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MORTAL STRIFE

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& C

MORTAL STRIFE

by

JOHN COWPER POWYS



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Dedicated to
BEN and JANIE ROBERTS
of Penyhont ar Ogwr

CHAPTER I

H O W E V E R !

WHEN we talk of practising a philosophy of our own that helps us in the struggle of life we are, I take it, only putting into words what all living men, together with not a few animals and certainly most dogs, instinctively and constantly practise.

To practise a philosophy it isn't necessary to hold any particular theory about the origin of the universe. It isn't necessary to believe, or to disbelieve, in God or Immortality. It isn't necessary to have clear-cut ideas about the mystery of good and evil. It isn't even necessary that our way should be a moral or a virtuous way. It may be a devilish way.

There is only one essential requisite that must be fulfilled before our manner of reacting to the blows and caresses of the world has a right to call itself a philosophy. That requisite is continuity. In other words our philosophy is a continuous awareness — driven underground of course sometimes by pain or sleep — of the particular formula for endurance or enjoyment which has become our private password in the battle.

As Voltaire said, 'in entering life we enter war', and we have the authority of Heraclitus for the assertion that if our personal reaction to life is to keep that continuity which alone justifies its claim to be called a 'philosophy', it must become a formula — though it may be a wordless formula — for adapting ourselves to what flows away rather than what abides.

Now the suggestion implicit in that significant 'However!' with which we so often turn from the sounding of our sea of troubles is really a double one. There is, first of all, the suggestion that bad as things are it is within our power to imagine them worse; and secondly there is the suggestion that since we've *got* to go on, we might as well adjust our mind to going on.

It is precisely in this simple but symbolic *However!* — in itself a gesture quite as expressive as any of those shameless signs wherewith Panurge discomfited Thaumast — that what might be called the wisdom of the poor has distinguished itself throughout the ages from the wisdom of the

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philosophers, who as a class, though not exactly rich, **are for the most** part exempt from the necessities of privation.

Some are of the opinion that a release from the harder and more primitive necessities is the very thing that has enabled philosophers to philosophize.

But it is the philosophers themselves who love to call us back to what they describe as the teaching of Nature; and when you consider what the 'teaching of Nature' really means you feel that Wordsworth is right when he says that it is the poet who learns from the Leech-gatherer, and not the Leech-gatherer from the poet.

And if it is true that the 'Stoic Porch*' through which we enter most easily into the Philosophy which I am trying to define as the Philosophy of 'However!' is to be found in this same laborious and patient Commonalty, the question naturally arises who are the best interpreters of its old wives' wisdom?

Are the self-conscious philosophic admirers of the People the ones to be followed in getting at this secret?

Are the People's representatives in the political sphere so saturated with this homespun mystery that we attain it by listening to their eloquent words?

It does not seem so! In fact it appears to me that unless necessity has made our life like unto *their* life, the only place to go for what we are seeking is the supreme fountain of all the secular sagacity of our race, the great humorists and humanists, such as Rabelais, Shakespeare, Cervantes, and Charles Dickens. These great men may or may not have suffered what the masses suffer, but at any rate they have more imagination than the philosophers.

In fact their imaginative insight is so penetrating that without either patronizing or explaining the common man they have the power of *becoming* him.

But it isn't only Shakespeare or Cervantes who can pick up the philosophic secret of what Milton called the 'heads without name, no more remembered than summer flies'. A little introspection, combined it may be, as life knocks us about, with a taste of what it means to be unprivileged, can give most of us some glimpse into the common heart. And what lies, it seems to me, far deeper than any superficial 'war-aim' in the **heart of the common person** is his **profound desire to be let alone. To be free**

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from fear of destruction is, I think, a secondary although a cruelly pressing exigency. It is in the difference between these two evils that we must look for what might be called the 'sticking-point' of this war. It seems to me that the best interpretation of this war is to regard it as a struggle for the mastery of a large portion of the earth between an old slowly-evolved, complicated system of life and a new oppressively organized, logically rounded-off system of life. The tyranny of an inhuman logic lies behind the force of Germany and the force of Russia. The slowly-evolved complexity of ordinary human nature, with its tendency to be religious, its tendency to be irreligious, its tendency to criticize its rulers, its desire to be let alone, its humorous suspicion of hero-worship, its natural anarchistic hostility to government as government, are only some of the imponderable urges that make us indignantly defend what is so full of old human injustices and old human stupidities against what looks so clear, so simple, so rational, in its attack on the imponderable private property of *Homo Sapiens*, the creature who wants to be let alone.

I have plenty of friends, of course, who in their horror of the atrocities of war throw all the blame, with a bitterness and a fury that; must have some profound psychological cause behind it, upon our rulers. This is a puzzle to me. I don't mean dieir pacifism is a puzzle, but the savage bitterness of their tone confuses me and makes me doubtful.

Such was not the tone of Socrates. Such was never the tone of Rabelais or Shakespeare or Cervantes. If it is possible to throw into our opposition to the Stream of Tendency what is noble in us, is it not also possible to throw into it what is less noble?

In regard to private individuals over military age it seems to me that the only honest attitude is to conceal nothing of our own ignorance and our own cowardice while we do our best to suppress our pathological craving to find scapegoats in others.

I confess I do not share the feeling of some of my contemporaries as to the loss to 'art' of the war, compared with the loss of the lives of men. I tend to agree with Immanuel Kant that the human conscience is a more miraculous appearance in this confused world than any of the instruments with which we measure the orbits of the stars or any of the metres in which we find rhymes for heroes.

In fact it seems to me that what is 'phoney' in this war is the conceit

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with which we 'Intelligentsia' overrate our contribution to posterity compared with the endurance and patience of the 'heads without name' who protect our 'freedom to think'.

I fully agree that the more our rich are prodded and pruned and pinched for the benefit of ordinary people the better for us all. But it grows clearer and clearer that to substitute for these lucky ones — who, after all, are only ourselves 'writ large' — some savage Despot who fears neither God nor Man, is only to leap out of the frying-pan into the fire.

Grant that our rich and privileged *are* hypocrites; what, after all, *is* such hypocrisy if not the obeisance that vice makes to virtue? Who isn't a hypocrite before the Lord? —and our rulers, like ourselves, are not devoid of *all* conscience.

And even in this matter of *propaganda*, which is certainly the supreme threat to our human intelligence, it must be remembered that our rulers only do what we ourselves not infrequently do; that is to say give a comfortable twist and a dash of ideal colour, to that ugly customer, the Real Truth.

I seem to detect an extraordinary change in the war-attitude of ordinary people on this side of the water from what it was in the last war; and I confess I cannot see a similar change in the temper of our foes. Our policy has blundered, has wavered, has hesitated, just because it has been influenced by this change. Everything with us depends on the evolution of the individual and the alternations in him between altruism and egoism. So many of us have kept saying: 'The Versailles Treaty was hard on them; they suffered from our Blockade; they ought to be given another chance.'

But all the while what has gone on in the mind of our foe seems to have been a great deal simpler: 'We have tried *once* to show we're the master-race, the race born to conquer. England hates us and wishes to keep us down. But God surely can never let our *second* struggle fail.'

I doubt if we, the ordinary people of this country, ponder very much upon what are called 'war-aims'. Our 'Intelligentsia' scolds our rulers for this lack of interest in such logical and ideal definitions. But in this matter we and our rulers are of the same mind. We have been given by the Dictators so many bloody examples of dogmatic logic and doctrinaire definition that we have come to associate any aims —except the individual's aim to be let alone — with massacre and oppression.

What we *feel* to be our aim is something that we would find very diffi-

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cult to proclaim — save in the crude phrase, 'He must be stopped'. But this crude phrase covers that long struggle of the common man to assert himself against tyranny that is as old as it is unrecorded.

It is not philosophy or logic, it is experience, that has taught us the importance of placing restrictions upon what is called the Will to Power.

And our 'upper class', though so complicated in their ways, do endeavour to keep, just as we do, a fragment of conscience somewhere about them, with its jumpy fear of God. They're not *entirely* cynical. They really do feci that it's wrong to bully and torture and to tell unmitigated lies. In other words they haven't come to the point of 'blaspheming the Holy Ghost'; though it must be admitted they deny Christ daily. Their faults are our faults and our poor virtues are their poor virtues. They're not monstrous super-men or cold-blooded world-intellec[t]s; they are cautious, troubled, clever, anxious, erring human beings.

But the grand point in which they resemble us and all other 'common or garden' people, the grand point in which they, like ourselves, have been faithfully represented by Rabelais and Shakespeare and Cervantes and Dickens, is that they have no intention of leaving the flag — this poor, faltering, fluttering flag of the moral law — and arraying themselves, *knowing what they're doing*, under the standard of the devil! At least they have not yet uttered the fatal words: 'Evil be thou my Good!'

I am tempted sometimes to believe, remembering Hitler's eloquent claims for them, that the Germans *are* of less mixed blood than the rest of us. Well, if they are, they have certainly paid for this simplicity of blood in a most singular simplicity of mind.

And why shouldn't our own more mixed blood explain the tact that the good and evil elements in us are more subtly fused? It cannot be too often repeated that our scattered Empire was brought together rather by individual adventurers than by the far-sighted unscrupulousness of an omnipotent Government. Our Governments *have followed*, generally at some distance behind, the desperate individuals, who by their mixture of good and bad, *traded themselves* into the possession of a quarter of the world.

And this fact alone, the fact that our Empire has come to us hugger-mugger and higgledy-piggledy, through the activity of reckless and rascally adventurers rather than of logical inhuman State-Machines is itself a fact that has given us the 'yield' and 'give' of grown-up people, contrasted with the logical ferocity of young converts.

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And there is always this other fact — and it is an historical one — that makes the attitude of our enemies seem like savage simplicity attacking humane, disillusioned malicious experience; and that is the age of Britain as a nation compared with the Germany of to-day.

The new German *Reich*, which Nietzsche said 'killed the German intellect', is anything but an ancient growth made wise and cautious and easy-going by long experience. It is so youthful an apparition upon this old World-Stage that it naturally struts and frets and hustles and bustles with all that naive efficiency which young boys evince when they play at being bandits; as though the whole of human civilization weren't Nature's patient attempt to evolve a conscientious self-reliant ordinary person, suspicious of the State, in place of tribal fanatics with a passion for trying their strength agamst other tribes.

But the German must say in his heart, 'this crafty mingling of good and bad, of righteousness and self-interest, that I see m these English must be pure hypocrisy. These things refuse to mix m me. I am good. I work hard. I serve the State. But when my Leader tells me to be bad and stick at nothing, I *am* bad and I *do* stick at nothing!'

And now — following still further this method of analysing all that the ordinary person means when he makes the significant gesture which is best expressed in the word 'However!' — I reach a point that m my present inquiry, is not without importance.

There is no doubt that some of the worst evils in our Empire arise from the selfishness and apathy of individuals; individuals with whom our slow-moving Government ought to have dealt much more sternly than it has.

Recent disturbances in our West Indian Colonies are a proof of our flagrant slackness in meddling with the injustices of our laissez-faire capitalism.

But if our worst shames spring from unrestrained individualism, our most redeeming characteristics spring from the same source. When it is a matter of enduring those various discomforts that the Janus-faced First Cause inflicts upon all the children of men it would seem that Rabelais and Cervantes and Shakespeare and Dickens are in complete accord with 'our common and garden' individual as to the most effective human weapon wherewith to ward off the darts of the evil one. This weapon is the comedy-spirit in him, his incorrigible awareness of the humorous aspect of people and things.

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Now though we can get caught out, as the saying is, by the greed of individuals, it would be impossible for us to be betrayed into the **far more** dangerous and sinister weakness of a slavish hero-worship. A greedy plantation-owner is a disgrace, but an unscrupulous tyrant is a catastrophe. The one may stupidly provoke a riot, the other may efficiently exterminate a nation.

This 'sense of humour', as we call it, is more lacking in the great German Race than in any other race in the world. They can, as we know from both Hitler and 'Lord Haw-Haw', be terrifyingly sarcastic; but they cannot be ironical. Heine, the most imaginative of all ironists, must of course no longer be called a German. Well! Can this humour of ours be regarded as innocent, or as simple as German sarcasm?

I think, in its devastating simplicity, the German soul is much freer from maliciousness than ours. But, like the man in the Bible, whose naive consciousness was so 'swept and garnished' that Heaven knows how possessed of the Devil it became, the German soul can decide to be cruel and remorseless with a grave and solemn efficiency that would be laughable if it weren't tragic.

Most of us must agree with Emerson in regarding Goethe as the greatest man of modern times; but no one would advance the paradox that Goethe was a humorous writer.

In *Mex n* ICampfHitler suddenly bursts out against the physical peculiarities of Jews in a manner that would be outrageous if it weren't so entirely insane. But insane or not, the point is that when a prophetic pure-blooded German gets obsessed with an idea he ceases to be a 'common or garden' person; he becomes a horribly efficient *marching mania*. But our enemy's Leader is not only 'maniacal' in himself, 'he is the cause', to paraphrase Falstaff, why manias 'are in others'.

One of the manias he has put into his followers' minds is that England 'is out to do the Germans down'. This view is hard to reconcile with our peace-loving Prime Minister's trip to Munich, when he didn't even open his umbrella, though, as 'old Moore' would say, 'Mars and Jupiter were entering Taurus'; but the cruel thing is that we tragic human beings are so constituted that when an alien Body Politic has one shocking and inexplicable characteristic — in our case Capitalism tempered by Decency and Fear: in their case Despotism electrified by Race-Passion — we each attribute our own dominant bias to the other; Mr. Chamberlain beUeving

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that, whatever Hitler might say, he *must* be ready to do a plain business deal rather than plunge the world into frightfulness, and Hitler believing that whatever Mr. Chamberlain might say, he *must* be only trying to gain time, so as to complete his war-preparations.

And such is the tragedy of human natures, whether German or English, that once having endowed our adversary with our own most inveterate peculiarity the next thing we do is to attribute to him, whether it be consistent or not with the quality with which we've just endowed him, the characteristic of all others which we most instinctively loathe! Thus, after taking for granted that with healthy and natural barbarism *we are out to down Germany*, the next Guy Faux mask thrust upon us is that of a degenerate and declining race, that in its effeminacy and moral sickness has yielded itself up body and soul to the international domination of a sinister gang of Jewish Financiers.

We on the other hand — congenitally of a tough conscience with regard to the wiles of business-men whether Hebrew or Gentile — hasten to attribute to the 'Third Reich' what to our mind is the worst that can be imagined, namely a sweeping programme for the complete subjugation of all other European peoples.

One of our most interesting tricks of conscience — and I know well of what I speak, for I share this subtlety — is to feel that there is all the difference in the world between dominating a distant race whose whole system of civilization is different from ours and dominating some ancient neighbour whose European history has for centuries been entwined with our own in a long receding series of invasions, victories, and defeats.

My Welsh Nationalist friends will hasten to assure me that the Saxon among us dominates the Celt; but I am sure there is more mixture of blood between *all* the dwellers in our islands than between the Germans and Czechs, or the Germans and Poles.

And it is indeed by this mixture of blood that we are saved. It must be to this mixture of blood that we owe that characteristic which in our quaint understatement we call *decency*. This 'decency*' — this 'being decent*' — has nothing to do with the opposite of indecency. We have given the word our own peculiar meaning. One of the *Altmark* prisoners, for example, declared that the Captain of the *Graf Spee* was so 'decent*' that he seemed almost like a Britisher.

It has taken a great many shocks to convince us — and some of us

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aren't quite sure yet — that the Germans, so nearly related to ourselves, are entirely lacking in 'decency'. This 'decency' is anyway the nicest characteristic of 'the common or garden' person of our nation; and it remains, I think, in spite of certain horrifying exceptions, lucky for this tragical planet that the nation which puts the ideal of 'behaving decently' above being intellectual or being efficient, should have, as the expression is, grabbed the 'lion's share'.

What our intellectual critics of our leaders must try and remember is that they themselves, with their witty attacks, are one of the Imperial Products that our Forces are so desperately defending: defending so that these very people may be at liberty to go on being free critics of the less detached men and women who feel that it would be better to be dead than to live at the mercy of a fanatical tyrant.

What I would like to hear the Ministry of Information doing, day by day and every day, is taking a leaf— many leaves — from the tone and temper of the members of our Judicial Bench, not our Lawyers but our Judges, that body of incorruptible protectors of the Magna Charta of individual liberty, to which moral evolution itself has given its sanction as something above all force, all violence, all privilege. That as a race we have done so many unpardonable things, that as a race we have got so many ill-gotten gains, doesn't alter the fact that the general trend of our tradesmen's Empire is towards emancipation and freedom. We *have* exploited, we *are* exploiting, but as Mr. Gandhi would be the first to make plain, if all India, including every one of the 'Untouchables', were to vote in a grand 'referendum' whether they would prefer to be transferred to Germany the verdict would be an almost universal negative.

You have only to state such an alternative to make the answer plain. And why? Because with all her trading instinct and with all the capitalistic rascals she supports, it still remains — and this is not hypocrisy but the psychological truth — that the British Ideal of Life is nearer the heart of common humanity than any other.

I have already spoken of the incorruptible and incorrigible sense of humour of the ordinary Britisher; but it is important to remark here that nothing helps the ordinary person to treat the war in the only entirely satisfactory way it can be treated, namely *as fate*, fate pressing on us all alike — on us *and* our enemies — than the possession of this quality.

Nor if we desire not to lose that essential humanity which we call

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'being decent' is there a better way of preserving it than in the spirit of which I speak. How grave, how portentously grave, is the face of cruelty and oppression!

Nor is this a superficial matter. As Rabelais says, 'Man is the laughing animal'; and the humorous attitude is part of the ultimate temper of the human soul when it confronts our basic predicament.

The difference between a wise Catholic-minded christian and a fanatical puritan is to be found in this matter of humour. 'Because *thou* art virtuous, is there to be no more cakes and ale?' is the humorist's everlasting retort to logical fanaticism. How grave must the countenance of Calvin have looked when he burnt Servetus! How pinched with fanatical resolution are the cheeks of poor Mary Tudor!

I admit there is an element of malice in the difficulty we ordinary Britishers experience in worshipping 'a Great Man'. But this is not at all, as Hitler supposes, because we have only 'nonentities' to set up against 'the Great Dictators'; it is because in our malicious individualism and our humorous fatalism we bring down these proudly-swelling ones to the ordinary human level.

It is a sense of humour, not rational logic, that helps humanity to endure 'the pathos of difference'; and it is humour and never logic that gives us time to arrive at those deep-sunken 'second thoughts' that are the rich residue at the bottom of the cask of truth.

Let us therefore narrow down this war to the most un-propagandized of all naked issues. Let us call it a war between rational logic and irrational tradition, between the dogmatic 'Veracities' with which Carlyle, that Nazi born before his time, tried to 'liquidate' Charles Lamb and to 'purge' John Keats, and the eternal waywardness of the individual soul, with which, according to the Russian theologian, Berdyaev, even God must not meddle.

Why does the 'common or garden' Britisher turn on the spigot of Lord Haw-Haw's sour lies instead of imbibing the wholesome milk of our allotted 'children's hour'? Because he instinctively knows more about his war-aims than anybody else. And they are *his*. They're not the war-aims of clever Intellectuals nor of Politicians. They are his own. And they can be very simply summed up. *He must be stopped!* In other words, 'We're going to be let alone'.

The psychological roots of the human individualism which our enter-

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prising traders have guilefully insinuated upon the world may be said to resemble those of floating sea-weed; for they follow the tides of the four seas. Now there is nothing that confounds the rational logic of philosophers more utterly than life-and-death contests with the elements. The logic of race-superiority is broken up on the high seas.

The master of the ship, 'The swabber, the boatswain, the gunner and his mate', are battered by the waves into a tradition in which Race, and the State, and the Government and the Economic Determination of History play little part. Their place is taken by *a tradition of necessity*, in which independence and obedience, under the pressure of winds and waves, arrive at a natural understanding.

World-domination by a great land-power is of necessity more harmful to individual freedom than similar domination by a great sea-power. The former brings all its machinery to bear upon the business of subjugation. The latter — save in the case of slave-ships — enforces its power sideways and in a haphazard manner as trade-winds and stoke-holes drive it from coast to coast.

And if the British Navy and the British Mercantile Marine have grown — beyond all logic — to be associated with the saving of life rather than with its destruction, and with the tempering of discipline by 'decency', they have also, in a gradual evolution of human character, come to be inseparably linked-up with that sort of personal and individual humour, at once wayward and stubborn, of which the gravity and fanaticism of despotism is most afraid.

But the soul of the average individual, of every nation, has yet another escape from the unscrupulous logic of mass-tyranny. I refer to Religion. Now of course Religion can be perverted into the cruellest tyranny ever known, worse than that of State or Government or Race. But unlike these it has the power of becoming something which is the extreme opposite of external authority, which is in fact the grand citadel and sanctuary of the individual soul.

In this sense it is like the spreading out over a man's spirit of a vast air-ocean of infinite escape, into which the soul can be steered, and to the free winds of which it can hoist its secret sail.

Now the peculiarity of Religion is, that although some of the most unpleasant of all reactionaries can hook their Inquisitorial Sadism to its star, under normal and healthy conditions it remains the grand sanctuary

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of the soul's intrinsic freedom. Though by no means limited to the moral sense, and indeed often breaking loose from it altogether, it is connected with courtesy and chivalry, with pity and remorse, and remains, by reason of its nearness to the human conscience, *an eternal drag*—like the sense of humour itself—upon the wheels of logical ruthlessness.

The moment I catch any of our progressive intellectuals declaring that this is a war between the new and the old, between Capitalism and the Revolution, my mind reverts to that famous saying of Field-Marshal Goering, 'When I hear the word "Culture" I feel for my gun!'

For cynical as Goering's remark was, you have only to give it a personal and anarchistic twist, *a la* Walt Whitman, to find that it contains at least this truth, that in the name of 'Culture', as much as in the name of 'Liberty', shameful crimes against average human nature can be committed. How often, for instance, in the name of 'Culture', do we hear vicious and sinister attacks upon that grand solace of the ordinary human being, the Cinema?

And when I hear intellectual people speak as if Hitler and Stalin represented a rational and logical Culture that had risen up in recent years to free the world from the old mentality of superstition I feel rising up in the pit of my stomach that Walt Whitman mood, in which the Long-Island poet felt as though he could alone make war upon a whole government.

It is Nature herself, as Goethe hints, who inspires us with our spiritual feelings; and for Dictators to set out to crush Religion is as bad as when they set out to crush atheism.

But in reality Hitlerism is a religion, and so is the tyranny of Stalin. The pictures of these men-gods are as sacred as *Icons*. But Democracy doesn't stand or fall with Capitalism. Its enemy, *our* enemy, is *authority from above*.

Capitalism is an ugly old fowl, I fully admit it, with moulting feathers and unpleasant manure; but at any rate it makes no claim to take the place of the Holy Ghost. And since it is only a wretched makeshift and a temporary convenience and we can very well imagine democracy getting on without it, there is no reason why the thrice-blessed Golden Age that ordinary human beings so hopelessly long for, shouldn't be born of *this* daughter of Chaos as well as of any other. It obviously can't be born in an atmosphere of dictatorship; for dictatorship is *ipso facto* a return to primitive barbarism; and the Libertarian Utopia which is the heart's desire

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of all ordinary people, is an evolutionary hope, not a retrograde despair.

It is as easy for 'Lord Haw-Haw' as it is for our bourgeois 'Intelligentsia' to curse Democracy for our Slums and our Unemployed. But what we must remember is that Dictatorship itself, the mere existence of this System, the mere fact that Hitler and Stalin are regarded by their followers as they are, *does at one blow* what slums and unemployment take generations to do, and then perhaps fail in doing; that is to say it kills the independent life of the individual soul.

'You must worship and serve your God upon Earth,' the New Orthodoxy preaches, pointing to its *Icon* with the one or the other of its little magnified men. At which the common human soul naturally retorts, like Jesus to the Devil: 'Thou shalt worship the God in thine own breast and Him only shalt thou serve!'

There is one thing we all can do in this war; and that is to try to be honest with ourselves about our attitude towards it. Hypocrisy and self-deception are by no means the monopoly of one class or one set of people. I think many among our 'Intelligentsia' are guilty of the most shocking humbug. A simple recruit, hoping not to be killed, and shamelessly taking what small personal measures his duty may permit to avoid that contingency, is much less likely to be guilty of self-deception than a subtle and eloquent denouncer of the war. At the bottom of our personal conscience lies the terribly clear voice of the Spirit; and half the eloquence in which we indulge — proving our superiority to others — is used to drown that voice. Not that we need obey that voice. *That* would be too much to ask. I am advocating a much more modest undertaking. I am only suggesting that we should admit to ourselves — not necessarily to another soul — exactly where and exactly why we do *not* obey that voice.

Every single moral issue in the world is a matter of discrimination, of proportion and balance. All sound morality is casuistry. Not to recognize this is to be a cynical and satanic fool. To think that it is wrong to kill in war is a fanatical opinion. To think that it is right in war to destroy the crew of a light-ship is a fanatical opinion. What the ordinary person feels is that there is a balance of right and wrong in war as in everything else.

It is in fact the curious mixture of malice and humour in ordinary Britishers that draws us with such lurid and Dickensian fascination towards the satanic sarcasms of 'Lord Haw-Haw'. This gentleman tickles our fancy as much as any of the hilarious villains in our favourite novelist. So

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incurably amateurish is our sense of the comical that we accept this extraordinary performance as a pure joke.

'Lord Haw-Haw' has already become one of our most popular comedians. Nothing helps better to keep up our morale in these gloomy days; and from the sermons of our elder statesmen we turn with relief to this amusing devil, croaking out his insatiable gall. 'Lord Haw-Haw' is indeed a powerful propagandist — *on our side*; for the particular tone of the attack he makes has such a hissing sound in it that it compels a reader of *Paradise Lost* to¹ think of the serpentine transformation that took place among the fallen angels.

A much more serious effect is made when we are permitted to overhear crowds of German youths singing. Then indeed, as we listen to these unequalled voices, so strong, so fresh, so simple, so *good*, we wonder how these young warriors can be hypnotized into such fatal obedience.

What has happened over there, we ask ourselves, in that great Central European Plain, that so many millions of brave lads should be inspired with a desire to over-run, crush, subjugate, and even evict their European neighbours? Well! The situation is clear enough. We know from his own words what Hitler's idea is. Namely that his new German *Reich* should establish by force or guile a powerfully-armed gigantic autocracy in the heart of Europe. This autocracy will be allowed to exercise an unquestioned suzerainty over all its neighbours, neighbours recently free but henceforth to be no longer free.

In this terrific and tragic contest there hover over the armoured hosts not only Hardy's spirits of irony and pity, but a cloud of atmospheric 'imponderables', gathering like vast feathered flocks of omens and portents. And this is what our critics forget. They concentrate upon the black spots in our systems; but *they forget the alternative*. They forget that in place of blundering, chaotic, casual, easy-going, negligent, selfish capitalists we ordinary people are threatened by despots *who kill the soul*, whatever they do to the body. They forget that all Germany's independent neighbours are in danger, not of the old familiar thieving of 'international Jews and Bankers', but of a grim and ghastly reversion to what existed in Europe two thousand years ago; a reversion to a sinister despotism designed to destroy all that evolution has given us.

No amount of rascally capitalists, no amount of clever intellectuals attacking rascally capitalists, can turn this titanic struggle into a 'phoney

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war'. A tragic war indeed it is, tragic and monstrous; but to call it 'senseless', to call it 'phoney', is to insult, not the sleek capitalists who, after all, are only swept along like poisoned sharks upon its tidal wave, but the masses of heroic common people, out of whose endurance and pain and death the future, whatever it is to be, is being born.

What our critics are apt to forget is the long and painful process by which the *supremacy of the Law* was obtained, this precious supremacy that puts the Law above our Government, above our Rulers, above the Crown.

I was struck by this only to-day, reading a six-months-old weather-beaten Proclamation on the bridge over our river. It was a Proclamation calling up some class of Air Force Reservists, if I made it out correctly. But what struck my mind amid all the quaint legal preambles was the statement that by some *particular* Act of Parhamment, carefully recorded and dated, '*It was made Lawful for Us*⁹ to do something or the other 'when Parhamment was not sitting'; and it proceeded — his present Majesty being the speaker — '*We do therefore enact*', etc. etc.

No one who has studied at all closely the procedure in our Criminal Law Courts can fail to have been struck by the sheer human wisdom, beyond that of any professional psychologists, of our British Judges, these men of super-common sense, whose business it is to defend the Rights of the Individual under the Law, if it be necessary *against the Government and against the Police*.

Now our home-critics, who are often, even in war-time, quite as severe as that great comedian 'Lord Haw-Haw', are inclined to take all this for granted, forgetting the long and terrible historic struggle which endowed the Law and its Judicial Interpreters with this tremendous supremacy.

But there is something else; for the Law itself is based upon a less ponderable product, of a far longer, far older, far more tragically-contested evolution. I refer to the evolution of the human conscience, of the human sense of right and wrong.

Now whatever less noble feelings intermingled with the motives that drove our late Prime Minister to make his famous flight to Munich, I think few of us would go so far as to deny that Mr. Chamberlain realized more clearly than most of us what another European war would actually mean, and that his human conscience played a part in the compulsion that urged him to make that unsuccessful move.

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Now we have only to call up before our mind's eye the countenances and personalities of the leading members of our War-Cabinet to realize how unthinkable it would be for any one of them to *take the law into his own hands*, and on the strength of his desire for power, or his personal hatred of an enemy, to have such an enemy put to death without scruple or remorse, and even contemplate with elation the victim's departure to the Torture-Camp.

