points out. To this unique moral conviction, the awareness that we *ought* to do right, Kant gives a formidable name—the categorical imperative of duty.

Now the only right motive, he maintains, is the motive of duty. The only right act, as we all know well enough when we examine our own moral life, is the act done in conformity with this imperative of duty. It is when we do what is right

> orable, deserves praise and encouragement but no esteem; for its maxim lacks moral content, namely, the performance of such actions, not from inclination, but *from duty*.[14]
>
> It is in this way, undoubtedly, that we should understand those passages of Scripture which command us to love our neighbor and even our enemy. For love, as an inclination, cannot be commanded. But kindness done from duty, also when no inclination impels it and even when it is opposed by a natural and unconquerable aversion, is practical love, not pathological love. It resides in the will and not in feeling, in principles of action and not in tender sympathy; and it alone can be commanded.[15]

THE FUNCTION OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY

The man, then, who knows that moral conduct consists in doing his duty and who undertakes uncompromisingly to follow the dictates of conscience needs no further philosophical training in order to be good. His own common sense is enough, Kant believes.

> It would be easy to show how human reason, with this compass in hand, is well able to distinguish, in all cases that present themselves, what is good or evil, right or wrong—provided that, without the least attempt to teach it anything new, we merely make reason attend, as Socrates did, to its own principle; and how in consequence there is no need of science or philosophy for knowing what man has to do in order to be honest and good, and indeed to be wise and virtuous.[16]

Even those who are unspoiled in their moral convictions and conscientious in doing their duty, become confused at times about what constitutes their duty, however. As we leave home, with its well-established standards of right and wrong, and face the conflicting demands made upon us in a new situation, where many of our friends differ with us about what is right and wrong, or as we share the inescapable sophistication that comes with higher education as well as with wider experience in business or politics, we feel the need for a sound moral philosophy to make clear to us what a consistent and reasonable morality involves; and Kant recognizes that such a need should be met.

> Innocence is a splendid thing, only it has the misfortune not to keep well and to be easily misled. On this account wisdom itself—which in any case consists more in doing and not doing than in knowing—does require science as well, not in order to learn from it, but in order to win acceptance and permanence for its own precepts. In this way the *common reason of mankind* is impelled, not by any need for speculation (which never assails it so long as it is content to be mere sound reason) but on practical grounds, to leave its own sphere and take a step into the field of practical philosophy.[17]

It is the function of moral philosophy, then, to provide guidance of this practical sort. It should not only reinforce the dictates of conscience by making clear to us the claims of the categorical imperative, but it should also show us the principles by which moral conduct must be guided if it is to be rational. Kant never did believe, however, that it was the function of moral philosophy to tell people what to do. They could find that out for themselves easily enough, he felt, if they used their common sense.

THE NATURE OF CONSCIENCE

Among the most helpful insights that Kant's philosophy provides for the ordinary individual is a better understanding of the nature of conscience. As Kant points out, the common reason of mankind—that is, the simple, unspoiled moral mind of man—leads us to recognize an immediate obligation to *do* what is right. But in the complexities of modern life we easily become confused as to just what *is* right. We begin to see that conscience is not infallible, that if we had grown up in New York instead of in South Carolina, in Russia instead of in the United States, our consciences would have operated quite differently and we would have had entirely different moral standards. From premises of this kind, moral relativists like the Sophists conclude that there are no universally valid moral principles, that "our duty" is merely what we have been taught in our youth, and that morals are but the customs and conventions of society. Unless our moral convictions are very strong, we too frequently drift into the position of the moral relativist and turn to some purely personal or pragmatic standard to guide our conduct.

Kant's moral philosophy is not only committed irrevocably against any such moral relativism; it also provides an explanation of the situation which produces this skeptical attitude. In all knowledge, Kant points out, whether it be the theoretical knowledge of science or the practical knowledge of morality, there are two elements: an empirical content, which comes from our own experience, and a rational principle of interpretation which is supplied by the mind itself and not by experience. We can see both these elements clearly in the operation of conscience. The content of conscience, the *specific behavior* that we take to be right or wrong, is the product of our experience and consequently will always vary with the experience and background of each individual. Those who have been reared in a strict moral environment may grow up to believe that such things as smoking and drinking are wrong; those reared in more liberal homes will accept these things without serious question. Those of us who grow up in America will believe in human freedom and in the right of each individual to direct his own life. Those who grow up in a communist country will just as naturally accept the right of the state to regulate men's lives completely.

Now conduct that is governed merely by the "uneducated" conscience of the individual constitutes, in Kant's terms, an empirical morality, and, like every-

thing else based upon experience, it is necessarily relative and subject to change. The moral relativists are entirely correct about this fact, as they are in pointing out that the content of conscience is for every person the product of his specific social environment. But where they are wrong, from Kant's point of view, is in assuming that the true moral ideal is to be found in such an empirical morality. They fail to understand the nature of right and wrong because their analysis of conscience is deficient and superficial. For conscience contains not only an empirical content, which is relative and changing; it contains also a rational or formal principle, which is universal—and which is not the product of experience at all, but is an essential aspect of human reason, according to Kant. This universal moral principle is expressed in man's sense of obligation to what is right; the conviction that we ought to do our duty no matter what the consequences—what Kant terms the categorical imperative. However men may disagree about *what* they take to be right, they all agree that there is a fundamental difference between right and wrong, and that a man *ought* to do what is right. On this point there is no disagreement between the savage African head-hunter and the Christian missionary who willingly gives his life in service to others.

This moral imperative, by which right conduct is directed, does not come from sense experience, however, Kant points out. It is a conviction which we as rational human beings bring to experience and which is necessary to make moral conduct possible. We become aware of the universality and necessity of the moral law only through the categorical imperative of duty. When we say that a thing is right, we mean that it is always right, right in all circumstances; it is not merely desirable or convenient or profitable in this situation. Likewise, if it is right, it is necessarily right, not because we prefer it or were taught it, but because it *is* right in itself. But these are beliefs which reflect the rational principle on which moral conviction is based, not its empirical content.

A RATIONAL MORALITY

Now if our morals are to be rational, they must be both self-consistent and universally applicable, Kant points out. The moral law must be as clear, as consistent, and as convincing as are the laws of mathematics. The trouble with an empirical morality, and with the dictates of conscience based upon it, lies just at this point: it is confused and self-contradictory; it does not apply in all circumstances, to all people; we cannot count upon it with complete certainty. To escape the dangers of moral relativism and build a morality that is valid for everyone, everywhere, regardless of circumstances, we must derive our moral principles, then, entirely from the moral *a priori*, the categorical imperative of duty, Kant maintains. We must get away from everything that is based simply on our own experience or training. When we do this, we will have a moral law that is genuinely rational, and one that makes the same necessary and universal claims upon men's minds as does mathematics. Now the one basic and universal

categorical imperative of duty which is completely independent of all experience, Kant writes, is this: "*Always act on that maxim which can at the same time be made a universal law of conduct.*"[18] This principle lies at the heart of a rational morality.

The real test of moral conduct does not consist in its immediate value to us, Kant insists. We have not discovered whether an action is right or not by finding out how well it works for us. In order to determine whether our conduct is rational and hence right for everyone, we have to universalize our principles of behavior. We must ask what would happen if everybody acted as we do? Would we be willing to act this way if everybody knew we were doing it? These are the questions which enable us to find out whether what we are doing is really right or not, whether our conduct conforms to the moral law of duty. Kant suggests an example to make his point clear: A man finds himself driven to borrowing money because of need.

> He well knows that he will not be able to pay it back; but he sees too well that he will get no loan unless he gives a firm promise to pay it back within a fixed time. He is inclined to make such a promise; but he still has enough conscience to ask, "Is it not contrary to duty to get out of difficulties in this way?" Suppose, however, that he did resolve to do so, the maxim of his action would run thus: "Whenever I believe myself short of money, I will borrow and promise to pay it back, though I know that this will never be done."
>
> Now this principle of self-love or personal advantage is perhaps quite compatible with my own future welfare; only there remains the question "Is it right?" I therefore frame my question thus: "How would things stand if my maxim became a universal law?" I then see straight away that this maxim can never rank as a universal law and be self-consistent, but must necessarily contradict itself. For the universality of a law that everyone believing himself to be in need may make any promise he pleases with the intention not to keep it, would make promising itself, and the very purpose of promising, impossible, since no one would believe that he was being promised anything, but would laugh at utterances of this kind as empty shams.[19]

Dishonesty, then, is clearly unacceptable morally because (1) dishonesty is effective only when it is believed to be honesty—a lie is of value to us only when taken to be the truth—and hence it is essentially self-contradictory; and (2) dishonesty is useless when everyone practices it. It cannot be universalized. The same defects are apparent in all other morally unacceptable actions. We have only to examine much of our own conduct in terms of this Kantian principle to see how far short it falls of a moral ideal which is universally valid. In too many cases what we do is clearly not right because we are guilty of seeking to make an exception for ourselves—just this once, in these circumstances. We would not

really be willing to see what we are doing made into a universal law of conduct for all people.

A second formulation of the moral law is also possible, Kant points out—not quite as general as the first, but also universal and equally valid. Human beings, because they alone are rational and capable of high moral achievement, have a dignity and worth of their own which it is wrong to transgress. We see that no behavior could be universally adopted—and so accepted as morally right—which tends to deprive others of a chance in life or takes from them the opportunity to develop their own capacities as fully as they can. In Kant's language, persons are ends-in-themselves. His second formulation of the moral imperative is as follows: *"Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, never simply as a means but always at the same time as an end."*[20] We have only to examine what our practices have been in industry and labor, in race relations, in war and politics, to see the importance of this way of stating the moral law. Again and again are we not guilty of treating other persons as means only, whether they are workers in a factory, members of an underprivileged minority, or residents in a backward and undeveloped country? Too often do we not seek to get what we want in life, careless and as a rule unaware of the effects upon others?

The comment some years ago of a visitor to one of the automobile plants in Detroit, a visitor with a particularly sensitive conscience, reveals the far-reaching implications of this Kantian principle:

> We went through one of the big automobile factories today. So artificial is life that these factories are like a strange world to me though I have lived close to them for many years. The foundry interested me particularly. The heat was terrific. The men seemed weary. Here manual labor is a drudgery and toil is slavery. The men cannot possibly find any satisfaction in their work. They simply work to make a living. Their sweat and their dull pain are part of the price paid for the fine cars we run. And most of us run the cars without knowing what price is being paid for them.[21]

Clearly Kant's moral law agrees in large measure with two fundamental principles of Christian morality: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you, and treat all men as brothers. Here we find earlier expressions of the categorical imperative of duty which have through the centuries impressed men as possessing those qualities of necessity and universality which Kant finds in the moral law. Kant himself, as a matter of fact, was quite satisfied to see in his *Fundamental Principles of Morals* just such a clear understanding and accurate statement of man's enduring moral conviction. "A critic who wished to say something against that work really did better than he intended when he said that there was no new principle of morality in it but only a new formula," Kant wrote some years later. "Who would want to introduce a new principle of morality

and, as it were, be its inventor, as if the world had hitherto been ignorant of what duty is or had been thoroughly wrong about it? Those who know what a formula means to a mathematician in determining what is to be done in solving a problem without letting him go astray, will not regard a formula which will do this for all duties as something insignificant and unnecessary."[22]

The primary task that Kant undertakes in his essay on the *Fundamental Principles of Morals* has now been accomplished. He has shown clearly that morality is within the grasp of the ordinary man, that a man can be good if he wants to. He has outlined the basic principles of the moral law, and shown how the good will depends upon the categorical imperative of duty. He has defended the universality and necessity of the moral ideal against the attacks of the moral relativists. In his opinion these are the things that moral philosophy should do. Two major philosophical problems still need consideration, however: one is the relation between morality and religion; the other the conflict between the moral imperative and the scientific view of the universe. And both of these problems Kant treats with unusual honesty and insight in his later works.

MORAL CONVICTION AND RELIGIOUS FAITH

A very genuine concern with religion is to be found in all Kant's major works. Whether discussing the outlook of the natural sciences, the moral imperative, or aesthetic judgment, he is always conscious of the bearing of what he has to say upon religious faith and practice, and to the end of his life his attitude toward religion was influenced by the German Pietism in which he was trained as a boy. In his own day, as we have already pointed out, Kant's philosophy ran counter to many accepted religious ideas and was considered a source of danger by the more orthodox Lutheran ministers. From our vantage point today, however, it is clear that Kant was actually providing a needed support for the claims of religious faith, as he himself maintained, in the face of a growing scientific disbelief.

FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, many thoughtful Christians hoped to derive from the findings of science substantial support for religion. The deists of this age strongly urged such an approach, and Spinoza went so far as to interpret religion almost wholly in scientific terms. Kant's careful study of the methods and findings of modern science convinced him that this endeavor to combine science and religion was an impossible one. "As a natural scientist, a student of Newton, an original explorer of the stellar universe, proposer of a nebular hypothesis, he finds no God in the world of physical law, no room there for freedom, no sign of immortality."[23] Science, by its very nature, must interpret human behavior, like the behavior of the universe, as completely determined;

cause and effect must apply everywhere with equal finality, Kant recognizes. "If it were possible to have so profound an insight into a man's mental character as to know all its motives and likewise all the external occasions that can influence them, we could calculate a man's conduct for the future with as great certainty as a lunar or solar eclipse," he writes in describing the scientific point of view.[24]

Science, then, cannot be used to support our religious faith in immortality and in God; and it is a mistake to try to use scientific knowledge for this purpose. Such an attempt will land us only in contradictions and uncertainty, Kant feels sure. Arguments on one side are just as inconclusive as those on the other. You cannot argue an atheist into believing in God; but neither can you destroy the faith of a deeply religious person by arguments based upon science, Kant goes on to maintain in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. For scientific knowledge deals only with the world of sense experience; it is an interpretation of the physical and material universe, not of man's moral or spiritual experience. The only sound basis for religious faith is to be found not in science but in the moral life.* What we can show, and what Kant therefore sets out to show, is that religious faith is morally necessary. That is, in order to make sense of the moral life and of the categorical imperative of duty, we *must* believe in God, in freedom, and in immortality. These are matters of faith, not of verified knowledge, as religion has always rightly maintained. The thing for the church to do, then, is not to argue about belief in God or immortality but to deepen its members' moral insight and sense of duty. Once a man becomes fully and inescapably aware of the moral imperative of duty, he will find faith in immortality and in God a necessity.

FREEDOM

The categorical imperative of duty, Kant points out, is an inescapable fact of the moral life. Every day there are things that we know we *ought* to do, not because we can prove logically or scientifically that they are necessary but because of an inner moral consciousness of obligation to do what is right. Now there is no sense in talking about right or wrong if everything one does is the necessary result of environment or past training. Such scientific determinism takes away completely the moral significance of conduct. Here Kant gets directly at the chief problem raised by the scientific ethics of Spinoza. For an act to be right or wrong, it is essential that I be responsible for my own choice, Kant insists. We see this clearly enough, for example, when a gangster forces a bank teller to hand over $10,000 at the point of a gun. The teller is not responsible for what he does in this situation, and his action is not considered wrong, because circumstances completely determine his conduct. But if the teller falsifies his books and takes

* "It is impossible by means of metaphysics to progress from knowledge of this world to concepts of God and a proof of his existence through cogent inferences. . . . The concept of God is one which belongs originally not to physics, but to morals," Kant writes (*Critique of Practical Reason*, pp. 240, 242).

the $10,000 to pay for a new mink coat for his wife, he is held to be both morally and legally responsible, and if caught he is punished by society. Now the convictions "of that marvelous faculty within us called conscience are in complete agreement" with this way of looking at things, Kant writes.

> A man may dissemble as much as he will in order to paint his unlawful behavior as an unintentional error, as mere oversight, which can never be avoided, as something to which he is carried along by the stream of natural necessity, and in this way to make himself out as innocent. But he finds that the advocate who speaks in his behalf cannot silence the accuser in him when he is conscious that at the time when he committed the wrong he was in possession of his freedom. He explains the misdeed by some bad habit, but this cannot protect him from the blame and reproach he casts upon himself. On this is based the repentance of an act long past, every time he remembers it.[25]

In the very inescapable certainty of obligation and of duty, there is included, then, an awareness of freedom, Kant maintains. Duty and freedom are not two separate facts so much as two ways of looking at the same moral experience. This conviction Kant states in the famous dictum: *I ought, therefore I can.* That is, it makes no sense at all to feel that we ought to do something if we cannot do it. A world of this sort would not be rational or meaningful. In order to make sense of conscience, we must believe that we have the freedom to do what is right as well as what is wrong.

Look at human conduct, Kant goes on to say, and you will see that all men do regard themselves as free. This is the assumption upon which we always act, whenever we make a rational choice. We deliberate upon several alternatives, choose one, and act upon it. Such behavior makes no sense at all if our conduct is already completely determined.

> Now I assert that every being who cannot act except under the idea of freedom is by this alone—from a practical point of view—really free. The independent warrant of freedom is this: that he who can only act as free is free. Now this is the situation of a rational being. Such a being has a will. He cannot have a will, that is, the reason in him cannot be practical or act, and yet not act under the idea of freedom. Briefly, to act is to be consciously free, and this means that you are free, since consciousness is you.[26]

KANT'S DUALISM

As soon as we face honestly the problem raised by this belief in moral freedom, we see that man is a creature who lives in two worlds, Kant points out. One is the spiritual, or *intelligible*, world, the world of moral law and of religious faith. The other is the *sensible* world, the physical and material world of sense experience with which the natural sciences deal. Moral freedom is an essential part of the spiritual world; in the sensible world, on the other hand, everything is com-

pletely determined in accord with the laws of nature. This is a dualism which Kant sees no way to escape.* It is forced upon us by the scientific interpretation of the universe, on the one hand, and the imperatives of the moral life, on the other.

> Now man actually finds in himself a power which distinguishes him from all other things—and even from himself so far as he is affected by objects. This power is *reason.* Because of this a rational being must regard himself *qua intelligence* (and accordingly not on the side of his lower faculties) as belonging to the intelligible world, not to the sensible one. He has therefore two points of view from which he can regard himself and from which he can know laws governing all his actions. He can consider himself *first*—so far as he belongs to the sensible world—to be under the laws of nature; and *secondly*—so far as he belongs to the intelligible world—to be under laws which, being independent of nature, are not empirical but have their ground in reason alone.[27]

Of these two worlds, it is the intelligible, or the spiritual, that is the more significant, the world of enduring reality, Kant maintains, whereas the physical and material universe with which science deals is actually of secondary importance.

The Kantian position has been well summarized by Rufus Jones:

> Moral obligation, therefore, for Kant is significant not so much for the specific deeds it leads to as for the fact that it reveals a deeper universe to which the moral man belongs. Through the forms of reason which are native capacities in us we cooperate in building up the world of science but as moral beings, obedient to commands of duty, we discover a world of wholly different order, which rests for its stability and for its ultimate triumph on a permanent and unvarying good will grounded in the deepest nature of the universe itself. We can live in either world equally well—the world ruled by fixed mechanical causation or the world of ends under ideals, in the world of space and time or in the world of the spirit where personality comes full into play.[28]

FAITH IN GOD AND IN IMMORTALITY

It is as impossible, Kant maintains, for a genuinely moral man to fail to believe in God as to fail to believe in freedom. Both these convictions are necessary aspects of the moral life. There has been some criticism of the way in which Kant states his moral argument for God, but there can be no misunderstanding of his forthright conviction in the matter. The moral imperative, he points out, demands that we promote the highest good we know without question or hesitation. In order to do this rationally, however, we must believe not only that we are

* In his third major work, *The Critique of Judgment,* Kant does suggest, however, that aesthetic experience provides a bond between the two worlds in which man lives. In our experience of the beautiful and the sublime we find the spiritual world reflected in and expressed through the temporal and the material.

free to act as we should but also that this moral ideal to which we devote ourselves is actually possible. We must believe, that is, in a moral order in the universe, a God who sustains our moral ideals. The moral man cannot accept the scientific picture of a universe of natural law in which human ideals and purposes are of no consequence, for if he does, he denies the validity of conscience and of morals. "Therefore it is morally necessary to assume the existence of God," Kant concludes.[29]

The heart of Kant's position here is simply that the presupposition of all genuine moral effort is the belief that we are not living in a world that nullifies such effort. The man who has committed his life to high moral endeavor believes inescapably that what he is doing is in accord with the deeper purposes of the universe, that somehow he has the universe behind him, no matter how circumstances may appear to contradict this. In other words, the moral man is led necessarily to believe in a divine moral order and purpose at the heart of the universe; he cannot accept the belief in a power hostile or indifferent to the life of ethical endeavor such as science depicts.

Kant's statement of the case for belief in immortality has seemed to many less convincing than his argument for belief in freedom and in God. The immortality of the soul he is content to describe as a legitimate hope, not a necessary belief; but even so his approach here is far superior morally to the popular religious idea that immortality is a reward for being good. The imperative of duty sets before us a moral perfection of which no human being is capable in this world, Kant points out. After a long life of moral endeavor, we realize that we have made only a beginning toward what we ought to become, and we see that an infinite moral progress will be necessary for us before we can reach this high ideal. Yet we know that such moral perfection is something we *ought* to strive for. We are led, therefore, to believe in immortality, not as a reward for goodness, but as an opportunity to achieve the moral ideal, Kant maintains. Without this opportunity, we cannot make sense of the categorical imperative of duty. For otherwise we would be in the contradictory position of believing we *ought* to achieve an ideal which we could never hope to achieve; and this could not happen in a rational universe.