But it is no lying Propaganda on our side but a fact written large upon the Dictators' faces, and upon the acknowledged facts of their rise to power, that they tore up and threw to the winds not only what shreds of legality hampered their New Despotism, assumed in the name of their people and forced upon their people, but also — and *that* is the point — those painfully evolved principles of right and wrong from which, as the *Status Quo* so to speak of the conscience of the world, humanity, as Goethe himself says, *having once come so far*, will never again recede. What they accuse us of as a nation is that we have possessed ourselves, in our long history, by hook or by crook of an unfair share of the world. Well! This, from *their* point of view, might conceivably justify a war. What it doesn't and cannot justify is the blood and the cruelty by means of which *among their own people* these particular despots obtained and still maintain their lawless and barbarous power.

CHAPTER II

OURSELVES AND OUR ENEMIES

IT is hard to see, granting all that can be said of our slums and dole-men and pensioners, that the working-people in Germany or Russia are so much happier or freer or more contented than we are. The average person with us undoubtedly prefers — as Mr. Ivor Brown wisely remarks — a rich neighbour who keeps race-horses to one who starts Societies for meddling with us and educating our taste. That personal hatred of the rich — of which I confess I am guilty myself — is shared by very few of my poorer friends. My own conscience — I am not boasting that I obey it! — is certainly touchy on this matter of money; but I see no sign among the great number of simple people I know, that they suffer day and night from a rankling grievance against the 'well-off' or even from a bitter feeling of injustice.

The truth is that our British working-class is as much addicted to suspicion as it is to humour; and it has from long-inherited experience a deep and obstinate suspicion of any Dictatorship, whether Proletarian or otherwise. Incorrigibly and maliciously individualistic as we are, we instinctively distrust these scowling Men of Destiny.

I should fancy the idea must be very prevalent among us that this war is destined to be won or lost in the air; and yet the fact that it is so largely a war between land and water remains extremely significant. Why, one asks, have sailors something chivalrous and humane in their nature that the rest of us seem to lack? Is it not because in their daily struggle with the most unaccountable and inhuman of all elements the men who sail the seas have already reached, from their very remoteness from 'earth's human shores' and the malicious firesides of men, a certain magnanimous *internationalism*, which may well prove to be a prophecy of the ultimate Federation of our troubled lands?

Nor are there wanting signs — with us at any rate — that this same quality, made so much harder when our feet are on the blood-stained earth, and the houses made by our hands are tumbling about our ears, **is evoked** by risks in the **air as much as by risks on the water.**

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Meanwhile, it seems to me, the important thing is to keep our secret spirit as intact as possible. Outwardly we may have to be cogs and screws and pistons and pawns as this life-and-death struggle continues. But inwardly — with a little ironical submission — we can remain free souls. Nor because we are reluctant to take the tone of sardonic ruthlessness adopted by our enemies' rulers is it incumbent upon us to take the tone of moral superiority adopted by some of our own.

As individuals we can at least be honest with ourselves. We are bound, as natural human beings, and therefore as eccentric human beings, to have endless personal reactions to the war, reactions that are totally inconsistent with one another. To ourselves, to our bosom cronies, there's no reason why we should conceal any of these, or make great moral efforts to be more consistent than Life and Nature.

To be a non-combatant for *any* reason, whether of age, health, privilege, or what you will, must, one thinks, unless we possess an exceptional spirit, bring its moments of gross, sly, shameless, animal relief.

On the other hand, I should suppose, all self-respecting non-combatants must feel that compared, as it may well happen, with much less clever persons who *are* combatants, they have scant right to have any opinion about the war at all.

Our enemies' comic-opera Satan, 'Lord Haw-Haw', is never tired of telling us that we common people are in the power of our shameless capitalists and our crafty aristocracy. Well, that may be so! But it is just at this point that there enters one of these subtle but tremendous *imponderables* that make so great a difference in these delicate situations. No British capitalist, no British aristocrat is allowed by the Law 'to come at us or go upon us', as the Magna Charta says, or hurry us off without a trial to torture and execution. The power that these sly gentry exercise is more indirect, they can and do bring pressure to bear on us, and we are often brought to heel from fear of destitution; but this pressure is exercised — and that is the point — upon our self-interest not upon our souls.

No aristocrat, no capitalist, is allowed by Law to stand over us, and watch our spirit being broken, until under the punishment we cry out: 'Hail Sir John, thou God upon Earth!' or 'Hail Lord Charles, thou Saviour of the People!' or 'My stripes praise thee and glorify thee, Alderman What-Not, thou Matchless Promoter of Companies!'

Let us try to look at the situation yet closer. Here is this great new

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gathering into one terrific *Reich* of the formidable German People — among them our own first cousins the Saxons — and all trained, educated, inspired, with the one single thought of fighting for their rights. And what do they feel their 'rights' to be? 'Living-Room'! And what does this 'Living-Room' mean? The domination of Europe. In the old days, before they became a *Reich*, the titanic energy of this people expressed itself, as all the world realizes, in such Philosophy, such Science, such Music, as Europe had never known before. And why, they ask, should not so great a race, thus newly gathered into one, dominate Europe? And why, having dominated Europe, should it stop there? The answer comes in many voices and in many tongues. Because *we* — the *other* races of the world — object to being dominated by Germans! Britain and her Empire we know. History and Evolution together, combined with an inherited instinct for legality, and with that particular kind of 'give-and-take' which only free individualism under the law can give, have already softened, subtilized, diffused, and in a sense, with the help of Jewish Financiers, *internationalized* the dominating influence of Britain.

The British have been at the game so long that they have learnt their lesson. Their imperial urge has grown malleable and mellow. It has begun to show signs, not of decadence, but of the very opposite of decadence; of that particular *art of yielding*, of yielding under the influence of liberal and humane ideas, which is possible only to the strong who have learnt their lesson.

But the *Reich* has learnt no lesson. Her defeat in the last war has only doubled her resolution to fight the *Status Quo* until she has got what she wants. And the unfortunate thing for all the other nations is that *what she wants* — by reason of her youth as a 'Reich' — *grows with what she takes*. Under her present Despot 'what she wants' has literally no limit. It resolves itself into a moving mark, that is put further on with every successive advance.

What might be called German psychology is the great enigma of the strange struggle. A faith in war as the supreme test of racial greatness is clearly one element in it. A deep sense of injury is another. A tendency to despise the vanquished is yet another.

And perhaps it is a lucky warning to the world in general as to the nature of German domination, that both in his famous book and in his personal struggle for power the German Leader has concentrated in his

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own Person all the ruthlessness in the German character. What in fact the ordinary person in these islands feels is that if the murderous unscrupulousness shown by all these modern Dictators *to obtain their power over their own people* is to characterize their nation's behaviour towards other nations, why then the only thing to do is to perish resisting rather than submit.

Now it is most important not to copy the methods of my 'Lord Haw-Haw' and utter cheap sneers at the expense of the deepest life-illusions of the enemy. It is no doubt with all the simple goodness in them — of which they have so much — that the Germans, in spite of their having so little choice to do otherwise, made a god of Hitler.

Nor is it — and this I know from my own feelings — altogether to our credit that we find this sort of thing impossible. As I keep repeating, we all have within us a certain *suspicious malice* that descends to the very depths of our being, modifying with a pinch of *something* — call it deep-sea salt, if you like — every hero-worshipping instinct we possess!

Why is it that now as a commonwealth of nations, with an obstinacy that no merely Imperial danger could possibly call up, are we settling ourselves to the long grim task of *doing Hitler down*? I think it is because we love freedom with *everything* in us, both with the good and with the bad.

I think the idea of Hitler saying to himself: 'I have beaten them as I knew I would' causes a reef-bell to ring in our souls such as only the cessation of the struggle can silence. when Germans are at war it is clear that they must say to themselves: 'We're good people, *but this is war*, and we must change into cruel, remorseless, ruthless, pitiless people, and follow *Him!*'⁹

Whereas we say — and this applies to the luckiest capitalists among us as well as to the most luckless tramps — 'These bullies must be taught a final lesson'.

I can of course only be certain about my own war-reactions, but I have a pretty shrewd inkling that it is the sub-ingredient of individualistic malice and suspicion in us that stiffens our love of freedom to the death-struggle point. In other words — and this applies to the less educated as well as to the over-educated among us — the idea of *other people*, whoever they are, meddling with our thoughts, feelings, opinions, caprices, whims, prejudices, habits, touches such a rooted and grounded instinct in us that it goes deeper than all politics, governments, parties, classes, empires, or

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the reform of empires! *Freedom* is a large word, and means many things. With us it means not being bothered, or over-looked, or meddled with; in brief, *let alone*.

lierdycav says that nobody or *anything* has an absolute right to private property, neither as individuals *nor* as the community; the *latter*, he says — speaking as a Russian — being the most fatal of all to freedom.

But I confess I don't think it's so much the loss of private property that we Britishers grumble at when we're poor, as the insolent claims of those who are not so poor to meddle with our lives. When 'Lord Haw-Haw' points out, in his stage-villain's hiss, how unequally divided property is with us and how our Government muddles things, for the ordinary person to retort at all adequately he would have to appeal to a thousand subtle 'imponderables of freedom' that we *have to have*, such as no German could possibly understand.

But the gist of our retort would be that a *muddling* government's human tinkering with our outward affairs doesn't touch the sensitive quick of our nerves at all; whereas that queer amalgam m us of passionate love of Freedom mixed with malicious suspicion of the State is at once roused to fury at the thought of a *competent* government's inhuman invasion of people's thoughts and souls.

We feel that it is this monstrous *hero-worship* of theirs — and what a traitor to British traditions our Germany-loving Carlyle was! — that paves the way to every sort of devilment. It is in fact as much our suspicion of 'heroes' as our sense of the comical that saves us from these enormities.

Is it not significant that we should have hung the faces of our best-loved heroes on the sign-boards of our taverns? A tavern sign-board seems to us the natural and proper place for a hero.

When the ordinary Britisher attempts to reach what Hegel would call the 'essential truth' of this war he cannot help envisaging it as the work of one man, feeling obscurely but instinctively that Hitler and his 'Gestapo' have 'done something', as the ladies say, to the German soul.

It is therefore with a *perverted* Germany that we are engaged in this life-and-death struggle. And what does this mean? Well! Let us ask certain plain questions. First, which side would suffer most on defeat? Germany in defeat would be left — unless we copied their ruthlessness — *as she was twenty years ago*. But what of ourselves? Our defeat would be a totally different thing. Our defeat would reduce us, after some appalling famine,

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compared with which German sufferings under our blockade would be a bagatelle, to what we were in the time of Edward the Confessor. And with our defeat would fall crashing down our whole manner of life, our whole tradition of free individualism, our whole system of Law and respect for Law.

It seemed to me a very sound and healthy note, amid a good deal of less appealing propaganda, when someone recently referred to the 'good manners of the sea', putting the case on a level a little more subtle than just 'good' and 'bad'. The reference in this case was to an incident in our historic war with France when a British war-ship called the *Endymion* saved an enemy frigate from shipwreck on a rocky coast, and then sailed off, 'to fight another day'.

Those who talk lightly about a 'commercial' war merely because our capitalists *are* capitalists and our aristocracy *are* aristocracy, forget the vast, mysterious, imponderable *atmosphere*, the very breath of our life, whether we be rich or poor, that we owe to our fathers who were before us; who were before us not for a century, as with the German Reich, but for a thousand years!

What our more cynical fellow-countrymen forget is the alternative. And to understand this alternative we have only to bring a little scrutiny to bear upon the present ruler of Germany. The Germans are a simple-minded race, prone to goodness, industry, honesty, efficiency and obedience. It is for this very reason, that under a tyrant who frankly proclaims 'Evil be thou my Good' they have become so formidable and dangerous.

We Britishers with our mongrel blood and careless Shakespearean humour are anything but a simple-minded race. We are even a match for the Jews, the subtlest race in the world! The Germans are not; and that is why they turned upon them so savagely. To an ordinary Britisher there is something engaging and comical about a Jew. We love Jews. We understand Jews. We haven't—save for a few simple-minded bullies—the smallest objection to being ruled by Jews. Some of us go so far as to talk of the 'Ten Lost Tribes'.

Now if any planetary observer had contemplated our mad world from a sufficiently safe distance and over a sufficiently long span of years he would have been struck by the fact that wherever Jews have flourished the Arts and Sciences have flourished, and wherever Jews have been persecuted and expelled the Arts and Sciences have dwindled.

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Hitler's hatred of Jews is a most curious and fascinating psychological problem. No one after reading his extraordinary book can explain it on strategic or economic grounds. It is clearly a mania, and a mania with a most interesting erotic shiver in it. The man is undoubtedly a prophet; but the mere fact that he has this mad prejudice against Jews proves that he is a *false* prophet. *

But his influence over the good, patient, industrious, single-minded Germans is due to his being a prophet, whether true or false. For the Germans are not accustomed to prophets. Their great men have been the very opposite of 'prophetic'; and consequently they have developed no defence-mechanism to ward prophets off. In this respect we are more fortunate. We have grown to be prophet-proof. Our great men when they're not clowns or poets, are recklessly prophetic. We know them at once. They generally come from the 'Celtic fringe', and are the sport of our cockney comedians.

But as a people — so mingled with malice are our virtues, so complicated is our attitude to life — it is as impossible for a prophet to hypnotize us as it is for a Prime Minister. We are indeed shameless and obstinate individualists; and we need no treacherous 'Lord Haw-Haw' to point out that we are selfish individualists. But this is the whole point. We Britishers — and in this the rich and poor among us are at one — feel blindly and irrationally, down to the depths of our complicated and *because* complicated, our hypocritical and hyper-critical souls, that the only really important thing in the world is the life of an individual human being.

This human being may be lucky or unlucky; lucky if he can make or inherit money, unlucky if he can't, but in either case he is possessed of an obstinate sub-rational feeling that he has a right to all his opinions, whims, caprices, fancies, prejudices, eccentricities, humours and manias. He has a powerful sentiment for the village or town or county of his birth and he has a still stronger sentiment for his nationality; but this latter he takes for granted. It is in his bones. But just because it is in his bones it doesn't present itself to him as something about which he is skin-sensitive and touchy. It is a very old feeling, with a very long history; and though he doesn't often or easily bring this to the level of articulation, he has it in him to think of his nation in terms that go back a couple of thousand years.

Now a German's feeling for Germany as a nation is a much **more**

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emotional, touchy and excitable thing; but it doesn't go so far or so deep. It's in his skin; not in his bones. It's a moral ideal, not an inherited atmosphere; it's a cult, a discipline, an acquired taste. It's a new religion, to which he is converted by hero-worship, and in which he is kept going by love and pride and loyalty and fear. His patriotism resembles the religious fanaticism of a convertite. He feels towards it as if it were the greatest of virtues; or rather a virtue *beyond* virtue. He is indeed prepared to sacrifice all the ordinary virtues to it.

Now when I try to analyse my own national instincts, and I am sure I am fairly representative in this, I confess I cannot sum up my attitude to my country in any articulate or rational or moral formula. I certainly don't feel it to be like a new religion; nor have I anything in me of the touchy convertite. It is being a convertite that makes a man itch to force his Religion upon his neighbour. Thus arise what are called 'purgings' and 'liquidations'.

An ordinary Britisher's patriotism is a piety in his bones. It is *there* — like the memory of his parents. Not to have it would be like being a foundling; but no one would think of flogging such foundlings till they found who their parents were.

Hitler is the Prophet of a New Religion, the first dogma of which is that the German Race has a right to dominate because it is strong. Britain's new ally, Stalin, is also the head of a New Religion; and it is significant how both of them have given what they represent a sinister twist of their own.

Nor is it unnatural, though certainly startling and disturbing, that we and Russia should be allies. It is also natural that Jews and Mohammedans and Confucians, together with the philosophic moralists that such Religions have evolved, should all be violently opposed to these Tyrannical Cults, and especially to what they have in common, namely, their Spartan doctrine that the opinions, thoughts, ideas, fancies, caprices, humours of the individual must be sacrificed to the State.

Here then we have the great German people, honest, industrious, obedient, efficient and *simple-minded* led by Hitler the Terrible and against them the great Russian people, careless, disobedient, inefficient, full of complexities, paradoxes, psychoses, sanctities, devilries, but also childishly *simple-minded*, led by Stalin the Terrible. And we ordinary folk are no hypocrites when we feel intense gratitude to these Russians

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who in defending themselves are defending our illogical *Status Quo*: a 'Status Quo', mark you, which is essentially democratic, but *not necessarily* capitalistic.

We, with our familiar patch-work *Status Quo*, are at the moment I write not only being persuaded from within by champions of the New Religion of Russia that our whole system is doomed by reason of its inherent injustice, but also are being coaxed from without by the treacherous 'Lord Haw-Haw' into the view that our boasted freedom of speech is only a clever sop administered to keep us quiet under the craftiest exploitation of the many by the few ever recorded in history.

How, under heaven, then, can the ordinary man, in these Islands and in these Dominions, continue as obstinately, as imperturbably as he does, preparing to resist to the death?

I think he can, and I am sure he does, for reasons that cannot be put into words. Oh how easily, oh how reasonably can the New Religion of Stalin's Russia be put into words! And Hitler's New Religion — what could be more clear, what more obvious than the doctrine that because the German race is a pure race, a scientific race, an industrious race, and above all a rapidly-growing race, it is destined by Nature to dominate?

Now if ever there was a great race *not* born, *not* trained, *not* evolved to dominate, it is the German race. Their heads are too round. Their good and bad are too *simple*. It is no use saying 'Guns instead of Butter', no use saying 'One Race, one Reich, one Leader'. No People, however heroic, can on the strength of such heroic simplicity and such brutal logic conquer the imponderable spirit of fate.

Every pledge, every appeal, every motion and gesture of our intellectual Pacifists only justifies more completely the common man's rooted conviction that 'He must be stopped'.

Capitalism can be pinched and prodded till it abolishes the slums, employs the unemployed, pays a better dole, raises the old-age pensions. But once, as Bcrdyayev says, *once you give all power to the State*, and you might as well roll up the map of history, shatter the only real progress of evolution, and return to the cave-battles between Cro-Magnon and Neanderthal!

Capitalism isn't a rational thing, or a sensible thing, or a just tiling — *but it saves us from worse*.

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For the State in Russia and Germany is simply the ruling despot beating down in blood and pain all who oppose his will. The German Reaction has been no less perverted by the personal tyranny of Hitler than the Russian Revolution has been perverted by the personal tyranny of Stalin.

Spengler's 'Decline of the West' predicts just this very danger; the rise of bloody and barbaric despotisms, until the great Wheel of Destiny turns again.

Our own critics of the war are for ever reminding us of the bad behaviour of Czechs and Poles. Heavens! We're all badly behaved. The point at issue isn't the bad behaviour of normal humanity; it is the inhuman behaviour of man-devouring tyrants. 'Lord Haw-Haw' is always uttering sarcasms about India and Ireland and Palestine and Egypt and Gibraltar and Malta. So be it! Such was our sin, or our fate, or our destiny, or our good luck*. But it is quite certain that all these regions and places would find Germany's little finger thicker than our loins if she ever succeeded us!

Crafty rogues though our capitalists are, and unctuous hypocrites though we ordinary Britishers may be, the fact remains that with all our hypocrisy we have—and everybody knows it—a peculiar gift for dominating with decency, with toleration, with common sense; and dominating finally under the aegis of the Law.

Wherever we go our Law goes—this Law that we instinctively regard *as above the State*. In fact our tricky and unrighteous domination goes hand-and-glove with our entirely authentic righteousness, our real justice under the law.

Now the capacity for all this springs from the fact that we-are a mongrel race, made up of aboriginal 'Iberians' and Celts and Norsemen and Romans and Saxons and Normans, and not only a mongrel-race, but a sea-race, born to that 'give-and-take' domination to which the four seas with their variable feminine moods are alone able to teach their masters.

But to return to the New Religion of Germany and the New Religion of Russia as compared with what they both regard as our crafty and hypocritical *Status Quo*.

The whole point of the issue of this war lies in this charge they bring against us of being hypocritical. What this charge really amounts to is

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that in *their* struggle to be on the top they have decided to disregard all that has been reached by a thousand years of evolution; and in order to justify this defiance they put forward the argument that the average human being only pretends to be chivalrous and decent; and that the honest course is to maintain that our barbaric human nature is the same now as it always was.

And on what nice and delicate and finicking point, according to the blood-and-iron Fascist view, does this 'hypocrisy' of ours turn? Well! It turns entirely upon the right of the ordinary person as against the State.

And what is the ordinary person and his independence? Nothing less than the supreme 'entelechy' of all at which Nature has been aiming from the start!

Which of our schools of thought and feeling has been roused to make the clearest stand against this dangerous attack upon the most precious thing in life? Well! The Catalan anarchists first of all; and then the old-fashioned British Liberals and Trades Unionists.

And the humorous thing is that in this tragic and titanic struggle, on behalf of the average human being against State-Idolatry, some of the most touchy and conscientious individuals, for whose right to be what they are we are in the field, keep up a ceaseless attack upon us, saying that to *fight at all* is to resemble the enemy.

Well, in one thing, any way, we don't resemble the enemy; and that is, as I have tried to suggest, in their glib and rational logic. The Hitlerites have their Credo, with *Mein Kampf* as its Bible; and the Stalinites have theirs with 'Das Kapital' as its Bible. We have no Bible, unless it be the ancient Hebrew one; and *that* isn't as easy as these others to *reconcile with itself*. Our Bible is like the growth and evolution of life, full of contradictions and inconsistencies; but laying its chief stress upon the behaviour of the individual.

No wonder it is easier for our enemies than for us to define their war aims. What we are fighting for are the indefinable necessities of the common man's soul. You can sum up the Rights of Germany and the Rights of Russia; just as you can, in a legal sense, sum up the Rights of Man. What you *cannot* sum up are the Rights of *the individual man*.

That is why so much of the oratory on the wireless wearies us with its sounding generalities about law and freedom. Between all this moral

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unction and the pain of the war, pain of mind, pain of nerves, pain, like the turning of impersonal screws in the flesh of millions of living creatures, there is a great gulf fixed. And the ordinary person very wisely and very shrewdly has his private 'black-outs' for the whole business.

What he does is to take the war as fate; just as if Hitler and his battalions were inhuman forces, like Fire and Flood, to resist whose attacks was too obvious a human duty to require intellectual discussion.

The ordinary person of our mixed Island-breed confronted by the 'knavish tricks' of unscrupulous Governments and the doctrinaire ethics of over-sophisticated moralists applied to these tricks, turns in weariness from the gravity of both Politicians and Pacifists, and amuses himself with Beachcomber and Charlie Chaplin.

The world under our present system is certainly no heaven for the poor man; but he has plenty of intellectual mouthpieces through which his wrongs are voiced, and after a struggle of a thousand years to obtain this privilege, though he remains under-nourished, his soul is his own.

In a Capitalistic Society the State interferes on the behalf of the poor and the weak like a fussy step-mother. In these new systems, where the State itself is the man-eating ogre, there is no appeal, no mercy, no discussion; none of those Rights of the Individual that are *the Magna Charta of Evolution*.

Hitler in the name of the common man, Stalin in the name of the common man, Mussolini in the name of Mussolini, Franco in the name of God, use what the people produce to oppress the people. There is no law above their capricious will. In place of the familiar injustices of rich and poor which humanity has known from the beginning of its history and which the poor have come to accept more or less philosophically, these dictators are busy creating the ideal Slave-State of all logic-drunk tyrants, a Slave-State from which its victims have no appeal, whether to the Law or to the Lawless.

They are indeed manipulating and plotting a revolution against the *Status Quo*. But the *Status Quo* they're plotting against is the *Status Quo* of the Freedom of the Personal Will. With us this Personal Will is under the Law. With them *it and the law* are together abolished; and brute force and material necessity dominate everything. The faults of our system are criticized every day, and criticized by ourselves, no one

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interfering. Besides, they are only the old familiar human faults of stupidity and selfishness.

But the crimes of these New Slave-States will never be fully known. Think of the difference between our own half-amusing, half-humane Scotland Yard, with its Sherlock Holmes innocency of responsible professionalism, and their arbitrary *Ogpus* and *Gestapos*! These Dictators have indeed started a Revolution against an old-fashioned *Status Quo*: the *Status Quo* of the eternal longing of the individual soul to be itself!

Put side by side with the sweetenings of the bitter truth in which our official propagandists indulge the brazen lies with which the victims of these Slave-States are kept in ignorance. Capitalism is a vast, clumsy, amorphous background-organism, trailing behind it in its huge oblivious wake, tramps, casual-wards, slums, depressed areas, dole-men, pensioners, 'mandated' colonies. It is no Cause, no Ideal, no Idol, no Religion, no Black-Magic Symbol. It is like the enormous Squid described in *Moby Dick*. It doesn't come to the ordinary person compelling him to lift his hand into the air and say 'Hail, Thou God upon Earth!' And it can't do this because its Name is Legion. We can set one master against another master. We can even, at a pinch, rob Peter to pay Paul. We can always curse the Government. 'Lord Haw-Haw' says we get no good of such curses. Was there ever so unpsychological a remark! We get *this* good, oh crafty voice of the Serpent! And you can learn it from our poet's description of the emotions of Satan in Hell! We get the good of feeling that we are still *un-squared*, that we still *have free souls*. There are those who regard it as a contemptible thing to fight for this hypocritical, irrational, illogical, shapeless *Status Quo*.

But what if this *Status Quo* — of which the evils of capitalism are the duck-weed on the surface — turn out to be nothing more or less than that Mystery of Mysteries, the freedom of men and women to be themselves? The Germans have got their own simple kind of obedient goodness. But what in their violence they are trying to dominate, and what in our subtle, complicated instinct we are trying obstinately to defend, isn't only our Empire, though it is something equally irrational, equally illogical, equally a tiling of slow growth and natural destiny.

Call it, if you like, a *Status Quo*; but it is a *Status Quo* that resembles that *energeia a-kinesis*, that 'movement without violence' which is the **Creative Energy that builds the world.**

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The Nazis and Fascists with their State-gods, meeting their match in the Kremhn with its State-god, are making war, not upon the blundering Democracies of which we are the too-human defenders, but upon the individual soul itself, *as it stands up against all external authority*.

And it is just because we have to defend this *Status Quo* of the ordinary human soul, full of its ordinary Conscientiousness and of its ordinary Cantankerousness, that we fight with one arm tied behind our back. We *have* to go on criticizing our Government, even while we obey it, and we *have* to draw back from certain inhuman forms of 'frightfulness'. And this is because in our long historic evolution, with all our selfishness and hypocrisy thick upon us, we have come to represent, as no other People or Commonwealth or Nation or Empire has ever represented, the only eternal *Status Quo* there is — the rights of the individual.

CHAPTER III

DEEPER THAN RELIGION

THE best way to take the war is the way of the ordinary person, the way of that 'Nobody' who is found under all our skins, the way of the unaccommodated man, 'who owes the worm no silk'.

And since, directly or indirectly, the war causes so much pain to so many, it is more in accordance with a sensitive conscience to adapt its religious attitude to the attitude of those who are thus suffering than to indulge in the insolence of mocking their endurance with the easy panaceas of the free-from-pain.

And strange as it may seem, considering the symbol of our Western Faith, this imperative of the sensitive conscience practically rules out Religion altogether.

Now the urges that drive the exceptional person and the intellectual person to Religion can be summed up thus. The most noble, most healthy, most honourable motive is gratitude for earth's good gifts. This might be called the religion of the Poets. The second religious urge is fear; and this might be called the religion of the Priests. The third is the feeling of inspiration; and this might be called the religion of the Prophets. The fourth is a craving to lose a man's separate identity in the Love of God, or in the supposed unity of the cosmos. This might be called the religion of the Mystics.

We are left therefore with gratitude, fear, inspiration and love, as the chief urges that impel superior intelligencies towards religion. But the conscience of the common man is Religion's trouble. This is Religion's difficulty and very often its judge.

It is true that the conscience of the ordinary man has been developed by Religion. It can even be called the child of Religion. But it has of late reached the point of condemning as unworthy, if not as immoral, the claims of its parent.

Conscience, like most children, finds it difficult to forgive its parent; and indeed, when the chief doctrines of the Christian Faith in their strict orthodox form are brought before the bar, not of an intellectual apologist

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like Newman or Berdyaev, but of the slowly-evolved conscience of an ordinary man of good-will, there is no alternative but their condemnation.

What the clever Russian Apologist Berdyaev is always doing, is to soften and obscure the less just, the less merciful, the less sympathetic, the less poetic, the less credible outlines of Christianity, till the residue can in some measure arouse gratitude, fear, inspiration, love. This, for an exceptionally endowed intelligence, when thus softened, and thus blurred, and thus obscured, they still *can* do, under normal and fairly tolerable conditions. But unless we are of an unusual and exceptional temper — the temper in fact of the early saints and martyrs — Religion will be found to fall away, and grow almost as remote and as dim as the great systems of philosophy, when confronted by those extremities of bodily and mental suffering endured by the common herd.

It would, however, be unfair to modern Christianity to refuse to give some brief space to this Russian apologist. Born in 1874, and a rebel against both the old and the new Russia, Berdyaev's work, finding its emotional background in the Greek Orthodox Church, reveals, paradoxically, as its prevailing 'aura' an aspect of Christianity which is as different from Catholicism as it is from Protestantism.

In Spengler's *Decline of the West* there is a remarkable hint concerning the future of what he calls the *Magian Culture*. This 'Magian Culture' we might, for want of a better name, call 'Early Christianity'. What Spengler suggests is the possibility of the birth of a completely new Magian Culture, *Christian in essence* but following certain fresh imaginative vistas; vistas especially suggested by Dostoievsky in relation to the personality of Alyosha Karamazov, as a young interpreter — in character perhaps rather than doctrine — of the Fourth Gospel.

It is indeed towards a new and original interpretation of the Christian Synthesis that Berdyaev has been feeling his way. As a revolutionary Professor of Philosophy in the University of Moscow and later as an exile from Russia, he might be called the champion of the Third Person of the Trinity — the Spirit of God — both as against the Father and against the Son. For instance, in *Freedom and the Spirit*, he writes:

In the Holy Spirit God becomes imminent in the world and in man, for the Spirit is closer to man than God the Father and even than God the Son, in spite of the fact that in theology the doctrine of the Spirit may be less prominent.

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In contra-distinction from *Mein Kampf* and from all the Jews **are** suffering in Europe to-day, one of Berdyaev's most notable inspirations is what he says about this extraordinary people. In *The Meaning of History* he writes:

The Jewish destiny is characterized by a particularly dramatic intensity which makes the purely Aryan spirit seem dull by comparison. Whatever the contributions of the Greek or the Hindu spirits, perhaps superior in many ways to that of the Jews, their non-historical nature is apparent. They do not carry the revelation of historical destiny, of its drama, of the intensity of historical action and movement. . . . The Jewish Religion had no place for either mythology, mystery, or metaphysics in the true sense of the word. . . . The Jew easily becomes a revolutionary. For the Jews have always upheld the myth that history is founded for the exploitation of man by man. . . . The idea of a terrestrial kingdom was to them not a worldly or secular idea, but a religious and theocratic one. . . .⁴

What Berdyaev suggests is that Communism is a 'natural child' of the Jewish longing for a Reign of Justice on earth destined to be fulfilled by Revolution and thus completely eliminate all human interest in any *Next World*. To this Berdyaev replies:

History is powerless to solve the problem of individual destiny, that problem which pervades the magnificent confession of Dostoevsky and which is bound up in the entire metaphysic of history.

And he goes on by boldly stating his conviction that —

. . . the problem of individual destiny admits of no solution within the historical framework, any more than does its tragic conflict with the destiny of mankind. The problems of individual destiny and of its conflict with world-destiny will only be solved when the world has attained to a higher reality and an integral time.

Berdyaev denies moral and humanistic progress of man upon **this** earth. He declares in favour of a Renaissance of the Middle Ages. There is a distinct Hegelian tendency in the combination of logical vagueness with cosmic comprehensiveness of his use of the concept, *spirit*. He contrasts our machine-age 'civilization' unfavourably with what **he calls** '**Culture**'; and he uses the word 'bourgeois' as a term of **reproach for the**

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ordinary man of our epoch. Berdyaev tells us in his book on Russia's Communism that he believes in a qualitative and personal aristocracy but not a class one.

He explains that when he says that the world is moving towards a new Middle Ages he does not mean a return to the old Middle Ages and least of all to feudalism. He says:

My phrase is only an indication of the type of society in which man will strive after wholeness and unity as opposed to the individualism of modern history. . . . The idea of God-humanity as the essence of Christianity is but little developed in Western Christian thought: it is an original product of Russian Christian thought. . . . Meanwhile Communism claims to have created not only the new society but also the new man. . . . This man is deprived of the measurement of depth—he is turned into a flat two-dimensional being. . . . In his dimension of depth man is a sharer not only in time but in eternity.

One might justly say that Nicholas Berdyaev was at his best and also at his worst when he talks of *the Spirit*.

The Holy Spirit *and* spirit are alike in their agency. . . . There is a gulf between the spirit and authority. . . . The agency of the Holy Spirit and 'spirit' is not continuous and evolutionary, but sporadic and catastrophic.

So 'catastrophic' indeed is Berdyaev's Holy Spirit that our ordinary Christian doctrines, however softened and obscured, are at moments between the Devil and Deep Sea. For not only are they made remote by our immediate pain; they are subjected to the drastic criticism of our conscience.

Another serious obstacle to Religion is that it counsels greater efforts than we feel able to make; and though Jesus did say once: 'My yoke is easy and My burden light', our twinges and squirmings under this 'light yoke', whenever we struggle to fit it upon our stiff necks, seems to give that gracious saying the lie.

And if the worst of Religion is that it calls for more effort than under the weight of life we are prepared to make, the worst of philosophy is that it flies over our heads. If Religion forces us to dig deeper into reality than we have the heart to undertake, Philosophy keeps flapping its broad wings so high above us that only a few feathers, fluttering down at intervals, remind us it is there at all.

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And yet there are what might roughly be called mental gestures and emotional efforts that we can use to wonderful advantage in our secret personal life and that, although not precisely prayer, partake of the nature and character of prayer.

Such living organisms as we mortals are, with the whole weight of evolution pressing us forward and with our terrifying modicum of freedom of choice twitching its fatal needle at the core of our being, we need every trick, every device, every secret we can gather together. Men and women have always been alert for such tricks to help them in the struggle. It was by means of such tricks that we emerged from the simpler levels of evolution, and it will be by similar means that we shall advance further yet along the unending road.

Some of these devices bring with them a strange feeling that they reach us directly from outside the whole astronomical universe while others carry with them the evident credentials of a crafty earth-wisdom that has been picked up by the generations of our ancestors.

We have reached a stage now when life herself endows us with an instinct shameless and shrewd enough to treat the high claims of both Religion and Science in an interested and fascinated, but at the same time an extremely critical and sceptical mood.

As William Blake says, everything comes out of the human mind; and though we endow some of these natural discoveries with the cloak of divinity and hide others under the mask of philosophy, they all belong to the constant struggle of the human individual to adapt himself to the perilous *multiverse* into which he has been born.

I say 'multiverse' rather than 'universe'; for although the unfathomable levels of Being and Not-Being, into the midst of which we have been flung, are too much of-one-piece to be called chaotic they are far too disconnected to be calmly treated as one simple *continuum*.

But what I am suggesting is that it is possible to treat as negligible all those aspects of Religion that are condemned by the conscience in us, that conscience which itself has been helped in its development by *other* aspects of Religion.

A good example of what I mean can be found in the Parables of Jesus. These, with a few exceptions, notably the story of the Good Samaritan, depend for their sole point and poignance upon the existence of a Prospero-like All-Father, whose angelic 'urchins at the vast of night

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that they may work', delight to 'exercise* their pricks and stings on those who reject his love.

William Blake hesitated not to remind us that even this jealous Father of Men' was born in the heart of man. And in the same manner the '*Christ in us*' which was St. Paul's contribution to the Christian Religion, was an offspring of the soul of man as completely as Athene was an offspring of the brain of Zeus.

All the great Religions, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Taoism, proceed from the spirit of man; and each one of them is really a bag of tricks, psychological, magical, moral, whereby man struggles with the 'multiverse' around him, either to circumvent it and exploit it or to flow with it.

And since all these historic religions spring from the spirit of man, and man himself, is a product of the *Multiverse*, we cannot escape the conclusion that all these religions spring up and draw their life and their value, or, if you prefer to put it so, their truth, from the *Multiverse* that gave birth to their human parent.

I keep repeating William James's strange word 'Multiverse' because I feel that it is infinitely satisfactory to hold in our mind that the world we live in is *not* — to use another expression of William James — a 'block-universe'.

Everybody knows the theosophical view that Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, and Taoism, not to speak of Judaism, are at bottom in agreement with one another and that it is only the belligerent contrariness of human nature that keeps them apart.

My own feeling is that those who say this have never been *real* Christians or Buddhists or Mohammedans or Taoists; but only good, clever, humane, and liberal moralists.

If Religion has actually become what Matthew Arnold said it was; that is to say 'Morality touched by Emotion', why then the theosophists are right. The esoteric truth of all these historic Religions is the same from this point of view; and Catholics and Protestants and Mohammedans and Buddhists only differ from one another in traditional details, and an intelligent broad-minded person has already arrived at the heart of them all when he lives a good, kind, chaste, unselfish life.

Do we not, it might be asked, assume that there is this identical essence behind their superficial differences, when we maintain that they all came forth from the soul of man?

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I cannot think so. You might as well say that the essence of trees and grass, of flowers and corn was the same because they all come forth from the same earth. The truth is that each great historic Religion has its own quite special and peculiar relation to the conscience of the individual.

Each great Religion lays special stress on its own favourite aspects of morality, neglecting others; and we all know by our own experience of zealous Catholics and Protestants how what really excites them and makes them touchy and uneasy and susceptible to being hurt have nothing to do with any 'moral essence' which is the same for all; but have to do with customs and traditions, with habits, usages, manners, organized channels for emotional satisfaction, whether of an elaborate or of a very simple pattern, and with aesthetic or iconoclastic modes of worship.

All the great Religions spring from the soul of man; and it is for that very reason that they differ so abysmally in their attitude to the *Mysterium Tremendum* which they worship. And how do we know that the Mystery they worship is the *same* Mystery? When once we accept William James's tremendous hint that the world we live in is a 'Multi-verse' and not a 'Universe' the whole situation changes.

If it is a 'universe', why then, with all the pain and all the fear of pain in it, God and the Devil grow close together; become in fact two faces of one Incomprehensible Absolute; before whose Presence cringing servility, despairing defiance, or complete cynical indifference are some of the more obvious attitudes.

If there *were* such a thing as an identical moral essence behind all the historic religions they would long ago have coalesced or disappeared. The essence of a great Religion is *not* in its depths, or behind its external form and colour and atmosphere and mood. These things *are* its 'essence'; for the 'essence' of every Religion is its living presence, its touch, its taste, its smell.

The essence of a religion lies on its surface or it lies nowhere. What the great Religions have in common is certainly realized by going behind their veils, their symbols, their mysteries — but what is it? What do we find there? We find nothing. We find an empty tomb. The Lord has risen. *Numen non-est.*

One essence they do indeed have in common: the emptiness inside the altar.

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But what wonderful, what startling possibilities are suggested by William James's pluralistic system of things or 'multiverse'! The astronomical world sinks into its proper place under these conditions, a place as small as those 'isles' which the psalmist tells us the Lord 'taketh up as a very little thing'.

And if the essence of every great Religion lies on its surface, in its touch, taste and atmosphere, and if their taste and their smell are all completely different, may we not hazard the speculation that they are worshipping different gods! What if this 'multiverse' of ours were the creation of a great many gods rather than of one? Why then it may easily be that in the intensity and concentration of our praying we shoot out electric waves of supplication that reach astonishing places in this strung-along congeries of universes. •

Our prayers in fact crossing the great gulfs faster than light may reach remote and concealed Beings that are as different from our old conception of God as from our old conception of the Devil.

No one admires Matthew Arnold more than I; but who could imagine a sillier remark and one displaying more ignorance of human nature than to say that religion was 'morality touched by emotion'! Religion's attitude to morality is an extremely complicated one. It requires morality — at any rate it requires the damming up of the sex-sluiques and the sex-weirs so as to save and hoard and foster that perilous ichor and vibrant magnetism that Eros alone can bestow. But it also reserves the right to dispense with morality. Religion is a rich amalgam of many elements. It is made up of fear, of erotic passion, of the delicious shiver of the mysterious, of a restless longing to escape into the unknown. When you really analyse it, it has nothing good or virtuous or moral or righteous or stoical about it.

The great question for us is this. How far does the desperate clinging to the Object of our Reverence, that is to say, to Jesus or Mary or the Buddha or Jehovah or Allah, really give us the strength to endure the pain and the fear of pain that come with life and that just now are being accentuated by Adolf Hitler?

And the answer to this question is, as I feel it, that it depends entirely on the degree of our faith.

In the days of the early Christians, the early Buddhists, the early Mohammedans, many individual human souls undoubtedly *did* endure

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not only the ordinary pains of life but abominable and exceptional pains on the strength of their faith in the particular supernatural Presence in whom they so passionately believed.

But in the course of time a change has come; and though here and there in all these historic religions a few may be found for whom pain and the fear of pain are reduced to gnats' bites, by power of faith, for most of us the fact that we are Christians or Mohammedans, or whatever we may be, makes very little difference. Those who are born Stoics among us bear their pains in silence; the rest of us whimper and squirm and wriggle and squeal as if Jesus or Buddha or Confucius or Mohammed had never lived!

This whole matter of Religion is in more need of analysing and overhauling than anything else in our modern life. Let us clear the stage a little, and face the bare facts with which Fate or Evolution now confronts us.

First, then, we have our *conscience*, that inner voice in the depths of ourselves whose mandate — I can only speak for myself in so personal a matter — is accompanied by the feeling which of course may be an illusion, that it comes from another Dimension, in plain words from outside Time and Space.

Now this conscience of ours, as I envisage it, both in myself and others, that is to say, in 'the common or garden person' — for, as Berdyaev so well says, all this patronizing worship of 'the People' is pure hypocrisy, when we've only to look in the looking-glass to see 'the People' — has nothing at all to do with Religion. There *was* a time when it had.

But that time is over. Whatever Religion has done in the past to make our conscience subtler and more sensitive it does nothing any more. Indeed, I think we can certainly go further and say that conscience has left Religion so completely behind that at present when the two clash, it is Religion that is the less touchy of the two.

A perfect example of this is the case of Pacifists and Conscientious Objectors. Any honest person reading the Gospels cannot escape recognizing that it never once occurred to the mind of Jesus that it was wrong to be a soldier. Nor did this ever occur to the more logical mind of St. Paul. The conscience of our Conscientious Objectors, and of course of the Quakers, has outrun the teaching of the Master as much as it has outrun the ordinary Catholic or Protestant doctrine .

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The human conscience has certainly in the past been extremely thick-skinned; and **it** has been the role of Christianity on one point, Buddhism on another, Islam on yet another, to strip it of many skins. But it would seem that once stripped by Religion, the conscience of the 'common or garden person' gets into the uncomfortable habit of *stripping itself*; and it continues doing so, until it strips itself of *some skins* that have been most elaborately designed by great creative Nature herself for the protection of her long-suffering creatures.

The motives of our rulers in this war and the motives of our enemies' rulers would naturally, one might suppose, have little to do with the conscience of the common man. Unfortunately the systems that might be called the Creed of the Totalitarian State and the creed of the Communist Party do undoubtedly supply the common man, of both Germany and Russia, with a ready-made set of doctrines, of which, when you challenge him, he unburdens his brain.

The same type of man on our side, on the contrary, is completely devoid of any logical set of ideas; and this fact alone throws his individual conscience into stronger relief. For it is of course implicit in the system, both of the Totalitarians and the watchful Kremlin, that at all points where the Religion of the State or the Religion of the Party conflicts with the conscience of the individual it is the latter that must yield.

With the common democratic man, on the other hand, whose pragmatic or practical notion of the best way to conduct the affairs of life is at bottom anarchistic, the conscience of the individual is much more important than any conceivable Sovereign State or any conceivable sovereign Party.

Of course, we have our Censorship; and we also have the propaganda of our rulers slipped with more or less artfulness into our ears; but a great deal of this propaganda jumps with what most of us feel; and where it doesn't, we can easily find, in our favourite newspaper, criticism of the authorities quite as violent as our own.

And it is before the bar of this troublesome conscience in us — this more than nonconformist conscience, this philosophical-anarchistical conscience — that Religion has to plead its cause, and must generally plead it in vain.

I mean 'in vain' in the midst of a mysterious tragedy like this present war. **For** this war brings terrible suffering of mind and body to those

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very persons who under normal conditions most intensely enjoy the gratitude, inspiration and love that Religion implies, or, if they are superstitious, most excitedly play with the *frisson* of supernatural fear.

But it is when this catastrophic war is 'brought home' to us, that our Religion has to appear in the dock to receive the verdict of our *conscience*. As far as Science is concerned Religion can always justify herself; and as far as Philosophy is concerned she can do the same.

It is Conscience, and Conscience alone, who has the right to act the Judge with such an Offender, and even, it may be, to put on the 'black cap*. In a world so miraculous, so irrational, so pluralistic, Religion must always have the last word in any argument with reason; but conscience is another matter. Conscience, drawing its bow with the terrible authority of an Archer outside the whole astronomical system, can shoot an arrow through Religion's heart. In the deep, still dialogue between a man's conscience and the First Cause it is the First Cause, not the conscience of a man, that must cast down its eyes in shame.

A man's conscience has the last word in this hushed court when it compares what *it* would feel were it in the position of the Almighty, with what it is being so constantly assured the Almighty actually does feel.

Conscience condemns Fear; and it is Fear that we are told should dominate our relations with God. Conscience condemns the 'god-fearing man'; and when the loving heart protests that 'perfect love casteth out fear', it is a man's Conscience, not his Reason, that makes him feel that to love a Being who may have been kind to *him*, but who obviously has been cruel to his neighbour, is not virtuous but scandalous.

And the same with Gratitude. Who has a right to be grateful for what *he* as an individual has enjoyed when so many other individuals — guilty of nothing but of being what they've been *made* — have nothing but pain to be thankful for? More subtle casuistry has been used in defence of God than in the defence of all the criminals in the world. 'Whom the Lord loveth', the Lawyer for the Defence protests, 'he scourgeth'; but Judge Conscience will deal with *that* plea in the Summing Up!

Over and over again it has to be repeated that the abiding-place of all Gods, all Saviours, all Holy Spirits, all Redemptions, all Atonements, all Salvations, is the soul of man; and not Man in the abstract, but of every man.

Totalitarian tyranny is, in a most literal sense, the creation of the

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Devil; for it deliberately seeks to install the Abomination of Desolation spoken of by the prophets —let him that readeth, understand! —in the innermost shrine of the individual's soul.

And the catapult that we instinctively use against this Monstrous Image in the Holy of Holies is our malicious humour. 'England expects that every man' will always make sport of the pretensions of every 'great' jnan.

And it is precisely this malicious humour that makes a 'democratic man', who is suffering from the extreme cruelty of fate, critical of the Unknown Power behind life.

Something essentially anarchistic in this humorous malice makes him — though not in so many words — wonder why, just because this Unknown Power is so 'powerful', It or He should be deserving of Worship. It is no more worthy of Worship because of its power than an All-Powerful State or an All-Powerful Dictator.

And it is the deepest tiling in us that feels this. It is our conscience. The humorous malice of our conscience is the great anarchistic Leveller. It assures us that not Power and •Greatness but Weakness and Pitifulness are what we ought to try to worship. Here our common conscience — given the hint by Jesus — has gone beyond Jesus. The Parables of Jesus assume that we ought to worship God because if we don't it'll be the worse for us. Our conscience replies that in place of God or the State or the Powerful Leader we ought to worship everything that has life — even a midge or a gnat or a worm or a drivelling idiot — though we get hurt rather than help by doing so.

But it must not be forgotten that there is another aspect of Religion, corresponding to a quite different urge in human nature than either our superstitious cringing before the All-Powerful — which makes of the whole cosmos a concentration camp — or our emotional clinging — which is less disinterested than it ought to be — to the Saviour of the World. I refer to *Magic*.

Now it is this magical element in religion that has — if we gather together the votaries of all the Religions on the earth — the widest as well as the oldest appeal. It attracts the sophisticated as well as the simple, the wicked as well as the good. A really saintly person is seldom as scrupulous in the performance of superstitious observances as the less conscientious among us. But the subtlest advantage that the magical

element in religion possesses over all others lies in the fact that it is better adapted to a Multiverse than to a Universe. In this respect it is the extreme opposite of Science. As we learn from Goethe's *Faust*, Magic is the refuge of those whom Science has failed.

Hitherto I have only spoken of two of the elements in the spiritual atmosphere that surrounds the mortal skull we see in our looking-glass; that is to say Religion, with its Supernatural Presences, its miracles, its magic, its rewards and punishments, its changes of heart; and Conscience, with its still, small voice, reaching us — so at least it feels — from some dimension in our soul that is outside Time and Space.

But to indicate all that surrounds, though not precisely with a nimbus, our too human physiognomy when we survey ourselves in the glass, it is necessary to include one thing more. I refer to that vague conventional diffusion of our inherited religion which we can neither accept or cast off.

The chief positive characteristics of this Diffusion or Suffusion of our inherited religion may be noted as follows: gregariousness, snobbishness, sensationalism, hypocrisy, suspicion, and what is called good taste.

Its chief negative characteristics are: *First*, its lack of any living faith in supernatural Presences; and *second*, its lack of any connection with Conscience.

Of these two negative characteristics the lack of Conscience is most marked in Catholic congregations and the lack of the miraculous and magical in Protestant congregations. Both are penetrated by a certain indefinable odour of masochistic docility mixed with pious austerity, such as emanates from the jaded nerves of old men and old women occupied in the alternate pampering and punishing of helpless youth.

The truth is that the human conscience, with its quicksilver sense of Right and Wrong, has outgrown all three of the great historic Religions. It has outgrown Christianity. It has outgrown Buddhism. It has outgrown Islam. The most stripped and sensitive consciences of our time are generally found to be the consciences of unbelievers in *any* Religion. But as far as Christianity is concerned it would be unfair to say that the lack of conscience in our Religion is due to the Church or to the Congregations. *It is due to Jesus Himself.*

It is unnecessary for me to quote from the Gospels the various sayings, parables, imprecations, which one would think ought to hurt any

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conscience among us that has developed with the slow development of the human spirit. But the truth is that we are all so accustomed to the biblical language that we don't take these things seriously; we let them pass without turning the light, such as it is, of even *our* imperfect moral sense upon them!

What is sometimes euphemistically and apologetically called the Parable of the Talents, 'spoken when He was nigh unto Jerusalem and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear', is a sufficient example of the element in the Master's teaching that must strike any simple soul as immoral and even monstrous. The omnipotent lender, of these 'Talents' — to be used, as it is so often explained to us, 'For His Glory' — not only rewards the cunning servility of his crafty servants by making them rulers over the whole Provinces; but in his final action shows himself as little better than Moloch.

'But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.' The words 'before me' withdraw from this outrageous passage all claim even to judicial severity, and make this 'Nobleman' who goes to receive a 'Kingdom' just an ordinary vicious despot.

But the question now before us is not to be answered by any carping rationalistic criticism of paradoxes in the *parables* of Christ. It is his *sayings*, not his parables, that have shaken the world. His sayings are neither 'reasonable' nor 'sweet'. They are irrational, terrible, divinely catastrophic. They are creative and destructive; and they are both these things in a way completely *new*. They rouse the most revolutionary vibration in the magnetic poles of the soul that humanity has ever known.

They stirred up St. Paul to psychological readjustments worthy of the characters in Dostoevsky; amid which that maniacally honest thinker moves like a wild-eyed mariner between whirlpools and waterspouts, his masts quivering and rocking as his ship rises and sinks, but his bowsprit steadily pointing to the Southern Cross.

CHAPTER IV

THE SECRET OF JESUS

MOST writers worth their salt in our Western World confess and allow that Dostoievsky is as much the greatest of all novelists as Homer is the greatest of all poets, and Shakespeare of all playwrights. And whence does Dostoievsky get his insight into the divine-diabolic soul of man if not from St. Paul and Jesus Christ?

And what — for there is nothing doctrinal about the teaching of the Jesus of the first three gospels — what actually is this terrible psychic revolution and transvaluation of all values which constitutes the most electric storm that has ever burst upon the conscience of man?

Well! the first thing 'the common or garden' reader, that harmless individual pursuing his patient way who might be any of us, notes as he goes along is the sharp and sudden sound, unearthly trumpets upon the air, telling of the coming among us — breaking miraculously into this world like an atmospheric disturbance from another Dimension — of a Condition of Being called 'the Kingdom of Heaven'.

The next thing revealed to us by Jesus in a series of summer-lightning flashes, and evidently accepted by himself without question until that shocking cry from the Cross which the poetical St. Luke thought best to suppress, is the incredible idea that the mysterious Creator of the World is not only identical with the jealous God of Moses but is the Loving Father of all created things.

And finally his third revelation concerns himself as being in some quite special way the Christ, the Messiah, the Representative, even the veritable Son, of this Father 'which is in Heaven'.

Now we have only to state all this, the Fatherhood of God, the Kingdom of Heaven, and the claim that the Messiah has come, to see at once that none of it contains the real secret of Jesus. No, no! The secret that so convulsed St. Paul and that quivers through the passion-rocked Confessional of Dostoievsky, has only very remotely to do with the Messiah, or the Kingdom, or the Father. The world-shattering utterances

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which so convulse our conscience that all rational criticism becomes a deliberate devilry are *psychological*, not doctrinal or social.

And what in realistic and unqualified nakedness, is this New Value brought into the world by Jesus alone; this value that is completely different from the wisdom of Socrates, the metaphysical liberation of Buddha, the heroic flame of the Faith of Islam? Is it not a particular kind of humility, a humility so abysmal as to make every *gesture of sanctity* a little comic? Those who in life have caught the real secret of Jesus seem as we turn our search-light on them curiously different from the great miracle-working Saints of the history of the Church. They manage to seem so much like an ordinary person that it is hard to distinguish them from an ordinary person. This is the infallible sign. Instead of doing their best to pose as a Somebody, they are naturally and inevitably taken for a Nobody. This is the greatest 'transvaluation of values' that has ever been announced; not only on earth but in the whole stellar system.

Certainly in our Society of competition where we long to have it said of us, 'He is a distinguished man', or at least, 'He is a Saintly man', this new Kingdom of Heaven seems so topsy-turvy as naturally to be regarded by healthy-minded people as a Kingdom of Madmen. And so it is. Those who have caught the secret of Jesus are indeed born again into a Looking-glass Land where everything is *the other way round*. They live *in* the world; but they are not *of* the world; and in the eyes of the world they would certainly be regarded as insane.

I say 'they *would* be regarded'; for the whole point is that if they are found out they are not possessors of the true secret. The famous Saints of History *were* found out; and not only the Lord of the Heavenly Feast but the generations of Humanity have said to them 'Friends, come up higher'; and they *have* come up higher and they have their reward.

But those whose consciences have been really touched by Jesus manage it so that no one says: 'Come up higher'.

Now the peculiar thing is that most of the people who have this mysterious secret are completely unaware of what they have. The idea of Jesus, or the idea of resembling Him, never enters their thoughts. Indeed, many of them are atheists. How then has this greatest of all revolutions, this tail-for-head reversal of the World's values, ever reached them? How can they, the only true Christians in the world, be ignorant of what they are?

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Well! It seems fanuuuc to say so; but it almost looks as if ideas of riiis kind reached our particular astronomical universe from Another Dimension. Perhaps Jesus, from this same other Dimension, is influencing us in the spirit still; and, after all, that is only what he *said* he would do. Perhaps he is not only influencing us, but improving on what he says in the Gospels! Why shouldn't this be the explanation of that queer statement of his, where he says that blasphemy against the Son of Man could be forgiven, but *not* against the Spirit?

It has become a commonplace of human experience that the last place to expect to find the Secret of Jesus, is in church. You expect to find magic and mystery there, if it's a Catholic Church, and sentiment and rational piety, if it is a Protestant Church; but the absence of the subject of our present analysis is so much taken for granted as to be proverbial. Of course it is possible that it is only one of our malicious intellectual prejudices that the secret of Jesus isn't to be found in the Church. Perhaps it is exactly where it *would* be found, since every modern intellectual would instinctively hunt for it in brothels and opium-dens.

But since we may be sure it won't be where modern intellectuals look for it, perhaps it deliberately dodges opium-dens. It is indeed so secretive that we ought to know better than to receive the startled shock we do, when we find it hidden, as it *has* been hidden, under the cassock of a priest.

The truth is, this Insane Kingdom of the Spirit is very widely distributed. It can be found among Soldiers killing their country's enemies. It can be found among Sportsmen hunting foxes with hounds. It can be found in every condition and in every circle of the most conventional people.

Now of course with so mysterious and growing a tiling as a secret of life we cannot expect to give it a logical or rational or scientific definition. But we can say certain things about it as they have been tested by our own observation of people. We can say, for instance, that we have found the secret of Jesus in the same soul as lechery and drunkenness, in the same soul as sardonic and cynical maliciousness, in the same soul as fits of furious temper, in the same soul as passionate miserliness, in the same soul as a genius for huge and palpable lies.

Now there are, of course, many innocent vanities, appreciations, timidities, and even curiosities, which pass under the name of *snobbishness* but are not the thing at all. At the same time I think it may be said

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without qualification that there is a subtle and spiritual *snobbishness* which is the one single and sole form of evil with which, in the same moral bed, so to say, we cannot imagine the secret of Jesus cohabiting.

The Snobbishness I am thinking of— and it has its moral, social, racial, intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic forms — acts on the secret of Jesus like the smell of a skunk. The presence or the absence of the kind of snobbishness of which I am speaking, is, I believe, the supreme test as to whether we do, or do not, possess the secret of Jesus. To be unspotted by what Jesus calls 'the World' is the true hall-mark of this greatest of all moral revolutions.

But this implies humility beyond humility. It implies a humility so profound that it can't be exposed or glorified, or told 'to come up higher'.

And the important thing, we have to confess and admit, purely from our experience of the simple goodness scattered among 'common or garden' people, is that this divine humility has developed a great deal since the disciples wrote down what the Master said.

Those busy-body saints, for example, who went bustling, so modest and smug, into those unsuitable 'lowest' seats where we may be sure they made the proper occupants, who were there from necessity, extremely uncomfortable, were at once, the Master explains, told to 'come up higher'. But it is obvious that this is precisely what these sly rogues were waiting for; and I am afraid — whatever the words may have been that Jesus actually uttered, the disciples understood them to mean that it is wise to be humble in order that the Authorities — God in this case — should reward our humility.

Jesus frequently told the disciples in strange and startling words that to *them* it was given to know the secrets pertaining to 'the Kingdom' while the people must be taught in parables, so that hearing they should hear and not understand; lest, understanding, 'they should turn and be saved'.

Talk like this may easily have arisen from that desperate irritation with the obstinate stupidity of our poor human race that so many great Teachers have felt. Indeed it is conceivable — for when once we begin to suspect irony in the Master it isn't easy to know where to stop — that this separation he was so constantly making between the masses of ordinary people and the disciples was an outburst of divine malice at the disciples' expense rather than at the people's.

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However that may be, it is certain that rewards for believers, and the number of threats of punishment for unbelievers grates most uncomfortably upon the human conscience that has behind it the evolution of a couple of thousand years. We must however remember that Jesus is not only the God of the West: He is also a great Oriental Sage; and who knows not the convolutions of irony, of what might be called the very imagery of irony, that such Sages use!