> One who is conscious of having persisted from legitimate moral motives to the end of a long life in a progress to the better, may well have the comforting hope, though not the certainty, that he will be steadfast in these principles in an existence continuing beyond this life. . . . On the basis of his previous progress from the worse to the morally better, and of the immutability of intention which thus becomes known to him, he may hope for a further uninterrupted continuation of this progress, even beyond this life. This infinite progress is possible, however, only under the presupposition of an infinitely enduring existence and personality of the same rational being; this is called the immortality of the soul.[30]

THE MORAL IDEAL AND PRACTICAL RELIGION

In his interpretation of the moral law and the good will, Kant insists with unrelenting logic upon the fact that in so far as our own interests guide our conduct, it cannot be treated as morally good. Only as we feel the compulsion of the moral ideal and do what is right because it is right and for no other reason is our conduct worthy of admiration. "Morals is not the doctrine of how to make ourselves happy but of how to be worthy of happiness," Kant writes. As Jesus asked many years earlier, if you love only those who love you, what merit have you? Do not all men do this? It is the man who loves his enemies, who treats kindly those who seek to do him harm, that really deserves our respect.

When he comes to a discussion of religion, however, Kant does recognize the justice of our deep moral conviction that the man who is genuinely good ought to be happy, even if he is not. This conviction can find no place in the fundamental principles of morality, but it is a legitimate religious belief that someday we will participate "in happiness in proportion as we endeavored not to be unworthy of it," Kant recognizes.[31] Many critics have felt, as a matter of fact, that Kant introduces God simply as a means to the happiness of those who have lived as they should. And at times he does write in such fashion as to open himself to this charge. But such a view as this clearly fails to do justice to his contention that faith in God is a direct and necessary outgrowth of the moral imperative of duty.

Our faith in God, in freedom, and in immortality is, then, for Kant, dependent in the final analysis upon the deep moral conviction of the human spirit. Such an approach provides not only the best but the only *proof* religion is capable of, he maintains. Religion at its best must be concerned, therefore, with high moral endeavor, not with the details of rational theology. Like his ethics, Kant's religion is designed to meet the needs of the common man. The essence of religion lies in "the recognition of all our duties as divine commands," he writes.[32] The voice of conscience is our best guide to the will of God. Genuine religion is to be found, not in reciting the creed, not in church attendance, nor ecclesiastical ceremony, but in high moral endeavor. Churches and creeds have value only in so far as they inspire us to a better life, and they should be judged by this standard. This is the true religion of Christ, Kant insists, and to this type of religion Christianity should return.

In Kant's opinion Christ lived and died to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, and this was to be a new society, in which a high moral ideal of unselfishness, brotherhood, and love would prevail among men. But as Kant looked around in his own day, he saw the Christian churches once more emphasizing creed and ritual rather than love and brotherhood. The hypocrisy of the Pharisees, which Christ so emphatically condemned, had found its way into the very church which professed Christ as its master, and once again a man measured his religion

by church attendance or theological belief instead of by Christ's moral ideal and way of life. It was high time, Kant maintained in 1794, that the essential moral content of religion be recognized and made central in Christianity again. This, in his opinion, was the enduring contribution that philosophy should make to religion.

A CONTEMPORARY INTERPRETATION OF RELIGION

As the tension between religion and the scientific spirit has become increasingly apparent in our own day, the appeal of Kant's emphasis upon the moral foundation of religious faith has likewise increased. A large number of able philosophers and religious thinkers have adopted the Kantian position as the soundest presentation of the claims of religion and sought to restate it in popular terms. Among contemporary writers none has done so more eloquently than John Baillie, for many years professor at Union Theological Seminary, New York, and more recently at the University of Edinburgh. In a volume of lectures to theological students, entitled *The Roots of Religion in the Human Soul,* we find a particularly clear and direct statement of the Kantian philosophy of religion as Professor Baillie sees and accepts it.

Religion, he here insists, is at heart "a confidence in the reality of goodness and the goodness of reality."[33] It is not primarily a matter of philosophical speculation, as the rationalist often leads us to believe, nor is it concerned with ecstatic emotional experiences, as the romanticist would like us to think. It is much more a matter of enduring loyalty to the best that we know: to goodness, to love, and to honor. Only the man who recognizes the authority of duty and the moral imperative can be expected to believe in God and to follow the practices of religion, Baillie is convinced. "There is no use at all (as, indeed, preachers have in every age known)," he writes, "in attempting to bring home the evidence of religious truth to a man whose hold upon goodness and love and honour is in any wise loose. How can a man who refuses to look Duty in the face ever hope to find God?"[34]

In our knowledge of the good, we are nearer the bedrock of reality and nearer to absolute certainty than anywhere else in our experience, Baillie maintains. The search for truth about the universe in which we live is a long and arduous one and has its moments of real frustration. Science is of some help to us, of course, but scientific knowledge is always of a provisional sort and what we think most certain today may tomorrow have to be revised. And in any case science is concerned at best with the detailed machinery of the universe, never with its final meaning or purpose. Although a man may be in the greatest uncertainty, however, about the nature of this "scheme of things" which makes up the universe, about its constitution and construction, he *knows* without any question that love is better than hate, that courage is better than cowardice, that it is right to help one's fellow traveler out of the ditch, Baillie points out. "However difficult it is

to know what to believe, there is always something which we know beyond all doubt to be worth doing."[35]

These are differences, of course, in what men believe about right and wrong at various times and in various places, but these differences are largely irrelevant to the point he is making, Baillie insists.

> No matter what anybody may say about the difficulty of certain moral problems or the relativity of certain moral standards, I am prepared to lay it down that there is nothing in life of which we are more certain than we are of the broad outline of our duty. The certainty which attaches to our primary moral values is the greatest degree of certainty which it is given to the race of man to possess. Loyalty and love and honour; truthfulness and purity and unselfishness—there is no knowledge of which I am surer than the knowledge that these things are more to be sought than fine gold and that there is laid upon all an absolute obligation to seek them, no matter at what cost to my own comfort or my own private pleasure and profit.[36]

It is important to emphasize the absolute nature of our primary moral certainties, Baillie tells us, just because he is so sure that out of these certainties faith in God arises in the soul.

> It is never possible for a man to have a firmer hold upon God than he has upon duty. It is never possible for a man to be any surer of the reality of God than he is of the loveliness of love and the ugliness of falsehood and selfishness. The only assurance of God which religion ever possesses is an assurance which is of the same kind, of the same texture, as our assurance of our ultimate values.[37]

But this assurance is enough.

Although the fact has not always been recognized, nothing could be clearer than that the moral rather than the intellectual conditions of belief are the ones emphasized in the New Testament. The assurance of God's presence is promised by Jesus or his followers never to the clever or the learned but always and only to those who are pure and true of heart. "Blessed are the pure in heart," said Jesus, "for they shall see God." Faith is closely associated with a good conscience and a pure heart; it is not the possession of the sharp-witted or the clear-headed. This is not to say, of course, that there are *no* intellectual conditions of faith. A man cannot be a moral agent at all unless he possesses at least ordinary intelligence, Baillie recognizes. But the process by which faith emerges is intellectually of so simple a character as to be within the reach of any ordinary, unsophisticated man or woman. This is a cardinal tenet of the Christian gospel as it is of the Kantian philosophy.

How, then, does faith in God arise as a natural accompaniment of moral conviction? The two are so closely associated that we can hardly separate them. Baillie insists. "Indeed we may say that to believe in duty and to believe in God

are not, for the man of faith, two different beliefs, but only one belief. To believe in God is, at least in its beginnings, hardly more than a deeper way of believing in duty." What happens is simply that as a man seeks earnestly to do what is right, there comes to him gradually the realization of a new and deeper meaning in duty and goodness. He has been believing all along that goodness and love and honor are the things that matter most in the world, and he has known that there is laid upon him an absolute obligation to follow the narrow and difficult way of duty no matter what the obstacles in his path. "But now he comes to feel, in a clear and explicit way, that it is nothing less than the hidden nature of things that is laying this obligation upon him. For how could he be obliged to do what is right if, in the last resort, the Universe does not care whether he do the right or the wrong?" How could the things that are right matter as they do, if they are not somehow central to the whole system of things in which he has his own humble part to play?

This does not mean, of course, that the ordinary man in whose soul faith in God comes to birth ever asks himself these questions in a conscious fashion. What actually happens, Baillie points out, is not so much that the man of deep moral conviction begins in time to believe in God; rather he comes to realize that he has been believing all the time.

> He has all along believed in the absolute worthwhileness of righteousness and love and service; he has all along felt that he was in the world to seek these things and that, if he did not seek them, he would be, in some sort, a disappointment, not merely to himself and to his fellows, but somehow also to that which caused him and his fellows to be. And now, it comes to him, perhaps with sudden surprise, that this belief is religion.[38]

Can we construct a really watertight argument to prove that this moral trust in God is credible? "I have no doubt at all that such an argument can be constructed," Professor Baillie writes. "On the other hand, I have the very gravest doubts as to the effectiveness of such a formal argument, when taken by itself." It is difficult to think that an argument of this sort could ever bring faith in God to birth in a man's soul. It is the experience of life that changes a man's outlook, not a well-turned syllogism. Religion is essentially a matter of finding a deeper meaning in duty, and this is accomplished not by developing greater logical acumen than we formerly possessed but by living more nearly in accord with the highest and best that we know. "The process of reasoning by which faith rises to the thought of God is so simple and direct that no man has ever been prevented from finding it by slowness of wits or deficiency of logic, but rather by *too much* logic of a false and abstract kind, or else by something lacking from his living experience," Baillie maintains. When reason has provided a clear and precise account of "the nature of that moral compulsion which in every age has led earnest

seekers after righteousness to trust in an Eternal Righteousness," it has done all that it can in the service of faith.[39]

> There is nothing of which I am more certain than that an absolute obligation is laid upon me to do the right and eschew the wrong. But what is it that thus obliges me, if it be not some larger order of things to which I stand related? How can values like truthfulness and unselfishness and courage have any claim upon me, if they are not grounded in the all-enclosing System to which I belong? The Universe cannot demand righteousness and love of me, unless Itself be righteous and loving; but how can anything be righteous and loving except a living Person. If duty means anything, if conscience be not a lying voice, then at the heart of the Universe there is Life and Mind and Reason, because Goodness, and Truth and Love.[40]

In this forthright fashion Baillie restates for our own age that confidence in the reality of goodness and the goodness of reality which with Kant he takes to be the heart of religious faith.

PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

How can we believe in the goodness of reality, in God, in freedom and in immortality—no matter how necessary such faith may be in man's moral life—when the sciences show us a world of natural law in which every event, whether in the physical universe or in human life, is completely determined? Here lay the central problem of philosophy for Kant; and in his *Critique of Pure Reason* he undertook to provide an interpretation of scientific knowledge and the scientific endeavor which would leave a place for the categorical imperative of duty and for religious faith. He gave eleven years to the writing of this *Critique*, then six more years to its revision, before he was satisfied with the job he had done. This task had to be accomplished, Kant felt, before he could go ahead with his moral philosophy. Unfortunately many interpreters of Kant have been so intrigued by the *Critique of Pure Reason*, or in some cases so baffled by it, that they never get to the moral philosophy for which it prepared the way.

THE PROBLEM KANT FACED

Kant's philosophy of science can best be understood when one sees clearly the problem he faced. As a young student he had taken for granted with Newton that the natural sciences give us dependable knowledge of the physical and material world around us. But from this "dogmatic slumber," as he called it, Kant was finally awakened by the skeptical philosophy of David Hume, with which he became acquainted about the time he was appointed to a professorship at Königsberg. Stated originally by the great English philosopher, John Locke, and de-

veloped by the Irish Bishop George Berkeley, British empiricism was carried to its logical conclusion by Hume, the Scottish skeptic. Locke had raised serious question about the rationalism of Descartes and Spinoza, maintaining that it is from experience, not from human reason, that we obtain our knowledge of the world. Prior to our experience of the world outside us, the mind is but a blank tablet, Locke argued. Examine the content of the human mind carefully and we find there no knowledge, no ideas, that have not come from experience, he maintains. This is the essential concept of seventeenth-century empiricism—that all knowledge is derived from experience, and that the human mind is but an instrument of recording and combining the data of sense experience.

In pushing such empiricism to its logical conclusion, however, Hume was led to question the validity of both science and religion. When only twenty-six (in 1739), he wrote a profound and subtle *Treatise on Human Nature* which became something of a stumbling block to all later empiricists. If we believe only what we can see, as some empiricists naïvely insist, we find very little that we can believe, Hume points out. Examine experience carefully and we discover, for example, that it contains no such thing as cause or natural law. We see the sun rise in the east day after day and conclude that it must do so, but in no instance do we actually observe any such necessity. This is not a fact of experience; it is merely an inference that we ourselves make. We see one billiard ball strike another; we see them together for an instant, and then we see them move apart. But we never *see* anything that we can justly call *causation.* Some impressions are present together, others follow one another; the fact that we observe this succession a hundred times rather than once does not justify us as empiricists in concluding that it must always occur. That conclusion is not justified unless we can actually observe the necessity of a particular event; and necessity is something that we never observe.

Hume then turns the same relentless logic upon religious faith. What perception, he asks, do we have either of the self or of God?

> For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I can never catch myself at any time without a perception, and never observe anything but the perception. When my perceptions are removed at any time, as by sound sleep, so long am I insensible of myself, and may truly be said not to exist.[41]

For the consistent empiricist the self is but a bundle of perceptions; the mind a stage or theater where perceptions make their appearance, pass by, and glide away in rapid succession. Our knowledge is of these perceptions alone. We cannot find anywhere in experience any definite and concrete perceptions which can be called the *self,* or any object which we can accept as God.

Thus the world of religion, with its faith in the soul and God, as well as the

world of science and natural law, dissolves in the hands of this unrelenting skeptic. Neither science nor religion can establish valid knowledge of any kind, Hume maintains. All we can be sure of is an unrelated flow of perceptions and ideas. That one cannot upon such skeptical conclusions build a practical philosophy of life Hume himself was quite aware. Nature has so fashioned us that we go on believing the things that we need to believe, he admits. We will continue to believe in an external world, in the laws of nature, in the self, and in God, because it is human nature to do so; but such beliefs are matters of feeling only, not the established conclusions of rational philosophy or science, Hume maintains.

THE COPERNICAN REVOLUTION IN PHILOSOPHY

Kant was given a rude jolt by the arguments of Locke and Hume. He realized that he had been taking for granted a number of things about scientific knowledge that he could not prove. On the other hand, however, he was sure that the Newtonian science, which he knew so well, provided him with a knowledge of the universe which the empiricists could not satisfactorily explain. Somehow the two points of view had to be reconciled before any further progress in philosophy was possible. Hume had made it clear that the kind of knowledge which science claims to have—knowledge that is universal and necessary for all rational beings—can never be derived from experience. Yet we unquestionably do have such knowledge in the natural sciences. It was this achievement of Newtonian science that so impressed Kant. Perhaps, however, the rational principles or laws which science uses in interpreting the physical universe actually come from the mind itself, Kant suggests, and not from our experience of external objects at all.

When this possibility first struck him, about 1770, the "critical philosophy" to which Kant devoted the rest of his life was born. Philosophy, he came to believe, must begin with the reflection of the mind upon its own nature and its own operations, rather than upon the nature of things outside the mind. In this sense it is a "critical" philosophy.

> Hitherto it has been assumed that all our knowledge must conform to objects. But all attempts to extend our knowledge of objects by establishing something in regard to them by means of concepts have, on this assumption, ended in failure. We must, therefore, make trial whether we may not have more success if we suppose that objects must conform to our knowledge.[12]

The result of this new approach to philosophy is a revolution comparable to the revolution of Copernicus in the field of astronomy, Kant insists. Critics of the philosopher have questioned his analogy. When Copernicus began his study of the heavens, man living on our planet was supposedly the center of this universe. The Copernican revolution in astronomy destroyed once and for all this anthropocentric view. Kant, on the other hand, in suggesting that our knowledge of things

must conform to the human mind instead of the mind's conforming to the things themselves, seems to be going in precisely the opposite direction. But does not this objection really involve a misunderstanding of both Kant and Copernicus? What Copernicus actually did was to show that certain changes in the apparent position of the sun and the stars were best explained not by the motion of the sun and the stars but by the motion of the earth itself. For Copernicus, that is, the true explanation of what we think we see in the heavens is to be found in what is happening to us. Kant in similar fashion argues that the source of our scientific knowledge may perhaps after all be found in what is happening in us—in what the mind itself contributes to experience—rather than in the external objects themselves. If we follow his suggestion, he points out, "we should then be proceeding precisely on the lines of Copernicus' primary hypothesis. Failing of satisfactory progress in explaining the movements of the heavenly bodies on the supposition that they all revolved around the spectator, he tried whether he might not have better success if he made the spectator to revolve and the stars to remain at rest."*

THE WORK OF THE MIND

The first problem that Kant deals with in the *Critique of Pure Reason* provides the key to his whole philosophy of science. How, he asks, is mathematical knowledge possible? According to the empiricism of Hume, it is impossible to find in experience either *necessity* or *universality*. Yet, as a matter of fact, in mathematical knowledge both necessity and universality are unmistakably present. Two plus two will always and necessarily be four. The mind cannot entertain any other possibility, no matter what the situation. Upon closer examination we discover, then, that in mathematics the universality and necessity come from the mind itself and not from experience. It is because the mind works as it does that we can always be sure that $2+2=4$. Experience merely provides the occasion for the use of certain fundamental principles by which the mind works; it does not supply these principles.

Here we have the insight, Kant maintains, which will enable us to understand how scientific knowledge is possible and what it is like. The mind is not a blank tablet, as Locke had suggested, upon which experience writes and so gives us our knowledge of external objects. The human mind is, rather, an active agent at work collecting and organizing the data of experience according to certain principles inherent in its own nature. The mere apprehension of facts never gives us scientific knowledge. Facts have to be put together, organized, and made intelligible before we get any knowledge; and this is the work of the mind itself. At the heart of Kant's philosophy is a new interpretation of the mind's creative

* *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. xvi. Professor Norman Kemp Smith, of the University of Edinburgh, a distinguished interpreter of Kant, is responsible for clarifying the Kantian position at this point.

activity. Someone has suggested that the work of the mind might well be compared to that of the managing editor of a great newspaper. From all over the world there comes to his desk information about what is happening: news flashes, feature articles, routine dispatches, weather reports, political cartoons, sports results. He has far more at his disposal than he can use; what he has does not by itself make sense. It lacks the order and arrangement necessary for a coherent and informative newspaper. This the editor himself must provide. He must supply the pattern, the principles of organization and interpretation, which will make of this mass of unrelated data a coherent whole, a meaningful picture of the world for the reader of the newspaper. He eliminates what he cannot use and fits what he wants into the pattern which he himself provides. And then, whether we like it or not, we see the world through this framework as we read the paper at breakfast the next morning.

Not only does this analogy portray clearly the active function of the mind in ordering the rough data of experience. It indicates also another equally important aspect of Kant's critical philosophy: no knowledge is possible until we have the data of sense experience to organize and interpret. Without the work of the editor there could be no coherent newspaper; but likewise there could be none without the mass of data which came to his desk from the outside world. In similar fashion, the mind by itself can give us no knowledge of the world, Kant maintains. It is equipped to organize and interpret what we see and hear, using certain fundamental categories of its own; but until we do see or hear something, the mind does not operate. As Kant himself puts it in somewhat more concise terms:

> There can be no doubt whatever that all our knowledge begins *with* experience. But although all our knowledge begins with experience, it by no means follows that it all originates *from* experience. For it may well be that experience is itself made up of two elements, one received through impressions of the senses, and the other supplied from itself by our faculty of knowledge on occasion of these impressions.[43]

When carefully read, Kant's own description of the way in which scientific knowledge is gained is quite revealing:

> When Galileo caused balls, the weights of which he had himself previously determined, to roll down an inclined plane; when Torricelli made the air carry a weight, which he had calculated beforehand, to be equal to that of a definite volume of water, a light broke upon all students of nature. They learned that reason has insight into that only which it produces after a plan of its own, and that it must not allow itself to be kept, as it were, in nature's leading-strings, but must show the way with principles of interpretation based on fixed laws, constraining nature to give answers to questions of reason's own determining. Reason, holding in one hand its principles, ac-

> cording to which alone appearances can be admitted as equivalent to laws, and in the other hand the experiment which it has devised in accordance with these principles, must approach nature in order to be taught by it. It must not, however, do so in the character of a pupil who listens to everything that the teacher chooses to say, but of an appointed judge who compels the witnesses to answer questions which he himself has formulated. Even physics, therefore, owes the beneficent revolution in its point of view entirely to the happy thought, that while reason must seek in nature, not fictitiously ascribe to it, whatever has to be learned, if learned at all, only from nature, it must adopt as its guide, so to speak, that which it has itself put into nature.[44]

A PRIORI KNOWLEDGE

Those principles of interpretation which the mind contributes to our knowledge of the world Kant calls *a priori*. That is, they exist in the mind prior to all experience, and it is only as they arrange and order the data of the senses that experience as we know it becomes possible.