There is no doubt that the startling nature of many of the sayings of Jesus are tantalizing to ordinary people's minds in these modern days. They make us long to get behind the Evangelists, especially to get behind St. John, and to draw our own conclusions from a more direct contact with Jesus himself! This is what, in a large measure, St. Paul did; only the fact of the Epistles being earlier than the Gospels, and the fact of St. Paul having practically founded the Church, gives us a desire to get behind St. Paul too.

What we really long for, tantalized as we are by the spiritual provocation of the personality of Jesus, is to get behind not only the three Evangelists and St. John, but behind St. Paul and the Church as well, and come into immediate individual contact with Jesus.

Now if we permit ourselves to think of Jesus as still living in some other Dimension and as exercising — and this is surely no crazy heresy — a direct influence upon our individual souls, why should not the development in our human conscience that makes so many of his parables, with all their apparatus of rewards and punishment, seem shocking and unworthy of him, be itself a direct intervention from his living spirit?

The Evangelists themselves make him hint that when he is gone and we have his spirit we shall *know more* than when he was with us in the flesh; and this being so, why cannot we boldly affirm that our individual conscience, inspired directly from some Dimension beyond Time and Space, is more to be trusted as to the difference between good and evil than any of these parables about capricious Lords of Banquets and Vineyards 'who do what they will with their own'?

And what if this Christ — beyond Time and Space — who thus instructs our conscience should turn out to be a part of ourselves? In the nervous crisis into which this war has plunged so many ordinary people, people neither wholly good nor wholly bad, but of mixed impulses, mixed motives, mixed feelings, if we cut down to the bed-rock bone of **our**

predicament, are we to conclude that the majority of men in our various Forces derive a deep spiritual comfort from their religion?

Are we to conclude that the majority of drowning seamen, that the majority of crashing airmen, turn in their desperate last moments to the thought of Jesus Christ with infinite consolation? Alas! we know from our knowledge of ourselves that this is not the case.

An exceptional individual here and there may turn to Christ and get thereby a deep spiritual peace in the hour of mortal need; but with most of us religion is only one strand in the complicated pattern of our life, and not one of the dominant ones; and we may be sure that the greater volume of the pain of mind and body endured among 'common or garden' people in this struggle is *not* relieved, and their death-gasps, whether by sea or land, *not* made easier, by any spiritual clinging to Christ.

If we are Catholics we *may* miss the Priest and the Sacrament, but it is more likely that whatever stoical courage or secular heroism we muster up will be due to the normal, simple, heathen goodness, or reckless dare-devilry of our personal character rather than to any vivid and intense consciousness of the Presence of the Son of God.

Take for a moment, from the Fourth Gospel, that sublime Proclamation of the Kingdom, in the language we know so well; and shamelessly and honestly ask ourselves what power these familiar words would have over us if we lay in pain on the battlefield or on a hospital-bed.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.

Surely it would be to those we loved, whether they believed on 'the Son of God' or not, that our thoughts would fly in our pain; surely it would be to whatever stubborn, obstinate, stoical, or even heroic fortitude Nature has given us, in other words to the God in our own breast, that we should turn at those critical moments, and not quite in vain

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perhaps, whatever our 'deeds', according to the Evangelist's opinion, may have been; and although we were 'condemned already, because we have not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God\ Upon this 'condemned already', with its inquisitorial and false assumption that it is because our deeds are evil that we do not believe, the whole of the Gospel of St. John is founded.

The neurotic and reckless St. Paul, on the other hand, takes like Dostoevsky, a completely different line, a line much more in accordance with the psychological truth of human nature; the line namely that it is only because our deeds *are* evil, and our hearts *are* desperately wicked, that we turn in our remorse and in our self-contempt to the Saviour of the World.

No, it is entirely untrue that we do not believe because our deeds are evil. The fact is that we evil-doers are the most superstitious ones! Like the devils, 'we believe and tremble'. Jesus himself knew this well. His difficulty was always with the righteous, not with the unrighteous.

The emotions of repentance and conversion, and sweet self-laceration are to the sinner an erotic release, an ecstatic sensuality. But our inquiry can be reduced to a very simple problem: Does the man in the street, the kind of person I have all along called the 'common or garden' type, experience real comfort, real support, real secret strength from his Religion in times of nervous trouble and physical pain?

I greatly doubt it. Physical and mental pain, together with the fear of physical and mental pain, come of necessity to some of us in all times, but in times like these they come to many more. And they do not all by any means have their origin in the actual weapons of war. The mere fact of the presence of a war releases a vast number of electric currents of pain which seem to reach all sorts of people who are far away from the centres of disturbance.

Some harassed business-man for example suddenly convinced by the attitude of his wife after the departure of the doctor that the discomfort he has been suffering from of late springs from a malignant growth, feels as he stares at the familiar pattern on the carpet as though his pain and the war had some unspeakable connection.

A factory-worker whose home is in a blind-alley of the adjacent slums suddenly finds himself crippled by some unexpected accident, for which owing to a legal technicality he can get no compensation, catches sight

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of a picture-card of his son in uniform and at once feels, without reasoning about it, that there is some sinister connection between his accident and the war.

A particular scrap of cloth caught on some wire and flapping in the wind gathers to itself the whole fearfulness of the war in the consciousness of a soldier who has been overlooked by both friends and foes, and lies at the end of his tether by the side of the road, not perhaps in extreme pain, but in such sick exhaustion that the thought of death, the thought of feeling nothing, thinking nothing, hearing nothing, seeing nothing, *being* nothing seems like 'a deep and liquid rest, forgetful of all ill*.

A tramp, who has long suspected that what makes the distance between his casual wards grow month by month heavier and longer, is something worse than his accustomed bronchitis, feels now, as he leans against the canal-bridge and watches the hairless belly of a drowned dog bobbing up and down in the water, that the blood he is tasting and spitting over that parapet is in some weird way due to the war.

Now if we take for granted that all these men are ordinary simple men, will they, in their extremity, receiving each of them the premonition of of his own 'coup-de-grace' instinctively and at once turn to the thought that 'God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that all who believe in Him should not perish but have everlasting Life'?

I greatly doubt it. But if not, to what *will* they turn? To their wife? their family? Well! This will depend upon the nature of the man, and also upon the nature of the wife. But if their first thought is of their family, their second is almost certainly of their own life, now doomed; some hoping against hope that things may not be as bad as they feel, others, like that exhausted soldier, longing only to drain to its dregs the dark, sweet, draught 'of deep and liquid rest'.

But if their first thought is of their family and their second of themselves, is their *third thought* likely to be of God or of Jesus Christ? I doubt even this, I doubt if even the most devoted Catholic, though he might long for a Priest to shrive him, would feel a deep personal comfort at such a moment from the thought of his Religion, I mean a comfort that would be denied to an unbeliever.

But because none of these stricken men — whether their hurt be caused directly by the war or only intensified and made harder to bear by the war's invisible pain-vibrations — finds any great comfort in the thought

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that he has the Christian Religion to fall back upon, *that* doesn't mean that he won't groan out the syllables 'O God!' over and over again.

The greatest pain, except that of a woman with neuralgia in her head, that I have ever seen, was when my brother Llewelyn was suffering from a 'stone'; but it never occurred to me to associate with Religion his repeated cries of 'O God!' before the 'stone' was passed.

It is indeed curious how that particular gasped-out syllable on mortal lips should so universally mean nothing but that some living creature is enduring extreme pain. Had the writer of the Fourth Gospel written 'God is Pain' in place of 'God is Love', he would have found much human experience to support him.

But let us try to probe a little deeper into the anatomy of human endurance, which is at this time laid out so conveniently in the dissecting-room of history. The ordinary man I have selected at random — one staring at a pattern in the carpet, one at the picture-card on the mantel-piece, one at a rag on a wire, one at a drowned dog in a canal — are not as entirely devoid of spiritual comfort as might be thought when we note that Religion is not at such a crisis even their *third* thought.

What *have* they got, then, to help them? Philosophy? I hardly think so; at any rate not in the usual acceptance of that word. The truth is we are confronted in cases like these, where the war-vibrations have intensified our personal pain by a trouble in mind and body that neither the flapping of Philosophy's great wings above our head, nor the magical descent of the Sun of Righteousness into our private Hell, have any power to heal.

These sufferers, who are ourselves, that is to say ordinary 'Nobodies' as Hitler would put it, by whose endurance the war is carried on, accept these happenings of fate without an attempt to explore their recondite causes.

But for the very reason that the tricks and devices wherewith the ordinary person drugs himself and fortifies himself against destiny are independent of both Religion and Philosophy they have much more of Nature's instinctive recoveries, of Nature's furtive redemptions.

The best Clinic to go to, the best Oracle to go to, the best Calvary to go to, to learn the art of enduring physical pain and mental misery — and it is Nature herself who gives her human children an inkling of this — are the less privileged and less distinguished ranks of Creation, are in fact what are usually described as the 'Lower Animals'.

Everything is in the soul. God, Jesus, the Incarnation, the Redemption,

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together with that great Son of the Morning whose defiance and resistance brought it all about, all these are within the circle of the individual soul. All these together *are* the individual soul. Contradictions that descend to the bottomless abysses of life, wrestlings, ravishings, rejections, reconciliations, all are in the soul; and not only in the soul of the thinker, not only in the soul of the saint, not only in the *human* soul. They are in all souls. What is it that endures pain so remotely, so silently, in the animal, in the bird, in the worm, in the plant? The creature's unconquerable soul!

The man staring at the pattern in the carpet when he hears his sentence, the man staring at the card on the mantelpiece when he realizes his fate, the man watching the fluttering rag on the barbed wire, the man watching the drowned beast in the canal, it is not the art of propitiating God, or the science of knowing what God is, that enables them to endure until the end.

It is the fact that they themselves *are* God. Their resistance to what they are suffering is the resistance of a Divine-Diabolic entity. God and Jesus, Lucifer and the Holy Spirit, are only south winds and north winds, voyaging tempests and starlit calms, within the circle of the individual soul. And this soul, down to its very depths, is a duality. It couldn't *live* if it weren't; for the ultimate life-trick, the ever-repeated life-leap, is to divide in order to rush together.

Any soul in the whole Multiplicity of Worlds — the soul of an Ape and of an Archbishop, as well as the soul of a Microbe who is aiming at the destruction of both — has the power to defy God, to challenge the Devil, to gather up the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Redemption and all Hell and Heaven into one frozen snowball of defiant resignation!

I do not say that a tramp defying consumption, or a yellow-throated field-mouse defying a crouching cat, or a celandine defying its extinction under a clump of nettles, or some disarmed bacillus under the spearhead of its antidote, visualizes its fate in the same 'synthetic unity of apperception', as the soul of John Brown of Kansas defying the slave-owners; but since all these living entities belong to the same Dimension, belong to a Dimension, wherein 'to enter life is to enter war', it seems on the face of it that St. Paul must be right when he links so closely the soul of a man with all these other souls, 'groaning and travailing in pain together until now'.

What I am trying to hint at in this blundering manner is that in our particular world, which after all is only one in a Multiplicity of worlds, war between the component entities and love between the component

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entities are the inevitable poles upon which life depends. To live is to fight; and to live is to love. *All* love — no cosmos: *all* fight no cosmos: just as it is impossible to have *breath* without in-breathing and out-breathing.

The presence of the sort of— what shall I say? — *official war* that we are now enduring, certainly accentuates and aggravates the ordinary pains and troubles. There are so many psychic vibrations of suffering and terror abroad that the moment any private pain takes possession of us it acts like a *pain-magnet* and draws its kith and kin from every direction to share the sport.

Let us assume then that we belong in person to this group of fate-stricken 'common or garden' people. What would be the nature of our 'Defence Mechanism' under such conditions? But I would like to add yet another and perhaps more general predicament to those I have named.

Let us suppose we are lying in pain and discomfort in a hospital-bed; and let us shelve for a moment the cause of our being there. What in the nature of any two persons thus situated makes one predisposed to despair, and the other to display, whether alone or not, the mysterious but common virtue of fortitude? A naturally cheerful disposition, you will retort, compared with an equally natural tendency to give way. So be it. And it would be absurd to discount these inherited tendencies. But who doesn't recall tragic and pitiful examples to the contrary; cases where such natural cheerfulness breaks down, cases where a natural tendency to collapse gives place to an astonishing and unexpected power of resistance?

This startling surprise, this unforeseen power in a brittle and querulous person, whence does it come? Whence does it draw its strength? 'From awareness', you will reply, 'of the presence of God and of Christ, and from faith in the doctrine of the Incarnation.'

I cannot think so; and that such is not the case can be proved by recalling various religious people you know, people who have never doubted one single clause in the Apostles' Creed; and yet here they are, groaning and complaining, while some impious son of Belial at their side endures in sublime patience.

'But', someone may protest, 'it isn't the intellectual aspects of Religion or any mysterious metaphysical doctrines that support the ordinary man in such cases. It is the Sufferings of the Saviour, it is the heroic patience of the Saints. These are what give a real Christian a strength at such a time

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that is unknown to the careless individual whose religion is conventional or non-existent/

I wonder whether the person who is inclined to make a protest like this realizes how unfair to the countless children of earth such words are? Why must we always look to the great and celebrated for help when we lie in our pain? Even if Jesus wasn't the Son of God, he was an inspired Prophet; and the well-known Saints, even if they weren't heroic Martyrs, were certainly exceptional men.

We are neither Prophets nor Martyrs. We are 'common or garden' human beings. And at present we are laid by the heels because pure Chance has been unkind to us, and such is our fate. The great saints were indeed wonderful in their faith and in their endurance; but so have been the millions and millions of unknown sufferers who have only had a wretched conventional half-hearted faith, or none at all.

It is unfair to these countless millions of human beings who have had to draw, for their patience and their courage, upon nothing but their own poor souls — the souls of nobodies and nonentities — to imply that it is to God or Christ or to the Holy Ghost or to the miraculously inspired Saints that all the praise is due. The praise is due to the weak, to the frail, to the simple, to the timid, to the abject, for what they have endured from the Foundation of the World!

Yes, to them is the praise; but alas! not the power or the glory. And just as praise is due to the countless millions of unknown human beings, who have endured, without the Saviour, indescribable miseries and pains, so it is due to the yet more uncounted millions of the 'lower creation'.

But how *does* a nameless human soul, and how *does* a nameless animal-soul, bird-soul, or fish-soul, manage to endure all it *has* to endure, whether its pain be due to 'the importance of guns above butter', or to that war, older than 'the Third Reich', older than 'His Britannic Majesty's Government', which Voltaire referred to as inherent in life itself?

Well! It's all in the soul! The soul contains the whole armoury of the spirit, the whole Pantheon of the Gods. The soul contains all the blessed army of Martyrs, all the consistory of miracle-working Saints. And not only the soul of a man. *All* souls contain *all*. And therefore all souls, because they contain all, are equal. It was this that Jesus alone saw. Confucius didn't see it. Buddha didn't see it. Mohammed didn't see it. Only the Jew-Prophet saw it; for, as He told the woman who had had

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five husbands, in the necessity of things and in the natural selection of things, 'Salvation is of the Jews'.

And Jesus was absolutely right — he alone — in this matter. **Every** soul is different from every other soul but in the aspect of it where **the** question of greatness lies there is no difference at all.

Beneath the things where heathen snobbishness finds *all the difference*, beneath strength, beneath intellect, beneath force, beneath magnetic energy, beneath the power of power, Jesus sees the soul. And he **sees** each separate soul as an individual fountain of the eternal spirit.

Below these outer qualities there is no difference. Everybody is a Nobody; and every Nobody is God. And it is what we call *humour*, **that** universal 'Fifth Gospel', that alone has recognized this fact. Who is **the** most Christian as well as the most universal of all artists to-day? Charlie Chaplin! And why? Because he shows us that the non-recognition of **the** equality of all souls is the most comical thing there is!

Charlie Chaplin, like Cervantes and Rabelais and Dickens, brings down the solemn portentousness of the Great in the light of the beyond-greatness of the commonest living soul. Of that enormous Gravity of Respect for what our poor human race has been humbugged into calling 'greatness' Jesus and Charlie Chaplin call the bluff.

The increase of pain and the increase of the fear of pain which **the** war has brought is a drastic searcher-out of souls. Between the patriotic soul of a combatant and the idealistic soul of a Peace-Pledge Pacifist there is to the ironic gaze of the Jesus-Conscience no essential difference. Both are helpless; both are blundering. Both are self-deceiving; both are well-meaning. Each of them has its own individual and separate port-hole upon the tossing ocean of the Multiverse; and each of them has both life and death within its circle.

But what we are concerned with just here is the inability of Religion to do more for a human soul at the end of its tether than that soul can do for itself.

When a man is at bay there is nothing left but his soul. And **his soul** is enough. His soul contains everything. His soul is limited outwardly by the Dimension of its life, of its struggle to continue its life. **But** inwardly it is in touch with another Dimension. Its pain belongs to **its** life here; but its conscience, bidding it resist its pain, is outside Time and Space.

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And as it struggles to rise above its suffering, the common man's soul is aware that what makes it impossible for Religion to help him is this very conscience in him which already belongs to a different Dimension. Religion tells him that God will answer his prayer and that Christ died in order that his soul should be saved.

But the man's conscience has already reached a point where he feels it to be wrong to pray that *his* soul should be saved. Why *his* rather than anyone else's? Is *he* the particular pet of God? But, you will say, he believes in God, he believes in Christ, while the man on the ground by his side, or in the bed by his side, doesn't believe.

Yes, but his conscience tells him that there is nothing wrong in not believing. The wrong, his conscience tells him, is in thinking that God can be so much like a modern Dictator that he is prepared to make a favourite of those who cry: 'Hail All-Powerful! Hail All-Merciful!'; and to 'liquidate' those who don't.

It is because of his conscience that this 'common or garden' sufferer, whether on the ground or in his bed, turns his face to the wall where Religious consolation is concerned.. He hasn't been endowed with a philosophic mind; but his human-animal instinct, taught by Nature, assures him that his only help lies deep down at the bottom of his own being, while with what might be called a grain of planetary humour his conscience assures him that it is wrong to make such a solemn fuss about *his* fate, whether corporeal or spiritual, compared with the fate of the man in the bed next to him.

His conscience *doesn't* tell him that he ought to be thinking of God and Christ and of all his sins. His conscience tells him that he ought to fight his pain, and struggle to reach a point where he can, with a calm mind and in spite of what he's enduring, actually force himself to enjoy something. To enjoy? Yes! To enjoy anything that catches his attention, even if it be only some meaningless scratch on the wall, or some curious shape taken by a pillow, or a blanket, or a bedpost, or by a dying man's hand on a coverlet. This wanton scratch, this swaying shadow, this goblinish bulge, when the soul dwells upon any one of them, or upon any other kindred trifle, have the power of evoking a magic spell and of exercising a mysterious and profound fascination.

And what is the secret of this mysterious comfort reaching out to our soul through these negligible objects? I think it might be called *the soul's*

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pleasure in returning home; in returning, that is to say, to those curious aspects of the Inanimate that 'he about us in our infancy'.

Any flotsam of chance, any casually drifted nothings from the accidents of Matter's motions, are a sign that we're in a friendly place, are in fact still in the old familiar Dimension of the life that we know so well. What we're gazing at from our bed through a mist of weakness may be only scratches on woodwork, bulgings and hollowings in flapping curtains, lights and shadows playing tricks with mirrors; and such things as door-knobs, broom-handles, wheeled-chairs and doctors' charts; and perhaps sometimes, as an indescribable super-sensation glimpsed through a window, the rain-pipe on the edge of a pointed roof.

But these trivial objects, these nameless nondescripts, these scratches, these curves, these knobs, these flickerings, become to a soul whose body is for a moment free from pain, and whose mind is exhausted, things of far more moment than the Resurrection from the Dead, and offer more significance than the Second Coming.

And the 'common or garden' person realizes far more deeply than a brilliant intellect can realize such a thing the failure of Religion at such a moment. He realizes it because he has never been for any length of time occupied with those spacious generalizations and those elaborate systems of thought that lift us above, or better say lift us *out of*, the pressure or diurnal necessity.

But though Religion may fail us, there is something that never fails us. I speak of the conscience. Through the long ages of man's history, with all the multitudes upon multitudes of the human dead, of so many dead that if their bodies rose in a cloud from the earth all the space between us and the moon would be choked with the up-mounting throng, hardly a man of all that multitude waking from his nightly sleep but has been compelled long before he lit his fire to his gods or poured his libation or prayed his prayer, to make some effort of will to face what the day will bring forth, to forget what yesterday brought forth, and finally, we may say, whether from the bare earth or from a bed, to rise up in his daily resurrection to new trials.

Here is a daybreak-truth that would be very quickly corroborated by every man born into the world! No sooner do we lift our head from the hard ground or the softest pillow than conscience leaps to **attention** within us and begins issuing its commands.

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None of us obey all these commands; and it is Nature herself who in her maternal wisdom prevents us. For which of us could obey all and live? The Dimension of Life that at present surrounds us is one of Duality; and this Duality descends to its uttermost depth. Conscience is one thing; and the self pursuing its own ends is another; and it is Nature who keeps the balance.

The ordinary person making no startling effort to be a saint will yet be found following his conscience to his hurt again and again. Indeed if great creative Nature hadn't seen to it that this poor driven ego of ours possessed a tough rudder of automatic self-preservation, down into the gulf many a devoted boat would go!

It may well be that this present war has laid bare the greatest psychological gulf that has ever divided humanity into opposed groups. Full of human selfishness and maliciousness as *our side* of this gulf may be, and sickeningly self-righteous as our moral propaganda often is, in the depths of our being — and this applies to the most unphilosophic of us — we regard this whole astronomical Dimension, pressing in upon us from every side, *as there* simply and entirely for the benefit of the individual.

Our enemies take a different view. To them the individual is nothing compared with the State. He is the State's child from Birth to Death. No wonder this difference between us has resulted in a war to the death; for it goes so deep as almost to be — only even *their* powerful rulers cannot change the channel of humanity's life-sap in a generation — a biological difference.

We have reached in fact a moment in the history of humanity when an attempt is being made to take evolution out of the hands of our slowly-evolved human conscience and give it an *expert twist* in another direction, a direction selected to suit a regimented society; monstrously and formally logical, and with a terrifying weight of science to back it up. In fact this whole war is a tragic attempt on the part of Slave-States, to dam up Nature's twenty-thousand-year-old struggle to free the individual from the tribe, the state, the race, the nation. Germany is attempting to destroy what evolution has done to make the individual the purpose of life, and is trying with scientific ruthlessness to side-track us into the ghastly uniformity and automatic slavery of ants and bees.

What is the most *startlingly individual* moment in our life? Surely the moment when the navel-cord binding us to our mother is cut! And

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what the Fascist-Nazi-Stalin doctrine is aiming at is the sewing-up of this navel-string and our return to the Race-Womb or the State-Womb.

Coming back however to our 'common or garden' democratic man, who is now laid on his back, it must once more be emphasized, as he gazes at the faint sun-flicker upon his bed-post, that though as a man he has all the Gods and all the Redemptions in his separate soul, it is not so much from his inherited Religion as from his right to spiritual loneliness that he draws his comfort.

Within the circle of his soul are all the Religions of the World, but as he stares at the flickering sun upon his bed-post what he feels — this common and ordinary 'nobody' — is that there is nothing in the world, in this moment's cessation of his pain, but a solitary soul staring at an illuminated piece of wood; and that this soul is himself!

Directly or indirectly the war has brought him to this, just as in reality, for all their worked-up illusion of being one with the state-womb or one with the race-womb, it has brought each solitary individual among our enemies.

The truth is that in a war like this it is advisable for all of us to practise in our moments of quiescence that fatalistic attitude to disaster which gives us our best and safest power of resistance.

And the great thing is to use to the utmost that misunderstood secret of the old Epicurean doctrine, namely, the conversion of the negation of pain into a positive enjoyment.

The soul of every man is larger than he knows. We couldn't be conscious of the Dimension of Life in which we are suffering if we were not also, whether we realize it or not, existing in another Dimension which lies beyond our suffering. The consciousness of pain in itself implies that a portion of our soul is beyond the pain it is suffering. The realization of the pain as something external to our soul is the ground-work and background of our endurance of the pain.

Our consciousness couldn't endure a thing that was entirely co-existent with itself. It is in the portion of our soul that is outside the region possessed by the pain that we take refuge while the pain is going on; and it is this free portion that has the power of turning any temporary cessation of pain, whether of body or of mind, into a positive enjoyment.

Pain itself is an *organ of research into reality*, for it reduces our mental worries and our egoistic prides and conceits into their true perspective.

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A soul in pain is a soul that has become, without any effort of its own, the possessor of the greatest secret of proportion in the world.

Pain is the grand equalizer. Our conceit of having a soul superior to other souls vanishes; and with it vanishes all the fevers and burdens of rivalry and competition. Pain purges the mind of its sun-spots and blood-spots.

The great circle of the soul is not reduced to smaller size, but it is cleansed of its duskiness and its opacity. From centre to circumference the microcosm is washed clean; and in place of all the manias of competition, in place of all the manias of superiority, we are now permitted to enjoy, as soon as this cleansing pain ceases for a moment, the whole magical scope of the situation, our individual soul, aware of its existence both within Time and beyond Time; and aware that a portion of itself *is already outside both Space and Time*.

Consider the modest examples I have alluded to in this chapter of men victimized by the war: the man staring at the pattern in the carpet when he hears his sentence: the man gazing at the card on the mantelpiece: the man watching the drowned creature in the canal: the man confronted by the fluttering rag on the barbed wire: the feelings of all of them — not to mention cases far worse — can be summed up and expressed in what the man in the hospital-bed feels as he merges both his past and his future in this mystic absorption in the sunlight upon his bed-post!

I am not asserting that all ordinary common men philosophize in precisely these terms. I am not for a moment trying to prove by subtle paradoxes, as Chesterton used to do, that the common man is, by the fact of being a common man, deeply committed already in spirit to the Church of Christ.

I know very well that all the types of ordinary men I have selected as war-victims are far from being what is presumptuously called *thinkers*. My point is that as the one in the hospital-bed, in whose particular feelings I have summed up what the others feel, stares with mysterious satisfaction during his freedom from pain at the light on his bed-post, he feels, without making any attempt to analyse his feelings, the whole indescribable 'peace that passeth understanding' which religious persons attempt to confine*to those who love God and feel their sins forgiven through the blood of Jesus.

And I am prepared to go further still and to say that the curious

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'melting mood' with which in his momentary relief from pain he **gazes at** his bed-post contains within it *precisely the same ecstasy* as that with which in moments of illumination the greatest saints have been convinced of what is popularly known as 'the Immortality of the Soul'.

I would go further even than this and maintain that as the man in the bed gazes in this particular way at that light on his bed-post he is aware, in a melting deliverance from all his pride and conceit and vanity and snobbishness, of his equality, as a Nobody who is at the same time a God, with every other soul in the whole Plurality of Worlds.

It does not matter what names you give to these 'atoning' emotions, to these 'redeeming' feelings. You are a man hurt by the war; but you are a man. And being a man you are not only the measure of all tilings', *you are all things*. You are God; you are Christ; you are the Holy Ghost. This, with no more of a twist in the direction of the truth than St. Paul gave to the words of Jesus, we have a right to claim as the *sensation* that reveals to itself the soul of the most abject among us.

In every moment of time there is a *residuum* that is beyond time. In every atom of space there is a *residuum* that is beyond space. The human 'ego' or 'psyche' or 'soul' — the mystery in us that says 'I am I' — is possessed of a strange sensation, especially at those precious moments when pain of mind and body fall away, the sensation that it exists in more than one world.

The simplest awareness *of* some outward object, apprehended even though a man has been struck blind and deaf and dumb by this war, may become, the moment his pain recedes, a symbol of the whole astronomical world.

He is himself, and that external object is itself, but as he apprehends it, both *it*, as a thing, and *he*, as a prostrate man staring at this thing, lose their separate identity. They merge, they fuse, they flow into each other; but beyond them both is still something else, something that is aware of them both. This something else is part of *him* and part of *it* — such is the sensation that the man has, though he well may be too simple — or perhaps too wise! — to attempt to explain it, and what it amounts to is that the whole form and pressure of this present reality is a plane of existence beyond which his identity already stretches! He is like a man up to his neck in one element while a portion of him is all the **while in another**.

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And since all human enjoyment depends on contrast, the mere awareness of these two dimensions brought so near together, life and death, just touching, like two circles at one infinitesimal point, becomes a strange pleasure to him.

The enjoyment I am now trying to analyse is probably identical, as a sensation, with what many mystics have described when they speak of ecstatic unity with God. For the curious thing is that in what they tell us of this great experience there is no stress laid upon what is popularly known as the worship of God. And why should there be? God cannot help being Himself. He has not *become* Himself—as we poor wretches have to become ourselves — by being brave and good. *He just is.*

And there is no more reason to worship Him because He *is*, and because he is All-Powerful, than to worship a Worm because it is a Worm. This is not the verdict of irreverent blasphemy. It is the verdict of our Conscience. Taught by Jesus to respect weakness and helplessness more than Power and Terror, our conscience, going further than the conscience of Jesus, feels that a worm is more deserving of worship just because it is so pitiful, than any Omnipotent Almighty. Let the Heathen worship their wielders of thunderbolts!

Our conscience tells us to worship the *victims* of thunderbolts. Our God is Mr. Nobody. Our worship is for Mr. Anybody. And it is Jesus, not Confucius or Buddha or Mahomet, who has taught us this. The pity is that instead of yielding to celestial narcissism and identifying himself with the All-Powerful, he didn't defy the All-Powerful on behalf of the powerless.

The human conscience that has really caught the 'secret' of Jesus goes beyond Jesus. It does *not* tell us to give cups of cold water 'for Jesus' sake'. It tells us to give cups of cold water because some poor devil's thirsty.