> By *a priori* knowledge we shall, therefore, in what follows understand, not such knowledge as is independent of this or that experience, but such as is absolutely independent of all experience. Opposed to it is empirical knowledge, or that which is possible only *a posteriori*, that is, by experience.[45]

When we examine the knowledge of the universe which science gives us, it is not difficult to distinguish the *empirical* from the *a priori* or purely rational elements, Kant feels. As Hume so convincingly argued, necessity and universality could never be derived from experience. Hence, whenever we find knowledge that is necessary and universal, we can be sure that it is *a priori*.

> Experiences tell us what is, but not that it must be necessarily what it is and not otherwise. Secondly, experience can never tell us that a judgment is always and universally true, only that it is here and now valid. Necessity and strict universality are, therefore, sure criteria of *a priori* knowledge, and are also inseparably connected with each other.[46]

As he examines the body of knowledge that science has amassed, Kant finds that there are such *a priori* elements, possessing both necessity and universality, in our perception of the world as well as in our understanding of what we perceive. In perception there are not only the data of the senses—taste, odor, sound, light or heat, color, hardness, and the like—but there are also space and time in which such sense data are always arranged and ordered. Now obviously space and time are something different from the properties of objects. We do not see space or time; they are rather conditions or forms into which all perception must fit. And they are universal and necessary conditions of perception. If any object exists at all, it must be somewhere in space and in time. We can-

not imagine anything existing except as we perceive it in space and locate it in time. We know this, as Kant says, "absolutely independent of all experience." It is necessarily and universally true. Hence Kant terms space and time *a priori* forms of perception. They are principles of ordering and arranging sense data which are supplied by the mind, not found in the outside world. They are, in a way, much like colored glasses which all human beings wear. The world must always look blue to anyone who wears blue glasses. So our world must always be a world of objects in space and time because these are principles or forms of ordering sense perception inherent in the human mind itself.

Just as space and time prove, upon examination, to be *a priori* forms of perception and not something outside the mind at all, so the basic concepts of science, such as cause and substance, must also be recognized as *a priori* categories of understanding, Kant points out. Not only do we perceive objects in space and time but we relate them to one another and understand their nature by means of rational principles that are likewise necessary and universal. We never see causation, no matter how many times we see a thing happen. Hume was right about that. But we know that every event must have a cause, quite apart from experience. And similarly we know also that a table is more than brownness, hardness, and rectangularity. These are qualities of a substance which we call the table, although we never actually observe the table itself, only the brownness, the hardness, the rectangularity.

We cannot understand the physical universe rationally except in terms of cause and effect, of substance and attribute, just as we cannot perceive it intelligibly except in terms of time and space. This is true *not* because cause and substance are things outside the mind which we find in the world of nature. It is true because the mind itself is so constituted that we must necessarily and universally think in this fashion, Kant maintains. Scientific knowledge is based, then, not upon what we find in the world outside us but rather upon certain principles of reasoning in the mind itself, our philosopher concludes, and he names a dozen of these, among which cause and substance are the most important.

THE LIMITS OF SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE

In this fashion Kant rescues scientific knowledge from the uncertainty into which Hume's empiricism had cast it. The creative activity of the human mind itself is the cornerstone upon which his philosophy of science is built; here we must look for the sure foundations of our scientific knowledge, he insists. The validity, the necessity, the universality which have given to science such prestige and influence are all supplied by the human mind; they are not discovered in the external world of nature.

If Kant can be said, then, to have saved scientific knowledge from the skepticism of Hume, he certainly did not rescue it undamaged. His philosophy of science is quite different from that accepted by most scientists. For if Kant

is correct, the world as we know it in the natural sciences is not the world as it really is; it is rather a world we ourselves have built by fashioning the data of the senses in accord with a pattern which our own mind provides. We might perhaps illustrate the difference by contrasting a photographer's picture of a landscape with an artist's painting of the same scene. The photographer reproduces the landscape as it actually is, we say; the artist gives us his creative interpretation of the scene, based upon actual facts to be sure, but given a new meaning and beauty by the genius of the artist. In the philosophy of Kant the scientific picture of the universe turns out to be more like the creative work of the artist than like the factual reproduction of the photographer.

Science as thus interpreted does not, and cannot, give us knowledge of the world as it really is. Scientific knowledge is knowledge of a world that we have built in accord with the pattern supplied by the human mind. This Kant calls the phenomenal world, to distinguish it from the world as it really is. The major error of most people, then, lies in treating science as if it portrayed the real world rather than the phenomenal world. The advocates of materialism, as well as those of scientific determinism, are guilty of this fallacy. A more sophisticated philosophy of science, Kant argues, must recognize the inevitable limits beyond which science cannot go. By its very nature science is limited to the rational interpretation of sense data, to the physical universe, the world of nature. The realm with which religion is concerned, however, the realm of God and the soul, of freedom and immortality, lies beyond the phenomenal world of science and can never be brought within the domain of scientific knowledge. When science attempts to go beyond the limits of the physical world, and to supply us with knowledge of God or spiritual reality, it immediately falls into unresolvable dilemmas, Kant points out. We cannot prove that God was the cause of the world, nor can we prove that he was not. We cannot prove the existence of the soul, nor its immortality; but we cannot disprove either of these beliefs. Arguments on both sides are equally convincing, since it is impossible to apply the categories of science beyond the limits of experience. Moral conviction and religious faith, on the one hand, and the world of science, on the other, simply do not coincide. Only when we recognize this fact, Kant felt, can the conflict of scientific determinism and religious faith be resolved. "I have therefore found it necessary to deny *knowledge* of God, freedom and immortality, in order to find a place for *faith*," he writes in the preface to his first *Critique*.[47]

WHAT KANT ACCOMPLISHED

In the field of moral philosophy Kant stands in a place by himself. He has portrayed the compulsion of the moral ideal with a care and thoroughness found nowhere else in the history of philosophy. He convincingly rescues the moral life of the ordinary man from the intricacies and uncertainties of moral relativism.

He vigorously defends the validity of moral conviction against the determinism of modern science. And he commits himself clearly to faith in God and the moral order of the universe as a fundamental tenet of the philosophy by which a moral man must live. It is not difficult, therefore, to understand the enduring appeal of Kant's moral philosophy.

Seen in historical perspective, the Kantian ethics combines certain elements of Stoicism and of the Christian moral ideal. With the Stoic, Kant emphasizes the dignity of man as a rational being, but with the Christian he accepts good will as the heart of practical reason. He makes it clear that man as a *rational* being cannot be divorced from man as a *moral* being. There are difficulties, of course, in Kant's position and upon these his critics have often seized. Undoubtedly his ethical theory does oversimplify the actual nature of moral conduct. The problem that perplexes us is not that of choosing between loyalty or disloyalty to family, to country, or to religion. In this situation we feel that we can tell what is right and what wrong without serious difficulty. Actually our difficult moral choices come when these loyalties conflict: when we have to choose between two courses of action both of which are good in themselves, when loyalty to family seems to demand of us conduct that conflicts with loyalty to country, or when loyalty to country asks of us action that is in conflict with our loyalty to God.

It is in such situations that Kant's philosophy seems to have little help to offer us. It is, as his critics have pointed out, too *formalistic*. It does not tell us what are the positive goods of life; it insists merely upon a formal commitment to the good will or the categorical imperative. Here Kant's conception of morality is in marked contrast to Greek thought, as seen clearly in the *Ethics* of Aristotle, which places little emphasis upon duty and obedience but regards the "good life" as one of beauty, joy, and self-realization. Kant, we may well agree, provides us with an excellent test for moral conduct: always act in accord with a principle which may be made a universal law. But this is chiefly negative. It does not tell us what morality actually consists of. It fails to take account of the specific conditions, the concrete needs and interests of each individual, which go to make up the good life for that person, and which Dewey, more recently, has emphasized in his empirical moral theory. As a matter of fact, Kant was probably guilty, as his critics point out, of smuggling in empirical consequences which his theory did not recognize. It is quite possible, for example, that a pessimist such as Schopenhauer might decide that human life is evil and should not be perpetuated, and honestly feel that everyone should adopt and act on this conviction. To get a completely sufficient criterion of what is good, one would have to examine the social consequences of such action as well as the motives behind them.

Although Kant's approach was perhaps narrow and did not include much that goes to make up the good life, his position certainly grew directly from his

own moral enthusiasm. As we have pointed out, Kant was convinced that it was not the function of ethics to provide specific rules of conduct any more than it was the function of logic to provide specific arguments on any point. The function of ethics, as he saw it, is to provide a valid test by which right conduct can be determined, just as logic provides a test for valid argument.* And it is from this point of view that his moral philosophy has proved significant.

Another weakness, perhaps, in Kant's position—as we look at it today, certainly—lies in the authoritarian spirit that it exemplifies. The good man, as pictured here, recognizes the authority of the moral law and obeys this law because it is authoritative for him. Such an ethical position clearly reflects the early Hebrew conception of the law of Jehovah as the basis of right and wrong. It is true that Kant tried to substitute the authority of reason for the authority of God, but his moral philosophy has an authoritarian flavor which will not appeal to members of a democratic society. It exhibits what has been called the Decalogue concept of morality: the "Thou shalt not" of the Old Testament. One does not find in Kant the Christian spirit of love at its best or the scientific attitude of patient investigation and careful weighing of one consideration against another before a final choice is possible.†

The political limitations in Kant's ethics ought also to be recognized. It has been argued frequently that the authoritarianism of the modern German state grew naturally from the moral philosophy of Kant and found in it strong support. Certainly one can hardly build a workable political philosophy on the principle that the motive and not the consequences of our conduct is all that counts. Even the principle that we ought to treat every man as an end in himself leads to serious political and legal difficulties. How could one reach a decision on this principle when two people's interests were in genuine conflict? In Reinhold Niebuhr's effort to apply the Christian ideal of good will and human brotherhood to our political and economic life these difficulties become particularly clear. And Niebuhr is finally led to the conclusion that the Christian ethic—and this would hold also for the moral philosophy of Kant—is of much greater significance in the life of the individual than is social philosophy. To this more direct consideration of Christian idealism, we now turn our attention.

* See C. D. Broad, *Five Types of Ethical Theory*, p. 113.

† See E. A. Singer, *Modern Thinkers and Present Problems*, pp. 133-137.

14· CHRISTIAN IDEALISM

Reinhold Niebuhr

The philosophy of Plato provides ample evidence of the compulsion of the rational ideal in human life and thought. In the philosophy of Kant there is an equally convincing statement of the compulsion of the moral ideal. Nowhere, however, have man's highest ideals and aspirations found clearer expression than in the Christian philosophy of life. To no other philosophy have men in the Western world given themselves with greater devotion; in none have they found so satisfying a statement of their deepest insight into the enduring nature of the universe; none has inspired them to such deeds of moral heroism and self-forgetfulness. It is true that today for the first time in centuries the Christian faith does find itself confronted throughout the world with a serious rival for the allegiance of mankind; and there have at all times been many who have disagreed with its teaching or have been indifferent to its message. But certainly no adequate account of philosophies men live by can omit Christian idealism from its major concerns.

We are not here interested, to be sure, in the theological controversies which for five hundred years have sharply divided those who call themselves Christians, at times arousing such bitter controversy as almost to destroy the very Christian spirit which they profess. Nor are we concerned with the doctrinal and ecclesiastical differences which today divide Christians into some two hundred and fifty sects. If we could do so, it would be desirable simply to turn back to the life and teachings of Jesus as the authoritative source of the Christian philosophy of living. But unfortunately there are complications which make this impossible. In one way or another, almost every Christian group claims the

authority of Jesus for its own particular interpretation of the Christian faith. It is not possible to reconstruct an authoritative account of Jesus' life and teachings that will not be seriously questioned by some able and sincere Christians.

Two fundamentally opposed interpretations of Christianity have exerted the widest influence throughout the twenty centuries of Christian history. One is the traditional, or "orthodox," position, adopted in general by the Roman Catholic Church and the more conservative Protestant denominations. The other is the "liberal" Christianity, which for a while seemed destined to become the dominant Protestant position but was accepted finally only by those Protestant groups which have been most influenced by the modern scientific spirit and by the urban and industrial forces at work in contemporary civilization. Orthodox Christianty has placed its emphasis upon faith and theological doctrine; liberal Christianity has sought to re-establish the intellectual respectability of religion in an age of science and has stressed the social implications of the Christian gospel. The sources of both points of view are to be found in the New Testament itself, and both likewise have reappeared in almost every age of vital Christian faith. All the wide variety of Christian beliefs and practices today are but expressions, with minor variation, of one position or the other. It is this fundamental cleavage in Christian thought that seriously complicates our present undertaking. An attempt to present Christianity from either point of view will naturally be resented as inadequate and misleading by the other.

It is certainly desirable, also, to find an exponent of Christian idealism of acknowledged stature in the field of philosophy. To guide our discussion of the Christian faith, we want a man of recognized intellectual ability as well as unquestioned sincerity. One of the outstanding religious figures in America today is Reinhold Niebuhr, professor of Christian ethics at Union Theological Seminary, New York. Niebuhr's influence upon religious thought in Europe as well as in our own country during the last two decades has been far-reaching; his insight into the significance of Christianity for an age such as ours is profound. He combines in unusual fashion an appreciation of the enduring truth of the Christian faith with the recognition that to be vital and meaningful religion must deal honestly and courageously with the disturbing social problems of the world about us.

Niebuhr, moreover, is a religious leader who ranks with the ablest philosophers of our day both in sheer intellectual power and in capacity to deal realistically with the issues of living that confront us. In his thought there is a genuine concern with the philosophical and ethical issues that we have faced thus far as well as a "dimension of depth" which we have not so far encountered. And, what is equally important for our purpose, his "prophetic Christianity" provides an appealing synthesis of the orthodox and the more liberal points of view; he has been able to retain what is essential in each and to reject what is secondary or

superficial. In Niebuhr's thought we can expect to find a discerning interpretation of Christian idealism as a philosophy of living adequate for the needs of our age and at the same time true to the essential spirit of Christianity.

THE MAKING OF A CHRISTIAN PROPHET

As his name suggests, Reinhold Niebuhr is of German extraction. His father was a German Evangelical pastor in a small Missouri community when Reinhold was born, on June 21, 1892; and the boy grew up in the American Midwest as his father moved from one pastorate to another in that region. After attending a small Lutheran college in Illinois and the Lutheran theological seminary at St. Louis, Niebuhr went on to Yale University with the intention of preparing himself to become a professor of theology. Before he finished the work at Yale necessary for the doctorate, however, he became deeply dissatisfied because so much of his theological study was unrelated to the practical problems of Christian living.* Upon receiving his master's degree at Yale, in 1915, Niebuhr decided, therefore, to leave the university and go into the active ministry.

In the German Evangelical Church, to which he belonged, individual churches did not invite men to become their pastors; instead the central authority of the church placed its ministers in various pastorates. Niebuhr was assigned to the pastorate of the Bethel Evangelical Church in Detroit, which at the time had only about forty members. During his thirteen years in this pastorate, he slowly and painfully worked out his own interpretation of the meaning of Christianity. There is to be seen in his view of religion an unusual combination of his German heritage, with its concern for the profound problems of Christian faith, on the one hand, and the practical spirit of the American Midwest, dissatisfied with any point of view that is unrealistic or out of touch with the concrete and the immediate problems of everyday life, on the other. Fortunately, Niebuhr kept a diary during these years in Detroit, which was published when he left his pastorate there under the title *Leaves From the Notebook of a Tamed Cynic.* In the notes jotted down here, it is easy to see his ideas being shaped by the forces at work in modern society.

REFLECTIONS OF A YOUNG MINISTER

At the beginning of his ministry, Niebuhr was very conscious of his own shortcomings. Soon after he began preaching, he wrote:

> I suppose that as the years go by life and experience will prompt some new ideas and I will find some in the Bible that I have missed so far. They say a young preacher must catch his second wind before he can really preach.

* See D. R. Davies, *Reinhold Niebuhr, Prophet From America,* pp. 5, 8.

> I'd better catch it pretty soon. You are supposed to stand before a congregation, brimming over with a great message. Here I am trying to find a new little message each Sunday. If I really had great convictions I suppose they would struggle for birth each week. As the matter stands, I struggle to find an idea worth presenting and I almost dread the approach of a new sabbath. The prophet speaks only when he is inspired. The parish priest must speak whether he is inspired or not.[1]

After he had been preaching for about five years, however, a noticeable change became apparent in Niebuhr's feeling about his work.

> I am really beginning to like the ministry. I think since I have stopped worrying so much about the intellectual problems of religion and have begun to explore some of its ethical problems there is more of a thrill in preaching. The real meaning of the gospel is in conflict with most of the customs and attitudes of our day at so many places that there is adventure in the Christian message. I can't say that I have done anything in my life to dramatize the conflict between the gospel and the world. But I find it increasingly interesting to set the two in juxtaposition at least in my mind. And of course ideas may finally lead to action.[2]

As a Christian pastor in Detroit, Niebuhr could not escape a deep concern with the effects of modern industrialism upon the lives of the men and women with whom he worked. It was impossible for him to think of the Christian gospel except in terms of what it meant to the workers in the automobile plants around Detroit. It has been suggested that Henry Ford is more responsible than anyone else for Niebuhr's views—that Reinhold Niebuhr, the Christian revolutionary, was one of the by-products of the Ford automobile factories in Detroit.* For Niebuhr soon reached the conclusion that the church cannot save a man's soul without doing something about the kind of life he lives in this world. In other words, the Christian gospel became a social gospel for him. An essential task of the church, he came to believe, was to improve the economic conditions which made it impossible for so many of its members to live decent, healthy lives. And more and more strongly the conviction forced itself upon Niebuhr that the church was not accomplishing this task.

His comment upon the death of Bishop Williams in 1924 is particularly revealing.

> Nowhere have I seen a personality more luminous with the Christ spirit than in this bishop who was also a prophet. Here was a man who knew how to interpret the Christian religion so that it meant something in terms of an industrial civilization. Yet I am afraid that it must be admitted that he didn't change the prevailing attitude of Detroit industry by a hair's breadth. He even had to offer his resignation in the face of increasing hostility to his social views. He did not change Detroit industry but he left many of us

* See D. R. Davies, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

> holding our heads more upright because of his intelligent and courageous analysis of contemporary civilization from the perspective of a Christian conscience. . . . Beside the brutal fact of modern industrial life, how futile are all our homiletical spoutings. The Church is undoubtedly cultivating graces and preserving spiritual amenities in the more protected areas of our society. But it isn't changing the essential facts of modern industrial civilization by a hair's breadth. It isn't even thinking about them.[3]

A trip to Europe in 1923-1924 brought home to Niebuhr the widespread havoc and devastation wrought by the First World War and sharpened his sense of the brutal, non-Christian forces at work in modern civilization. One incident during this trip is of especial interest. In England for a visit, he and a group of friends worshiped one Sunday morning in the great Anglican cathedral at York; then at dinner the same evening with officials of the Rowntree cocoa works they faced as honestly as they could the disturbing ethical problems raised by our industrial practices today. Niebuhr's companions felt that there was more real religion in their experience at the Rowntree plant than in the communion service read so atrociously in the cathedral. Niebuhr, however, despite his own deep concern with the ethical ideals of Christianity, recognized clearly the inadequacy of this point of view.

> Religion is a reaction to life's mysteries and a reverence before the infinitudes of the universe. The cathedral with its dim religious light, its vaulted ceiling, its altar screen, and its hushed whispers is symbolic of the element of mystery in religion. Without an adequate sermon, however, no clue is given to the moral purpose at the heart of the mystery, and reverence remains without ethical content. I am sorry that there is no more ethically vital preaching in the cathedral, though that wretched communion service this morning is hardly typical of everything which happens in a cathedral. But I am equally sorry that the sense of awe and reverence has departed from so many of our [Protestant] churches. The very appearance of many of our churches betrays the loss of one necessary element in religion. Everything suggests the secular rather than the religious, from the red hat of the rather too sensuously pretty soprano soloist to the comfortable pew cushions and the splendiferous pew holders. Of course, I know that the devotional attitude frequently destroys clear thinking, and we need clear thinking for ethical living in a complex civilization. But it ought not to be impossible to preserve the poetic with the scientific attitude, the mystical with the analytical, to have both worship and instruction.[4]

THE DILEMMA OF THE MINISTER

Among the most impressive and appealing characteristics of Niebuhr are his complete candor and honesty. As far as anyone can do so, he has escaped the vice of rationalization, which allows most of us so easily to put upon others the blame for our own shortcomings. During his years in Detroit, he did not simply blame the church for its failure to deal realistically with the evils in our economic

system. He recognized that he himself and his fellow ministers were primarily responsible.

> I must confess that I haven't discovered much courage in the ministry. The average parson is characterized by suavity and circumspection rather than by robust fortitude. I do not intend to be mean in my criticism, because I am a coward myself and find it tremendously difficult to run counter to general opinion.[5]

The Christian minister today is in no easy position, however, as Niebuhr is well aware. For he is committed to ideals which are in direct conflict with the dominant interests and prejudices of our contemporary civilization. This conflict is particularly apparent in America, where the economic forces of an industrial era have found full expression. All Christians are forced to make some compromise "between the rigor of the ideal and the necessities of the day," Niebuhr writes.

> A reasonable person adjusts his moral goal somewhere between Christ and Aristotle, between an ethic of love and an ethic of moderation. I hope there is more of Christ than of Aristotle in my position. But I would not be too sure of it. . . . It is almost impossible to be sane and Christian at the same time, and on the whole I have been more sane than Christian. I have said what I believe but in my creed the divine madness of the gospel of love is qualified by considerations of moderation which I have called Aristotelian but which an unfriendly critic might call opportunistic. I have made these qualifications because it seems to me that without them the Christian ethic becomes useless for any direction of the affairs of a larger society.[5a]

In our effort to arrive at a workable compromise, we easily deceive ourselves, however, and let Christianity become largely a matter of vague generalities. This seems to Niebuhr as true of the minister as it is of the layman.

> That the ministry is particularly tempted to the self-deceptions which afflict the moral life of Christians today is obvious. If it is dangerous to entertain great moral ideals without attempting to realize them in life, it is even more perilous to proclaim them in abstract terms without bringing them into juxtaposition with the specific social and moral issues of the day. The minister is easily fooled by extravagant conceptions of his own moral stature, held by admiring parishioners. If a minister wants to be a man among men he need only stop creating devotion to abstract ideals which every one accepts in theory and denies in practice, and to agonize about their validity and practicability in our present civilization. That immediately gives his ministry a touch of reality and potency and robs it of an artificial prestige which it can afford to dispense with.[6]

These criticisms are not meant to suggest a lack of appreciation of the minister's important task. At the close of his work in Detroit, Niebuhr writes:

> Having both entered and left the parish ministry against my inclinations, I pay my tribute to the calling, firm in the conviction that it offers greater opportunities for both moral adventure and social usefulness than any other calling if it is entered with open eyes and a consciousness of the hazards to virtue which lurk in it. I make no apologies for being critical of what I love. No one wants a love which is based upon illusions, and there is no reason why we should not love a profession and yet be critical of it.[7]

THE TAMED CYNIC

Niebuhr's experiences brought him close to the borders of cynicism. Many who heard him thought that he was unduly critical and pessimistic. He was certainly caustic in his attack upon our social sins but, at least during his years in the ministry at Detroit, he never completely lost his faith in his fellow man.

> Cynics sometimes insinuate that you can love people only if you don't know them too well; that a too intimate contact with the foibles and idiosyncrasies of men will tempt one to be a misanthrope. I have not found it so. I save myself from cynicism by knowing individuals and knowing them intimately. If I viewed humanity only from some distant and high perspective I could not save myself from misanthropy. I think the reason is simply that people are not as decent in their larger relationships as in their more intimate contacts.
>
> Look at the industrial enterprise anywhere and you find criminal indifference on the part of the strong to the fate of the weak. The lust for power and the greed for gain are the dominant notes in business. An industrial overlord will not share his power with his workers until he is forced to do so by tremendous pressure. The middle classes do not aid the worker in this pressure. He must fight alone. The middle classes are in fact quite incapable of any high degree of social imagination. If the children of strikers are starving it is more difficult to find support for them than to win contributors to the missions of the church.
>
> Men are clearly not lovely in the mass. One can maintain confidence in them only by viewing them at close range. Then one may see the moral nobility of unselfish parenthood, the pathetic eagerness of father and mother to give their children more of life than they enjoyed, the faithfulness of wives to their erring husbands, the grateful respect of mature children for their old parents, the effort of this and that courageous soul to maintain personal integrity in a world that continually tempts to dishonesty, and the noble aspirations of hearts that must seem unheroic to the unheeding world.[8]

LATER ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

By the time Niebuhr left his church in Detroit, in 1928, to become professor of applied Christian ethics at Union Theological Seminary, New York, he was recognized as one of the ablest and most courageous Christian leaders in our

country. In place of the struggling little congregation of some forty people, he left behind him a flourishing church of more than eight hundred members. It was a church that made its influence felt in the life of a city which during the same period had grown from a hundred thousand to nearly a million people. For during his years in Detroit Niebuhr's activities extended far beyond the bounds of his own church. As long as his life was limited to professional church circles, he believed it impossible to understand the practical problems of ordinary men and women. And he feared especially the kind of pious unreality that too easily accompanies withdrawal from the everyday world of affairs. Therefore he became acquainted with organized labor in Detroit at first hand; he read widely in the Marxian philosophy that the more radical labor leaders were advocating; and he sought to fashion a Christian gospel capable of meeting the issues raised in these circles. In this way Niebuhr saves religion from the charge of being remote and unrelated to life. In his hands it becomes a razor's edge which cuts through the pious complacencies of the conventional churches, on the one hand, and the deep-seated illusions of conventional politics and economics, on the other. He has helped to disprove the idea, prevalent among the disciples of Marx, that religious orthodoxy is necessarily reactionary. Orthodox religion has frequently been associated with dullness, complacency, and privilege. Niebuhr has done much to rescue it from so deadly an association.

This almost passionate concern on Niebuhr's part with the practical bearing of Christianity upon economic and political problems has by no means displaced a deep and essential religious faith, however. The fact that he has been able to combine these two divergent approaches is, indeed, one of the marks of his greatness. It has meant that he is heard with genuine respect alike by the more radical labor groups in our country, who as a rule pay little attention to religious leaders, and by more orthodox Christian groups, which by and large do not concern themselves with the social implications of religion. Niebuhr himself describes his point of view in an arresting phrase: as he has moved gradually toward the left in his economic and political thought, he has moved more and more toward the right, he says, in his religious conviction.

Niebuhr's first major work, *Does Civilization Need Religion?* published a year before he left Detroit, exhibits his growing understanding of religion, on the one hand, and of the forces at work in shaping modern civilization, on the other. A few years later, in a volume entitled *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, he carried to its completion his ethical analysis of modern civilization. This book ranks among the ablest and most searching studies of social life in our generation. At the time (1932) our American economy was going through its most serious convulsion to date, and Niebuhr is particularly critical of political and economic practices which he sees accepted with little thought by most Christians. He is equally vigorous, however, in pointing out deep-seated illusions in the Marxian social philosophy which he knew at first hand.

In several later works Niebuhr's treatment of religion gradually reaches mature form. The earliest of these, *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics*, was published in 1935. In *Beyond Tragedy* (1938) and *Christianity and Power Politics* (1940), a number of sermons and essays written during this same period are brought together. The latter volume is worthy of especial mention in this connection because here Niebuhr states his views on religion and ethics in popular and appealing fashion, a thing he does too seldom. For most readers this book will serve as their best introduction to his thought. Finally, Niebuhr's series of Gifford Lectures at Edinburgh should be mentioned. Only three other Americans have been invited to this distinguished lectureship at Edinburgh: William James, Josiah Royce, and John Dewey. The inclusion of Reinhold Niebuhr in this select group speaks for itself. His Gifford Lectures, entitled *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, were published in two volumes between 1941 and 1943. We find here his most clear-cut acceptance of the orthodox Christian faith; he commits himself unequivocably to the medieval Catholic and early Reformation tradition in theology, and he undertakes with marked success to show that orthodox Christianity contains a penetrating insight into the nature of man and the universe which more liberal, humanistic philosophies fail to provide.

During the past twenty years, Niebuhr has written a number of other books on current social and theological issues; he has been widely sought as a lecturer in college and university circles; he has exerted a profound influence upon the thinking of the young ministers being trained at Union Theological Seminary; he has taken a leading role in important church councils both in this country and in Europe; and for most of this time he has edited the quarterly *Christianity and Society* and the biweekly journal *Christianity and Crisis*. Through these various activities he has done as much, certainly, as any other individual to shape the course of Christian thought in this country. The first book about him, a small volume entitled *Reinhold Niebuhr, Prophet From America*, has been written, interestingly enough, by an Englishman. Its concluding estimate of his significance, although couched in British rather than in American terms, is a striking one:

> Reinhold Niebuhr is a gift of God to a tortured and troubled world. He is, by any standard of judgment whatsoever, a leading, if not the leading theorist in the contemporary revolution in Christian thought. He has made orthodox theology relevant to our secular crisis. He has made it intellectually respectable. In our optimistic youth, many of us drifted into liberal Protestantism because we shared too easily the assumption that orthodoxy was intellectually discredited. It had ceased to be fashionable. It was out of date. Every bright young thing was modernist by definition. Niebuhr has powerfully helped to change all that. Nowadays, it is the old who are theological liberals. The young, who as always tend to swim with the tide, are orthodox. Niebuhr has been one of the influences that have reversed the

theological tide. But he has done more than that. By his prophetic insight and passion, he has made the Christian faith an inescapable issue for a generation whose own secular faith has proved to be bankrupt. This achievement makes his place secure in the apostolic succession of Christian revolutionaries.[9]

RELIGION AND MODERN CIVILIZATION

Niebuhr has never been willing to interpret the role of religion in such fashion as to isolate it from the dominant forces at work in modern civilization. No matter how important its task of saving men from the sins of the world, the church still must function "in the world" as a social institution; its achievements and limitations must be examined critically, like those of other social institutions. As he examined the condition of the church some twenty years ago in Detroit, where the rapid growth of industry had accentuated the social problems of our age, Niebuhr was not encouraged by what he found. "Religion is not in a robust state of health in modern civilization," he writes in the opening sentence of his first major work. "Vast multitudes, particularly in industrial and urban centers, live without claiming its sanctions for their actions and die without claiming its comforts in their extremities."[10] The urge of progress has not apparently proved to be an unmixed spiritual blessing.

It is among rural groups rather than in the city that religion seems to have its most natural appeal, Niebuhr points out. In rural life, men are close enough to nature to be prompted to awe and reverence by her beauties; they have a natural sense of gratitude for her vast and perennial benevolences; they are instinctively moved to fear by her occasional cruel caprices. In the face of such momentary calamities as floods, hurricanes, and drought, rural groups appeal from nature's God to the God who is above nature and seek the intervention of the supernatural in behalf of their neighbors and themselves. Despite the growing influence of the automobile and the motion picture, the forces of our urban and industrial civilization have had a less disturbing effect upon the religious temper in the country, where the ethical life of the community is still relatively simple and family loyalties still dominate moral conduct.

The modern city, on the other hand, tends inevitably to undermine religious faith. As men are divorced from the soil, they gradually lose both the reverence to which the serene majesties of nature prompts them, and also the fear occasioned by her elemental passions. As Walter Lippmann has said, it is not natural to form reverent attachments to an apartment on a two-year lease, or to an imitation mahogany desk on the thirty-second floor of an office building. In such an environment piety begins to appear somewhat absurd. Even the refinements and artificialities of city life, however, can not save man from facing

his most implacable enemy—death; nor can the city give him the support he needs to bolster his deeper moral ideals and aspirations. Even in the city, therefore, the church continues to exert an influence. The ideals of personal morality are always strongest in those classes whose financial resources are not so abundant as to tempt them to sensual excesses or so scant as to lead them to an obsession with the physical and material necessities of life, Niebuhr points out. For that reason the middle classes in the city covet the resources of religion for the solution of their personal moral problems far more than do either more privileged or exploited groups. Next to the faith of the agrarian classes, the greatest stronghold of religion is to be found among the middle classes in the city. This group, moreover, is comparatively unconscious of its responsibility for the sins of society, Niebuhr feels, and its members are able, therefore, to accept a religion which gives them moral respectability and reinforces their self-respect but does not force them to share their privileges with all their fellows.

CALVINISM AND THE MIDDLE CLASSES

It was John Calvin, great Protestant reformer of the sixteenth century, who provided the interpretation of religion most congenial to the privileged middle classes. "Calvinism," Niebuhr writes, "is religion's most energetic effort to master the ethical life of the individual." Calvinism placed its moral emphasis particularly upon man's control of his appetites and upon the overcoming of his natural indolence. It encouraged diligence and thrift; it inspired habits of continence and temperance; it was as contemptuous of luxury and leisure as it was of an interest in the arts and in the enjoyment of life which these make possible. Its virtues were the very ones that would ensure success in business. It developed a high type of honesty among its adherents without which modern banking and trade would have been impossible. "A temperate, industrious, thrifty and honest individual was, in its esteem, the perfect exemplar of the religious ideal and the stuff out of which a new society could be built."[11] For this reason Calvinism was a religion admirably suited to the needs of the commercial classes that came into prominence with the rise of the modern city. Its puritan virtues were the driving force in establishing the power of this group over a decadent aristocracy in England, in Holland, and to a less extent in France. These same virtues have enabled America to establish her industrial supremacy throughout the world today.

Calvinism may be seen, in a way, then, as the spiritual foundation upon which the whole structure of our modern industrial civilization has been built, Niebuhr feels. The common tasks of life and the commercial enterprise itself were given the blessing of religion. Men were taught to serve God by diligence in their daily toil. In time the religious virtues and the economic virtues became identified. "This religious sanction of material gain was a new thing in history and undoubtedly helped to fashion the moral temper of modern society in which diligence is the great virtue and greed the besetting sin," Niebuhr writes. "It is

the puritan heritage of America which gives a clue to the paradox of our national life. It explains how we can be at the same time the most religious and the most materialistic of all modern nations."[12]

For Calvinism's source of strength is likewise its chief fault. In its concern with the ethical conduct of the individual, Calvinism simply failed to recognize the inescapable conflict between the moral ideal in man's soul and the intractable, nonmoral forces at work in human society. It did not know how to deal with the lust for power and the greed for gain, which have had such tragic social consequences, Niebuhr maintains. Calvinism, he writes, "was a spiritual discipline admirably suited to lift the middle classes to a dominant position in society but hardly designed to guide them in the use of power once they had achieved it."[13] Its social bankruptcy is clearly revealed in the rise of *laissez faire,* Niebuhr feels. When it became increasingly difficult to make simple moral standards, designed for the guidance of the individual, fit the new complexities of international commerce and the industrial system, men turned to the consoling reflection that "in the providence of God life is so arranged that each man seeking his own gain shall best serve the common weal." In accepting this point of view, Calvinism withdrew from any serious concern with the unchristian influences at work in our urban and industrial life today, content to place its emphasis upon a high moral standard of honesty, temperance, and purity for man as an individual. Stated in somewhat different fashion, the great weakness of Calvinism lies in its failure to comprehend the meaning of Christian love both in the life of the individual and in the social order as well. "The uncompromising spirituality of the ethics of Jesus is totally lacking in Calvinism," Niebuhr writes. "Its moral theories were in fact derived from the Old rather than the New Testament."[14]

As a result of this limitation in its Calvinistic religious heritage, there is a large measure of hypocrisy in the kind of religion which thrives among the more privileged middle classes in the city, Niebuhr maintains. To a certain degree hypocrisy is the inevitable by-product of every religion, he points out. For men are never as good as their ideals, and they are never as conscious of their own shortcomings as is an impartial observer. But the religion of modern men, particularly of privileged groups, seems to Niebuhr more than ordinarily insincere. The privileges of the more fortunate are so great that any profession of the Christian spirit of love and brotherhood must seem hypocritical, particularly when seen from the perspective of the less privileged. It is no longer possible to deny the moral limitations of a religious faith that is largely individualistic and self-centered.

THE CHURCH AND MODERN SCIENCE

Religion in urban areas has not only felt this disturbing impact of modern economic and industrial life, however; its outlook has also been seriously affected by the steadily increasing tension between religion and modern science. The

more sophisticated members of city churches in particular have been eager to correct the intellectual inadequacies of traditional religious beliefs and to revise the ancient affirmations of faith in the light of modern learning. As a result, the leaders of the "liberal" movement in contemporary Christianity have given their attention rather largely to the problem of making the Christian faith intellectually respectable, and in Niebuhr's opinion have frequently neglected the more difficult task of remedying the ethical impotence of the church in urban life.

Modern science, as a matter of fact, is challenging the Christian position today on both the intellectual and the ethical front. The pure sciences have given us a picture of the universe which is thoroughly impersonal, much less concerned with human needs and moral ideals than we formerly assumed; a universe in which there seems to be no place for God. The applied sciences, at the same time, have enabled us to create an impersonal, urban, and industrial civilization in which the Christian spirit of love and brotherhood is equally impracticable. Hence it has become increasingly difficult for men today to believe in God, on the one hand, and if anything more difficult, on the other, for them to treat their fellow men as brothers, even if they want to. In our complex urban society, even the most robust ethical purpose finds itself frustrated. We hardly know our neighbors today; certainly we do not love them.

It is always difficult to fight on two fronts at the same time. Hence it was perhaps inevitable that the Christian churches, faced with this dilemma, should choose the easier task, Niebuhr admits. "It is easier to challenge the idea of an impersonal universe than to challenge the fact of an impersonal civilization. That is what the modern church has done and is doing. It is spending all its energy in discounting the excessive claims of a deterministic science."[15] This is an important task, and liberal Christianity has been quite successful during the past several decades in re-establishing the intellectual respectability of religion. But this is not the only necessary task. If the Christian faith is to be defended successfully in our day, there is another and more difficult undertaking that we face, Niebuhr insists. In the Christian idealism, as in every consistent philosophy of living, metaphysics and ethics are both essential. Christianity not only teaches men to find God by loving their brothers; it also urges men to love their brothers because all men are sons of God. "Its ethics is dependent upon its metaphysics and its metaphysics is rooted in its ethics." Kant is right, Niebuhr believes, in emphasizing the close relationship between religious faith and moral conduct, and in recognizing that a continued disregard of the moral ideal must bring with it a loss of religious faith. "Morality is as much the root as the fruit of religion; for religious sentiment develops out of moral experience and religious convictions are the logic by which moral life justifies itself."[16]

If this is true, the churches cannot hope then to rescue religion from its present state of ill health until they seek to apply the Christian ideal to the solution of our urgent social and industrial problems, Niebuhr maintains. The intel-

lectual respectability of religion cannot save the church in the crisis that civilization faces today. Christianity cannot retain the loyalty of men and women in our generation unless it does succeed in bringing the attitudes of the great economic and political groups under the dominion of conscience and moral law.

> The fact is that more men in our modern era are irreligious because religion has failed to make civilization ethical than because it has failed to maintain its intellectual respectability. For every person who disavows religion because some ancient and unrevised dogma outrages his intelligence, several become irreligious because the social impotence of religion outrages their conscience. . . . If modern churches continue to prefer their intellectual to their ethical problems, they will merely succeed in maintaining a vestige of religion in those classes which are not sensitive enough to feel and not unfortunate enough to suffer from the moral limitations of modern society.[17]

DOES CIVILIZATION NEED RELIGION?

A civilization that is fundamentally unethical will not only destroy the vitality of religion, however; ultimately it will destroy itself. Unless Western civilization can solve the major economic and political conflicts which continue to breed bigger and more deadly wars, it cannot hope to survive. It desperately needs the moral and spiritual dynamic of the Christian ideal to save it from self-destruction, Niebuhr maintains. Actually the future of religion and the future of civilization hang in the same balance, and the outlook for neither seems particularly bright.

Education and greater social intelligence can be of real assistance, of course, in promoting understanding and removing barriers of conflict and hatred in our social life. As men become better educated, there is less uncritical acceptance of injustice; and those who suffer from exploitation become more conscious of their rights in society and seek to assert these rights more energetically. But education by itself can never succeed in building a new and better society. The most persistent error of modern educators and moralists, as a matter of fact, has been their belief that the evils of modern society were due largely to the failure of the social sciences to keep pace with the achievements of the physical sciences, Niebuhr insists. Social scientists and philosophers have argued that with a little more time, a better education, a higher development of human intelligence, we would be able to solve our more pressing social problems and build a better world in which to live. This position has been vigorously defended, for example, by John Dewey, who writes:

> It is our human intelligence and our human courage which is on trial; it is incredible that men who have brought the technique of physical discovery, invention and use to such a pitch of perfection will abdicate in the face of the infinitely more important human problem. What stands in the way is a lot of outworn tradition, moth-eaten slogans and catchwords that do substitute duty for thought, as well as our entrenched predatory self-interest. We

> shall only make a real beginning in intelligent thought when we cease mouthing platitudes. Just as soon as we begin to use the knowledge and skills we have, to control social consequences in the interest of a shared, abundant and secured life, we shall cease to complain of the backwardness of our social knowledge.[18]

In Niebuhr's opinion, Dewey's point of view, which is shared by many other able educators and social scientists, misses completely the central difficulty we face in dealing with our more serious social problems. Only in a passing phrase does Dewey get at the heart of the matter. "No man will ever be so intelligent as to see the needs of others as vividly as he recognizes his own, or be as quick in his aid to remote as to immediately revealed necessities," Niebuhr writes. Education will never be able to lead us in this country, for example, to feel that the economic recovery of Europe is as important as our own economic prosperity. Actually it is only by making it clear that our own economy depends in large measure upon what happens in Europe that we are persuaded to continue our aid to European nations in any appreciable measure.