What the Jesus-Conscience, were it to return to earth in this war would say, would not be: 'I am the Light of the World'; but, 'Every poor soul that breathes is the Light of the World'.

But it is not only the Jesus-Worshipper or the God-Worshipper who will quarrel with our Malvolio-hke tendency to 'think nobly of the soul'. There is also the materialist, the person who believes that matter, and matter only, 'continues onward'.

Such a one feels that the universe presented to our senses is all there

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is, and that compared with the galaxies of the stars rolling about in infinite space it is pitiful nonsense to talk of the soul as existing in more than one dimension.

Well! there will never be any reply to this. 'You that way. We this way'; as the Comedy ends. But it is queer what small effect this difference has upon *our feelings*.

Our feelings appear to be very much the same whether we live for ever or perish utterly to-morrow. Thus, although we are led to the conclusion that Religion, in the dogmatic and doctrinal sense, fails us when we come to what Shakespeare calls the 'sticking point', we are also led — in the sense in which my friend James Hanley, replying to some rationalistic questioner, who asked him what he believed, answered laconically: 'Everything!' — to the conclusion that in the only sense that is essential, that is to say in the sense of the sensation of Reality, all these religious myths are true.

What this war — taken as it is wisest to take it — that is to say, *as fate*, really teaches us, is precisely what the slowly evolved conscience of humanity has come to teach us, namely that we can only get the full flavour of being alive when we are aware, in the first place, that death is a part of life; in the second place that the souls of all living things are equal; and in the third place that it is wrong to feel in our hearts that we are superior to any other creature.

Then it is, and then only, when we are giving ourselves up to enjoy the Mystery of Existence, that we shall enjoy it *as* a Mystery. Although there is pain before and pain after, and although the essence of the mystery be only revealed to us in the fact that a bed-post is more than a bed-post, a wounded man more than a wounded man, the Light of the World comes from within and not from without.

Pain is a salt and bitter tide, at its worst intolerable, at its best an annihilator of all but itself. But it cleanses the mind of the 'perilous stuff' of competition and rivalry; it sweeps all the broken shells and dead star-fish and stinking seaweed from a man's consciousness; and as soon as it has washed these things away some deep magical reciprocity rises up between the soul of a man and the primordial chemistry of matter, a reciprocity which is older than Love, older than Worship, *older than Fear itself*. The 'common or garden' man would be as unable as I am to put what he feels into any but the most clumsy words; but the case is

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simple enough. He has that Essence of Being which we call 'life' with that other Essence of Being which we call 'death'; and drinking of them both together has for that moment at least, grown reconciled to his fate.

What we forget — what all comforters of the wounded forget — is that the only real comfort for that unfathomable Mystery, the human soul, is as mysterious as the soul itself.

The soul of the commonest man, like the soul of the commonest animal, dwells alone in inscrutable silence. Words form and words dissolve on the surface of its unsounded depths. Like bubbles of foam they gather, they reflect, they gleam, they darken; and then they arc swallowed up.

The most ordinary of men when the crash comes and he stares at the pattern on the carpet, at the card on the mantelpiece, at the corpse in the water, at the rag on the fence, at the fading sunlight on the bed-post, grows aware, the second his pain recedes, of something that he cannot reveal. He utters words in his language, as the animal utters words in *his*. And such words may be frivolous words, beautiful words, tragic words, indecent words. But the margins of life and death are overlapping. They are rolling together; they are losing themselves in one another.

And the soul, that *amphihium* of life and death, knows that it has at last come into its own. Let this receding of the pain-tide, this ebbing of the pain-pulse, last but a mmute more, and the soul feels that a sensation will possess it, compared with which — But Nature, fearful lest her ultimate secret be betrayed, blows out the candle at that point; and all that we, all that the pathetic, deluded, bewildered chorus 'to this tragic scene', who are but 'mutes or audience to this act', are able to do is to mutter the meaningless words 'eternal rest', mutter them in the presence of that *dead silence* which has all the while been the soul's real life, and with which it now covers its escape.

CHAPTER V

TRUER THAN PHILOSOPHY

Is it not a strange thing that so few 'thinkers' — for such is the name we give to those who are cleverest at escaping from reality — have had the honesty to confess the truth that we cannot face reality and live?

After the last war there arose a literary gang — for it seems pedantic to call them a school — whose attitude to existence can best be described by the expression 'Hell! Let's have another drink!'

This attitude, in its drug-debauched desperation, was, and still is, as we turn back to their work, not a little shocking to a quiet idealistic mind. But we must bow to the fact that this 'Hell! Let's have a drink!' is by no means devoid of a profound justification; a justification that is perhaps more natural than philosophical but a justification that has a deep root in life. The implication, of course, of these reckless words is that life in certain aspects is so unbearable that the best thing to do is to deaden our attention to it, or at least to those aspects of it that are unbearable, by some absorbing and drugging distraction.

And this implication is entirely justified. Certain aspects of life *are* unbearable. They will not bear thinking on. 'That way', as Shakespeare says, 'madness lies'.

The jarring shock that the expression, 'Hell! Let's have another drink!' makes upon a grave and timid mind is entirely due to the reckless connotation suggested by the syllable 'drink'. Put in a different way this sardonic recommendation to forget the unbearable is one that answers to a primal necessity of our nature.

Any sort of distraction — it doesn't matter whether athletic or sedentary — could be substituted for the word 'drink'. We could say, 'Hell! Let's have another game!' or 'Hell! Let's have another swim, or another dance, or another bonfire!'

The implication, below it all, is simply: Xet's forget the unbearable! Indeed the famous conclusion of 'Candide' might just as well **read**, 'Hell! Let's have another garden!'

Now I have been unable to discover the writings of one single

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Philosopher, whether ancient or modern, who has devoted himself to a consideration of the Unbearable.

And this fact alone is enough, when we are*considering, as a war like this compels us to consider, the phenomenon of pain, to make us suspicious of philosophy. Religion, whether false or true, is much nearer life than Philosophy. Certain individual philosophers have behaved well under painful conditions; and from Socrates to Epictetus and from Epictetus to Spinoza, there have been thinkers who have proved that the use of logic to wrestle with world-problems doesn't of necessity debar a man from being wise and kind or even from dealing with reality.

Certain Philosophers, like the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, have concerned themselves with some of the details of daily life which test a person's character; but even in the case of Marcus Aurelius there seems a curious gulf between his high cosmic speculations and the particular occasions calling for fortitude and magnanimity.

If we define a writer's 'honesty', in the Socratic sense, as his faithfulness to the truth of his own real response to life, the credit must be given to the tricky, troubled, unhappy anxious, self-lacerating religious writers, in spite of their dogmatic and wicked opinions, rather than to the eloquent Cynics and Sophists and the famous Stoics and Epicureans!

I am not thinking just now of the ironic difference, so mischievously delineated by Anatole France in one of his wanton tales, between the Peripatetic Sage who bribes a young woman to be friendly and the exultant death-cries of the Proto-Martyr, St. Stephen, which happen at that moment to interrupt these philosophic pleasures.

I am thinking of the much more realistic attention — attention often approaching morbidity if not insanity — given to the pain of existence, as we experience it in ourselves or contemplate it in others, by religious writers than by philosophers. Religion has been until now a permanent aspect of the nature of man; though it may well be, just as has happened with certain bodily members which evolution has outgrown, that Nature will sacrifice this first-born child of hers.

But it will be always recorded of Religion, even when Nature has no more need of her, that she was the daughter of Gratitude and Fear, and the Bride of Pain.

In the matter of contemplating another's pain — a situation which for good or evil comes naturally to take on a cloistered quality — it may be

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noted that at least two philosophers — I refer to Emerson and Nietzsche — made a veritable cult of withdrawal from the painful and unpleasant.

Matthew Arnold eloquently advocates the same kind of planetary pre-occupation; while Walter Pater's imaginary portrait in *Marius* of Marcus Aurelius bending over his writing-tablets at the Gladiatorial Show, was deliberately intended as a reproach to Stoic impassivity contrasted with Christian sympathy.

But though in the contrast between this Emersonian detachment from the pain and frightfulness of life and the morbid pre-occupation with these things displayed by religious writers the advantage as far as I can see rests with the latter, this 'Hell! Let's have another drink!' mood is a little different from either.

What Goethe and Emerson and Nietzsche are aiming at is simply an habitual cultivation of that selective and aristocratic attitude to life, deliberately ignoring life's refuse and dross, that we enjoy in the poetry of Homer.

The selection implied in this Homeric temper is too wide and deep to be called an aesthetic cult. Not the aesthetic but the poetic is its discriminating test.

But the attitude to life implied in 'Hell! Let's have another drink!' goes deeper than the rejection of the unpoetic. It is a basic indictment of life itself. The implication is that there are aspects of life so abominable that you must drug yourself to forget them.

Some are in the habit of saying that it was the disillusionment produced by the end of the last war, and the consequent disintegration of character and nerves, that led to this mood. Some go so far as to maintain that in this present war conscripts and civilians alike are calmer and more civilized.

I am not, however, laying stress on any particular nervous disorientation that may have intensified this 'Hell! Let's have another drink!' I am only making use of the phrase as an arresting popular symbol for a definite psychological attitude that has existed among quite ordinary and normal human beings through all the generations and that exists with us at the present hour beneath all our sobriety, our resolution, our fortitude.

What in fact I am trying to make clear is that the mood indicated by these reckless words is a temporary explosion, under special provocation, of an attitude to life that can be justified on the calmest and most rational grounds.

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The fact is there are things in life — things that a war like this only accentuates and multiplies — that simply don't bear thinking on. And we have to put these things out of our mind, not as the reckless disillusioned revulsion of neurotic victims of a particular crisis, but as a 'common or garden' person's instinctive attitude in all ages; an attitude not of nerves nor of any aesthetic or poetic cult, but of ordinary common sense.

The evolution of the civilized man-animal has in fact evolved a creature who cannot face *real* reality and keep sane. And it is therefore only natural that what is generally known as Philosophy should fail us at this point. Religion is different. Religion has always contained within it — as Plato taught — a certain element of madness. And since madness is what follows for those who try to face life, Religion which is half-mad already, is 'endued to the element'.

Now there are three senses in which, popularly speaking, we could say of a man: 'He is a philosopher'. In the first sense the man would be a professional thinker; that is to say he would either be the formulator of some particular philosophy system; or he would be the critic and interpreter of somebody else's philosophical system.

In the second sense the man would deliberately have appropriated to himself, with or without using the name, the chief practical tenets of some ancient School of Philosophy, such as the Platonic, or the Neo-Platonic, of the Stoic, or the Epicurean.

In the third sense the man would possess what we call a philosophical nature. This would generally mean that ordinary people, when they met him at a crisis, would be astonished at his unruffled placidity, and would think to themselves: 'This fellow's either as dumb as a beast, or is a real philosopher'.

Now let us consider all these three ways of acquiring the philosophic reputation. Not one of them will be found to have devoted itself to getting under the skin of pain.

Let us think for a moment of any philosopher we know, whether he be the author of a system, or the champion of a system, or endowed with the gift of being unruffled by disaster. Would we not far sooner have a priest or nun at our side at such a juncture than the wisest of secular sages!

Although as an ordinary person we ourselves might be helped very little by our Christian Faith, it is I think unquestionable that a person who was a professional adept, so to speak, of the Tragedy of the Cross, a person

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who had, so to say, been tortured with Christ and buried with Christ, would be a greater comfort to us if we were awaiting some unpleasant death than if we had Mr. Hobbes or Mr. Hume or even Marcus Aurelius at our side. But when it came to the actual moment of our being delivered over to the Gestapo officials I am inclined to think that not even the presence of the most holy of saints would make much difference. Such an adept in the triumph of faith might himself be able to endure the worst and to face the thought of the worst; but what an ordinary person would go through under such conditions is one of the things that won't bear thinking about.

And yet it is likely enough that among our 'common or garden* people are not a few who in their wayward obstinacy and humorous malice would endure branding with hot irons before they cried 'heil!' to the tyrant.

There is no necessity here to enumerate the particular horrors, the thought of which turn the stomach and freeze the blood. We each have a private set of our own; but the sick loathings, blood-curdling disgusts, blind shnnkings, unbearable abominations, maniacal terrors of our poor human nerves can expand outwardly till they mingle with that vertigo of immensity which so shocked Pascal, or inwardly till they reach the madness of Swift.

But there are among us those who swear that there is nothing — no object, no grouping of objects, no Nazi-horror, no Irtquisition-horror, no Bedlam-horror, no Vivisection-horror — which they dare not face in thought.

Well! I have only one reply to this. These people don't really face these things; no! not even in thought. Nature has endowed them with much; but she has not endowed them with the fatal power of visualizing ^rightfulness as it is. Thus they have been, these lusty gentlemen, kept sane and sensible; but when they assure us they can face all, I can only accept their words with the reservation that their 'all' has by some fortunate decree of Providence been restricted in its circumference. They can bear to think of many painful and distressing things; but to the horror of what actually occurs in this world in diverse times and places. Nature in her inscrutable and beneficent wisdom has made them dull.

The truth is that we *all* go about — yes even the bravest of us — turning away from things, not thinking *of* things, not allowing our minds 'to

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dwell' upon things. It isn't only nervous cowards who behave like this — Caesar, Attila, Napoleon must have done it.

The man-animal has to do it to live. Mad-houses are full of people who *haven't* done it. The curious thing is that in the established books of the philosophic life there is so little reference made to the pivot upon which all human life turns. That pivot is escape. At every moment, in all our lives, we are escaping. The insane are those who haven't been successful in this art.

When you examine the character and temperament of those who have lived to what is called 'a ripe old age' you will find that their most marked quality has always been the same — the power of concentrated and energetic absorption in work, or in play, combined with a cat-like mania for what might be called the feel of their own skin.

But in place of making clear to us that the pivot upon which life turns is the escape from the unbearable, philosophers are always bidding us imitate the unchanging, the permanent, the eternal. All except Herachtus. Here was one who was more than a philosopher! How true — and, if I may say so, how unphilosophical — are the simple wind-blown words of this great pessimist!

Nature is always flowing away; and the nearer we are to Nature the more we ourselves must 'flow away'. In other words we must include death as well as life in our inmost being; and as Nature escapes from death into life, and from life into death, so we must die to live and live to die. Heaven help us! The great thing is not to be a saint or to be a philosopher: it is to be a man.

And in the epoch we are living through to-day, when for all sensitive human nerves the air is quivering with the vibrations of pain, it is as necessary that we should sink down below all the systems of philosophy as that we should o'erleap all the 'banks and shoals' of religion.

You are a man. God is no more.
Your own humanity learn to adore!

But even these words of William Blake, bringing down the pride of all 'great' men, do not go far enough. As far as they go they are good. Anyone who worshipped man, worshipped that is to say all the 'Sons of Men', would have as little energy left to discriminate in favour of strong or clever or brave men against the ordinary run of men, as to discriminate in

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favour of *Gloire-de-Dijon* roses as against roses in general. If you felt the poignance, passion and pity of the human race to such a tune as to worship a man as a man, whoever he may be and whatever he has done or has left undone, your adoration would blot Out in a moment all the petty superiorities, such as greatness' of character, of intellect, of class, of race, that make such a tiresome stir and preposterous fuss between man and man.

But to follow the psychic pioneering of William Blake to its furthest horizon we ought to include all living things in this adoration. 'Thou art a worm', we ought to say to ourselves: 'God is no more. Thy own worm-anity learn to adore'.

The grotesque fallacy of the superiority of one man over another is one of the chief causes of the failure of philosophers to help us at a world-crisis like the present one. Not that this is any new failure of these conceited intellectuals. We read in some of the oldest Chinese classics of the commendable characteristics of what are called Superior Men. These Mandarins of the soul have indeed made such a coil about their superiority that though Jesus once for all razed their grand Bastille to the ground with his kingdom of mental 'sansculottes' yet they're always building up again their new little Bastilles of fashionable affectations for the humiliation of the simple.

And this cult of 'Great Oneyers', as Shakespeare calls them, as against us ordinary people who have nothing to eke out our limitations but a mahcious sense of the ridiculousness of such claims, is closely connected with the swaggering optimism of 'profound thinkers' of the Robert Browning type, to whose thick-skinned insolence the best retort that could be made is this same: 'Hell! Let's have another drink!'

But is it not sad to find the great Matthew Arnold, who of all men ought to have known better, joining forces with what might be called the *Swastika* of the soul?

Foil'd by our fellow-men, depress'd, outworn,
We leave the brutal world to take its way,
And, Patience! in another life, we say
The world shall be thrust down, and we up-borne.
And will not, then, the immortal armies scorn
The world's poor, routed leavings?

Yes, dear master, 'the immortal armies', Hitler's competent cohorts

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transferred to the celestial world, no doubt will, as you say, scorn these poor 'routed leavings'. But suppose Jesus, and *not* you, were in the right of it?

In any case the conscience that follows the 'secret of Jesus' will be found risking it and taking the side of the 'routed leavings' in despite of the contempt of your celestial storm-troopers.

Now one of the most deplorable weaknesses that characterize us 'routed leavings' of the competent world is our pessimistic recognition that certain aspects of this said world are so appalling as not to bear thinking about.

This weakness of ours is rarely shared by the great thinkers. *They* hold that everything — at least everything in their limited space-time universe — is not only bearable by the philosophic mind but actually enjoyable. And not only do the great philosophers dodge the unbearable, they reject, except a very small minority of them, as totally illogical, that multiplicity of worlds, or of 'dimensions', that was put* forward so modestly and tentatively and yet so challengingly by William James.

This idea of a variety of Dimensions; thickened out as a variety of worlds, is a clarification of the mystery of life far more important than any discovery in the realm of chemical matter.

The word 'dimension' carries a suspicion of mathematics about it; but its true connotation is a purely common-sense one. It is common sense, not philosophy or religion that compels us to recognize that to call the astronomical universe all there is because it alone is responsive to physical science, is as silly as to call the world of waters all there is because its shores are invisible.

These are crucial days for the human race. The Norms and the Fates **are** pulling up the dams of supernatural weirs and overturning the banks of occult waters.

These are days of searchings of hearts, of reversions and recessions, of the sloughings off of ancient skins and the splittings of the husks of horny chrysalides! The birth-pangs of the unborn world convulse the sinews of the old; and with groanings and travail-pains the earth heaves, yawns, fumes and shudders, bringing forth Death, but bringing forth also Death's Twin, the unknown body of never-before-seen Life!

And where in this 'hurly' are we to look for guidance? To Religion? **Why should** we worship the God without us when in such a crisis w

feel the pulse of the God within us beating like Don Quixote's Fulling-Mills?

To Philosophy^ Why should we patch up the world-machine with the cogs and the pist6ns of our mental revolutions, when all the while, thrust into the fumes of our chaos, arc the imponderable arms of Destiny grasping the great wheel?

No, there is only one shrine to question, only one oracle to invoke, and that is the average common-sense of the 'common or garden' man. Blessed is the humorous maliciousness that is the oil of the democratic cause! It is their fatal mingling of impersonal science with mystical hero-worship together with their fanatical separation of good and evil that makes these Germans so formidable. And what have we to set up against this triumph of organization under a will to universal power?

Nothing but an obstinate resolution to resist it; to resist it to the bitter end. Life to us is so varied and precious that the one cause for which we are prepared to be shot is the cause of the simple Pleasure of Life threatened by a monstrous mania; nor can our attitude to the Defence of this Realm be considered as exhausted in the syllables 'cannon-fodder'. Earth cannot suffer the greatest battle of her history since the Cro-Magnons defeated the Neanderthals to be played out on such a scale without throwing into a new relief, such as has never been known before, the three birth-marks of her human evolution: love and conscience and pain. But death, like Apollyon in Pilgrim's Progress, straddles across the long road traversed by those who fight; and in death at any rate the virtues of equality and humility are exposed and naked. 'Unaccommodated man' is the natural man, forked and familiar; but when we come to a dead man we are forced to uncover our heads. We do this before something greater than any one dead person. We do it before the Human Race — and before something else too.

An individual with a particular name has abdicated. An Immortal in the mask of a corruptible body has taken its place. Sleep works something of this same miracle. In the presence of sleep even the ravisher and the murderer are stayed; while a sigh like a wind on a shoreless ocean crosses the coldest lips.

The life behind those 'earth-forgetting eyelids', what will be its destiny? The oldest persons when you catch them asleep become like

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young children caught off-guard dressed in the grown-up garments of Old Mother Death.

'Canon-fodder'? Tear, rend, burn and mangle the bodies of men into a horror beyond horror. From a foot, from an arm, from a piece of a skull, from a face that is no face; from a bone twisted into monstrous distortion, from a scrap of scalp with a tuft of hairs, you can gather up the mask of Homo Sapiens, the Unconquerable Antagonist of Destiny.

With perfect justice, with an instinct far deeper than the indignant intellect, the common man in the Middle Ages worshipped the relics of the saints. Sancho, in refuting Don Quixote's extravagant claims for Knights-Errant, points out that every Church is full of the bones of men who were not Knights-Errant; and that all these are worshipped.

But every fearful relic in the battle that's now going on is a relic of the Immortal Person from whom all Saints and all Knights-Errant proceeded — the relic of a common man.

This war has certainly brought home to us the ^Arightfulness that can be inflicted on flesh and blood by a Science without a conscience used by an intelligence that has de-humanized itself. But the relation between a single Human Being and the vast multiverse of worlds that surround us has not lost its everlasting pivot or swerved its magnetic pole because Hitler has decided to erect the symbol of his doom in a shambles of the nations.

One thing he cannot do. He cannot make a ghost cry 'Heil!' Mechanized units are powerless against the Unseen; and the common human soul is a ghost-fox that has laughed for thirty thousand years at cleverer Sportsmen than Herr Goering.

Hitler were wise to force each new population he over-runs to stimulate the saliva of the Wandering Jew, and to dissect the genius of Charlie Chaplin.

What a pity our own two-thousand-odd Vivisectors are too occupied to help him hunt among our nerves for the ambushed soul. No quest could suit them better. The soul-hunt in the No-Man's Land of nerves! Well, the flesh of most of us is so weak, that, as the search went on, it might utter sounds of cats and dogs and even monkeys, and thus reward The Inquisitors with quite their accustomed glow in the pursuit of truth.

And when the soul, that foxy friend of democratic nobodies the mere mention of whose hypocritical behaviour makes a Dictator 'feel for his

gun', cannot be found, how satisfactory for all nations and languages to learn through the modest lips of Lord Haw-Haw that it has sailed for an unknown destination.

Considering the terms upon which we live upon earth there is no doubt that Religion touches life more intimately and poignantly than Philosophy. We may regret it but the truth is that the old wife, Religion, remains nearer the tragedy, nearer the pain, nearer the fallen jaws, nearer the after-births, than her clever college-trained daughter!

There was a time when the majority of our 'intelligentsia' felt that a heavy responsibility for this war lay upon us, with our Treaty of Versailles; but this seems to me to be pressing a good deal too hard upon one single link in the fatal chain.

'Well,' you will say, 'Hitler also is only another single link.' Not a bit of it! Hitler is a prophetic medium. *He* would soon tell us that he wasn't a 'link'! I am sure he feels like the god who creates links.

But if you put aside *logic* for a moment, which always leads to insanity, isn't it plain that we, in the Hitler sense, *are* 'degenerate' — that is to say we *have* given up organizing our whole life for war, and we *have* begun to organize it for other things; for things that give 'degenerate' people like us a weak, effeminate, and contemptible pleasure!

But what are we to do when we're called upon to throw up our hands and yield, *or fight*? Slowly, blunderingly, reluctantly, with all the natural hesitations of an old unwieldy society, full of rogueries, hypocrisies, and injustices, we take up the challenge.

What for? Well! To continue our personal and individual 'pursuit of happiness', that selfish pursuit which to the German mind is a mark of degeneracy. And a funny kind of happiness it is too that we pursue! It's a kind that a man on the dole, an old-age pensioner, a tramp even, can share with my lord of Derby.

Yes, extreme pain is a queer phenomenon in the world; and blood, as Goethe says in *Faust*, is 'a very peculiar thing'. Come on, however! Let's face the issue. Though it is as queer a thing as pain itself and as curious a thing as spilt blood, the fact remains that blundering and unwieldy and unjust as our System is, it does allow for seven times seventy more personal happiness than this monstrous regimentation.

As I have hinted before, the intention of Evolution will always be found on the side of the Community which is most libertarian; for in the heart

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of every 'common or garden' man you will find, if you hunt long enough, the guileless integrity of an Ideal Anarchist. In the belly of that reserved and ticklish enigma, the Anglo-Celtic humorist, you will find a perceptible preference for Death over submission to this particular enemy. And, after all, we know the meaning of Hitler while we are completely in the dark about death.

Individual men have ere now courted death: they have beseeched death to take them: they have exultantly rushed into death's arms. But all this intrepidity implies nothing about the secret of death, and for a good reason! Nature has been at pains to keep the land of death under an impenetrable cloud, lest, if the whole creation got into its head that the house of Hades was a palace of delight, there would be no keeping it in this dimension of un-ease.

Man first, with conscious deliberation, and then dogs, the friends of man, and then all the beasts that can read man's thoughts, followed by all the cattle of the field and the birds of the air and the fishes of the sea, together with all the reptiles and all the swarms of ephemerons — who knows but that they might not be seized by a universal and irresistible urge, lust-dark, wine-sweet, and fatal, like a blind urge of love itself, so that there should be upon the earth a planetary reversal of the Story of the Flood, and in spite of the frantic efforts of the creative Powers, desperate at this divulging of their aeon-old secret by some new Prometheus, there would pass through land and sea an electric current of ecstatic death; until, as the magnetic death-pull dragged them forward, all the monsters of the deepest ooze, sharks and whales and sun-fish and sea-serpents, shouldering one another up the moonlit beaches of the seven seas would meet in a swelter of terraqueous incest all the death-enchanted creatures of the land, men and women and children in their nakedness, along with the wild beasts and the herds of cattle, all too intoxicated with the love-madness of death to give a thought to preying upon each other!

There is only one way to get this death-mystery, this death-vortex, this inter-stellar, *death-pocket*, into some kind of perspective in our mind; and that is by a firm, fixed, unyielding grasp upon two impenetrable limitations: in the first place the limitation of our reason, and in the second place the limitation of the astronomical dimension in which we live.

Our reason is adapted to this space-and-time world in which our senses function and upon which all those more exact extensions of our senses,

developed by science, are naturally concentrated. But it must be remembered that in addition to our logical and scientific reason we possess other organs of intelligence which also have a role to play and intimations from a different quarter with regard to the predicament of our race.

Cardinal Newman made use of the curious expression 'illative sense' for the grasp upon things to which I am referring, but since I am concerned with the wisdom of the ordinary person, as against the specialized vision of the philosopher, I prefer to call this practical organ of research by the more familiar and simple words, *common sense*.

Now though it takes a very special type of mind to follow the Einstein theory of relativity or to comprehend the circular nature of what we used to think of as infinite space, it doesn't take more common sense than the ordinary person possesses to recognize that the profundities of existence far transcend this astronomical world, whether it be infinite or circular, whether it be objective or subjective.

A closed system of inescapable materialism has never appealed to the simple common sense of 'the average sensual man', as some leader of thought contemptuously calls him.

And it is to our common sense that this doubt is due; not to a flash of ecstatic illumination. Indeed the steady, quiet, normal view of things that I am describing, though it is expressed carelessly, lazily, casually, and in terms of the poetry of religion, is ten times less fantastic than the conclusions of any 'great thinker'.

CHAPTER VI

THE SOLDIER ON LEAVE

THE life-and-death struggle into which Hitler has plunged us for the domination of the world is something that throws a great many crucial matters into focus and a great many delicate matters into perspective; but, in order to visualize these imponderable things through the medium of some honest Nobody, let us imagine that we are following the steps and sharing the thoughts of a soldier who has just come out of hospital.

Our soldier is — at the moment we enter his consciousness — moving slowly along a gravel path between the spring-time flower-beds of one of London's smaller parks. The scene doesn't give him any lively pleasure; though he does feel that its neatness differs in some indefinable manner from the neatness of the particular hospital garden with which he has become familiar.

At least it looks as if it responded to seeing, not *unseeing*, human eyes! The middle-aged person weeding the beds has that reassuring look of leisured idiosyncrasy that indicates a dignity above a flirtation with a frivolous nursemaid, but not above a piquant conversation with a headnurse. The kind of man he is whose work would be competent and his hobbies fantastic: while his manner is certainly suggestive of the happy epoch before the country was fighting for its life.

The soldier cannot help noticing that the receptacles for rubbish on the edge of the gravel-paths are empty. They don't contain even a paper-bag that once had sweets in it — no! not so much as a burnt-out match-box; but when a person is soon to embark for an unknown destination, there is something reassuring about the stems of well-nourished flowers even though seen through the wires of empty receptacles! He sits down on a bench and contemplates the desolate neatness of the nearest rubbish-container and it seems to him as if the flowers in the bed beyond were in some way less interested than they ought to have been in his fate.

His mind wanders. He recalls the occasion of his hurt. He spits on the gravel as if it were something different from gravel. The problem of death presents itself to him and the problem of life after death; but these

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things appear to him in an atmosphere that has nothing to do with the words of St. Paul or of Hegel, or of the Rationalist Press. They appear to him in an atmosphere of smoke tasting of blood. They appear to him in a cleft between waves of bodies, between shelves, shoals, hills, *mountains* of bodies — bodies bent double, bodies twisted and huddled and contorted; bodies torn, scooped, dismembered; bodies that are no longer the bodies of human beings.

And, between these mountains of bodies, colossal iron playthings go perambulating, tellurian playthings, driven by monstrous children with staring pale eyes and plump, pink cheeks and round skulls flat at the back; and under the machinery of these playthings lie the broken pieces of men's skulls.

And the problem of death and the problem of life after death present themselves to this soldier as if they too belonged to these ridges of dead bodies, as if they too, all the old human thoughts of death and all the old human thoughts of life after death, were being pounded into a paste under the heels of millions upon millions of stamping children, who as they stamped kept uttering one single infantile word: 'iiber . . iiber . . . uiber . . . iiber!'

This soldier of whom I have been speaking has been outraged in his thoughts, but his feelings have retained their normal sense of proportion. The stamping upon life of all those millions of child-colossuses, trained from infancy to do nothing but stamp, has become a trouble to his *mind* more than to his nerves.

As he stares at the wires of the rubbish-container and at the flower-heads peeping through them, he feels as if beneath those perambulating playthings of iron, and beneath the ironshod feet of those baby-stampers with staring eyes and pink cheeks and round heads flat at the back, all that he has ever loved is being stamped out of existence. He thinks of the girl who is to meet him in this park. Oh how these iron-shod baby stampers despise women! How they despise all that the subtlety of women's brains, all that the delicacy of women's feelings, all that the irony of women's detachment, have done for human life.

But his girl comes at last; and at the sound of her voice these dark thoughts of a world where all the imaginative and humorous imponderables are pounded into dust by monstrous babies with no backs to their heads, dissolves like a vapour.

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And as, hand in hand, they sit at the cinema that night, and his mind wanders from the screen, his whimsical common sense returns and he sees the solemn bombast of these children of Jokenheim as merely one of those same old slap-stick jokes of the Circus Clown of History: jokes that always tickled the fancy of the younger gods, but that have never affected, no! not in anything that really counts, the slow uncoiling of the great world-snake in its spiral advance, that advance which is also a regression.

I don't mean of course that this soldier holding his girl's hand at the Pictures uses in his mind any of the elaborations that are necessary for an author to use if he is to make his meaning clear to other authors.

The thoughts of the soldier, as they drift away from the screen and back to the screen, seem simple and natural enough to himself. They are the thoughts of a nobody; but, after all, this nobody is a man, and, as such, on questions of life and death they're not irrelevant thoughts. The image of Jesus comes back to him from far-off days, along with the image of the Spirit of God in the shape of a pigeon. He has had in his time plenty of terrifying feelings in regard to Religion. These, however, were all connected with menacing old gentlemen with long outstretched fingers pointing to devouring flames.

But the feelings that come to him at this moment and that make it possible for him to contemplate without his flesh turning into goose-flesh his voyage to a new front, have nothing to do with terrifying old men.

It was as if all he had ever heard of God and Immortality, of Redemption and Atonement, had dissolved; not dissolved *away*, if you understand, but dissolved into a new sensation, a sensation different from any he had ever had before. Jesus had also dissolved into this new sensation; the chief effect of which seemed to be the destruction of all desire to enjoy any future or revive any past; and the substitution for this of an obstinate resolve to discover Something to Enjoy under all conditions and in every kind of circumstance!

What comforted him most was the fact that this wonderful sensation, which had something to do with Religion and yet wasn't Religion, brought with it a new attitude towards death. The soldier had had, from the moment when war broke out, a much greater fear of pain than he had of death. But those monstrous tanks the enemy had devised, which stalked like Behemoths through every obstacle and were plated with

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the scales of Apocalyptic Dragons, had changed his **attitude to death**. He had seen Death contort itself under the crushing weight of these Megatheriums into shapes so horrible that it was as if the corpses of men were being used as the tellurian hieroglyphics, or planetary code-signals, by means of which one demiurge communicated to another demiurge that their manhunt was proceeding according to plan.

And this had changed his attitude to death. He had come to feel that he would sooner suffer crushing pain on the field, sickening pain in hospital, rather than perish under the belching bellies of those monsters.

As all this passed through his mind he found that his thoughts were converging upon a little drop of perspiration, or was it a half-dried tear, that he saw on his girl's face. Little did *she* know that there had passed into a drop of her sweat all the religious feelings of a man's whole life! The Redemption of the World was there. The Resurrection was there. The Immortality of the soul was there. Yet they were not there in their old theological form, but in some new form that rendered them far more wonderful.

It is an insane mingling of love and hate that has created this 'Fiihrer' and 'Duce' phenomenon in our modern world: and if it won — which is impossible — back would the world recede — two thousand years!

And this *man-god* worship is, like all manias demanding bloody sacrifice, soaked with the perversities of sex. It exactly represents the cruel sex-element in heathenism that the worship of Jesus sublimated.

If, dodging the devilish 'Haw-Haw', we get some German station on the Wireless, the chances are that in intervals of the most heavenly singing, from voices pure and strong and sweet and care-free, we shall catch some vibrant tremulous flute-toned appeal, not to us this time but to the mystic child-like German heart, in the beat of which the words 'Freiheit' and 'Fiihrer' will be mingled as in the sweet tears of a girl who has been ravished.

And this quavering, lingering, echoing adoration will be repeated in a kind of liturgical ecstasy full of sobbing and weeping abandonment. It is clear that the most shameless seduction has been reached in this yearning refrain. But on the other hand consider the word 'Freedom!' What kind of 'Freedom' is this to be, this gift to his darlings by the All-giving and the All-taking?

It will be a special kind of Freedom; you may be sure of **that**. It will

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be a Freedom in which slavishness will come full circle and be indistinguishable from Satanic Pride.

In other words, it will be at once a merging of all their little negligible sacrificial selves in the divine self of Hitler, the last of the gods, and a finding of themselves again in the 'stamp, stamp, stamp' of an Iron Heel upon the neck of Europe, with an 'iiber alles, iiber alles' in place of *Ave Maria*, or *the Eternal is One!*

The worship of a Genghis Khan, of a Tamberlaine, of a Great Mogul, has had a deadly python-like fascination for certain bewitched skulls all the ages down. To melt in an ecstasy before your 'Leader' and trample in an ecstasy upon your enemies; such is the sex-urge of all savage tribes.

I don't say that the negative humour that makes such an attitude seem both horrible and ridiculous is the same as the positive humour that proves the equality of all souls; but the important thing is to bring both the good and the bad of this *Humour-Pierrot* of the human soul into touch not only with the pain of appalling wounds and the horror of heroic suffering but with the problem of Death. It is not, be it noted, on the strength of Philosophy, any more than it is on the strength of Religion that the man of good will, according to Horace, can face the *Gestapo* and look unabashed upon the distorted countenance of the tyrant. It is on the strength of character that he can do this and remain unshaken though the world crash about his ears.

*SifRACTUS inlabatur orbis
Impavidum ferient ruinae.*

From the beginning of our human history tyrants have conquered by what is called *Black Magic*. This is of course only a pseudo-scientific name for drawing upon the dark and satanic forces of our particular Dimension; a Dimension that for some curious reason gives itself up periodically and with a passionate abandonment to the worship of the Devil.

Not all conquerors have been tyrants, and not all tyrants have triumphed; but one thing is certain, no tyrant has triumphed without **the** aid of at least three Familiar Spirits — Fear, Cruelty, and Treachery.

The most ghastly and horrible thing in the world is what we do in secret to animals in our Research Laboratories; and *after that* **the most**

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horrible thing is the secret torture inflicted by tyrants and their emissaries with the deliberate intention of breaking the human spirit. This deliberate breaking of the human spirit — and when I say 'spirit' I mean the spirit of the individual — is the supreme sexual ecstasy to the tyrant.

He has other motives of course, and other impulses; but this is his special prerogative, his relaxation, 'the cabinet of his little pleasures', his retirement at Capri!

When you think of what is being done at this moment to so many old and highly-civilized peoples you feel an implacable indignation; but when you think of what is happening to individual human souls — I don't mean in the shambles of open murder but hidden away in concentration camps and prisons — you feel that no conceivable argument of any possible apologist for 'the God of this World' could change the direction of the curse of the human race.

These secret cruelties, inflicted by tyrants on the spirit of man, to weaken and waste it, to destroy its integrity, to make it cry 'Heil!' give to our whole astronomical Dimension a dark and questionable character.

Once having glimpsed these things, once having had imagination enough to appropriate these things with the antennae of the soul, and henceforth the sun can never shine as bright, the wind can never blow as fresh, the waves can never break as free, nor the ocean murmur with the same reverberation.

The 'common or garden' man has been strengthened in his two deepest convictions: firstly that all is fate; and secondly that there are tilings which won't bear thinking on. Thus the particular level of the unfathomable Multiplicity in which we dwell is found to rest, like a circle resting on another circle, upon one infinitesimal point — on the point of the Unendurable.

Such is the nature of life; and not only of the life of man, of the life of all sentient existences in this troubled Dimension!

The sound of the striking of Big Ben at Nine in the evening by the B.B.C. has become a significant symbol of what I might call the meta-physical defiance of Hitler by all free spirits. When you consider the unquestionable power of telepathy it seems as if the support extended to those *in extremis* from the rest of us, when our minds are concentrated, must be immense. Each individual soul — however remote from any

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front — can cultivate a mental battery from day to day against this enemy who uses pain as his ambassador and terror as his plenipotentiary; and whose method wide all he conquers is 'down! down! down! down!' like the cook with the eels in King Lear.

One most significant thing about our attitude to the Germans and theirs to us as the war gets worse is that we have begun to de-personalize the personal in each other.

The Fuhrer's methods have converted millions of simple German warriors into solemn-faced, humourless executioners; and though — since to laugh is natural to the British army — our men still laugh among themselves, and indeed laugh in their sleep, the curse upon these barbarous methods is that not only does respect for personality vanish from the world, but an anger, too deadly to be expressed takes its place; an unnatural anger, like that of Melville's great white whale!

It is a fatal peculiarity of obsessed people that they have the power, and it puzzles them to the depths, of rousing this particular kind of hatred. You might have thought that the German nation could have challenged the English nation to battle for the supremacy of the world without calling into existence the sort of feeling of which ordinary people are conscious in their hearts to-day.

The truth is we hate Hitler as we hate the Devil. And in this we are justified. *This* and nothing short of this is the common man's feeling. In our hearts we have an uneasy inkling that the old world-order is doomed. But upon one thing we are resolved. We will leave it to Fate or Evolution or Nature or God to create the New Order. Our business is to destroy Hitler and hope for the best!

The Pacifists and the Rationalists are agreed that it is both wrong and illogical to pray for the defeat of Hitler. On the contrary, it is by the prayers of All Souls that this Order of the Devil is destined to be destroyed.

And it is the consciousness of being already outside the whole stellar immensity that gives an ordinary man *in* a war like this something to rest upon. He is not enduring *alone*. His inmost identity is already in another Dimension and in touch with Forces outside this stellar system; and though things have happened and will again happen around him here that to the end of his days he will regard as unbearable, he has not only learnt the trick of forgetting these, he has also fallen into the habit

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of feeling that the 'I am V in him is only bound to this particular level of life by pain and pleasure and fear and custom.

I would like to make a special appeal to the common man — for of course there is no such thing as the 'average man' and the more ordinary we are, the more we differ from one another — and to ask him this crucial question: 'Can you endure to face all the horrors of life, whether imaginary or real, whether mental or physical; or is there one, or are there some, of these horrors over which mentally and imaginatively, it is necessary to throw an impenetrable black-out?'

And I am certain that all the honest ones — and that is the majority — will confess and not deny, but will confess, saying: 'Of this or of that I never can bear to think!'

But short of these intolerable things what are the hurts from which we suffer the deepest? What are the things we remember from our past days the longest? Surely the occasions when we were humiliated, when our pride was hurt!

Well! Once get rid of our deep, secret, private competition with other souls; once make the grand plunge; once make up our mind to be a fool, and a silly fool, and lo! the magic trick has been worked! And it is then with a free heart that we can enjoy all those sensations of well-being that before this blessed 'conversion' — in our competitive days — were so often spoilt by hurt feelings — no! I won't say hurt feelings, for that brings in the affections of the heart which belong to a different category — were so often spoilt by hurt pride.

Yes, what the soul has to slough off when it dies, as scurf and shard, is its superiority to other souls; and the more intensely it cultivates its recognition of this fact the stronger and maturer and *older*, so to speak, will the surviving soul become.

The souls who suffer most from death are surely the souls who have petted themselves most; for are they not naturally, *plumper*? Is there not more 'psychic stuff' to be sloughed off? The great thing — I speak metaphorically in that popular language which always comes nearest to the truth — is to have thinned out your soul before you die, and lightened it, as it were, by throwing a lot of its astral blubber overboard!

Considered in the spirit of all this, may we not be permitted to indulge a modicum of malicious pleasure in imagining the blank astonishment of our distinguished intellectual friends when they find that some cinema-

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loving drudge or some nameless office-clerk has actually attained more of that mysterious thinning-out which implies immortality, than they have reached?

But this, and nothing less than this, was the revelation of Jesus; and although it was a 'stumbling-block to the Jews', i.e., to orthodox church people, and 'foolishness to the Greeks', i.e., to the intelligentsia, to such great popular geniuses as Shakespeare and Rabelais and Cervantes it remains the secret of their power.

And what is this secret that emanates from *Don Quixote* as well as from the crudest and most inartistic of the works of Dickens, and that acts like magic upon the common heart of man, outraging the academic and confounding the intellectual? A certain kind of humour; and, let it be noted, a humour completely different from sarcasm or irony or wit.

In its essence the humour of which I speak is the supreme expression of humility. Unlike sarcasm and irony, which always imply a sense or superiority in those who use them, humour is the grand solvent of all souls. It is the twin-sister of that magical poetry which 'rolls through all things'. It is the 'one touch of Nature that make the whole world kin'.

I am following now, as a shadow follows a traveller in the moonlight, the everlasting implication of the humility of the common man. Certain things, casual and negligible things, cause the souls of all common men to overflow their accustomed margins in a rush of universal emotion. The intellectual person despises such emotion. He is for ever competing with other intellectual persons, rivalling them, contending with them, struggling to surpass them. He never meets a living soul but the thought at the back of his mind is, 'I am greater, wiser, nobler, and above all more intellectual than this poor wretch! I cannot hate him, of course; for hate is an attribute of the vulgar; but obviously all I can feel towards such grotesque and pitiable people is ironical indulgence'.

Passing by the comical spectacle of great thinkers regarding the secret of life with ironical indulgence, let us consider this mysterious 'Kingdom of Heaven' a little closer, particularly in the light of the unsophisticated emotions, religious and yet deeper than religion, of our soldier-on-leave; and try to see what actually is implied in the idea that the portion of our individual soul which is most common and most equal is the only portion that has a chance of surviving death.

What intellectual people find so hard to get into their heads is the

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complete helplessness of human reason in the presence of the mystery of the world. Our reason is adapted with proud and lively exactitude, as Bergson so admirably pointed out, to the crudest, lowest, and most unimportant aspects of the Dimension which hems us in.

It is completely blocked in its approach to the reality of things by the obtruding presences of Time and Space, who like a pair of monstrous Punchinellos — one striking on the gong of a clock whose echoes refuse to cease, and the other emptying starry marbles out of a pocket that seems bottomless — so deafen and dazzle it that it takes electrons for living affections, mathematical symbols for living persons, and the extremely limited dimension that surrounds us for the Totality of Being.

Not on any ground at all has the human race the right to arrogate to itself a position so superior to the other creatures of the earth that while they must perish at death it alone survives. All that lives in this Dimension, and this includes the whole chemical mass of the so-called Inanimate, has a portion of its identity in the next Dimension. In this Dimension there is a perpetual process of birth, growth, decline, and death.

Nor are any entities, from the most active and sentient to the most immobile and insentient, exempt from the law under which we come into existence, live out our allotted span, and fall, easily or painfully, under the common doom.

This is all that reason can tell us. Life-death, death-life, life-death, in an inexhaustible and inescapable alternation! But reason is not the most subtle, nor by any means the most comprehensive organ of research we possess. Reason is easily drugged and bound and tossed into their car by the marauding gangsters, Time and Space.

And not only so! Reason is always, even when left to herself, *a little mad*. Not mad in a noble, reckless, heroic way, but mad in cold, deliberate, mean, concentrated, fanatic ruthlessness, like inquisitors and vivisectors!

No! It is with our whole nature, including every species of that pragmatic energy, natural and terrible with its occult secrets, to which some apply the abusive term, 'wishful thinking', but which, under the nobler appellation of *'faith'*, has stirred up, urged on, and engineered, the whole process of organic evolution, that we grapple with the mystery of life.

What created the Dimension around us? Did reason? Never has

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reason created anything! It was the very urge and impulse and instinct which these people love to deride and call 'wishful thinking' that created it; and is even now creating the future.

But what is this intimation in us by which we feel that what in us survives death is *not* the peculiar, the exceptional, the superior, not all that portion of our personality for which we want to be loved and petted and admired; but something simpler and deeper which we share with all?

Well! the feeling is one that we have all had many times. When it comes it has a queer effect on us, very hard to describe, but it certainly melts our pride to the marrow of our bones. Most of us, I fancy, call it love; but it isn't love. Some call it religion. But it isn't religion. 'I have no name to give it: feeling is all in all'; but I can say this about it with absolute certainty, that it makes us feel in harmony with all living things *and superior to no living thing*.

This also can be said about it, that it evokes the most magical sensation of happiness we are capable of enjoying; a sensation which gives us a feeling of delectable unity with the soil or dust or road or pavement under our feet, with the grass at the edge of the road, with the ugliest, sorriest, forloniest, wretchedest masonry in sight, as well as with the wind that blows warm or cool, salt or fresh, upon our face, whether from between the walls of the town or through the trees of the lane.

Now you can call this feeling by many names. What it really amounts to is the condition of being in harmony with every living thing and superior to none. Its strength depends on the fact that the happiness it brings is untroubled by our usual worries, which are always connected with possession or position or rivalry, and with the question as to how we are regarded by others, whether with love and admiration or the reverse of these.

Another attribute of the feeling I am attempting to describe is that like all our ordinary erotic feelings, and indeed it might be described as a kind of elemental eroticism, it gives a complete 'quietus' to the conscience. That troublesome tormentor ceases tormenting.

And just as when in making love to a person you feel 'beyond good and evil' so you feel 'beyond good and evil' in making love to the planet in which you live.

And finally, the feeling of which I speak brings with it a vague impression of permanence. I will not go so far as to roundly declare it

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brings with it an intimation of immortality; but I will say this, that it provokes the feeling of vistas and horizons and long far-away memories, such as seem to belong rather to the generations of men than to any individual man, and as much to our fathers before us and our children after us as to ourselves.

But does it not seem a thing full of significant implication that when these moments come to us the wondrous sensation we enjoy excludes pride and possession; above all excludes the thought that our soul is wise, purer, stronger than the souls of others?

It is to the enlightened Matthew Arnold that we owe the discriminating phrase — *the Secret of Jesus*, but, as I have pointed out, this excellent man when *he* talks of Immortality contradicts at its deepest core this same secret, playing with the arrogant fancy that only the successfully intellectual and the successfully competent will survive death; whereas 'the world's poor routed leavings' — those I presume who couldn't, like Jude the Obscure, save up enough to go to Oxford — lack the strong hearts, strong constitutions, strong characters, or strong eyes, to

Support the fervours of the heavenly morn.

The man who survives death according to this view will be the man who:

His soul well-knit and all his battles won,
Mounts, and that hardly, to eternal life.

If this be the case how is it that our most divine sensations are those when in relaxed humility we feel completely at one with the 'world's poor routed leavings', and marvellously indifferent as to whether we have 'won all our battles' or lost them?

Putting it forward therefore merely as a suggested explanation to cover certain recognized facts, my feeling is that even in this world, in so far as we can succeed in detaching ourselves from this whole business of competition and rivalry and superiority, something of us is living in another dimension. May it not be that this, and nothing less than this, is the 'eternal life' of which Jesus speaks? And as our soldier-on-leave gives himself up, in his natural emotion, as he waves his good-bye to his girl, to a feeling that 'passes understanding', what he falls back upon is something beyond all reason and beyond all knowledge. He has already passed the bitterness of death.

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The whole circumference of the circle of his consciousness is balanced upon one indescribable point on its tragic curve. In the world life remains unjustifiable and intolerable still: but he has overcome the world.

Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia,
The gods themselves throw incense.

CHAPTER VII

THE SOUL

IT was the gods themselves who persuaded Hitler to attack the Russians. Russia's amazing resistance gives new heart to every race and nation all the world over who still challenges this singular Person who is trying to destroy the hinge upon which all human life turns, the independence of the individual soul.

Must we, however, give up our careless vein of: 'Hell! Let's have another drink!' before we succeed in 'stopping Him'. I do not see the necessity. It seems to me that if the solemn and arrogant intention of Hitler is to be thwarted it can only be done by resisting him in the natural sincerity of our instinctive humour.

Where his fighting gland makes him cruel, ours makes us obstinate and jocular. The question is what do we really imply when we accept 'Hell! Let's have another drink!' as our final judgment upon this present Dimension of life? Do we imply, in accordance with the opinion of many pessimists, that it would have been better had we never been born?

I cannot see that this is the conclusion. If our soul, as it wandered up and down the further shore of Lethe in the land of Limbo, were, like most souls, instinctively egoistic, it might surely think to itself: 'Even if this Dimension of Life into which I now have the chance of being born has such appalling aspects that any noble spirit questioned in advance would 'return the ticket', there remains a gambling chance that another kind of soul, the less noble one which mine is, might escape these horrors.

There is also the further possibility that a noble soul, of a different sort from the first, a saintly soul shall we say, would decide that a Dimension containing such cruelties and horrors would be the very one its conscience would compel it to select, in the hope of at least changing the *worst* into the *worse*.

The point is that a world which had no philosophical justification and no moral justification, could easily have a lurid dramatic value, and

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fearful poetic beauty. And such *is*, in fact, the world in which we are at present pilgrims and sojourners.

The repeated question asked by ordinary selfish souls of the featureless Image of Destiny is why should they be good, why should they bother, why should they be honest and just and charitable?

Well, the answer to this is the extremely simple one: *nobody knows why!* The truth is that the most mysterious phenomenon in the whole universe isn't gravitation, or light, or colour, or the tides. It is the human conscience. Now the interesting difference between us and the Dictators doesn't lie in their being wicked and in our being righteous. It lies in their deliberate and cold-blooded rejection of the human conscience. We frequently act contrary to our conscience and we frequently cover such actions with the cloak of hypocrisy. But conduct of this kind is inevitable when you consider what conscience is and what man is. It results, of course, in very imperfect virtue; but, as the philosopher Croce points out, *all* virtue must be imperfect virtue; for since virtue is the condition of struggling with the opposite of virtue, the moment the struggle ceases and virtue becomes absolute it ceases to be virtue.

But to deliberately turn upon conscience and set it at naught, not only here and there in the weakness of the flesh but in the total calculation of a philosophy of dedicated behaviour, is a very rare thing and only a few races have been dragged and drugged into it.

Let us, therefore, as we strive to retain our balance on the tightrope, between good and evil, give a few sharp, oblique glances at the situation in which we find ourselves. It remains, as I say, a situation that has certain aspects, to dwell upon which would drive us mad; and though this would be the case even without the war, with the war, on top of everything else, there is a piling up of the unbearable that is *too much*. And what are we to do with our minds? — that is the question! There is much less choice as to what we are to do with our hands.

For neither physical activity, nor the type of mental effort which is concerned with physical activity, covers the whole field of our human consciousness except perhaps at some extreme crisis. As we go about our affairs in War-time or as we 'hold the fort', as the Salvation Army would say, there are bound to be many moments of leisure and many moments not exactly of leisure but of a quite legitimate wandering of the mind when what we're doing is mechanical and automatic.

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And the point is, is it worth our while to use our will to force upon our consciousness any method, any system, any device for dealing with our free thoughts at these moments?

Well! Every one of us is unique; every one of us is, as they say, 'different'; every one of us is a little world of unbalanced contradictions in a bigger world which itself is only one among an infinite number of worlds. But we shouldn't have been able to invent language at all if with all these differences there wasn't a good deal in common; and language having once come into existence we are made year by year as we grow older more alike. The words of our language dominate us; and this goes on till we approach old age.

But at that point there begins a tremendous reaction. Slowly but surely we revert to our beginning, when we were wiser than words. We talk less, but there is less necessity to talk, for the old man's T becomes more and more lonely, more and more secretive, more and more absorbed, until at last its physical sensations return to those prehistoric feelings of being alive which make old men so much more different from one another than they were when in middle age they tried so hard to assimilate the chasms and gulfs of difference to the standardizing tyranny of the dictionary.

Many intellectual people labour under the illusion that because they can string together so many striking words and arrange them in a plausible order, and because they have whole logical sentences at their disposal, and because these striking words and these logical sentences can be quickly and forcibly used to contradict the views of others, that they are therefore profoundly different from these others!

Quite the opposite is the case. To catch the real difference between human souls and their individual uniqueness we have to go to infancy and old age; for in every infant and in every aged person the tissue of conventional similarity, which the use of words weaves like a silk-worm's cocoon round the soul's unique character, is sloughed off.

Infants and old people live in their sensations of life and not in their thoughts about life. *And it is in our sensations that we differ from one another.* Our thoughts, because of the treacherous alliance between thoughts and words, tend always, especially when we have reached that period in our lives which the world regards as our prime, to resemble the thoughts of other intellectual people, also 'at the prime of life'.

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The wisest infants, and the ones destined to be the least slavish in their devotion to the dictionary, are the ones who, for as long as they possibly can, put off learning to talk. And in the same way the wisest men are those who bring their 'intellectual prime' to the speediest possible end, and relapse into the absolute uniqueness of their silent sensations.

The grand difference between us and the Germans — and this is the thing they most of all want to stamp out — is our refusal to take war seriously or science seriously, or the superiority of the intellect seriously.

Before any kind of an *expert* every German stands to attention in mystic awe. We, on the contrary, are aware of a tendency to laugh. The gravity of professors, the gravity of vivisectors, the gravity of the goose-step, strikes our amateur minds as at once monstrous and comic.

Everything as a matter of fact except sensation *is* a little comic. Not only do infants and old people live in sensations; but it is in sensations that are concealed our truest 'Intimations of Immortality'. Sensations are at once pre-historic and post-historic. They are inexpressible in words and they are infinitely various in their essence. One immortal soul differs from another immortal soul not in words and ideas — for these are what make us slaves to causes, movements, manias, and the fanaticism of tyrants — *but in feelings*.

It is through the hypnotism of ideas, and of words, the 'storm-troopers' of ideas, that we suffer from mass-thought and mass-madness. Now the magical virtue of any unique sensation lies in the fact that it makes us forget the *Unbearable*.

Thoughts and ideas are unable to do this.

And here I reach the crux of the whole matter and I think it is here that I must begin to prove my contention, that the terror and frightfulness which drive us back into our own souls, where all truths and all conceptions of things and all proportions of things appear in their nakedness, only throw into greater relief the fact that our rarest sensations turn out to be weapons against Hitler. It may not have the importance some of us attribute to it, but the question: 'Is there a purpose in Life at all?' if taken seriously, is fatally entangled with our metaphysical battle against Hitler. What we are really 'after' in this investigation, entered upon under the threat of the heavens falling, is a quest similar to, but not identical with, the one pursued by Spinoza.

THE SOUL

There is a purpose of life, said Spinoza; and this purpose is to **feel** yourself one with God.

Spinoza, it is true, was a philosopher, the most professional of all philosophers, and a supreme master of logical form; but what he set out to obtain by his philosophizing was not just the proud glow of scientific truth, it was an indisputable, an indestructible *feeling*, a feeling that under no conceivable circumstances could be side-tracked, deflected, or lost in the scuffle of life.

To Spinoza's mind this desirable feeling was an emotion rather than a sensation, and he named it by the name of 'love'. The aim of all his formidable reasoning was to discover *an object to love*; an object that nothing could shake, disturb, hide, or take away.

Now my contention is, that not 'love' at all, but a pure and particular *sensation* is the purpose we seek. Of course there is no writer who can speak for *all* types of people, and most writers can only appeal to those who in general methods of apprehension and feeling resemble themselves; but by a lucky chance between the most ordinary and common type of democratic person and myself there is a heart to heart reciprocity.

Thus what I am aiming at just here is to be a medium of expression for those people whom I resemble in being irrational, illogical, and obstinate, imaginative rather than creative; in being fanciful rather than mystical, and in having a fatal tendency to be flippant where a sublime seriousness would seem the only appropriate tone.

Now in order that a real inspiration from a few of these Mr. Anybodies and Nobodies, for whom the Dictators have such a contempt, should take possession of me I am going to introduce you, reader, to two brothers, one lucky and the other unlucky. And I will begin with the lucky one.

Imagine therefore a middle-aged man, pondering, not without nervous apprehension, what Hitler will do next, while he ascends from his summer cottage, a grassy lane leading to a high moorland.

Now my problem is to select among this worthy man's feelings some particularly dominant one which may serve me as an example of what I am fumbling towards in this difficult quest. The man has by now got quite a considerable distance up his lane; and is beginning to set foot on the moorland above. He is a well-meaning individual, somewhat timid, though not exactly what you'd call cowardly; and at this **moment with**

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certain crucial impressions working in his brain of what he has been reading about the war, he is so absorbed that for a time he sees and feels nothing of the country round him.

But at last with a deliberate effort of his will he flings away this tense visualizing of frightfulness and begins to look about him and to fall back upon some of those normal sensations which the thought of what is happening in Europe had obliterated.

Of course, the actual sensations of the most ordinary and unintellectual of the sons of men are far too subtle, far too recondite and mysterious ever to be really caught in words; and the problem I have to face now is simply this: Upon which of all the feelings that possess or absorb my Mr. Nobody as he goes along shall I fix my attention, as the clue-sensation or key-sensation of his response to life as he tries to shake off the problem of what Hitler will do next.

Goethe's noble heathen oracle commands us to live resolutely 'in the Whole' — that is to say, *in the True* — 'in the Good and in the Beautiful', and every one of the great religious systems of the world call upon us to live in God, by God, and through God — *even though*, as Spinoza says, 'He who loves God does not expect that God should love him in return'.