> If psychological and social scientists overestimate the possibilities of improving social relations by the development of intelligence, that may be regarded as an understandable naïvete of rationalists who naturally incline to attribute too much power to reason and to recognize its limits too grudgingly. . . . Men will not cease to be dishonest, merely because their dishonesties have been revealed or because they have discovered their own deceptions. Wherever men hold unequal power in society, they will strive to maintain it. They will use whatever means are most convenient to that end and will seek to justify them by the most plausible arguments they are able to devise.[19]

These limitations of human reason make it inevitable that pure moral action, particularly in the more intricate, complex and collective relationships of life, will never be brought about simply by improving and extending our educational opportunities, Niebuhr maintains. "Men will never be wholly reasonable and the proportion of reason to impulse becomes increasingly negative when we proceed from the life of the individual to that of social groups who depend upon a common impulse to bind them together," he writes. As Nietzsche clearly saw, the forces of reason, which seek to bring the will to power in individual men and in social groups under control, are weak indeed compared with the force arrayed against them. "The will-to-power uses reason, as kings use courtiers and chaplains to add grace to their enterprise. Even the most rational men are never quite rational when their own interests are at stake."[20]

Without the resources of religion the ethical reconstruction of modern civilization is, then, an impossibility. This is the conclusion to which Niebuhr is led inescapably. Men cannot create a just and good society if they do not believe in

one another. And they cannot believe in one another unless they have faith in what men may become as well as knowledge of what men are like. Such faith is a matter of religious conviction, not of rational analysis. Not only must men be persuaded to trust one another, however; it is equally important to encourage them to action that is trustworthy. As Niebuhr sees it, "It is the function of religion not only to inspire men to trust each other but to create the type of personality that is worthy of trust."[21]

SOCIAL RESOURCES OF RELIGION

There are, then, indispensable moral resources for the building of the good society which only religion affords—resources without which the Utopia of Plato, the practical political philosophy of Aristotle, or Dewey's experimental program of social reconstruction can never escape the conflict bred by man's natural self-interest and will to power. Before we can hope for a just and lasting peace on earth, we must be able to rise above the limitations of selfish ambitions and greed for gain. Now religion has always condemned selfishness of all sorts as sinful, Niebuhr points out. It has insisted that a man cannot worship God with sincerity until he repents of his self-centered life. There is nothing that modern psychologists such as Freud or philosophers such as Schopenhauer have said about man's self-interest and his dominance by passion that the great religious mystics did not recognize centuries ago, and none of our contemporaries have sought more earnestly to free themselves of these natural human emotions. The great religious teachers of all ages have made it abundantly clear that until a man is willing to deny himself some of the things he desires, and to share his possessions with his fellow men, he cannot hope to satisfy the demands which religion makes upon his conscience. Of this fact the advice of Jesus to the rich young man seeking to enter the Kingdom of God affords apt illustration. "If the recognition of selfishness is prerequisite to the mitigation of its force and the diminution of its anti-social consequences in society, religion should be a dominant influence in the socialization of man," Niebuhr writes; "for religion is fruitful of the spirit of contrition."[22]

There is also in every vital religion a millennial hope, a belief that the revival of religion will enable men to escape from social chaos, and this hope constitutes a second important moral resource of religion. The religious imagination is led again and again to this vision of an ideal society in which love and justice will be fully realized, and sin, suffering, and evil finally overcome. The prophet Isaiah dreamed of the day when the lion and the lamb would lie down together—when, in other words, "the law of nature which prompts the strong to devour the weak would be abrogated." Jesus' conception of the Kingdom of God reflects a similar vision of an ideal social order in which love dominates all human relationships

"Whenever religion concerns itself with the problems of society, it always gives birth to some kind of millennial hope, from the perspective of which present social realities are convicted of inadequacy, and courage is maintained to continue in the effort to redeem society of injustice," Niebuhr writes.[23] And this courage is needed; "for the task of building a just society seems always to be a hopeless one when only present realities and immediate possibilities are envisaged." Without the courage provided by religious faith, man is always tempted to abandon his endeavor to achieve social justice as finally unrealizable.

In its high regard for human personality there is a third indispensable moral and social resource of religion, especially evident in Christianity, which seeks to persuade men to treat their fellow men as brothers because they are all children of God. Thus Jesus could deal sympathetically not only with the harlot of the street, the publican at the gate, and the Samaritan women at the well but even with the blind fanatics who crucified him. Celsus, a critic of the Christian church in the first century, in fact derides the Christians of his day for their failure to distinguish between outcasts and respectable citizens.

Actually, of course, the church has not always been as loyal as this to its ideal of human brotherhood. It has made many compromises with the brute facts of social life; it accepted slavery in the Roman Empire and serfdom during the Middle Ages without serious protest; and it has frequently closed its eyes to a flagrant denial of human rights in our modern industrial society. But it has never been able to betray altogether its faith in the equal worth of all men, Niebuhr points out. And this religious faith he takes to be essential for the building of a good society. "It is difficult to escape the conclusion," he writes, "that the reverence for personality which is implicit in religion is necessary to establish an adequate motive and an adequate method of social reconstruction." The facts of human nature are so complex that they justify almost any hypothesis or prejudice with which we start. If we decide that men are scheming and selfish, and treat them as such, our initial hypothesis proves to be true. But it does not have to be true; our own attitude is one of the important factors involved. "All men are potentially at once our friends and our foes," Niebuhr writes. "An unreflective social life assumes that they are enemies and helps make them so. A higher social intelligence establishes a nicely balanced compromise between trust and mistrust so that the one cannot be too creative nor the other too destructive. Only the foolishness of faith knows how to assume the brotherhood of man and to create it by the help of the assumption."[24]

Until men are willing to treat one another in the spirit of love, we cannot hope to build a good society, Niebuhr is convinced. And love is essentially a religious attitude. Without the faith of religion, men will not embark upon the venture of brotherhood in their larger group relationships, not be able to face the inevitable disappointments that mark the pursuit of this venture. The family relation is the most ethical social relation that men know; here we find the spirit

of love at its best, and Christianity accepts the family as the norm by which all social life is to be judged. This is not a position that can be supported by the facts of history, however, and to the more sophisticated men and women of our day it seems an absurd hypothesis. As Niebuhr sees it, the Christian position is a truth which is withheld from the wise and revealed to babes. "Yet it is the truth without which men will not be able to build a peaceful society," he insists. "The races and groups of mankind are obviously not living as a family; but they ought to. And as the necessity becomes more urgent the truth of the ideal becomes more real. The religious interpretation of the world is essentially an insistence that the ideal is real and that the real can only be understood in terms of the ideal."[25]

Such an interpretation of the social function of the religious ideal provides a desirable synthesis of the pragmatism of William James and Aristotle's recognition that possibilities are the most significant aspects of reality. And it also makes an important contribution to the better understanding of religious idealism.

> A religious ideal is always a little absurd because it insists on the truth of what ought to be true but is only partly true; it is, however, the ultimate wisdom, because reality slowly approaches the ideals which are implicit in its life. A merely realistic analysis of any given set of facts is therefore as dangerous as it is helpful. The creative and redemptive force is a faith which defies the real in the name of the ideal and subdues it.[26]

SOCIAL COMPLEXITY AND ETHICAL IMPOTENCE

Here, then, are moral and social resources of religion without which the ethical reconstruction of society is, in Niebuhr's opinion, a hopeless task. Will it be possible, once they are properly utilized, to redeem society completely? To this question Niebuhr gave almost undivided attention between the time that he wrote *Does Civilization Need Religion?* in 1927, and the publication of *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, in 1932. These years of great economic and political tension tended to sharpen Niebuhr's awareness of the ruthless will to power at work in all our larger group relationships. "All human groups tend to be more predatory than the individuals which compose them," he points out. "As individuals men believe that they ought to love and serve each other and establish justice between each other. As racial, economic and national groups they take for themselves whatever their power can command."[27]

Gradually Niebuhr came to the conclusion, therefore, that religion, despite its large social significance, will always make its major ethical contribution in providing moral guidance for man as an individual and for intimate social relations such as the family. The good will inspired by religion actually depends for its encouragement and its vitality upon personal contacts and upon the vivid awareness of need.

> We express our love most generously to those who have natural claims upon us, and to those who have no claims at all. The beggar, the completely dis-

> inherited, the needy at the ends of the earth, the lepers to whom Father Damien went and the children of the primeval forest who are being served by Albert Schweitzer, these and our own kin are the inciters and prompters of the spirit of love; love is most active when the vividness or nearness of the need prompts those whose imagination is weak.[28]

As one proceeds, however, from ordinary relations between individuals to the larger and more complex problems of social groups—to politics, to class conflicts, and to the tensions produced by racial antagonisms—the spirit of good will becomes increasingly weaker and less effective. Even the Christian spirit of love cannot be counted upon to alleviate very much these graver ills of modern society. It is inevitable "that the religious spirit of love should lose some of its force in proportion to the size of the communities which profess it, the impersonal and indirect character of social relations in which it operates, and the complexity of the situation which it faces," Niebuhr writes. Hence the demand that political and economic groups base their conduct upon the Christian ideal is an unrealistic one, he believes, and the hope that they will do so is sentimental. No nation in history has ever been known to be purely unselfish in its actions; even a nation composed of individuals who possessed the highest degree of religious good will could not be genuinely Christian in its relation to other nations. And the same thing may be said with equal certainty of class and racial groups. Religious idealism may influence national and economic policies in a measure, but it can never completely eliminate the selfish and antisocial attitudes which express themselves in all intergroup life.

THE MORALITY OF NATIONS

A realistic and forthright analysis of national conduct provides abundant support for the conclusion to which Niebuhr is led. "The selfishness of nations is proverbial," he points out. "It was a dictum of George Washington that nations are not to be trusted beyond their own interests." "No state," declares a German historian, "has ever entered a treaty for any other reason than self-interest," and he adds: "A statesman who has any other motive would deserve to be hung." "In every part of the world where British interests are at stake, I am in favor of advancing these interests even at the cost of war," writes Professor Edward Dicey, a respected English author. "The only qualification I admit is that the country we desire to annex or take under our protection should be calculated to confer a tangible advantage upon the British Empire."[29] National ambitions are not usually admitted as candidly as this, but this is a fair statement of the actual facts which hardly needs to be argued with any student of history, Niebuhr is convinced.

As a matter of fact, the most significant moral characteristic of national policy, he feels, is its hypocrisy. A nation hardly ever goes to war without claiming that it is fighting for civilization and for culture, or that it is seeking to benefit the peoples who are being subjected to its power rather than itself. It is easy for us

to see the hypocrisy of other nations, especially of the Russian or Chinese communists, in situations such as this, but much more difficult to realize that democratic British and American governments have been guilty of much the same sort of thing. The Italian statesman Count Sforza some years ago paid a witty but revealing tribute to the British art in politics. There is, he declared,

> a precious gift bestowed by divine grace upon the British people: the simultaneous action in those islands, when a great British interest is at stake, of statesmen, and diplomats coolly working to obtain some concrete political advantage and, on the other side, and without previous base secret understanding, clergymen and writers eloquently busy showing the highest moral reason for supporting the diplomatic action which is going on in Downing Street. Such was the case in the Belgian Congo. Belgian rule had been in force there for years; but at a certain moment gold was discovered in the Katanga, the Congolese province nearest to the British South African possessions; and the bishops and other pious persons started at once a violent press campaign to stigmatise the Belgian atrocities against the Negroes. What is astonishing and really imperial is that those bishops and other pious persons were inspired by the most perfect Christian good faith, and that nobody was pulling the wires behind them.[30]

The Spanish-American War provides a striking illustration, Niebuhr points out, of such hypocrisy and self-deception on our own part.

> The hypocrisy was probably excessive, because a youthful and politically immature nation tried to harmonize the anti-imperialistic innocency of its childhood with the imperial impulses of its awkward youth. It was just beginning to feel and to test its strength and was both proud and ashamed of what it felt.[31]

President McKinley's state papers and addresses during this war provide an abundance of ammunition for the cynic. In a message to Congress before the outbreak of hostilities McKinley declared:

> If it shall hereafter appear to be a duty imposed by our obligations to ourselves, to civilization and humanity to intervene with force, it shall be done without fault on our part and only because the necessity for such action will be so clear as to command the support and the approval of the civilized world. . . . I speak not of forcible annexation for that cannot be thought of. That by our code of morals would be criminal aggression.[32]

McKinley was actually pushed into war by circumstances he could not control and, at the conclusion of a war begun ostensibly to free the Cubans, he decided to keep the Philippine Islands against their will. When he explained to a group of clergymen somewhat later just how he reached his decision on American policy in the Philippines, McKinley said,

> I walked the floor of the White House night after night until midnight; and I am not ashamed to tell you gentlemen that I went on my knees and prayed to Almighty God for light and guidance more than one night. And one night it came to me this way—that there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos and uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and by God's Grace to do the best we could by them, as our fellowmen for whom Christ also died. And then I went to bed and went to sleep and slept soundly.[33]

America, as a matter of fact, has not been altogether disobedient to Mr. McKinley's religious vision. It did a very creditable job of education and sanitation in the islands, and it is genuinely anxious to help them preserve their freedom now that they have regained it. But a little junta, of which Theodore Roosevelt and Senator Lodge were the leaders, had carefully planned the campaign of the Spanish-American war so that the Philippines would become our possessions, Niebuhr maintains, and their designs for the expansion of American power in the Pacific, rather than President McKinley's religious idealism, seem to him the real reason for our acquisition of these islands. There is, then, no historical ground for believing that we can eliminate national egoism and hypocrisy, Niebuhr concludes. "Perhaps the best that can be expected of nations is that they should justify their hypocrisies by a slight measure of real international achievement, and learn how to do justice to wider interests than their own, while they pursue their own."[34]

ETHICAL ATTITUDES OF PRIVILEGED CLASSES

In the attitudes of the privileged and the exploited groups within each nation as well as in the moral conduct of nations, Niebuhr finds further confirmation of his thesis that we can never hope to bring these larger group relationships into harmony with the Christian ideal of love and good will. The social and ethical outlook of the members of any group is invariably colored, if not determined, by its economic circumstances, he contends. "This fact, regarded as axiomatic by economists, still fails to impress most moral theorists and ethical idealists. The latter persist in hoping that some force of reason and conscience can be created, powerful enough to negate or to transcend the economic interests which are basic to class divisions. The whole history of humanity is proof of the futility of this hope," Niebuhr writes. In fact, he points out, as the personal relationships between workers and employers have gradually been lost, as the ownership of industry and the control of economic power have been increasingly centralized in the hands of relatively few wealthy individuals, as the working class has become a self-conscious social and political group fighting for a greater control of industrial life, and as the privileged classes have become correspondingly more concerned to safeguard their own power, the underlying antagonism

between privileged and proletarian classes has been intensified by modern industrialism.

The imagination of very few men is acute enough to enable them to see the true character of their own motives or to understand fully the interests of other people. This is particularly true, of course, in our more impersonal group relationships. Being himself a member of the more privileged class in society, Niebuhr is particularly conscious of its moral pretensions and self-deceptions. Hypocrisy and self-deception almost always color the attitudes of dominant and privileged groups, he maintains. "The most common form of hypocrisy among the privileged classes is to assume that their privileges are just payment with which society rewards specially useful or meritorious functions," he writes. If this argument is to be plausible, however,

> it must be proved or assumed that the underprivileged classes would not have the capacity of rendering the same service if given the same opportunity. This assumption is invariably made by privileged classes. The presence of able men among the privileged is allowed to obscure the number of instances in which hereditary privilege is associated with knavery and incompetence. On the other hand, it has always been the habit of privileged groups to deny the oppressed classes every opportunity for the cultivation of innate capacities and then to accuse them of lacking what they have been denied the right to acquire.[35]

The struggle for universal education in the nineteenth century provides an excellent example of the kind of arguments always used by the privileged in suppressing any effort by the less fortunate to secure social justice and equality. The poor, it was argued at that time, are incapable of enjoying the benefits of education, and education would make them only discontented and unhappy with their lot in life. When the bill providing for state-supported schools was before the English Parliament in 1807, a Mr. Giddy, afterward President of the Royal Society, raised objections which can be matched in every country:

> However specious in theory the project might be of giving education to the laboring classes of the poor, it would be prejudicial to their morals and happiness. It would teach them to despise their lot in life instead of making them good servants in agriculture and other laborious employments; instead of teaching them subordination it would render them fractious and refractory; it would enable them to read seditious pamphlets, vicious books and publications against Christianity; it would render them insolent to their superiors and in a few years the legislature would find it necessary to direct the strong arm of power against them.[36]

The hypocrisy and self-deception involved in such objections to universal education a century and a half ago is quite apparent to us today. But it is not difficult to find essentially the same justification for privilege being used again

in contemporary life, and, especially where our own interests are involved, we are as a rule quite easily convinced by it.

THE MARXIAN PROLETARIAN

Niebuhr's analysis of the social and political attitudes of the modern proletarian class is equally discerning. The outlook of the working classes today finds its authoritative expression in the Marxian philosophy, he believes. Critics may claim that Marxism is not so much the natural political philosophy of the proletarians as it is a disease with which they have become infected, but "it is a fact that Marxian socialism is a true enough interpretation of what the industrial worker feels about society and history, to have become the accepted social and political philosophy of all self-conscious and politically intelligent industrial workers," Niebuhr writes. "If the American worker seems for the moment to be an exception, that fact can be explained in terms which will justify the confident prediction that the full maturity of American capitalism will inevitably be followed by the emergence of the American Marxian proletarian."[37]

The most characteristic attitude of the Marxian proletarian, Niebuhr feels, is his cynicism. He has little confidence in the morality of men, especially the morality of privileged groups and political leaders in the democratic state. To the confirmed proletarian, democracy is merely another instrument of the bourgeoisie to be used for the oppression of the workers. As Lenin once put it, "Marx splendidly grasped the essence of capitalistic democracy, when he said the oppressed are allowed, once every few years, to decide which particular representatives of the oppressing classes are to represent and repress them in politics." The complete cynicism of the proletarian on this point stands in striking contrast to the more sentimental estimates of the achievements of political democracy which are current in the middle-class world, Niebuhr points out.

This cynical estimate of the democratic state carries with it a similar cynicism regarding nationalism and patriotism. The true proletarian is completely without patriotic loyalty and gives his devotion to his class rather than his nation. The sentiment of patriotism is so powerful, however, that if the injustice from which the worker suffers is not unbearable, he will in the end respond to the appeals of the nation, though more reluctantly than the middle classes. "The modern worker, that is, sacrifices his patriotism in almost exact proportion to the measure of social injustice from which he suffers," Niebuhr writes.

In the place of patriotism the Marxian proletarian exalts class loyalty as the highest form of altruism. His class becomes for him not merely a class but *the* class which is destined to usher a classless society into existence. It is not difficult, of course, to detect unethical elements in this Marxian exaltation of class. The vindictiveness of the communist is particularly apparent. As soon as he achieves power, he sets out to liquidate all his opponents.

> The element of vengeance is of course as dangerous as it is vehement and vital. It may lead to very destructive social consequences. The modern Russians pursue the surviving members of the classes, regarded as their hereditary foes, with relentless vindictiveness. This vengeance, which they justify by the supposed necessity of making a clean sweep of the past, not only outrages the conscience by its cruelties but frequently interferes with the orderly establishment of the new society. Recently Stalin had to call a halt upon the policy of force and fear which was used upon experts and specialists who were suspected of belonging psychologically to the old order. Experience had taught him that there are limits to the policy of "liquidating" the foes of the new order. No community, whether class or nation, can build a society by destroying everything outside itself.[38]

The moral cynicism of the proletarian, however, is relieved, paradoxically enough, by an uncompromising social idealism. The victory of his class, he believes, is to usher in a classless society in which all inequality and exploitation will be done away with. "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs," is the ethical ideal he has adopted. In theory, at least, the proletarian is a rigorous equalitarian. This may be true because he suffers so much from inequality or because he has had equality, within the confines of the proletarian class, forced upon him. Doubtless both elements enter into the formation of his ideal. But it cannot be denied, Niebuhr is convinced, "that a genuine moral idealism, a passionate desire for a just society, is a significant element in the social outlook of the working class." The disinherited of every age, as a matter of fact, have dreamed of a just society, but the modern proletarian differs from the underprivileged of other ages in that his vision is less obviously religious and more definitely political in its orientation. Actually, the Marxian ideal of complete social equality "is as impossible of consistent application in the complexities of society as the Christian ideal of love," Nebuhr writes. "But it is an ideal toward which a rational society must move, and the religious overtone may be regarded as a guarantee against the dilution of the ideal."[39] In Niebuhr's opinion, indeed, it is the religious element in this Marxian social philosophy, rather than its economic principles, which constitute its greatest source of strength.

ETHICAL DUALISM

This realistic analysis of our social attitudes and conduct leads Niebuhr to the conclusion that force and coercion can never be successfully eliminated from social life. Nations, like dominant classes and races, will always carry out their will when they are able to do so, despite the effort of religious idealists to oppose the use of force. There will always be a conflict between the demands of society and the imperatives of a sensitive conscience. From the perspective

of the individual, the highest ideal is unselfishness and good will, but from the perspective of society, justice is a higher ethical goal than peace. The individual Christian must seek to realize his life by losing it and by giving himself to something greater than self-interest; society, on the other hand, must strive for justice even if it is forced to use means, such as self-assertion and coercion, which cannot gain the moral sanction of the Christian conscience. "Furthermore, a high type of unselfishness, even if it brings ultimate rewards, demands immediate sacrifices," Niebuhr points out. "An individual may sacrifice his own interests either without hope of reward or in the hope of an ultimate compensation. But how is an individual who is responsible for the interests of his group to justify the sacrifice of interests other than his own?"[40] Does anyone have a right to be unselfish with the welfare of other people?

As a matter of fact, every effort to apply a pure morality of love and disinterestedness to group relations has resulted in failure, Niebuhr maintains. During the early years of fascism in Italy the socialist leaders, for example, decided to adopt pacifist principles. A socialist paper urged the workers to combat the advances of fascism with the following strategy:

> (1) Create a void around fascism.
> (2) Do not provoke; suffer any provocation with serenity.
> (3) To win, be better than your adversary.
> (4) Do not use the weapons of your enemy. Do not follow in his footsteps.
> (5) Remember that the blood of guerilla warfare falls upon those who shed it.
> (6) Remember that in a struggle between brothers those are victors who conquer themselves.
> (7) Be convinced that it is better to suffer wrong than to commit it.
> (8) Don't be impatient. Impatience is extremely egoistical; it is instinct; it is yielding to one's ego urge.
> (9) Do not forget that socialism wins the more when it suffers, because it was born in pain and lives on its hopes.
> (10) Listen to the mind and to the heart which advises you that the working people should be nearer to sacrifice than to vengeance.[41]

A nobler decalogue of virtues could hardly have been prescribed. Nevertheless when the Italian socialists tried to act upon these principles, they were annihilated by the fascists, their organizations were destroyed, and the rights of the workers were left in the hands of a state governed by their enemies.

The efforts of Tolstoi to follow much the same strategy in Russia met a similar fate. Tolstoi and his disciples believed that the Russian peasants would have a better chance for victory over their oppressors if they were not guilty of the violence and bloodshed which the Czarist regime was using against them. The peasants were advised to return good for evil and to win their battles by

nonresistance. When they attempted to follow Tolstoi's principles, however, they themselves were overcome. Their attitude of nonresistance simply helped to weaken a rising protest against the political and economic oppression of a morally corrupt Czarist regime and so proved itself politically ineffective. Only Mahatma Gandhi, among recent religious leaders, has been able to relate the ideal of love to the political necessity of coercion, Niebuhr feels. And even the type of nonviolent coercion which Gandhi used in his effort to gain India's freedom from the British was in large measure successful because of the sensitiveness of the British conscience; it would have had little effect in halting Nazi or communist aggression.

Thus it is not only highly improbable that a nation or a racial group can maintain a consistently unselfish attitude toward other groups; it is also unthinkable that any competing group would have the imagination to appreciate the moral caliber of the achievement. In Niebuhr's opinion, the ethical ideals that Christianity proposes for the life of the individual simply cannot be made the basis of our social morality.

> Whenever religious idealism brings forth its purest fruits and places the strongest check upon selfish desire it results in policies which, from the political perspective, are quite impossible. There is, in other words, no possibility of harmonising the two strategists designed to bring the strongest inner and the most effective social restraint upon egoistic impulse. It would therefore seem better to accept a frank dualism in morals than to attempt a harmony between the two methods which threaten the effectiveness of both.[42]

This ethical dualism to which he is finally led would itself have two aspects, Niebuhr tells us. First, it would cause us to condemn our own selfishness more severely than we do the egoism of others. This is a necessary discipline, of course, if we are to overcome our natural self-interest and our tendency to be more severe in blaming others than in judging ourselves. As Jesus insisted, we must remove the beam from our own eye before we can hope to remove the mote from the eye of another. Secondly, such dualism would distinguish between what we expect of individuals and what we expect of groups. A high moral ideal in the life of the individual would in a measure at least, serve to mitigate the harshness and brutality of group conflict; but when he concludes his study of *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, Niebuhr is committed to the position that group conduct can never be guided by the Christian principle of love.

> There is not enough imagination in any social group to render it amenable to the influence of pure love. Nor is there a possibility of persuading any social group to make the adventure in pure love. The spirit of love may preserve a certain degree of appreciation for the common weaknesses and common aspirations which bind men together above the areas of social conflict.

> But it cannot prevent the conflict. To some degree the conflict between the purest individual morality and an adequate political policy must therefore remain.[43]

This was not a position which satisfied Niebuhr, but it was one which at that time (1932) he saw no way to escape. "As a generation we are bound to feel harassed as well as disillusioned," he confesses in concluding his social philosophy.

> We live in an age in which personal moral idealism is easily accused of hypocrisy and frequently deserves it. It is an age in which honesty is possible only when it skirts the edges of cynicism. All this is rather tragic. Yet there is beauty in our tragedy. We are, at least, rid of some of our illusions. We can no longer buy the highest satisfactions of the individual life at the expense of social injustice. We cannot build our individual ladders to heaven and leave the total human enterprise unredeemed of its excesses and corruptions.[44]

THE FOUNDATIONS OF PROPHETIC CHRISTIANITY

As he faced the problems which an ethical philosophy such as this raised for the Christian conscience, Niebuhr was led to re-examine carefully both the more orthodox and the more liberal positions regarding the social implications of the Christian faith. In the process he not only came to see more clearly the limitations of each of these points of view but he also for the first time recognized the necessity of transcending both in a return to what he calls "prophetic Christianity." Here at last Niebuhr finds a *religious* answer to the dilemma which he had not been able to handle successfully within the framework of a rational ethics or politics. This new position is stated in his series of Rauschenbusch Lectures in 1934, entitled *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics.*

ORTHODOX *vs.* LIBERAL CHRISTIANITY

Centuries ago the more conservative, or orthodox, churches resolved the conflict between the imperatives of a Christian conscience and the practical demands of political life that so disturbed Niebuhr. Aware of the fundamental conflict between the Christian ideal of love, on the one hand, and the political and economic attitudes of all racial and national groups, on the other, orthodox Christianity set the way of the world, the flesh, and the devil in sharp antithesis to the Christian way of life and took the task of the church to be the saving of a man's soul. Especially in Protestant circles, the concern of the church with the sins of society was more and more completely abandoned. The Kingdom of God was interpreted not as a new social order in which the spirit of love domi-

nated economic and political life but as a state which man can hope to achieve only in heaven. Sin was seen as primarily a matter of disobedience to God, individual rather than social in its implications.

Thus, orthodox Christianity became essentially otherworldly in outlook. In its view "the individual is saved by the grace of God, while society is consigned to the devil; that is, the social problem is declared to be insoluble on any ethical basis," Niebuhr writes. The Christian faith is taken to be a matter of theology and of doctrine. The ordinary man is saved from sin by faith, and no great changes in the conduct of his business or in his political and racial attitudes are demanded by the church. The deeply religious man, on the other hand, who sees the essential sinfulness of civilization, seeks the perfection of God in an ascetic withdrawal from the world. He enters the service of the church, perhaps he takes upon himself the monastic vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and renounces the ordinary desires of life as sinful by contrast with these.

Niebuhr, of course, had long been familiar with this aspect of the orthodox faith. It was the accepted position of the Lutheran community in which he grew up. But his own deep conviction that the Christian church must face the disturbing political and economic problems of our age with honesty and with courage made him unwilling to adopt the orthodox position. For quite different reasons, the more liberal Christian faith of the present century seemed to him equally unacceptable. The exponents of liberal Christianity gained a great deal of influence a generation or two ago as a result of their vigorous insistence "upon the direct application of the principles of the Sermon on the Mount to the problem of politics and economics as the only way of salvation for a sick society."[45] This insistence of the liberals that we re-examine our political and economic practices in the light of the Christian ideal of love and brotherhood recaptured something of the original spirit of religion which orthodox Christianity had lost, Niebuhr admits freely. And as a result, the liberal movement was particularly strong in this country during the 1920's. It brought new life and inspiration to American Christianity, and for a time it looked as though this liberal faith would be accepted by all the major Protestant churches in the United States.

But there were serious weaknesses in the liberal position, Niebuhr feels, and gradually these became apparent. The liberals

> approached the injustices and conflicts of this world with a gay and easy confidence. Men had been ignorantly selfish. They would now be taught the law of love. The Church had failed to teach the law of love adequately because it had allowed the simplicities of the gospel to be overlaid with a layer of meaningless theological jargon. Once this increment of obscurantist theology had been brushed aside, the Church would be free to preach salvation to the world. Its word of salvation would be that all men ought to love one another. It was as simple as that.[46]

This undue optimism of the liberal church is really a product of the Age of Reason, in Niebuhr's opinion. The leading figures in the Age of Reason protested against the theological subtleties with which orthodox Christianity was so greatly concerned. They insisted that if men would only be reasonable and use their God-given intelligence to deal with the problems that confronted them, the simple ethical principles of Jesus and the gospel of love was all that they needed in order to be saved. Thomas Jefferson, who was a typical child of the Age of Reason, stated the faith of liberal Christianity more clearly than most modern theologians. Jefferson wrote:

> When we shall have done with the incomprehensible jargon of the Trinitarian arithmetic, that the three are one and the one three, when we shall have knocked down the artificial scaffolding, reared to mask the simple structure of Jesus, when, in short, we shall have unlearned everything which has been taught since his day and get back to the pure and simple doctrines which he inculcated, we shall then be truly and worthily his disciples, and my opinion is that if nothing had been added to what flowed from his lips, the whole world would all this day be Christian.[47]

In recent years it has become clearer and clearer that this optimism of the liberal church is not based upon a sound understanding of human nature and human society, Niebuhr maintains. First in the postwar anarchy and confusion in Europe three decades ago, and then in the economic crisis of our own American society, men came to realize that liberal Christianity was wrong in assuming "that the law of love needed only to be stated persuasively to overcome the selfishness of the human heart." It became increasingly apparent to all that underprivileged nations, like underprivileged social groups, could achieve justice only by the use of force and coercion, both of which were condemned by the liberals as unchristian. The liberals, however, were able only to pass resolutions urging the more privileged nations and economic groups to be more unselfish and more Christian in spirit; when this advice bore very little fruit, they had no strategy capable of meeting the hard realities of political and economic life.

"If the liberal Church had had less moral idealism and more religious realism, its approach to the political problem would have been less inept and fatuous," Niebuhr writes.[48] The trouble with liberal Christianity, he believes, is that it does not recognize the fundamental difference between what can be expected in man's collective behavior and what is possible in the life of an individual. Since coercion, conflict, and self-interest will always be present in the conduct of nations and economic groups, the insistence of the liberals upon pure love and good will in man's larger group life is mere sentimentality and bound to be ineffective. It was this insight which Niebuhr found so disturbing

in his consideration of *Moral Man and Immoral Society*. It left him completely disillusioned with the easy optimism of the liberal churches.

THE DIALECTIC OF PROPHETIC CHRISTIANITY

Unwilling, then, to accept either the orthodox or the liberal position, Niebuhr has gradually worked out his own interpretation of Christian idealism. In this "prophetic Christianity" the limitations of both the orthodox and the liberal views are transcended but the sound insights of both are retained, Niebuhr feels; and he is enabled to meet on a new plane the ethical problem with which he wrestled unsuccessfully in his earlier works. Against the orthodox position, he insists upon the relevance of the Christian law of love in judging the moral life of mankind, both individual and social. To the prophet the religious ideal provides the only acceptable moral standard for man's social and group relations as well as for the more intimate relations of the individual and the family. The great prophets of every age, especially such great Hebrew prophets as Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, condemned social unrighteousness wherever it existed, and insisted that the nation marked by injustice, greed, oppression, and hatred repent or it would be punished by God. To this extent, then, Niebuhr agrees with the liberals. But prophetic Christianity recognizes, as the liberal does not, that the ethic of Jesus is an absolute and uncompromising one—that the commandment of love is one that cannot possibly be fulfilled. "If the relevance of the love commandment must be asserted against Christian orthodoxy, the impossibility of the ideal must be insisted upon against all those forms of naturalism, liberalism, and radicalism, which generate utopian illusions and regard the love commandment as ultimately realizable."[19]

Liberal Christianity, especially in America, has mistakenly tried to read its optimism back into the gospels, Niebuhr feels. It has talked much of its "rediscovery of Jesus," and has pictured Christ as the ideal man whom all Christians should emulate, once the persuasive charm of his life has captured their souls. It has, in fact, reduced Christ to a figure of heroic love who does no more than reveal to us the full possibilities of human nature. Thus He becomes a symbol of our faith in man, not our faith in God. Actually, however, in Christian theology, man's faith in Christ is his only way to salvation, not primarily his guide to a better moral life, Niebuhr points out. Christ makes demands upon the human spirit which no one can completely fulfill in the kind of world in which we live. A man cannot run his business by the principle of love and avoid bankruptcy. He cannot treat the enemies of his nation as his brothers without endangering the existence of his own country and contributing to the success of ethical practices in which he does not believe. Those who claim to be able to do so simply fail to comprehend the uncompromising demand of the Christian spirit of love.

> In genuine prophetic Christianity the moral qualities of the Christ are not only our hope, but our despair," Niebuhr writes. "Out of that despair arises a new hope centered in the revelation of God in Christ. Christian faith is, in other words, a type of optimism which places its ultimate confidence in the love of God and not the love of man. It insists, quite logically, that this ultimate hope becomes possible only to those who no longer place their confidence in purely human possibilities. Repentence is thus the gateway into the Kingdom of God.[50]

Most of us fail to comprehend the significance of this prophetic faith because we still believe that there is "some fairly simple way out of the sinfulness of human history," Niebuhr feels.[51] Even the tragic character of contemporary life has not persuaded us to take our sinfulness seriously. Prophetic Christianity knows, as the modern liberal does not, that the force of group egoism and will to power cannot be overcome by reason, moral persuasion, or education—but it does not on that account adopt a complacent attitude toward such group conduct. It condemns as sinful the group that is moved by self-interest, no matter how natural this may be, and it insists without compromise upon the absolute ideal of love in our political and economic as well as in our individual life. This recognition of the necessity of the impossible Niebuhr terms "the dialectic of prophetic Christianity." Among many possible causes of the failure of Christians in our generation to deal constructively with the problems of practical politics, the basic one, he maintains, has been "the tendency to destroy the dialectic of prophetic religion." The ethical ideal of Jesus demands of us a spirit of love and unselfishness which is impossible of attainment within the limits of our present social order. Until we realize this fact, we will not recognize our own inescapable sinfulness and need for repentence. As Niebuhr interprets our predicament, a man can become a Christian only when he sees the futility of all naturalistic, humanistic, and rationalistic efforts to resolve the moral dilemma with which he is confronted. The Christian "gospel" is a great deal more than Jesus' emphasis upon the spirit of love and brotherhood. The gospel deals with the fact that men necessarily violate the law of love, and it presents Christ as a revelation of God's mercy to those who are genuinely repentant.*

PACIFISM AND PROPHETIC CHRISTIANITY

In the willingness of many sincere men and women a decade or two ago to defend pacifism as essential for the Christian, Niebuhr finds particularly convincing evidence of the failure of the modern church to understand the perfectionism of the Christian ethical ideal. It is true, of course, that violence and coercion are contrary to the spirit of the law of love. If we are to treat all men as brothers, and to love our enemies, we cannot engage in war against them.

* See *Christianity and Power Politics*, p. 18.

But there are many other things we cannot do either. "A Christian's concern over his violation of the ethic of Jesus ought to begin long before the question of violence is reached," Niebuhr points out. The Christian must recognize that he has violated the commandment "Thou shalt love they neighbor as thyself" and the injunction "resist not evil" in almost all the attitudes found in our modern industrial civilization: the attitude of labor and industry toward each other, of a privileged class toward one that is exploited, or a powerful nation toward one that is weak. "The Christian who lives in, and benefits from, a society in which coercive economic and political relationships are taken for granted, all of which are contrary to the love absolutism of the gospels, cannot arbitrarily introduce the uncompromising ethic of the gospel into one particular issue."*

Our position as Christians must be a consistent one. Either we must refuse to participate at all in a non-Christian civilization and withdraw to build a little society of our own, as did the monastic orders during the Middle Ages, or we must accept the dialectic of prophetic Christianity, recognize the impossibility of Christian perfectionism in our social relationships, and at the same time admit our responsibility for the sinfulness which characterizes all group life. The latter alternative seems to Niebuhr the only tenable one: "Since the ascetic saint is, economically speaking, a parasite on the sinful world, and since disavowal of the natural relationships and responsibilities of ordinary life lead to the destruction of life itself, his devotion to the absolute ideal can be no more than a symbol of the final ideal of love, under the tension of which all men stand."[52]

The Christian church, therefore, throughout the ages has rightly refused to adopt the pacifist position, even though in too many instances it has not been quite sure of its reason for such action and has all too frequently failed miserably in restraining the spirit of hatred and vengeance which war inevitably breeds. The underlying spirit of his own prophetic Christianity is well expressed, as a matter of fact, in Niebuhr's concluding comment on pacifism.

> It is a terrible thing to take human life. The conflict between man and man and nation and nation is tragic. If there are men who declare that, no matter what the consequences, they cannot bring themselves to participate in this slaughter, the Church ought to say to the general community: We quite understand this scruple and we respect it. It proceeds from the conviction that the true end of man is brotherhood, and that love is the law of life. We who allow ourselves to become engaged in war need this testimony of the absolutist against us, lest we accept the warfare of the world as normative, lest we become callous to the horror of war, and lest we forget the ambiguity of our own actions and motives and the risk we run of achieving no permanent good from this momentary anarchy in which we are involved.[53]

* *Christian Ethics*, p. 186; see also "Why The Christian Church Is Not Pacifist," *Christianity and Power Politics*, pp. 11-17.

PROPHETIC FAITH IN GOD

We stand face to face today with the disintegration of our civilization. Our general reaction to this catastrophe seems to alternate from fear or despair, on the one hand, to shutting our eyes and forgetting it all in the pleasures of the moment, on the other. At such a time the Christian faith, which claims to have a light "the same yesterday, today and forever," should certainly become a source of illumination for an age like ours, so sadly in need of clues to the meaning of life. But this is not happening, Niebuhr feels. "The Christian churches are, unfortunately, not able to offer the needed guidance and insight," he writes. Although the religious insights of orthodox Christianity are in many ways superior to those of liberalism, the orthodox faith has too frequently allowed its religious truth to become mixed up with an outgrown science and its moral ideal to lose all relevance to modern life. In many instances the religious conservatives are still arguing against evolution or the violation of Sabbath prohibitions, fighting battles that have lost both religious and moral meaning, when what men today desperately need is a faith in God adequate to meet the perplexities of our modern urban and industrial civilization.

The liberal churches, on the other hand, in their endeavor to meet this need have, in Niebuhr's opinion, been guilty of discarding almost completely the essentials of the Christian faith. To make religion appealing to the modern mind they have been willing to reject everything that seemed unreasonable or incredible in the Christian heritage. Now, to their dismay, the liberals are discovering that this same modern mind is itself in a sad state of confusion amid the debris of its shattered dreams and hopes, and that it stands in need of a new faith and courage which liberal Christianity cannot provide. "A religious faith which substitutes faith in man for faith in God cannot finally validate itself in experience," Niebuhr maintains.[54] This fact the liberal churches are now discovering to their sorrow.

The distinctive contribution of religion to philosophy lies in its awareness of a dimension of depth in life, and this religious insight must be stated clearly and convincingly. A vital religion leaves us dissatisfied with immediate pleasures and ordinary achievements; it forces upon us a concern with the deeper problems of good and evil, a recognition of some enduring purpose in the universe with which man must come to terms, and it creates the tension in human life between what is and what ought to be. The religious man sees all life in terms of its relation to God. He finds here a transcendent source of meaning and goodness upon which alone he can base his confidence in the meaningfulness and goodness of human life. At this point Kant makes his most serious error in dealing with religion, Niebuhr is convinced. "The sense of obligation in morals from which Kant tried to derive the whole structure of religion is really derived from religion itself," he writes.[55] Christian morality can be understood, then, only in

its relationship to the Christian faith in God. The spirit of love is not a product of a rational or a naturalistic ethic; it is the fruit "of a prophetic faith which knows life in its heights and in its depths." Without this faith in God, men would soon cease to sacrifice and suffer in order that good will and brotherhood might triumph in human society.

RELIGIOUS TRUTH AND SCIENTIFIC FACT

Like Kant, Niebuhr has been constantly aware of the tension between the spirit of science and the faith of religion, and in one volume after another he has sought to work out some satisfactory relationship between the two. He sees the contradiction between the religious view of man as potentially a son of God and the more realistic scientific description of man as little more than an animal, driven by his passions and ambitions. He recognizes the grounds upon which the religious hope of a just society is treated by the scientific historian as little more than an illusion. Yet he is convinced that religious faith affords deeper insight into the true nature of man and society than scientific analysis by itself can provide. He insists, therefore, upon the limitations in the scientific picture of the universe and, with Kant, emphasizes the inability of science to deal with moral and spiritual experience. "The ultimate nature of reality cannot be grasped by science alone," he writes; "poetic imagination is as necessary as scientific precision."[56]

For a time the pragmatic view of truth seemed to Niebuhr to afford the most satisfactory statement of the nature of religious conviction. He was willing at one point, for example, to say "the truest visions of religion are illusions, which may be partially realized by being resolutely believed. For what religion believes to be true is not wholly true but ought to be true; and may become true if its truth is not doubted."[57] But a pragmatism of this sort, as Niebuhr himself was aware, is hardly an adequate foundation for the religious faith of mankind. One is hardly willing to base one's life and destiny upon illusions, even though by so doing one can somehow transmute them into working truths. It is not surprising, therefore, that by the time he published his volume on Christian ethics, Niebuhr had found a more positive interpretation of religious truth and its relation to scientific fact. Science and history, he had come to believe with Kant, are capable of dealing with reality in its surface aspects only—with what may be called its *horizontal* relationships. These the scientist analyzes, charts, and records; and the web of cause-and-effect relationships which make up the world of nature as pictured by science is the result. But the transcendent source of meaning in human life, that deeper reality by which man's moral and spiritual destiny is determined, science is incapable of describing, Niebuhr maintains. Of this transcendent reality we are immediately and inescapably aware in religious experience, but such uniquely religious insights and convictions cannot be stated in rational, scientific fashion. They can be expressed only in symbol or

myth, which is not literally or scientifically true but which nevertheless possess a greater degree of ultimate truth than do the findings of science. In such religious myth the most revealing account of man's *vertical* relationships to God is found.