Now will our ordinary, unintellectual, middle-aged man, trying not to think of Hitler's next move or of the possible descent of German parachutes, give himself up to the feeling of love, or to the feeling of lust, or to the feeling of beauty, or to the feeling of the presence of God?

Unfortunately it is only too likely that our worthy man, even if he manages to forget the horrors of war, will fall into the temptation of concentrating himself on a subject of meditation that is much more dangerous to his soul than all the lust in the world, much more weakening to his soul than all the tender affection in the world — namely, his own personal gain, prestige, glory, advantage, success, reputation, honour, esteem, superior cleverness, superior cunning, superior virtue, superior wisdom, or even — and this is the real 'last infirmity of noble minds' — superior consciousness of his contempt for all these things!

Far better it were that he gave himself up to a glow of sentimental weakness thinking of his mate, far better he gave himself up, as he walks along, to a cerebral orgy of wicked lust, far better he contemplated with the passionate pedantry of a crazy artist, the shades and tints and colours

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of the noon-day landscape. For the truth is that of the three dragons that make war upon poor human beings, namely, the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, there is only one of them really dangerous to the soul; and that is *the World*.

But as a matter of fact as soon as he can get what he has been reading about the war out of his head, our friend begins to give himself up to a feeling and a sensation entirely different from any of those I have tried to describe. He has stopped just now for a moment and is standing on a small path between two thick masses of heather with his head hung down and is gazing — like Dante in the *Purgatorio* under the reproaches of Beatrice — at some tiny patch of potentilla of a particularly lovely yellow, growing in the grass at his feet. There has been a delay in his calling-up and this delay is a worry to him. He is a patriotic man but he is a timid man and not particularly athletic, and when various images of the camp and the drilling cross his mind they cause certain troubled lines to appear between his eyebrows, and a peculiar twitching to take place at the side of his mouth, while his eyes assume an unnaturally fixed stare.

These symptoms are very familiar to his wife and when she sees them she always does her best to turn the subject to carnations. The carnations themselves are unsympathetic to these manifestations of mental pain in their devotee. It isn't that the man is afraid of being killed by Germans. He is afraid of looking a fool before his fellow-conscripts. He knows his own nervousness, as nobody else, not even his wife, knows it; and when he wants to think of other things the voice of an imaginary corporal calling him to attention resounds through his ears.

As he stands looking at the yellow potentilla and thinking to himself that yellow has always been his favourite colour, a specimen of the delicate little butterfly known as the green hairstreak alights upon the yellow blossom and closes its wings. With its wings thus closed it resembles the newly-budded leaf of a beach tree. Sunshine from a cloudless sky falls upon the man's bowed head and causes the shadow of the green hairstreak to rest motionless upon a neighbouring stone.

Upon this stone there is a patch of grey lichen; and upon the particular lichen-scale upon which the shadow of the hairstreak falls rests a diminutive beetle. The beetle who has come forth to enjoy the sun, is obscurely worried by the butterfly's shadow. The butterfly, who has just begun its life in the air, is obscurely worried by the over-hanging human head.

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The stone alone is free from worry; but this is due not to a complete imperviousness but to an imperviousness to everything except thunderbolts.

The middle-aged man who wishes to serve his country, but knows how afraid he will be of the voice of his corporal and of the jokes of his fellow-recruits, tries in vain to concentrate his attention upon the yellow flower and the green butterfly; but across those folded wings, proving that it must be their *under-side* that's as green as a leaf, keeps marching a regular procession of non-commissioned officers each one of them with a contemptuous eye for un-athletic commercial travellers.

At length with a sudden jerk the man straightens his back and walks on; and as he walks on beneath that sunshine, listening to the bird called a Stone-Chat emitting sounds like the popping of seed and the tearing of seed-husks, and watching a Meadow-Pipit pretending to be a Lark, he begins to feel a slow, deep, indescribable *dullness of mind*, accompanied by a sturdy, earthy and constantly increasing forgetfulness of worry and a growing imperviousness to the expectation of pain.

The man isn't a stoic by nature. He is more like the beetle than the stone. But, as he walks forward again, the rays of the sun permeate the pores of his skin, the seed-popping noises of the stone-chats, the high-pitched string-music of the meadow-pipits stupefy his brain with the hot shimmering, sacred stupidity of sunshine upon a dry path between sapless heather-stalks.

Now what had this ordinary, commonplace, timid man done as he jerked himself away from the yellow flower and the green butterfly and began moving with bold strides, sweating profusely and breathing deeply?

Well! He had suddenly and fiercely drawn upon what Keats calls 'the resources of his spirit'. Into a deep bottomless well within him he has lowered a bucket and brought it up full of living water! He felt alone; and yet he had in that very loneliness a queer reassurance about his wife and children, and about his country, and about that abrupt corporal, and about his joking mates — yes! and about, though why *this* should be he couldn't tell, his own violent death and the life after death.

And yet the cause of what he felt was no mystery, no illumination, no divine ecstasy. In complete cold blood, and at the behest of his simple common sense, though with a touch of natural fierceness like the fierceness of an animal at bay, the man had sunk down into his own soul; had

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plunged, homely and insignificant 'nobody' as he was, into what is stronger than all the Dictators and all the Mechamzed Units in the world. He had plunged into the soul of a man. And he had got comfort: comfort, *pro tern.*, anyway — for neither gods nor stone-chairs nor hair-streaks nor beetles can get lasting comfort in *this* Dimension.

But the great thing is to confine the frightful and the unspeakable to that point of time in which it occurs and to those unthinkable ticks of time in which it lasts. Pain to the death none can describe except the dead; and the dead carry it away into the darkness with them and keep it a secret.

But what did our Mr. Nobody *fec*i, as he walked on in that burning sun along that path of brown grass and cracked soil, and drew deep breaths and sweated profusely, and moved his legs in so vigorous though hardly a military manner?

Our worthy friend was indeed of a purer Nordic strain than the Ftihrer himself, though the goose-step would have been impossible to him and the mere sight of it *on* the screen made him laugh.

No, what he felt was that he was 'trying to enjoy his walk'. That is exactly how he *did* express it when he got home to his wife. 'I knew I wanted a breath of air/ he explained, but his wife said nothing though he had meant her to say, 'I can't *think* how you can be so indifferent to the war as to go all that distance and forget the six o'clock news'.

But the queer thing was that after this sturdy and fierce resolve to resist the devil, whoever the devil might be, and to resist him in the strength of whatever this was in the depths of his own Being, he hadn't expected that his physical response to the sun, and his physical response to the wind, and the feel of the dry cracked earth under his feet would give him so much more pleasure than they had done before.

Another thing that he hadn't expected was that he could force himself and successfully force himself, to enjoy himself. No! 'Enjoy himself is not quite the word. What he found he could do was to force himself to concentrate his attention — *that* was the thing — upon the substances and materials, and elements, as well as upon whatever living creatures, that might happen to be within his hearing, or seeing, or touching, or smelling.

That he could concentrate upon these *as if he enjoyed them*, that was **the** trick he had now been forced to learn! What had forced him **to** learn **this** trick? Had he learnt it in that single short moment when, in his **pain of**

soul, leaning **over** that yellow flower, he had seen his **future corporal's** eye and caught the mockery of his mates?

Our simple-minded friend soon gave up any attempt to find out whence this secret way of taking life in such a crisis had come to him. We, however, who are composing a book for other writers, may be permitted to hazard the suggestion that at that supreme moment of mental pain, as he leant over that flower without seeing it and contemplated those green wings without knowing any tiling about 'hairstreaks', his own deeper self — that is to say the portion of a human soul that extends into another Dimension — was forced by some instinctive appeal to come to his rescue, just as if a man's free arm and hand had come to the rescue of a man's feet, embedded in some hostile clay.

The worthy salesman himself soon gave up all attempt at analysing what had happened. But he did recognize that the more he concentrated on what he saw and felt, especially on sun and wind and the path between the heather-stalks, the tougher and more resolute became his defiance of the devil.

Contentedly he went on, practising this new-found device as any of us might have done; that is to say *feeling his way* into the use of his secret, without a single logical theory as to what he was doing. If he'd been asked what he was doing he would doubtless have replied, 'Enjoying myself. But the real truth of the matter was he wasn't enjoying himself. He was only forcing himself into the various mental gestures and the various sensuous attitudes towards the spectacle of life which he knew were supposed to be enjoyable and which he had discovered at different times by personal experience to *be* enjoyable.

In other words he was giving up his senses to the vaporous horizons, to the heat of the sun, to the grey rocks amid the heather, to the feathery grasses at the edge of the path, to the feel of the wind, to the astringent scent of the clumps of newly-planted larches, and to the far-off whistle of the curlews, with a vigorous effort. What he was doing was very simple. He was drawing the energy for this effort out of his soul.

Nor was it altogether the *beauty* of the clouds, of the larches, of the heather, that obsessed him as he went along, but just the naked chemical elements, the dull slate-grey of the gravel of the little streams and the empty spaces of the air, combined with the power he had to keep his face, blinking and dazzled, in the direction **of the blazing sun!**

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Superficially, what he was trying to do, as he hurried forward in his swaying, slouching lurch, was to *force* himself to 'enjoy his walk' but below the surface he was practising a miraculous and magical trick.

This trick he had only just discovered by tapping in that terrible moment of mental pain 'the resources of his spirit', as Keats called it.

And where lay these resources? They lay concealed in that portion of his soul which was already in another Dimension. That is the point. In the truest sense of the word, *we live by faith*. Consider the doctrine of the ultimate figures of destiny, the vicious circle and the spiral curve! According to this cause-and-effect determinism, if we are predestined to have the will to triumph we *shall* triumph, but if not, not.

This is the vicious circle; and it is *from life to death*. But according to our faith in 'the resources of our spirit' — that is to say our faith in being able to draw upon something outside this present Time-and-space dimension — we become free Creators; Beings who actually play their part among the high creative Energies that build the world. We the most timid of creatures, we the amateurs who don't know a rifle from a shotgun, are now thrust by the mysterious potency of life into the role of what philosophers call the First Cause; for we are creating, as far as this astronomical universe is concerned, something out of nothing!

In other words if my hero isn't a god he must at least allow me to call him a magician. But he can rest assured he is by no means a unique magician. All those queer jerks and spasms and leaps and eruptions and flights and uprisings and recoveries and revivals which diversify the life of midges and earth-worms and sea-urchins and have so much to do with evolution are also the result of drawing, each little creature after its kind, upon the next Dimension.

When therefore our timid friend, driven to his last trench by the imaginary image of the angry corporal and the imaginary mockery of unmerciful companions, broke in sheer desperation the partition between our world and the next he was only making the gesture to which Faust refers at the beginning of Goethe's play: 'In the beginning was *the Act*'.

But now, as he lurches forward again, the movement of his muscles, the circulation of his blood, the sensations of panting and sweating, the touches of coolness with the faint puffs of northerly air, all these things helped to retain and consolidate the mysterious magnetism he **had** fished up from beyond our psychic equator.

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And as with the ordinary man's awareness of another life', this assertion of the soul's secret store of subliminal force didn't present itself— though he was driven to stumble upon it in desperation — as any kind of mystic Illumination. It presented itself as a calm and simple fact and bore upon it the hall-mark of common sense.

And the comforting thing about it was that the power to draw upon this 'fountain' of living water was entirely independent of the place or the occasion. The nervous salesman whose worry about his approaching 'calling-up' drove him to this drastic S.O.S. happened — like Macbeth when he met the witches — to be striding, only his movement was hardly a stride, over a 'Desert Heath' on a lovely June day; and the effort he made, as he explained to his wife, 'to enjoy his walk', happened to have, as its material to work upon, rocks and stones, heather and streams of water, and the cries of curlews.

But it might just as well have had a solitary begrimed tree in a sultry back-yard to work on, or a sky-line from a hospital ward, or a factory, or a pit, or a brick-yard, or a dock, or a locomotive shed.

The energy the soul has drawn up from its other-world reservoir must have *something* to work on, something, as our friend said to his wife, 'to enjoy'; but the point is, it need not be something that is rare or lovely or beautiful, except in the profound sense that all matter, all chemical combinations of atoms, all the planetary elements, have their own particular quality of what — if you were artist enough and not a mere Dilettante of the Picturesque, might well be called beautiful.

The truth is that the power we summon up to rescue us from the tyranny of this world requires the barest minimum of the outward upon which to 'enjoy itself. The great thing is to feel it bubbling up, or burning up, or floating up or even *dragged* up, like Cerberus out of Hell!

And the more often you practise this subtlest of all mortal devices the more naturally and easily will it work. But what do you actually *do* with these chemical substances, with all these animate and inanimate objects?

Well! Suppose I were one of the people sent down to Hades so that Hitler might out-history history; and suppose I lay dying on the battlefield with my bowels torn out, what would I be feeling?

Let us grant first that some chance in the effect of shrapnel upon a man's vitals has given us a pulse-beat of respite before death comes;

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and through the sick film that is falling upon my eyes I vision for a moment, swimming and dim but unmistakable in its outlines, the charred branch of an elder-bush with one or two blossoms still left upon it.

Now I am aware that pure chance, or accident, or what Hardy calls 'crass casualty' is so potent in the various upshots of men's affairs that the circumstances of our last moments are not likely to prove an exception.

We are constantly being assured that since character is fate it would be character that would prove the determining factor as to my thoughts and feelings as I lay with my fingers entwined in my bowels and a strange numbness fallen upon me, and, for my final moments of consciousness, the pain gone.

I know it would be possible that I should fix what, as a cliché-loving novelist I might be tempted to call my 'glazing eyes' upon that elder-blossom with a last spurt of sardonic fury against God. I know it is possible that using that charred elder-tree with its single blossom as a symbol of his power I might 'curse God and die'. I know it is possible too that my attention might be completely atrophied to what my eyes beheld as my soul travelled over land and sea to the person or persons I loved the most in the world.

It is likely enough also that at the final moment the greedy selfishness of my competitive spirit would prevail over every other feeling, and that 'the last infirmity of noble minds' would be literally the *latest* infirmity of an *ignoble* mind and that I should spend my ebbing minutes desperately wondering whether a manuscript I had left at home would be lost if the place were bombed.

If, however, I had to the end faithfully practised my familiar psychological trick of forcing myself to enjoy what lay before me and enjoy it in my own peculiar almost erotic manner, it is possible that however weak or even in pain I was, if the pain wasn't overpowering, I should instinctively call up that power in me which belonged to the Dimension on the brink of which I was now pausing, and instinctively force myself to 'enjoy', in the strength of that power, the blackened branch and the ghost-white blossoms.

There was an epoch in my days, when I believed that happiness was a natural, a legitimate, and, what's more, a *realizable* aim.

I cannot feel like that now. What I feel now is that happiness must be left to come and go as it pleases, in pursuance of its own mysterious

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caprices; while we confine ourselves to seizing upon, and forcibly or feebly possessing ourselves of those external elements of our present Dimension which we are able to enjoy.

In Coleridge's 'Ode to Dejection' there is a passage where he speaks of a 'peculiar tint of yellow-green' in the sky, a tint which he *sees*, but cannot *feel*, to be beautiful.

Well! My idea is that if Coleridge had behaved on that occasion, great bard and metaphysician as he was, in the manner in which my salesman is behaving now, he would have been content to *see* how beautiful that sky was, to know that under happier conditions, or in a happier mood, he naturally would enjoy it, and then to force himself to make the gesture of enjoying it.

I used to think that by watching the eccentric ways and tricky weather-signs of happiness you could hunt down the feathery thing and 'bend it to yourself, without destroying its 'winged life'; but I have now come to the conclusion that this happiness-hunt is a tiresome game from beginning to end and not worth the candle.

I do not at all mean that we should play the puritan and put the Will of God before our own enjoyment. I mean that we should, as the Americans say, *make the motion* of seeking enjoyment by giving ourselves up to whatever 'peculiar tint of yellow-green' thrills us the most at the moment!

And this* I contend is precisely what the ordinary person instinctively does. The simplest among us if left to ourselves, unperverted by these sophisticated intellects, would in our moments of worry do exactly what this man did, that is to say we would keep our souls in touch with our nerves according to the old technique of war, and advance far into the 'tints of yellow-green' — I speak metaphorically — with the spiritual gesture of ravishing these lovely things.

This is a very different method from the auto-sadistic puritanism of that proud and touchy Totalitarian, Thomas Carlyle. What *he* says is the final counsel of disillusioned Fascism; and what it amounts to is, 'Hell, Let's have some more *work!*'

The difference between the Shakespearean instinct of my salesman, forcing himself to enjoy his walk when his 'calling-up' nervousness seized him, and the Carlylean hero forcing himself to work to forget is a gulph deeper than the space that separates this world from the next.

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The curious thing is that when once a person grasps the complete implication of the nature of our ignorance his whole attitude changes. The 'certainty' which some people have of there being no other life is a certainty without justification. How can there be such justification when every single category of our present ways of thinking, that is to say of every category of thinking that it is possible for us to imagine, depends completely on the familiar space-time in which we now live? When once this is broken up — that is what we have to face — there is absolutely nothing left.

Now what our rationalists are simple-minded enough to imagine as 'nothing*' is a very different thing from the real and absolute nothing. The real and absolute nothing might be anything; that is the point!

And the ordinary Shakespearean Tom Fool feels this in his bones. When we shake off at death the space-time of this world we shake off the whole mental mechanism which now drives us to believe in extinction; but in spite of this our frantic logic wilfully brings down the axe, like a Nazi executioner, and proclaims our obituary with the crushing word 'annihilation'.

But this mental necessity, invented, as Bergson says, to cope with the lowest levels of Matter, in reality falls away completely at death, just as Dante's 'Emperor' of the one and only Universe will fall away.

What in this Dimension we naturally think and feel about life and death is in harmony with this Dimension. When we are dead, life and death, according to this present dimension, cease; and something else substitutes itself for them. Of the nature of this something else it is not only now impossible to obtain the faintest clue; it must of necessity always be impossible, simply because Time and Space *get in the way*. It is just as contrary to the common sense of the 'common or garden' individual — whose secretest instinct Shakespeare and Rabelais interpret — to 'beheve', as we so quaintly call it, in annihilation as in that old-fashioned Deity with a beard whom the early Painters love to paint.

I would go further and say that it is just as impossible to beheve in 'another life', in any conceivable intellectual definition of that term, as it is to beheve in 'the Great White Lodge'. It is as Monkeys and Worms, it is as Grasses and Trees, it is as Midges and Gnats, quite as much as Men, that we are brought to a dead end when we try to imagine anything about the next world.

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It is not hard to fancy that the blind urge — this individual and personal impulse that our pseudo-scientists rejoice to treat as universal, and to call the 'Life-Force' — of every one of the creatures of earth does in some dim manner recoil sullenly and helplessly, and with a trouble corresponding to our own obstinate anger, before the supernatural barrier that rounds our present life with a circle, as Homer would say, 'of pitiless bronze*.

But because every living thing in this world butts blindly with the feeble horns of its snail-like hope against the adamantine barrier, and is unable, for all the pulsing of this tender organ to know one single thing about what lies beyond, there is no reason why we should affirm that what we roundly call, deriving a weird satisfaction from the brutality of those particular syllables, annihilation, should be 'the be-all and the end-all'.

The dogmatic deniers of another life have a most quaint and touching and childish faith in human reason. This is where the 'common or garden* person, represented by such careless and popular writers as Rabelais, Cervantes, Montaigne and Shakespeare, is much nearer the truth than our professional scientists and philosophers.

Although a portion of the soul of every gudgeon and moth and lizard and newt and beetle and bird, not to speak of man and the nobler animals, is already in the next world — which is only the next Dimension of the unfathomable multiverse — its nature and character are so completely hid from us that all we have a right to say about it is that it is as different from any of our space-time conceptions of it as a human thought is different from a frost-mark on a window-pane.

We can be perfectly sure, anyway, about what it is *not*. It is *not* anything that we have the remotest chance of imagining! We have arms and legs, just as a snail has horns, a stickleback fins, a cock a comb; and as death comes nearer to us and nearer to the hedges and ponds and gardens of our devoted isle, we have no more hope of retaining our anthropoid appendages than these others have of retaining horns and fins and scales and shards and feathers.

The next Dimension — in which we are *all* already unconsciously living — is something so absolutely different from anything we can remotely call up before our mind that it is a quaint and curious folly to spend a moment thinking about it.

But that it is there and that a portion of us, though deaf and blind

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and dumb, benumbed in touch, atrophied in smell, is *already in it*, is the cause of the strangest phenomenon of our earthly life, the causeless thrill of pleasure in the 'tangled yarn' and confused substance of *what Exists*; the cause why birds sing, frogs croak, squirrels chatter, bulls bellow, dogs bark, lambs bleat, cocks crow, fish leap, and midges dance, *not* purely for necessity, but because, deep as death is, life is deeper than death.

What Wordsworth calls 'the pleasure which there is in life itself is a pleasure that carries with it, both for a man and a midge a feeling of permanence. The indifference to death of so many creatures, the indifference to death of so many races, is a hint that the soul of a living thing is dimly aware that it is only a portion of it which perishes with the body. It is aware of this without knowing that it is aware of it. It hears the 'tick, tick, tick'⁹ of the ancestral clock at the World's End, not with the consciousness of its mind but with the consciousness of its spirit.

The undying tick of that pre-historic clock is for us in this island naturally uttered in the aboriginal tongue. '*Nis gwn!*' it says, 'I don't know!'

And this ignorance of the next Dimension — though a part of us swims obliviously in its element all the while — lies at the end of each one of the long avenues of our desire to survive the death of the body. And we must be content to leave it there. It is likely enough that the difference between the next Dimension and every thought we have about it is even greater with us than it is with the beasts of the field.

Dim and obscure is *their* feeling, dimmer and more obscure the feeling of creatures still lower in the scale; but any man who isn't aware, as he moves among his fellow creatures, how the part in him which survives death is what they all possess, is a man who deliberately cuts himself off from deepest intimation of immortality.

But the point about this humility which is the hall-mark of the Revelation of Jesus which concerns us now is its connection with this power of forcing yourself to 'enjoy' the pleasure of being alive.

Remember I am not talking about being what we call happy. I agree that sometimes, quite often in fact, the forced enjoyment I am advocating may have little happiness in it. But if this must be, so be it. *In the actual effort to enjoy* there is enjoyment. Happiness comes, as Goethe says, 'like happy children crying: "Here we are!" ' and is totally *unpremeditated*.

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Man is an animal; and man is born to enjoy himself; and the effort by which he *tries* to enjoy himself is part of the enjoyment. 'Enjoyment', in the sense I am using the word, is a successful grasping, or a successful appropriation to our deepest soul, of 'the form and pressure' of our immediate surroundings.

In the case of the well-meaning though nervous salesman, whose calling-up is so imminent, the subject-matter of this 'act of enjoyment' which perhaps can best be defined as a cerebral ravishing, happens, since it contains the yellow potentilla and the green hair-streak, to be aesthetically pleasing; but the intrinsic value of the act would be just the same, in fact it would be greater, if the elements we had to practise on were *not* aesthetically pleasing; were in fact—though in one sense all elements reducible to chemistry *must* have their own peculiar beauty—were selected from a mass of offensive and forbidding objects.

But to return to our lonely pedestrian. He was vaguely thinking about God now; for ever since he tapped that reservoir of force in himself he had been—good anxious man!—desirous in his conscientious mind of clearing up all doubt, whether it was God who had come to his rescue or not.

And he decided that it *was* God; for he had always told his wife when she wanted to go to a High Church Service 'because of the singing' that our only communication with God was the 'still small voice' in our own heart.

Now it happened that our friend's unsuccessful brother was several years older than himself and lived in one of the poorest streets in Liverpool. During all this time, ever since the collapse of Europe began, being above service-age, he had held what he had got for himself, an unskilled munitions-job, of no light nature and entailing long hours.

And our friend of the green hair-streak incident recalled with shame a certain flicker of contempt for his brother that had crossed many times the threshold of his consciousness when he saw him unable to rise from the position of an ordinary wage-earner. But, after all, his brother remained stoical in adversity and this was the very virtue, and none other, that he knew, without looking into the mirror in their tiny hall, he himself had had a glimpse of, when God spoke to him as he bent over the potentilla and the butterfly.

Yes, that was it. That was the secret; and it was no more than what in

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his private thoughts he had always held, namely that a cheerful spirit and a kind heart were the apex of all the virtues. But how could his brother keep it up like that, toiling so hard all day at the works, and undertaking other war-work in the evening?

And more than that, how could his brother remain so cheerful when he had no week-end cottage to retreat to and all those rough children, and a mate who was both a shrew *and* a slut? 'Tom, can't have seen the heather for ten years/ he thought. 'No, not since he married; for *that* girl always makes him go to Blackpool.' But Tom, he thought, probably wouldn't have noticed the green butterfly if he *had* seen it, 'for he had never been a chap to study Nature'.

Thus did one good man disparage another good man, while to us who know them both the interest is to mark how they both had discovered that to sink into one's own soul is a better way of enduring adversity than to take refuge in religion or philosophy. *How* you sank into your own soul shouldn't be expressed, except in words so bleached with banality that intellectual and aesthetic people instinctively shrank from them as if they were the utterances of Mark Tapley, or of Polly-Anna.

But the paradox that the most magical secrets of life are revealed to downright fools may still have some truth in it. The conditions under which we live at present force us to root up many false assumptions. We have been driven to make a bonfire of them as a nation; and we are now being driven to do the same thing as individuals.

It was Remy de Gourmont who was so fond of the phrase, 'the de-association of ideas'; and it must often present itself to anyone who attempts to become a medium for ordinary persons that concealed under the verbal trap-doors that intellectuals despise are to be found the treasure-chests of the subtlest wisdom.

Consider the expression 'enjoy yourself for example. Now what both these commonplace brothers, the rich self-conscious one and the poor, rough-and-ready one, discovered during the intensifying of their lives by the war was that concealed beneath this common phrase, surely one of the most undistinguished expressions in the language^ lay the whole process of the cosmogonic energy of living things.

And the word *sensation* too! We all know the quarrel between philosophers who say that ideas depend on sensations, and those who say that sensations depend on the creative synthesis of the mind; but at this

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moment I am using the word 'sensation*' in its most ordinary and most popular significance, simply as a *conscious feeling* enjoyed or endured *through the senses*.

To be capable of sensation is the supreme test of conscious life. An organism that feels is a conscious organism. An organism that has ceased to feel is either asleep or dead.

In sensation he all the mysteries of conscious life. Sensation implies consciousness in action. A very little analysis suffices to show us that every sensation implies an activity of the mind. While you forget your pain your pain ceases to exist. And it is the same with pleasure. At every second of our lives our minds are at work creating through our senses that tangled skein of pain and pleasure that is the rose-scented and nettle-stinging garment of life!

The mind itself is for ever quivering with memories of pain and pleasure, hopes of pain and pleasure, fears of pain and pleasure. Its reactions, reflections, imaginations, repercussions, inventions, visions, create new worlds of pain and pleasure for the soul to inhabit.

Our conscious self, the focus-point of a million rainbows of pain-rays and pleasure-rays, rocks itself up and down on the Ocean of Being. It is a ghost-ship whose rational compass is broken but whose steersman still sails by the sensation of light from the polar star.

The strange thing about us is that we don't consciously gather up, each one separately for himself, the life-thread of our ever growing experience. We are forced to feel and we are forced to be conscious of our feeling.

But it is left to our choice whether or not to electrify the *wire of continuity* between the separate moments of our necessitated feeling. Generally we are so absorbed by the beads on the string that we forget the string. But although we live from moment to moment as far as sensation is concerned, and shirk the effort to tighten the connection between the beads, in one essential thing none of us quite fail. I refer to this strange power we all possess of calling upon the mysterious reservoir of magnetic energy which reaches us from the portion of our soul that extends into the next Dimension: and of calling upon this to strengthen us in that activity of conscious enjoyment which is the lung, so to speak, of the spirit's in-breathing and out-breathing.

For the truth is that although we are so slow to grow conscious of the

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connecting link between our past and present sensations, when it comes to struggling with some especially disagreeable thought that creates nearly as much pain as the reality would do and a great deal more terror, or when it comes to forcing ourselves to concentrate on a familiar sensation, even though the pleasure usually derived from that sensation refuses to flow into the mould we have prepared for it, we instinctively resort to a desperate appeal to what may correctly be styled the supernatural part of the soul.

Consider for example the actual nature of the 'revelation' — and there is no reason why so startling a discovery, even though it is only made in ourselves, should not be called a 'revelation' — which came to these two ordinary men of good will under the impact of the war. They both learnt that the most important motion of the will, or conscious effort of the will, that any living creature could make was the effort to endure, without self-pity and with a cheerful spirit, the painful, the tragical and the laborious.

This 'effort to endure' merges into, and cannot be separated from the will to force ourself to enjoy. We 'enjoy' with our whole nature; that is to say with our mind and with our will we use our senses in the embrace of the 'body, form and pressure' of all the elements around us.

This psycho-magnetic act of will, if I may so style it, is continually wavering and flickering — as we all know only too well — between enduring and enjoying.

When the impecunious brother had been sharply scolded by his wife, mocked by his children, and worn out by his extra work, the exertion of this simple will-power, fortified by a magical accession of energy from the 'next Dimension', or from what we used to call the supernatural, felt to him more like endurance than enjoyment; but when his wife was in a good mood, his children quiet or out of the way, his half-pint at the Marquis of Granby in reasonable prospect, an absolutely fresh packet of cigarettes in his pocket, the light of the sunset flinging an heraldic rose-bloom upon the roof-tops, and a mysterious wind bringing him memories of his boyhood, why then the compass-needle of the purpose of life need only shift the thirtieth part of an inch, and lo! endurance becomes enjoyment!