> It is the genius of true myth to suggest the dimension of depth in reality and to point to a realm which transcends the surface of history, on which the cause-effect sequences, discovered and analyzed by science, occur. But since myth cannot speak of the trans-historical without using symbols and events in history as its forms of expressions, it invariably falsifies the facts of history, as seen by science, to state its truth.[58]

This paradox of religious truth is explicitly recognized by St. Paul and intriguingly portrayed in a phrase which describes the Christian ministry "as deceivers yet true" (II Corinthians 6:8). "For what is true in the Christian religion can be expressed only in symbols which contain a certain degree of provisional and superficial deception," Niebuhr writes in commenting upon this passage. "Every apologist of the Christian faith might well, therefore, make the Pauline phrase his own."[59] For we can teach the truth of religion only by myths which from a purely rationalistic and scientific point of view must always appear to be deception.

When thus using a myth or symbol to portray the dimension of eternity in the world of time, religion is, as a matter of fact, employing the method of art rather than the method of science to state its truth. Every artist who makes use of depth and perspective to suggest three dimensions upon a two-dimensional canvas, or who makes parallel lines converge on the horizon when in fact they do not, is picturing things as they *seem* rather than as they *are* in order to give the observer a *truer* picture. For the religious man, who is trying to describe the nature of God, the process of time is much like the painter's flat canvas. Another dimension must be added to his picture before he can portray the truth about man's relation to God. "This can only be done by symbols which deceive for the sake of truth," Niebuhr writes. Thus, religion, like art, cannot describe the world merely in terms of its exact historical and factual relationships. It must constantly falsify these relationships, as analyzed by science, in order to express the truth about their total meaning.*

THE PARADOX OF RELIGIOUS FAITH

One of the most familiar and also most profound of the myths used by religion to portray its unique insight is that of God as the creator of the world. To

* See *Beyond Tragedy*, p. 6. See also B. H. Streeter, *Reality*, Chaps. 2, 4. "It is not surprising, then, to find that Religion in the past has had recourse to myth, ritual, hymn, parable, epigram and paradox—all of them methods of Art," Streeter writes. "A religion is true if, and in proportion as, the quality it expresses is actually existent in, and characteristic of, Reality. It follows that to test the element of truth in any religion we must direct our attention first of all, not to the intellectual constructions of the theologian, but to myth and rite, to hymn and prayer, to parable and proverb, to the mystic's meditation and the prophet's trumpet call." (pp. 46, 47)

believe that God *created* the world is to use an image which expresses both his interest in the world and its dependence upon him but also recognizes the necessary distinction between God and the world, on the one hand, and his independence of it, on the other. It is to find meaning and value in the world without admitting that it is totally good. Now these are basic religious convictions about the nature of man and God which cannot be stated in logically consistent or scientifically defensible fashion. "The notion of creation is a mythical idea which cannot be fully rationalized," Niebuhr points out. "It has therefore been an offense to the philosophers, who, with the scientists, have substituted the idea of causality for it." A rational philosophy is forced either, with Spinoza, to a kind of pantheism in which God and the rational order of the universe are identified or, with Aristotle, to seek for a first cause that gives an original impetus to movement and change without itself being involved in the process. Religious faith has never been satisfied with any such consistently rational interpretations of the nature of God. None of these has expressed what was fundamental in the religious experience. All efforts, however, to picture the creative process by which God brought the world and man into existence, if true to the insights of religion, must be stated symbolically. They cannot be literally or scientifically true, since the details of which the picture is made must be drawn from history and human experience but the creative source of all things with which such accounts deal lies beyond experience.

The account of the "fall" of man in the Old Testament is another such significant religious myth mentioned by Niebuhr. In this story of Adam's eating the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, Christianity accounts for the origin of sin and evil in such fashion as to make man himself responsible for the sin he commits and yet at the same time not to deny his ultimate dependence upon God. These are both convictions which are essential to man's moral and religious life but which cannot be given logically consistent statement. Rationally we cannot reconcile the belief in an all-powerful God with the fact of sin and moral responsibility. The purely rational and deterministic view, to which science is inevitably led, has been well expressed by Fitzgerald in the *Rubaiyat*:

> Oh Thou, Who didst with pitfall and with gin
> Beset the Road I was to wander in,
> Thou wilt not with Predestined Evil round
> Enmesh, and then impute my fall to sin.

It is impossible logically to escape the position expressed in these lines by Fitzgerald if one accepts the belief in an all-powerful God. Prophetic religion simply recognizes the limits of human logic in dealing with the transcendent Source of our moral and spiritual life and expresses in symbolic and mythological fashion its own deeper insight into man's relation to God.

It is easy to corrupt all such religious myth by mistaking its symbolic statement of truth for literal scientific truth, and so to commit religion to a scien-

tifically untrue statement of historic fact. This has been the error into which orthodox Christianity too frequently has fallen, Niebuhr feels, in insisting upon the literal truth of all the great myths contained in its religious heritage. But it is equally easy to deny the fundamental truth in religious myth, rejecting such myths as mere primitive superstition or outgrown tradition and accepting in their place the factual, scientific picture of man and the universe. This has been the fallacy of liberal Christianity in too many cases. "A religion which capitulates to the prejudices of a contemporary age is not very superior to a religion which remains enslaved to the partial and relative insights of an age already dead," Niebuhr observes.[60]

Prophetic Christianity, however, recognizes and seeks to escape both these dangers. It insists that religious myth alone is capable of portraying the dimension of depth in experience of which the religious man is aware, but it recognizes that the presentation of such truth is always symbolic, not literal. Such a grasp of truth Niebuhr describes as not only prescientific but also suprascientific. His comment on the Christian doctrine of the divinity of Christ gives excellent statement to his general position.

> The truth that the Word was made flesh outrages all the canons by which truth is usually judged. Yet it is the truth. The whole character of the Christian religion is involved in that affirmation. It declares that an event in history can be of such character as to reveal the character of history itself; that without such a revelation the character of history cannot be known. It is not possible to arrive at an understanding of the meaning of life and history without such a revelation.[61]

BEYOND TRAGEDY

Clear in his own mind concerning the implications of prophetic Christianity, Niebuhr is at last ready to return to the problem with which he wrestled so long and painfully as a young minister. What is the message of the Christian church for our generation? Is it possible for the church to save modern civilization and in so doing to save itself? Can we hope for an ethical reconstruction of civilization as an outcome of the work of the church? Niebuhr is now more deeply conscious of the conflict between the spirit of modern civilization and the Christian spirit of love and good will than he was as a young minister in Detroit. His early uneasiness has developed into a mature and informed conviction that human culture and civilization at its best is always involved in rebellion against God. "It was Roman law, the pride of all pagan civilization, and Hebraic religion, the acme of religious devotion, which crucified the Lord," he writes. "Thus does the Cross reveal the problem of all human culture and the dilemma of every human civilization."[62]

Nietzsche was entirely correct in this regard when he insisted that Christianity does involve a radical transvaluation of all our accepted values in life. "In human

history, wealth, fame and immortality are given to the wise, the mighty and the noble. They receive the plaudits of their fellowmen in their lifetime," Niebuhr points out. They are fed by the toil of their fellows, and the pride of their souls is sustained by the respect, fear, and adulation of those whom they suppress. When they die, their names are recorded on monuments and in historical chronicles so that they may be remembered by those who came after them. But in the Kingdom of God, so St. Paul declares, not many of the great of this world will be chosen. The mighty, the rich, and the noble are condemned in the gospels because their very success in this world tempts them to an egoism and pride which is offensive in the sight of God. There is an inescapable antithesis between the Kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world which we as Christians today, as a rule, do not like to admit.*

In the world today, as heretofore, the law of love is not kept simply by being preached; it is the law of life and must be both preached and practiced. The Christian gospel, Niebuhr writes, "can be preached with power only by a Church which bears its share of the burdens of establishing peace, of achieving justice, and of perfecting justice in the spirit of love. Thus is the Kingdom of God made relevant to every problem of the world."[63] The church, then, must be not of the world but in the world. Although the Christian gospel reveals a world which is above human experience and human history, it does not remove our responsibility for working in this present world, with all its conflicts, suffering, and tragic disappointments. The Christian will know that he is a sinner who can never keep the law of God perfectly, but he will also know that there is an obligation laid upon him to obey this law in every walk of life.

Repentance, then, must be the first note in the gospel for our age as for every age. Whenever men trust in their own achievements and in their own righteousness, they rest upon a frail reed which must inevitably break and leave their lives without enduring meaning or purpose. For this reason the greatest ages in the Christian faith have been those periods in history when civilization was crumbling and men felt desperately their own weakness and their need of some more than human purpose and power to sustain them. "Proud men and successful civilizations find it difficult to know God, because they are particularly tempted to make themselves God," Niebuhr writes.[64] The faith of the Hebrew prophets was formulated when the civilization of Israel was being threatened and finally destroyed by Assyria and Babylon. Augustine wrote his *City of God* when the proud and mighty civilization of Rome was crumbling before the northern barbarians. The Protestant Reformation was, historically speaking, the consequence as well as the cause of the disintegration of the once dominant medieval civilization. We, too, live in an age of crisis, an age in which the very foundations of our civilization are being shaken and, as a result, our age may well be led to a new awareness of the meaning and relevance of the Christian

* See *Beyond Tragedy*, pp. 197 *ff.*

gospel. But in Niebuhr's opinion we cannot hope to understand its message until the tragedy of our age leads us to repentance.

To those who are aware of their own human frailties, however, who do truly repent of their sin and renounce their allegiance to the things of this world, the message of the church today is one of hope. When men no longer rely upon themselves, they can find a source of strength and courage in God. "Every humanistic creed is a cosmos of meaning sustained by a thin ice on the abysmal deeps of meaninglessness and chaos," Niebuhr believes. In his opinion the only serious competitor of Christianity as a spiritual religion is Buddhism, and Buddhism conceives of life in terms of pure tragedy. But a prophetic faith in God can rescue human life from the despair into which it must inevitably be cast by the vicissitudes of history and the tragic disappointment of its facile hopes. The superiority of Christianity to Buddhism at this point is seen in the fact that it takes mankind through tragedy and beyond tragedy by way of the Cross.

There is, in the Christian gospel, a wisdom that is beyond human knowledge but not contrary to human experience.

> The Christian faith finds the final clue to the meaning of life and history in the Christ whose goodness is at once the virtue which man ought, but does not achieve in history, and the revelation of a divine mercy which understands and resolves the perpetual contradictions in which history is involved, even on the highest reaches of human achievements. Through it we are able to understand life in all its beauty and its terror, without being beguiled by its beauty or driven to despair by its terror. . . . Without it we are driven to alternate moods of sentimentality and despair; trusting human powers too much in one moment and losing all faith in the meaning of life when we discover the limits of human possibilities.[65]

SOURCES OF NIEBUHR'S APPEAL

In forthright and disturbing fashion, Niebuhr has confronted us with the uncompromising demands of the Christian faith and way of life. After his analysis of the forces at work in modern civilization and his discussion of what the Christian ethic means in modern life, it is much more difficult for us to be hypocritical or self-deceived. Two characteristics of his approach are worth noting: he consistently uses the Christian ideal as the dominating principle in his analysis of economic and political problems; and then he always seeks to indicate the direction that Christian action should take in any given situation. Thus he prevents the Christian faith from being remote and unrelated to life. Few contemporary thinkers have been so honest in recognizing the defects and limitations in the work of the Christian churches, yet at the same time so completely committed to the necessity and importance of what they are doing.

Niebunr nas been unusually successful in recognizing the religious values in the more orthodox interpretation of the Christian faith and at the same time in not losing the concern for a more Christian social order upon which the liberal churches have insisted. He has sought to develop a religious realism which would incorporate the loyalties of the idealist but escape the undue optimism or superficiality of any utopian scheme. Quite naturally, his position has not proved entirely acceptable either to the liberals or to the conservatives. Despite his explicit commitment to the orthodox theology, the conservatives in many instances have felt that he is guilty of surrendering aspects of Christian faith which are essential. They have not been willing to accept his interpretation of theological doctrine as necessarily symbolic and mythical, and they have frequently insisted that he allows religion to become too involved in political and economic life, that he is far too radical in his views for the good of the church. The liberals, on the other hand, although quite satisfied in general about Niebuhr's social ethics, have insisted that in his theology he falls into serious contradiction, and that, when confronted with these contradictions, he can only resort to the desperate expedient of abdicating intelligence and falling back on an irrational faith which cannot be criticized because it refuses to recognize the right of reason to serve as critic. Hence they have found in his thought a dogmatism that proves as unacceptable as that of the traditional orthodox theology against which the liberal churches reacted originally. Indeed, Niebuhr may be said to have made the full circle from the very conservative and orthodox theology where he started as a youth through the liberal social gospel and back again to orthodoxy. His Gifford Lectures on *The Nature and Destiny of Man* become so strongly dogmatic in spirit as to disturb seriously many to whom his early books, *Does Civilization Need Religion?* and *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, made a strong appeal.

A source of great difficulty in Niebuhr's position, undoubtedly, is the very narrow line that he seeks to draw for himself on almost every issue between two contradictory positions. He has tried to recognize the truth that does exist in both the liberal and the orthodox theology, in both science and religion, in ethics and politics, even in democracy and communism, and he has sought by what he calls the "dialectic" of prophetic religion to emphasize the fact that we can grasp the truth only when we see the necessity of contradiction and rise above it dialectically, since we cannot do so logically. To the ordinary Christian, however, such argument has about it an air of excessive subtlety, and even deception. Niebuhr is difficult to pin down; he seems, indeed, to want to be on both sides of almost every issue. As a result, many are left confused, perplexed, uncertain by Niebuhr's interpretation of Christianity, rather than committed more firmly to a faith that is clear and capable of being followed in everyday life.

Despite this fact, Niebuhr's thought has continued to have wide influence. The economic and political difficulties which have plagued our Western civilization

for the past three or four decades have done much to undermine the appeal of naturalism and humanism, and to turn many men to a more definitely religious faith. In the grip of social forces such as those at work in our world, humanity feels deeply its need of a philosophy that contains more than a rational program of social reform. The implications of reason seem too frequently to lead only to pessimism or despair, whereas the individual needs a sustaining faith that will give purpose and meaning to his life in the face of the irrational social destiny with which he seems to be confronted. The full extent of this disillusionment with rationalistic and naturalistic philosophies has been most apparent, of course, in those European and Asiatic countries which have suffered most from the ravages of war and the brutalities of a totalitarian regime. Too complacently, perhaps, we have attempted in recent years to reassure ourselves that this attitude is merely a postwar phenomenon abroad, of little genuine concern to us.

On every hand during the past decade or two, evidence is to be seen of the profound effect of this new social situation upon the religious thought of our own day. Where men have not turned to communism, they have increasingly sought to discover a religious faith adequate for their needs. Niebuhr's interpretation of Christian ethics, with his re-emphasis upon a suprarational faith in God, is but one expression of a much larger movement throughout the world, known as neo-orthodoxy. Throughout Europe, the theology of Karl Barth and of Emil Brunner, perhaps Barth's ablest disciple, has given popular expression to this point of view, as does the thought of Søren Kierkegaard, brooding Danish theologian of the mid-nineteenth century, who has recently achieved an amazing popularity both in England and America. The work of Nicholas Berdyaev, a distinguished scholar of the Russian orthodox church who spend his last years in Paris, has provided a widely read and rather more respectable philosophical statement of much the same position. All these are indications of the deeper social motivation that helps us understand Niebuhr's appeal to Christians in our generation.

A PHILOSOPHY FOR THESE TIMES

Wherever we turn today, we find the yearning for a philosophy that will give to human life direction, purpose, and dignity. There is a feeling of need, of insecurity and frustration, abroad which leads men to seek for some authoritative source of wisdom and guidance. To meet the demands that modern life makes upon us, however, each of us must in the end discover the way for himself. At best, we can find in the experience and ideas of others suggestion and instruction, but our final decisions in this undertaking must be our own. For many of our most urgent questions, the great philosophers of the past do not provide the direction we would like, but much that they say will prove as helpful to us as it has to countless other men and women through the ages.

To most of us today, the spontaneous enjoyment of life, which the disciples of Epicurus so strongly recommend, will continue to prove appealing. The Epicurean philosophy forbids us to go through this world complaining, sulking, and otherwise making ourselves nuisances to our friends. In place of sighs and tears, it urges the laughter, song, and good cheer that come with health of the body and tranquillity of the spirit. Life can be difficult enough without our filling it with unnecessary restrictions and prohibitions. Every door to happiness should certainly be open, and the joy and gladness of the hedonist can make a needed contribution to the enrichment of human life.

If we accept this suggestion, we shall not readily give ourselves to a barren asceticism which prevents the normal fulfillment of our natural instincts and desires. But with Schopenhauer we shall do well to remember that soon enough the flesh grows weary of those pleasures which for a time seemed so appealing. It is the tragedy of naïve desire that all things sweet seem destined in time to turn bitter, that even the most beautiful flower fades when we pluck it. Hence the more thoughtful among us may hardly be content to accept the pursuit of pleasure as a dependable path to happiness.

With the Stoics we may in time master that difficult lesson of maturity: in order

to achieve happiness, a man must remake not merely his world but first of all himself. We may decide, as they did, to exchange the passing pleasures of the flesh for the more enduring joys of the life of reason. There is hard and unpleasant work to be done in the world; there are disparagements that we must at times endure and injustices that we must bear. The strength of character of the Stoic, his integrity of purpose and calmness of spirit in the face of all that life can do to break his will, these qualities have proved themselves essential for any mature philosophy of living. Especially in the trying days through which Western civilization is now passing, the Stoic formula may prove as valuable to us as it did to the noble minds of Rome when their vaunted empire was crumbling before the onslaughts of the barbarians.

The abler exponents of rationalism have expressed for us clearly and confidently man's abiding faith that beyond all chaos there is order, beyond all seeming contradiction there is enduring truth. Spinoza's breadth of vision and fortitude we shall certainly find helpful in time of adversity, and with him we may well learn not to speak harshly of the universe because it has designs other than our own. As we come to see life in its entirety, we may recognize that the harmony of the planets is more important than our own petty woes. To know that there is law and order everywhere, to measure the passing desires of our own lives by the enduring order of the universe, can help us fortify our souls against the ills of misfortune and enable us to move on resolutely toward the goal that lies before us.

The appeal of the life of reason, however, will hardly cause us to repudiate that discontent with things as they are, that ambition to surpass present achievement, so vigorously urged upon us by such philosophers as Nietzsche, James, and Dewey. With them we may well agree that it is not in philosophy but in life that man finds his keenest satisfactions and his most rewarding success. The concern with the practical upon which William James laid such stress, as well as his insistence that a man's life must demonstrate what he truly believes, most of us will continue to find appealing. Born and brought up as Americans, we naturally seek our happiness in action and success; we are tempted to put the body before the soul, wealth before wisdom, and individual freedom before cooperation with others. We look with favor upon the tentativeness, the experimental attitude, the concern with each particular problem and each individual need which have marked the scientific enterprise at its best and which play so large a part in the philosophy of John Dewey. With Dewey we shall probably agree also that the best life is the richest, the life that is varied in content, replete with action as well as thought, with adventure as well as contemplation, with danger as well as responsibility.

But with Plato we may well come to see that no endeavor, however vigorous or successful, can be finally satisfying if it loses sight of the higher ideals and values of the human spirit. There are many who will believe with him that good-

ness, beauty, and truth have a place of their own in the nature of things, arousing within us a devotion and imposing upon us an obligation that is not merely the creation of human endeavor. From Plato, also, we may be wise to learn the importance of that devotion to the common good which enables a man to rise above his individual interests and gives order to the inner life, bringing harmony to his conflicting desires and directing his actions to a worthy end. And we can hardly disagree with Plato's contention that a nation can be strong and successful only when the great social groups within it—the industrialists, the politicians, the military leaders, the leaders of labor—are willing to place the welfare of all before the private interests of each; when the government itself is guided by men of outstanding ability with broad vision of the real needs of the nation and an uncompromising loyalty to the common good; and when its ablest and most promising young men give themselves to the service of the state rather than to the selfish achievement of wealth or power.

In Aristotle's recognition that pleasure normally attends the healthy fulfillment of our natural desires and needs, and that happiness comes only as we cease to pursue it and seek, instead, the full and harmonious development of our highest capacities, we certainly find a desirable modification of hedonism. Aristotle's emphasis upon man's capacity for self-development affords desirable stimulus for those who would too easily accept things as they are; his insistence upon moderation and restraint in all things provides a word of wisdom to those whose eager ambition or overzealous goodness may lead them to excess or frustration. For, as Aristotle clearly sees, those who seek too impatiently usually do not find; to those who knock too loudly, the door is frequently not opened.

Even more helpful to us, perhaps, in building a sound philosophy of living is Aristotle's doctrine that the soul without the body is as incomplete as the body without the soul, that the spiritual without the material is as empty as the material without the spiritual is purposeless, that the natural and the ideal need not and should not be opposed. Here we can find a desirable modification of Plato's too sharp dualism between the world of the spirit and the desires of the flesh. And we may be able thus to combine our enjoyment of the good things of the world with our commitment to the more enduring principles of rational insight.

With Kant, however, many of us will agree that reason and intelligence by themselves lead us at best to an enlightened self-interest rather than to an abiding loyalty to the highest that we know. Our study of Kant's philosophy may well deepen our sense of the compulsion of the moral ideal in human life; we may learn from him to free the dictates of conscience from provincialism and from the relativities of individual experience, and so come to see in the voice of duty the awareness not only of a universal moral law but even of a divine command. Thus we shall share Kant's faith that the moral ideals which move us profoundly are not merely the accumulated wisdom of social convention but reflections of the deeper moral order and purpose of the universe itself.

If there is a narrowness and an authoritarian spirit at times apparent in the moral philosophy of Kant which tends to lessen its appeal, some of us undoubtedly will find that the Christian spirit of love and good will enable us to retain the values while escaping the limitations of the Kantian ethics. Here we will see the most satisfactory expression of that concern for the welfare of others which Mill sought unsuccessfully to incorporate within the bounds of hedonism and which Plato perhaps sacrificed too readily to an aristocratic social philosophy. Some certainly will be led also to share the Christian conviction that as sons of God all men are brothers and should be treated as such. And many of us will see more clearly in the Christian philosophy of living that truth which all the great philosophers recognize: only as a man is willing to lose his life can he hope to find it; only as we forget ourselves in devotion to a higher loyalty can we hope to achieve enduring happiness. With Reinhold Niebuhr, many of us will want to work out a faith that is true to the spirit of historic Christianity but is keenly aware also of the needs of modern life, a faith that escapes not only the dogmatic orthodoxy which too frequently undermined the appeal of the Christian gospel in the past but also the sentimental optimism which undoubtedly weakened the power of the liberal social gospel a generation ago.

There are times in the life of each individual, as in the history of every civilization, which reveal with especial clarity the deeper needs of the human spirit and which stimulate with greater urgency our search for a satisfying philosophy of living. It is in such an age as this that we find ourselves today. It demands of us more than a commitment to old formulas or an attempt to take refuge in outworn prejudices. Surely those who think they can preserve for themselves a life that is worth having without being willing to risk it repeatedly in the service of some larger loyalties are deceiving themselves. We realize today, as men frequently do not in less trying moments in history, the significance of those durable convictions and values which in the past have kept humanity going when confronted with hardships and dangers such as ours. No smaller faith—whether it be the humanist's reliance upon man's own intelligence and good will or the naturalist's desire for a harmonious fulfillment of our oldest instincts—has seemed able to sustain man in time of great trial or to give him the inspiration and strength that he needs for ultimate triumph over the obstacles that confront him.

A dependable philosophy of living must be realistic in the sense of taking into account all the facts, the disagreeable as well as the agreeable. But no philosophy that fails to meet the deeper needs of the human spirit—those that are moral and spiritual as well as rational—will satisfy us permanently. If a man's convictions are not deep and genuine, if they are not truly his own, in time of crisis they will fail him. Those who have strong loyalty and conviction develop power, a power indispensable for greatness of living. Until a man establishes a central core of purpose around which all lesser loyalties can be centered, his life will be frustrated, uncertain, and disappointing. If he is to think decisively, act intelligently,

and unite with his fellows in any larger worth-while social endeavor, the first step lies in his own philosophical reorientation. He must find that inner calmness of spirit which comes from knowing what he believes and why, and that outer strength of purpose and courageous action which come with a sense of inner peace and security. If the present study makes some contribution, no matter how limited, to the achievement of this end, it will not have failed altogether in its purpose.

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NOTES

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55. *Ibid.*, p. 173.
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60. *Ibid.*, p. 196.
61. *Influence of Darwin on Philosophy*, pp. 71, 72, 73.
62. See J. Barzun, "America's Romance With Practicality," *Harpers*, February, 1952.

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2. Plato, *Letter VII*, §324B, D (condensed).
3. A. E. Taylor, *Plato: The Man and his Work* (New York: Dial, 1936), p. 6.
4. See G. C. Field, *Plato and his Contemporaries* (New York: Dutton, 1930), p. 20.
5. *Republic*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (London: Oxford University Press, 1892), I, §332A.
6. *Ibid.*, I, §338C.
7. *Ibid.*, I, §§345 E, 346E.
8. *Ibid.*, II, §§359D ff.
9. *Ibid.*, II, §363A.
10. William DeWitt Hyde, *The Five Great Philosophies of Life*, p. 114. Copyright 1911 by The Macmillan Co.
11. *Republic*, II, §368D, E.
12. *Ibid.*, II, §369B, D.
13. *Ibid.*, II, §371C.
14. *Ibid.*, II, §372A, B, C.
15. *Ibid.*, II, §373B, D, E.

16. *Ibid.*, V, §473D.
17. *Ibid.*, IV, §430B.
18. *Ibid.*, IV, §§430E, 432A.
19. *Ibid.*, IV, §420B.
20. *Ibid.*, IV, §434B.
21. *Ibid.*, IV, §439D.
22. *Ibid.*, IV, §§439E, 440.
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27. *Ibid.*, VII, §541A.
28. *Ibid.*, IV, §424A.
29. *Ibid.*, III, §386A.
30. *Ibid.*, VII, §§536E, 537A.
31. *Ibid.*, II, §378E.
32. *Ibid.*, III, §402A.
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34. *Ibid.*, III, §399B, C.
35. *Ibid.*, V, §455D.
36. *Ibid.*, III, §412D, E.
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38. *Ibid.*, VII, §§525B, C; 527B.
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3. B. A. G. Fuller, *History of Greek Philosophy* (New York: Holt, 1931), III, 92.
4. *Historia Animalium*, VIII, 1, 2.
5. *De Partibus Animalium*, II, 7; V, 10; IV, 5; *De Anima*, II, 2.
6. *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin*, ed. Francis Darwin (New York: Appleton, 1896), II, 252.
7. Physics, II, 8, trans. Philip Wheelwright, in *Aristotle* (New York: Odyssey Press, 1951).
8. *De Anima*, II, 1, 4.
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10. *Ibid.*, III, 3, 9, 10.
11. See *The Nicomachean Ethics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1926), I, 5, 13.
12. See *Politics*, I, 13.
13. See *Metaphysics*, XII, 7.
14. *Ibid.*, XII, 10.
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30. *Ibid.*, pp. 108-109.
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32. *Idem.*
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37. *Ibid.*, p. 144.
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42. *Ibid.*, pp. 270-271.
43. *Ibid.*, pp. 272-273.
44. *Ibid.*, pp. 276, 277.
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48. *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics*, pp. 178-179.
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62. *Christianity and Power Politics*, p. 211.
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64. *Ibid.*, p. 212.
65. *Children of Light and Children of Darkness* (New York: Scribner, 1944), pp. 188, 189.

Suggested Readings

At least three kinds of material will be of value to the thoughtful reader who wishes to continue his study of the issues raised in this volume. Most important, certainly, are the works of the philosophers discussed here. Suggestions as to the best books with which to begin in each case are made below. Then there are numerous studies by contemporary scholars which deal with various aspects of the thought of each philosopher. The studies of this kind listed here are not technical or abstract treatises for the specialist but are designed for the general reader. Finally, there are books on philosophy which discuss in greater detail the ethical and religious issues raised in the preceding chapters. These books will appeal to readers who become genuinely interested in a specific problem and want to consider carefully its implications for their own philosophy of living.

The works of the philosophers are listed in chronological order. The specific studies and the general books are listed alphabetically by author. In the readings for each chapter, works concerned directly with the philosophers under consideration are listed separately from popular volumes on philosophy. A brief comment indicates the nature, difficulty, and content of each work. No attempt is made, of course, to include all the good and relevant works. Those listed here seem most likely to prove of value to the readers of this volume and to provide for them a balanced treatment of the issues raised.

Works of a General Nature

G. H. Clark and T. V. Smith, *Readings in Ethics* (Crofts, 1931). A convenient collection of readings from the pre-Socratics to John Dewey.

Warner Fite, *Moral Philosophy* (Dial, 1925). A discerning examination of moral issues and moral philosophers, avowedly humanistic in spirit.

W. E. Hocking, *Types of Philosophy* (Scribner, 1929). A clear and concise analysis of major types of world view, including naturalism, pragmatism, realism, and idealism.

Benjamin Rand, *The Classical Moralists* (Houghton Mifflin, 1909). An inclusive volume of selections from the great moral philosophers.

Leon Robin, *Greek Thought and the Origins of the Scientific Spirit* (Knopf,

Eng. trans., 1928). A good one-volume history of Greek philosophy by a distinguished French scholar.

A. K. ROGERS, *Morals in Review* (Macmillan, 1927). An able and scholarly discussion, which includes all the great moral philosophers. Difficult for the beginner.

JOSIAH ROYCE, *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy* (Houghton Mifflin, 1892). A thoughtful discussion of the men and ideas that gave modern philosophy its direction, by one of America's greatest philosophers.

BERTRAND RUSSELL, *A History of Western Philosophy* (Simon & Schuster, 1945). Provocative comment intended to exhibit philosophy as an integral part of man's social and political life, by one of the ablest living philosophers.

ARTHUR E. SINGER, *Modern Thinkers and Present Problems* (Holt, 1923). Stimulating discussion of the central issues raised by outstanding modern philosophers.

W. T. STACE, *A Critical History of Greek Philosophy* (Macmillan, 1920). A concise, readable, and balanced treatment.

CHAPTER 1

The Works of Plato, ed. by Irwin Edman (Modern Library, 1928). Plato's portrayal of Socrates, in a convenient edition containing Jowett's translation of the *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Protagoras,* and *Symposium*, among other works.

Portrait of Socrates (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1938). The *Apology, Crito,* and *Phaedo* of Plato, with an introduction and notes by Sir Richard Livingstone.

XENOPHON, *Memorabilia* (Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, 1923).

ARISTOPHANES, *Clouds* (in *The Frogs and Three Other Plays* [E. P. Dutton, 1911]). The *Clouds* and the *Memorabilia* are two quite different views of Socrates from two of his other contemporaries.

PLATO, *Protagoras* and *Gorgias,* trans. by Jowett (Oxford University Press, 1892). The traditional interpretation of these two Sophists, as presented by Plato.

KATHLEEN FREEMAN, *The Pre-Socratic Philosophers* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1946). Includes a careful analysis of available information on the philosophy of the Sophists.

B. A. G. FULLER, *History of Greek Philosophy*, Vol. II (Holt, 1931). A popular but extensive study of the Sophists, Socrates, and Plato.

A. K. ROGERS, *The Socratic Problem* (Yale University Press, 1933). Clear and balanced discussion of the relation of Plato's dialogues to the historical Socrates.

F. C. S. SCHILLER, *Studies in Humanism* (Macmillan, 1907). Contains a vigorous defense of Protagoras as the first great humanist (Chap. 14).

A. E. TAYLOR, *Socrates* (Appleton, 1933). A popular account of Socrates' life and thought by a noted Scottish philosopher and Platonist.

CHAPTER 2

W. J. OATES, *The Stoic and Epicurean Philosophers* (Random House, 1940). An easily available source of the extant writings of Epicurus.

LUCRETIUS, *On the Nature of Things*. Classic statement of Epicurean philosophy by a noted Roman poet of the first century B.C. (included in J. W. Oates's *Stoic and Epicurean Philosophers*).

R. D. HICKS, Stoic and Epicurean (Scribner, 1910). Includes a careful study of the thought of Epicurus, covering all its aspects (Chaps. 5-7).

DIOGENES LAERTIUS, *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, trans. by R. D. Hicks (Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, 1925). Contains invaluable early account of Epicurus and his philosophy, from third century A.D.

A. E. TAYLOR, *Epicurus* (Constable, London, 1911). A popular treatment of Epicurus' life and thought by a distinguished Scottish authority on ancient philosophy.

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LIN YUTANG, *The Importance of Living* (Day, 1937). Popular contemporary advocacy of hedonism as the desirable philosophy of living.

WALTER PATER, *Marius the Epicurean* (Macmillan, 1885). An English classic, portraying the philosophy of Epicurus in action.

BERTRAND RUSSELL, *The Conquest of Happiness* (Allen & Unwin, London, 1930). Balanced and interesting examination of the sources of appeal and the limitations of hedonism.

CHAPTER 3

JEREMY BENTHAM, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1907). A careful analysis of the principle of utility by the founder of Utilitarianism.

JOHN STUART MILL, *Utilitarianism, Liberty and Representative Government* (Everyman ed., 1925). Essential for understanding Mill.

———, *Autobiography* (Columbia University Press, 1924). An excellent introduction to Mill's thought; quite readable.

JOHN MACCUNN, *Six Radical Thinkers* (E. Arnold, London, 1910). Contains a popular discussion of the social philosophy of Bentham and John Stuart Mill.

JOHN PLAMENATZ, *The English Utilitarians* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1944). Brief but competent discussion of the movement and its chief figures.

W. R. SORLEY, *A History of English Philosophy* (Putnam, 1920). A more extensive treatment by a gifted British philosopher.

LESLIE STEPHENS, *The English Utilitarians*, Vol. III (Putnam, 1900). Standard work on the philosophy of John Stuart Mill; comprehensive and thoughtful.

CHAPTER 4

ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER, *Selections*, ed. by DeWitt H. Parker (Scribner, 1928). Good selections from *The World as Will and Idea* and later essays. All that the average reader will need in order to grasp Schopenhauer.

The Living Thoughts of Schopenhauer, ed. by Thomas Mann (Longmans, Green, 1939). Briefer popular selections from *The World as Will and Idea.*

Essays of Arthur Schopenhauer, trans. by T. Bailey Saunders (Willey Book Co., 1942). Eminently readable, witty, and biased.

R. A. TSANOFF, *The Nature of Evil* (Macmillan, 1931). Comprehensive treatment of pessimism in Western thought; includes Schopenhauer.

WILLIAM WALLACE, *Life of Arthur Schopenhauer* (W. Scott, London, 1890). The standard biography. Contains occasional comment on the development of Schopenhauer's philosophy.

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JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH, *The Modern Temper* (Harcourt, Brace, 1929). Contemporary pessimism, not far removed in spirit from Schopenhauer.

CHAPTER 5

J. W. OATES, *The Stoic and Epicurean Philosophers* (Random House, 1940). Convenient edition of the *Discourses* and *Manual* of Epictetus and the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius.

SENECA, *Moral Essays*, 3 vols. (Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, 1928). The best source for Seneca's philosophy.

E. V. ARNOLD, *Roman Stoicism* (Cambridge University Press, 1911). A comprehensive study of later Stoic philosophy.

RICHARD M. GUMMERE, *Seneca the Philosopher and his Modern Message* (Marshall Jones Co., 1922). Brief, readable account of Seneca's life, thought, and value for us.

R. D. HICKS, *Stoic and Epicurean* (Scribner, 1910). Contains a careful analysis of the doctrines of Stoic philosophers from Zeno to Marcus Aurelius (Chaps. 1-4).

HENRY D. SEDGWICK, *Marcus Aurelius* (Yale University Press, 1921). A biography based largely upon letters of the emperor, with a brief account of his philosophy.

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HARRY A. OVERSTREET, *The Mature Mind* (Norton, 1949). Practical philosophy of living for our age, applying the central idea of the Stoics.

BERTRAND RUSSELL, "A Free Man's Worship" (in *Mysticism and Logic*, Chap. 3 [Norton, 1929]). Brief but moving advocacy of the Stoic attitude as essential for modern man.

———, *The Conquest of Happiness* (Allen & Unwin, London, 1930). Modified Stoicism, recommended as a workable philosophy of living today.

CHAPTERS 6 AND 7

BENEDICT SPINOZA, *Selections*, ed. by John Wild (Scribner, 1930). Contains the essay *On the Improvement of the Understanding*, the short treatise *On God, Man, and His Well-Being*, the *Ethics*, and important letters. Difficult but rewarding for the thoughtful student.

Living Thoughts of Spinoza, ed. by Arnold Zweig (Longmans, Green, 1939). A more popular arrangement of selections from the *Ethics* and the *Improvement of the Understanding.*

C. D. BROAD, *Five Types of Ethical Theory* (Harcourt, Brace, 1930). Contains a thoughtful analysis and criticism of Spinoza's ethics (Chap. 2).

LEWIS BROWNE, *Blessed Spinoza* (Macmillan, 1932). A popular biography; thoroughly enjoyable.

* * * * *

WALTER LIPPMANN, *A Preface to Morals* (Macmillan, 1929). Philosophy of the Stoics and Spinoza restated in popular fashion and applied to contemporary problems of living.

ARTHUR E. MURPHY, *The Uses of Reason* (Macmillan, 1943). Vigorous contemporary defense of reason as the only acceptable basis of belief and conduct.

A. N. WHITEHEAD, *Science and the Modern World* (Macmillan, 1925). Among the best interpretations of the meaning of modern science; difficult but not designed for the specialist.

CHAPTER 8

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE, *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (Modern Library, Vol. No. 9). Nietzsche's best-known work; moving poetry but puzzling for most readers.

———, *Beyond Good and Evil* (Modern Library, Vol. No. 20). More popular essays that provide perhaps the best single statement of Nietzsche's philosophy.

———, *The Genealogy of Morals* (Modern Library, Vol. No. 62). Essays developing ideas expressed in the preceding volume.

CRANE BRINTON, *Nietzsche* (Harvard University Press, 1941). Balanced and able study by a well-known American historian who is not very sympathetic.

J. N. FIGGIS, *The Will to Freedom* (Scribner, 1917). Sympathetic comparison of the gospel of Nietzsche and the gospel of Christ.

WALTER A. KAUFMANN, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (Princeton University Press, 1950). The case for Nietzsche's philosophy forcefully restated, with good presentation of its central principles.

H. A. REYBURN, *Nietzsche, The Story of a Human Philosopher* (Macmillan, 1948). Popular and uncritical biography, with some comment on the development of Nietzsche's thought.

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WILL DURANT, *The Mansions of Philosophy* (Simon & Schuster, 1929). Popular naturalistic philosophy of life, designed to appeal to the contemporary mind.

JAMES BISSETT PRATT, *Naturalism* (Yale University Press, 1939). Thoughtful defense of a naturalistic philosophy against radicalism of all kinds, including that of Nietzsche.

Naturalism and the Human Spirit, ed. by Y. H. Krikorian (Columbia University

Press, 1944). Scholarly interpretation of naturalism by a group of well-known American philosophers.

CHAPTER 9

WILLIAM JAMES, *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (Longmans, Green, 1897). Early essays providing necessary background for James's later philosophy.

———, *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking* (Longmans, Green, 1907). James's most influential statement of his philosophy.

———, *Essays on Faith and Morals* (Longmans, Green, 1943). A convenient collection of James's more important essays, assembled by Ralph Barton Perry.

———, *Varieties of Religious Experience* (Longmans, Green, 1902). Careful psychological analysis of the difference that religion makes in human experience.

The Philosophy of William James, ed. by Horace M. Kallen (Modern Library, 1925). A small volume of selections, conveniently arranged.

HORACE M. KALLEN, *William James and Henri Bergson* (University of Chicago Press, 1914). Contains a popular and appealing interpretation of the main ideas in James's philosophy by an enthusiastic disciple.

LLOYD MORRIS, *William James: The Message of a Modern Mind* (Scribner, 1950). A brief and popular volume in the Twentieth Century Library.

RALPH BARTON PERRY, *The Thought and Character of William James*, 2 vols. (Little, Brown, 1935). The standard work on James; indispensable for any serious study of his thought. (Also available in one-volume edition [Harvard University Press, 1948]).

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J. SEELYE BIXLER, *Religion for Free Minds* (Harper, 1939). A strong defense of liberal religion, inspired by the philosophy of William James.

JAMES BISSETT PRATT, *What Is Pragmatism?* (Macmillan, 1909). Early, thoughtful analysis of the pragmatic movement.

CHAPTER 10

JOHN DEWEY, *How We Think* (Heath, rev. ed., 1933). A popular presentation of thinking as problem solving and a careful re-examination of the educational reform that this involves.

———, *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (Holt, 1920). The best brief, inclusive statement of Dewey's position available.

———, *Experience and Education* (Macmillan, 1938). The mature wisdom of a lifetime devoted to educational reform.

———, *Problems of Men*, Parts I and II (Philosophical Library, 1946). Popular discussion of democracy, education, and human nature; easier to grasp than Dewey's more systematic works on these subjects.

JOSEPH RATNER, *Intelligence in the Modern World: John Dewey's Philosophy*

(Modern Library, 1939). Comprehensive selections, well organized to cover all important aspects of Dewey's thought; with extensive introduction.

The Philosophy of John Dewey, ed. by Paul A. Schilpp (Northwestern University, 1939). A careful examination of Dewey's thought by well-known philosophers, with a reply by Dewey to his critics.

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