CHAPTER V I I I

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

WE have reached the point therefore of recognizing that the ultimate gesture of the Creature wrestling with its Cosmos, the gesture by which we call upon the supernatural portion of our own soul to enable us to enjoy our fate, is what Wordsworth had in his mind when he used the curious expression: *the pleasure which there is in life itself*.

Now it is clear that we all, the people fated to be killed by the Germans as well as the people fated to kill the Germans, find it necessary to emphasize a few other impulses beyond the general one, which indeed is more than an impulse, of enduring or enjoying, and it is to a consideration of some of these that we must now pass.

Is it not a curious thing that we can become subjects of that 'kingdom of Heaven', of which Jesus was perpetually talking, without feeling what is called *love* for Jesus himself?

Now there is an assumption in this matter which has been very extensively spread among us, namely that there is no way of entering the Kingdom of Heaven except by being lovable and by loving.

This seems to me a great blunder; and a blunder which causes considerable self-laceration to a number of ordinary people who feel that their temperament refuses to lend itself either to that mysterious 'charity' eulogized by St. Paul and practised by the Saints, or to that genial sociability and impulsive tenderness that we imply when we use the expression 'a warm heart'.

And doesn't it appear as if there were many of these simple souls who hearing the praise of love' in the scriptures, and in popular hymns, and finding allusions to it in plays, cinemas, sermons, novels and poetry, feel that they have little chance of ever entering the 'Kingdom of Heaven' until by hook or crook they acquire the power to experience this all-conquering gift?

There are also two other varieties of love likely to be familiar to normal persons; I mean women's possessive love and men's lecherous love.

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A woman's possessive love is as dangerous and remorseless as a man's lust. Both are natural; both are inevitable, and neither deserve any particular praise or blame for being what they are. If a man deserves praise for restraining his lust, a woman deserves even greater praise for restraining her possessive love.

The extraordinary thing is that while the man's conscience reproaches him for his selfish lust, no woman's conscience seems to reproach her for her selfish possessive love. And yet we have only to begin to analyse these things to discover that the woman's 'love' is no more like the 'love' described by St. Paul than is the man's lust. She will do everything else for him. But she will not — though she knows well enough that *that* is what he wants and that *that* is what alone would make him really happy — relinquish what Mr. Lloyd George recently described as 'the seals of office'.

And if neither the possessive love of women nor the lecherous lust of men can be regarded as in tune with the Kingdom of Heaven, neither can that warm-hearted relish for the give and take of gregarious society. This 'lovingness' increases the pleasurable glow of the person who displays it but it seldom is evocative of any deep spiritual endurance. We thus reach the conclusion that neither possessive love, nor lecherous love, nor even warm-hearted gregarious love, is what we need to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. And as the high mysterious *Agape* of St. Paul is, from his own definition, clearly too rare and sublime a thing for ordinary human purposes, we are left with something that is, in its essence, not *love* at all. We are left with ordinary *kindness*.

And that it is kindness and *not* love that is necessary for the Kingdom of Heaven can be proved by a scrutiny of Jesus' words about becoming as a little child. Be it noted that he doesn't say become 'as a child' but as a little child. Now there is all the difference in the world between a child and a little child. What the former is we know well. Who *doesn't* know that difficult and engaging Being whose egoism so closely resembles our own though its *power* is pathetically weaker? But the latter is simply a baby.

Now the characteristics of a baby are quite different from those of the ordinary snatching, greedy, querulous, cunning, cruel, mischievous, winning, bewitching child.

A baby is a detached, contemplative and self-sufficient philosopher.

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A baby smiles out of the deepest gulfs of consciousness. It is entirely free from pride and conceit. It has no craftiness, no lying in wait to deceive, no devilish plots, no cruelty.

It lives for sensation. Its humility is absolute. Can a baby compete with other babies? Do babies rival one another in clever bon-mots as children do? Do you ever catch a baby 'acting silly' or 'showing off'? Does a baby look ashamed when it has behaved like a baby?

A baby is as much beyond ethical compulsion as it is beyond the compulsion of the artist. It comes sailing in from another Dimension, and bears about it that Dimension's indescribable spirit. This is a spirit to which the over-tones and under-tones of what might be called the *primal sensations* are alone — and *that* only feebly and faintly — responsive and commensurate.

It comes sailing in from another Dimension and its helplessness suggests *something intentional*, as though on a widening river in a Chinese Picture it were rocking and tossing and drifting and floating, according to the Secret of the Tao.

It is as absolute in its egoism as if it came sailing into our petty tribal contentions, into our States and our Sovereignities and our Competitions, wrapped in the pearl-white *samite* of the sacred gonfalon of that Palace of Anarchy towards which, whether in the Past or the Future, the needle of our compass turns.

A baby lives for *sensation*; but the sensations it lives for are the purest essences of our planetary life. So pure and absolute and free they are and so arbitrary in their coming and going, that as the poet says, they often remind the infant voyager of the 'imperial palace whence he came'.

And the baby acts like an exiled monarch. It has no desire to compete. Its superiority is implied in its humility. When it cries it tramples upon creation and flings the gods out of the sky. When it laughs it cajoles destiny and disarms fate. It has no life-illusion save the life-illusion of being beyond the rules of the Dimension it is visiting. It behaves like the citizen of an eternal city who can be kind to the savages of the tyranny of Time, while its own passport carried a different signature.

A baby is kinder than the people who minister to it. They possess it. It possesses nobody. When a baby takes your finger, and smiles at you, it is you who are clinging to Life, not Life to you.

Through the gates of pain the *Golden Hind* of the New Birth sails into

the harbour; but the war has now brought pain to our door, and where pain walks, *there* walks the leveller. Not to be in pain is one miracle; not to be dead is another. Pain is the measurer of the true proportion; pain is the architect of the real perspective; and pain can work infallibly as well as vicariously, like the Pope.

It will be different in the next Dimension; and from what the soul feels that's up to its waist, so to speak in that Dimension already, it will be *so completely different* that the space from this segment of paper across which my pen is travelling to the remotest galaxy in the Milky Way will be of far less importance than the distance between your mind and my mind.

Life moves like a spirit from one smell, taste, sight, touch, sound, to another; and a wounded man prostrate on his back can grasp life through every pore of his skin, and float and circle, and hover and dart, and quiver and turn to stone, and in spite of his feeling of nausea or his endurance of pain he can make the mental gesture of enjoying Life and Death at the same moment.

Both of these brothers had a system, that was really the same system, of dealing with the mystery of pain. And though one brother shared a living-room' with five children, and the other seldom even saw with his eyes the kettle which boiled his tea, in certain tilings they were very alike.

But although there was the same mania for simple sensations in them both, proving their blood-kinship, it must be confessed it was easier for the childless one with a cottage in the country to give himself up to such joys than for the factory-worker who had nowhere, except while he walked to the place from which the bus started, where he could be alone!

At the moment when his mind was smarting under his wife's tongue, and his bones aching from his day at the works, there came one of those *cessations of tongues* which, quite as much as any Pentecost, are a sign of occult disturbance. But even in the midst of this domestic hush, due either to a goose walking over one of their graves or to his children having heard an enemy-plane, the man deliberately forced himself into that lively consciousness of the boiling kettle, of the darting flames, of the evening light on the opposite wall, and finally the word 'Repairs' over a bicycle-shop on the other side of the street, which he had found by experience gave him a private and peculiar satisfaction.

He forced himself to enjoy, too, certain recurrent domestic details. One

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of these was his oldest child's round owl-like spectacles reflected in the firelight; another the fact that his wife had removed her dirty apron and had put on the most presentable of all her week-day ones, and yet another a little blue vase which his second daughter had brought him from the sea-side.

Yes, he made the gesture of enjoying all these things. But he could not enjoy them. The rasping scrape of his wife's nerves had been better aimed than usual.

There was a round alarm-clock on the chimney-piece that informed him in relentless severity that in half an hour he would have to be on duty. But, for all that, he resolutely continued his mental effort, deliberately driving from his mind the thought of his duty, and helping himself to some bread and margarine while his wife, unaware which of her flicking darts had pierced him, began, as she filled the tea-pot, to explain why the war was so much worse for women than for men. •

This was a moment, as the children began their usual high-pitched argument, that he was nearly driven to let go his hold on the handle of his mind, but he knew too well the misery that such weakness would entail, and desperately, just as his brother had done above the green hair-streak, he bent over his cup and called up the magic from the buried roots of his soul.

It may well be that if the taste of that cup of tea hadn't been particularly aromatic nothing would have come of this appeal to the next Dimension. As it was, it did the trick. The man got himself under control. He amused the children, he opened a tin of sardines, he placated the woman, and by the time he lit his cigarette he thought to himself how lucky he was to be able to afford sardines at a time like this and have all his family alive to enjoy them.

Sardines weren't in his usual 'repertoire'; but the sight of those oily little scales, and even the jagged edges of the open tin gave the man a thrill of unexpected happiness. And it justified his method. He had forced himself to be cheerful when he was anything but cheerful; but now destiny had rewarded him, by giving to the oily zigzags of an open sardine-tin the quality of his deepest secret hope; the hope of spending — after the war — a fortnight on Dartmoor.

Leaving our parable for a time, it must be once more repeated that the qualities that belong to the Kingdom of Heaven revealed by Jesus are so

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deep and subtle — I might almost say so cosmic — that it is of very small importance what name you give them. You could limit yourself, if so you pleased, as long as you defined them as carefully as St. Paul defines 'charity', to designating them by *numbers* in place of using any proper names; and in this case let us indicate by the symbol *one* every shade and nuance of what we ordinarily mean by *natural human kindness*.

Let us indicate by the symbol *two* all those occult recoveries and miraculous intimations still less adequately expressed in the homely syllables of that tiresome and inartistic word *cheerfulness*. This will leave as represented by symbol *three* that still more evasive and still more subtle *atmosphere* — for it is more diffused than the rest — that is so imperfectly suggested by the magic-working word *humility*.

We have been already led in these brief psychological glimpses into the lives of two very ordinary men to the conclusion that for a human soul brought face to face with a war like this the underlying mood it were wisest to cultivate is a mood whose atmosphere is suggested, though by no means exhausted in the three homely expressions, *kindness*, *cheerfulness*, *humility*.

Of course these things, comprehensive as they are, do not cover the whole field. They do not for example indicate our attitude to our natural animal-functions, such as the pleasures of eating and drinking and the pleasures of Eros.

And beyond these chief impulses of an average living creature, yes! and beneath them too, there are all those other abandonments, gentler and more vague, that come to a dweller upon this earth, tilings that have to do with life; more rarefied moods.

Kindness, cheerfulness and humility are not the *material* of life, but the formulating *mould* whereby the soul puts its predetermined seal upon the material of life.

Consider for example the third mould in our Triad, namely the powerful cosmic force humility. Be it noted that having got rid of the arrogance of philosophy as well as the sanctimoniousness of religion we do not sink into humility out of superstition or fear or reverence or pious awe. We revert to it in a wanton, profane and secular spirit. We employ it as a magician might employ some potent *elixir vitae* in the creation of Homunculus. We use humility neither like Uriah Heep nor like the author of the neo-platonic fourth Gospel, but like a heathen alchemist casting a new

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element into his crucible. The great thing to remember is that what the Poll-Parrots of to-day sneer at as *wishful thinking* is one of the most powerful of all cosmic forces.

It was *wishful thinking*, not the 'Struggle for Existence', that created the complicated organisms flung up by Evolution; and it is our 'wishful' faith that the secret of the wisest life can be found in the character of any doleman, any pensioner, any tramp, any poor devil of a nobody, whom Hitler would regard as born to be a slave, that leads us to our conclusion.

The only real 'progress' in our present Dimension is the appearance of 'men of good will'. Science is nothing compared with this miracle. It was the *wishful thinking* of all the commonplace nobodies of history that evolved 'men of good will'. Hitler is a Reversion; for with all his prophetic magnetism and mystical power it is impossible to regard him as a 'man of good will' — As Goethe said of Napoleon, he is a *demonic* character, and if not the Antichrist he is certainly the antithesis of any cheerful or humorous humility.

In my present attempt to act as a *medium* for the unexpressed feelings of the ordinary democratic man I have perpetually to remind myself that I am not expressing these unexpressed feelings — all the lightly-coming and lightly-going over-tones that make up 'the pleasure which there is in life itself* — for the sake of the ordinary person, for with the ordinary person such enjoyment is an absolute and needs no expression, but for my own sake and also for the sake of such among our younger 'intelligentsia' as have grown uneasy under the arrogance of their superiority.

The feelings of the ordinary democratic man as he responds to the hardships and horrors of this war are the same feelings — only more concentrated—as those with which he responds to life's accustomed pains and shocks and nervous irritations; while the vast cloud of constant small awarenesses of indefinable pleasure, which Nature gives to all her children, would last on just the same if all art and all writing ceased for ever.

We writers and artists think too highly of ourselves. Life would be what it is, a thing unbearable in some aspects and in others powdered as thick with pleasure as the firmament with stars if all works of art were thrown into the sea.

Isn't it possible that we writers and artists make such a stir about 'creativity' and 'awareness' and 'sensitivity' and 'imaginative insight' largely because — due to various psychological frustrations — our

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normal response to 'the pleasure which there is in life itself has been interrupted?

I don't think there is need for any particular psychic insight to detect the fact that the thousand and one little nameless sensations which make up our mortal satisfaction in being alive are fatally dependent upon our emotional moods; but I don't know whether my readers will agree with me when I assert — for this is my own experience — that they also depend *upon the state of our conscience*; whether we are or are not, for instance, suffering from the self-laceration of remorse.

Would I were allowed by the licence permitted to philosophers, to invent some absolutely new word for this Triad of kindness and humorous cheerfulness and humility which I regard as the best psychological background for enjoying to the full 'the pleasure which there is in life itself; for I am fully aware that the superficial look of these words is sure to arouse in the un-Shakespearean, un-Dickensian mind of any modern intellectual a feeling of sophisticated contempt. 'So we've got back *there*, have we?' he sighs wearily, as if he were some great Sir Francis Bacon whom we were recommending to go to the village Curate to learn a philosophy of life.

It must be allowed, of course, that I am using kindness, humorous cheerfulness, and humility in their full Rabelaisian, Pantagruelian sense, where they go far and deep. What we want really is some new word for this particular *triad of qualities* at which the evolution of our species seems aiming, and against which these devilish Dictators, have raised the standard of revolt.

Charles Lamb's phrase 'Utopian Christian' is not a bad one; but we really do need some catchy verbal antithesis to all this 'master race' arrogance. Try, reader, if you can't hit upon some wittier appellation by which we can contrast the democratic virtues, and the virtues, too, of the masses of the Italian people, with the 'iiberalleskeit' of these haughty 'herren-folk'.

Not since Rabelais invented the word *Pantagruelian* for the human magnanimities that Hitler sets out to destroy has any bookworm been inspired with a word earthy enough, and peaceful enough, and mellow enough to indicate the temper of people who refuse to regard war as the supreme test of greatness.

We need a word that suggests all the rich wine and oil and milk of the

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natural pleasures which only by means of these same qualities can be thoroughly enjoyed by the human soul.

I beg you, my reader, whoever you are, to just try the experiment at this very moment of allowing your mind to follow me in this choice of human qualities; which I swear to you is no arbitrary choice.

It must be understood however that the temper I am advocating must be thought of as possible to the soul of every man born into the world. It is only by thinking of it in this way that we can endure events such as are occurring everywhere at the present hour.

You will already perhaps have been surprised that I haven't included *love* among the essential qualities needed in a world like this; nor do I retract a jot of this wilful omission. Justice is as much more essential than Love as Mercy is more essential than Justice!

Now the one thing that Love *never* displays is Mercy. In the cannibalistic heart of Love there can only be mercy when there's nothing left of sweet and desirable to be swallowed up! No oracle in heaven or earth can alter the fact that every living creature throughout the world lives by its sensations. What you need therefore—I mean what a clever person needs—is to imitate ordinary people by simplifying the conscious life of the senses; and this can only be done when we get rid of our pride and priggishness and our mania for competing.

And here we reach the heart of the whole matter; for by 'the conscious life of the senses' I mean a sensuous awareness far beyond the specialized enjoyment of food or drink or the pleasures of love.

I mean, in fact, exactly what Wordsworth meant when he used the expression 'the pleasure which there is in life itself. Now although this conscious sensuous life of which I speak includes that basic glow of all the physical movements of the creature, walking, flying, burrowing, climbing, swimming, diving, basking in the sun, inhaling the salt wind, or merely 'enjoying our thoughts over the fire', it includes even more than this. It is an *active principle* in the organism; and as such it is an *active principle* in the soul, for it fortifies, inspires, sustains and comforts the solitary 'ego' at the centre of every-man's life.

I look in vain in the dictionary for any word to describe the continuity of sense-impressions which are flowing over us all the while and receding from us all the while. It certainly would have to be a very comprehensive word! It would have to include, for instance, that fine, indescribable

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freshness that quickens the air sometimes under certain conditions of the weather, and which we draw into our lungs with mysterious relief, as if we were aware of coming home to something old and familiar that we had lost long ago.

It is natural enough that there should be no one word in our language to describe such a mystery as the living urge of our whole Being as we take hold of life.

Our personality, even as we are aware of it, is so much more widely extended than our physical body, that the scope of the *antennae*, so to speak, of our identity is by no means confined to the space our body fills. It extends, this grasp, this touch, this reach, like a living and conscious *aura* projected from some point in time and space that feels to our own consciousness as if it were independent of the body.

The ordinary person when he is using in a vague and comprehensive manner the senses of the body for enjoying life feels as if their temporal and spatial position was very indefinite and uncertain. I would go so far as to say that if the ordinary person tried to analyse exactly what he *does* feel when he is 'enjoying himself' — that is to say when he is *taking things* in with all his senses at once—he would discover that his personal leaping-off place is not only very loosely located *in* time and space, but carries with it a feeling that it might just as well be *outside* time and space.

This feeling often comes in a different manner from the poetical 'intimation' described by Wordsworth; for it comes quietly and calmly and with *no sense of the mystical*. It is — when he comes to look straight at it — what the ordinary person feels to be the cold, quiet, natural reality of the way his mind works and of the way things are. He reaches this feeling — the feeling, I mean, that when with all his senses he grasps at life he does so from a vantage-point independent of his body and even sometimes independent of time and space — on no rocking under-tow of mystery, on no erratic tide of occult intimation.

He reaches it from the solid position of an ordinary person, thinking ordinary thoughts.

But the point is that when an ordinary person 'is being' — to use the simple expression of Robert Burns — '*happy thinking*'⁹, or as I would say, in a grosser and less poetic manner, is making love to life with all his senses, he seems to himself to be embracing existence with more than his senses. He seems to himself to be grasping at the phenomena of life and

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death from some focal point outside life and death. This may be an illusion, just as it may be an illusion that the depths of our soul answers our call for help from another Dimension; but I think it will be found that when we really begin to acquire the trick of living in our conscious sensations the three qualities which I took upon myself to associate with what Jesus called the 'Kingdom of Heaven' will turn out to be the most magical of all possible helps to this Faustian attempt to embrace our 'glassy essence' with another 'glassy essence'.

To an ordinary person — in fact to everybody except a few privileged intellectuals — it will be clear why it is that the egoistic grasp upon life in which our identity finds its account is helped by the cultivation of kindness where it would be thwarted and impeded by the possessiveness of love.

Love is always trying to obsess us and side track us and fetter the free leap of our being from a limitless vantage-ground upon what lies around us.

But *kindness* lends itself with easy grace to the nature of the situation. Again, while mystical ecstasy would disturb our grasp upon life, any humorous cheerfulness acts like a wholesome *sponge* keeping the poison and the suspicion and the anger in a state of harmless suspense, until, in a calmer and less agitated hour, we can squeeze out the perilous stuff.

Return for a moment to our middle-aged brother offering up so much of his sleep to the cause of his country. He is back again now and longing, before he goes, happily and proudly to bed, for *what?* Not for love, whether in the possessive sense or in the sense of wild romance and cruel jealousy and sweet delirious exhaustion.

What he craves is more obvious, more animal, more harmless, more un-committing. He simply craves to be listened to, and while he is being listened to to be given a well-concocted glass of some sort of pick-merup, together with a packet of cigarettes, and a little irresponsible erotic play.

Just because Love, whether in the form of intense lust, or in the form of intense passion, or in the form of intense possessiveness, is the strongest emotion in the world it is much harder to reconcile: with 'the pleasure which there is in life itself' than is kindness. Love commits us, kindness frees us, love enslaves us, kindness liberates us, love tortures us, kindness heals us. The possessive love of women is no less dangerous, no less ruthless, no less an enemy to 'the pleasure which there is in life itself' than

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is the irresponsible lust of men. Many of the early saints made the grievous, the insane mistake of trying to deny themselves *all* sensuous pleasure; but since they were enjoying a spiritual emotion as desperate and possessive as any earthly one they were perhaps justified in turning their backs on love.

But if kindness rather than love, and humorous cheerfulness rather than ecstasy lend themselves to the particular grasp upon life which was the secret of ordinary people long before Jesus called it the Kingdom of Heaven, the one human quality that is absolutely essential to it is humility. No man can enjoy life with the enjoyment which was, as the old religious phrase runs, *intended*, without humility.

It is the vice of competing with one another that does the mischief. I don't deny we've got to live. I'm advocating no fanatical-beggary, no 'selling all' and becoming tramps, though I confess I could find it in me to admire as if he were a saint a man who *did* give his money away and took to the road.

But what we want if we are, as ordinary people say — and how profoundly descriptive of what I am struggling to define is this expression! — 'to have a good time', is freedom from worry; and it is silliness to take the Lady Poverty for our mistress if we're going to tease her with our worries! 'Poverty for Pleasure' is the motto, and not 'Acquire merit by being poor'.

But humility goes deeper than any lack of goods. Pride of possession is the most absurd and comical of human weaknesses; but pride of birth is far more insidious and pride of intellect far more wicked.

Yes, the thing that hinders us in our struggle to become members of the Kingdom of Heaven isn't so much our feeling of being superior to this or that ordinary person; it is our accursed *competition*; this active, exacting, and continuous rivalry with one another.

I beg you, my reader, to scrutinize your feelings very closely through all the hours of just one single day. I am convinced you will discover that I have not been exaggerating. You will find that while your sound instinct as a common man — especially under the pressure of the reckless courage of the war — urges you to 'enjoy yourself' or at least to make the psychological gesture of 'enjoying yourself', what will be troubling your mind and biting like acid into your peace, will almost always turn out to be either some half-mad fear or loathing, peculiar to yourself, or some

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teasing comparison between yourself and some more fortunate competitor.

Why not make one drastic gesture of the mind and cut down, once and for all and with no retreat, upon the whole business of comparing yourself with others? There are many comparisons that would do you no harm; such as to compare yourself with dogs or cats or sheep, but if you *must* think of yourself in relation to another human being wouldn't it be the best way to think of yourself in relation to a convict or a slum-dweller or a stoical tramp?

Modern human beings seem to have given up all that arguing and disputing about the 'meaning of life' and the 'purpose of life' which used to occupy the heads of sophisticated people; and at the present moment with the decline of religion and the devilish prejudice against idealism, this race-mania of Hitler's has slipped like a machine-made ghost-ducut into the Time-Slot, and opened the Traitor's Gate to the sluices of the Dark Ages.

The best a writer can do when he deals with matters of this kind is to follow the uneasy and disjointed experiences of his own soul, trusting that there are others whose souls are constructed in no very different way, and that what applies to him applies to them.

Why cannot we say boldly, then, that the whole purpose of life consists in the embrace by the individual of the cosmos around him? It is undeniable that a large part of this surrounding world, at any particular moment, must consist for most of us of what is ugly and monotonous and grotesque.

Well! *that* is precisely the pain and the labour in this motion of the soul; and it is when this pain and this labour become more than we normally can bear that we are thrown back upon those interior depths of the soul itself, which are already in the next Dimension.

The qualities that aid the soul in this struggle to derive pleasure from embracing what surrounds it imply a very considerable effort of the will; but they repay this effort a thousand times over; for if we force ourselves long enough to 'make the motion' of enjoyment the result will be that we really shall 'enjoy ourselves'.

And since this grasp by the desperate self upon the world that surrounds it is what might be called a *cosmic sensation*, it is only hindered, and never helped, by our ridiculous wish to be superior to our personal rivals.

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I find it to be the greatest help of all in keeping up this pretence of being cheerful, which *if kept* up will gradually come to be the reality, to compare myself with particular types of life that are not supposed to be very appealing, such as a gorilla, or a viper, or an ichthyosaurus.

It would be a good thing if we could feel our resemblance to slow-worms and newts, but if that is difficult we can at least imagine ourselves moving across the mud-flats like megatheriums. Heavens! It doesn't matter what we imagine ourselves as long as we banish from our mind all secret feelings of superiority.

To think of ourselves solely and simply as creatures of the earth, forcing ourselves to enjoy existence and when we cannot enjoy it *to act to ourselves as if we were enjoying it*, that is the best way of fulfilling 'the purpose of life'.

It's a sensation, *that* is the point; and it is clear that when it's a matter of enjoying the sensation of life this vice of feeling superior vanishes into thin air.

Where philosophy collapses and becomes a broken reed is where we require it most; that is to say in actual daily life and in man's consciousness as he wrestles with daily life. Philosophy is nervous about the whole idea of the soul.

But we are forced to use the word 'soul' for the unifying energy of our life; and when we think of a man's soul it is absurd to give it any form or shape or to think of it, as St. Paul apparently did, as a spiritual body. 'For us feeling is all in all. The name is sound and smoke'; and although we can't visualize the soul or think of it, as our ancestors did, as a transparent doll, we certainly *feel* the soul within us. We feel it in fact as that centre-point of our living energy which impels us forward into the sweet dark mysterious world of sensation.

The soul is will, and the soul is thought, but the stuff the soul works on when it is most purely itself is sensation. If you were to define the soul as *conscious will embracing sensation* you would be coming far closer to its essence as we feel it in ourselves than when you conceive of it as conscious thought; for the will must have something to work on and what it works on is sensation.

But the soul is a tantalizing mystery just because the base of it, the root of it, the deepest part of it, dwells in another dimension and is outside time and space. This is what Proust was feeling his way towards when he made

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so much of that Eternal Being, who, in the taste of the Madeleine' dipt in chamomile tea, found so quick and lost so quick its human recognition of its divine imperishableness. Wordsworth's 'Intimations' move in the same direction. In fact it is a proof of how much closer the soul is to sensation than it is to thought that the whole trend of our poetry finds its evidence of immortality in the come-and-go impressions and casual flickerings of the senses, rather than in any mental cultivation of concentrated spiritual vision.

It is an extraordinary thing how calmly our professional philosophers take for granted this present astronomical dimension; and how they draw back in dismay, as if such a possibility were as weird and un-homely as it is irrational, before an unfathomable multiverse of which this present circle of time and space is only one negligible phase.

We unphilosophical common people feel we have souls; but what the soul *is* we have absolutely no notion. We feel we are destined not only to what people so pathetically call 'a life after death' but to something much more like a million lives after death; but what this 'after death' may be we haven't the faintest flicker of a guess!

The real geniuses of the world, such as Rabelais and Cervantes and Shakespeare, are the only ones among our ridiculous 'great men' who comprehend what it really implies to be absolutely ignorant of what life and death *are*, and what this world, or any other world, really and truly is.

Philosophers seem completely unable to keep this, 'I don't know' and this, 'by the nature of things it is impossible to know', clearly before their lucid intelligencies. They feel themselves so superior to ordinary people that their whole joy, pleasure and delight consists in constructing edifices of pure thought that to ordinary people are pure abracadabra.

Surely it is wiser to hold with Cervantes and Shakespeare that this little island of conscious knowledge floats in an ocean of absolute ignorance? At any rate, since absolute ignorance surrounds us on every side, our intellectual leaders have no more right to assure us that our annihilation is certain than the preachers have to assure us that 'another world' is certain.

No man can prove that his soul is mortal and perishes with the body. No man can prove that we pass at death into conditions so absolutely different as to turn this whole astronomical universe into an insubstantial reflection in water.

It is entirely a matter of your own choice. 'Well-descended spirits',

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as my brother Llewelyn loved to put it, like Charles Lamb for example, shrink in disgust and disrelish from any of these occult and mystical 'lives after death', where there will no longer be 'the pleasant juices of meats and fishes, the unspeakable rural solitudes, and the sweet security of streets'. Others, on the other hand, derive, I am sure, a sadistic satisfaction in thinking of the words, 'Down, wantons, down!' as addressed to such an eager, glancing, struggling, twisting creature, as it indicates by its contortions its objection to 'descending alive into the pit'.

But surely the best way is to feel that this Dimension, out of which the deepest part of us, that is to say the inscrutable mystery below our staring eyes, snatching hands and quivering nostrils emerges, and out of which it draws its power, is a Dimension so completely different from anything we can conceive with our space-time reason and our space-time senses that it is as ridiculous to shrink from it in distaste as it is to long for it in relief.

It may — why not? — satisfy us with an enjoyment just as natural and homely and warm and sweet, and with the same absence of cold intellect-uahsm, as these 'pleasant juices', and just as magical as these 'rural solitudes'. On the other hand some of us ordinary people have rebellious moods with regard to 'this too, too solid flesh'. We feel the weariness of our gorilla-like arms, the weariness of our ox-like grinders, the weariness of having nothing but the same old nose and mouth and eyes and ears, and the same old set of erotic nerves wherewith to embrace our little world!

Oh you jostling, competing, ego-centric, touchy, Intellectuals, you who think all human happiness depends on your discussions, how surprised you would be if you knew the odd thoughts that pass through the minds of some of us ordinary people with regard to this 'next world'! You regard the idea, I know, not only as entirely problematic, but even as a little babyish, as something in fact from which serious students who have studied 'conditioned reflexes' must needs turn with an emancipated smile.

But this is just where we market-place rabble of the 'Kingdom', with our cockney humour and our unscientific toleration of superstition, have the advantage. Like Rabelais and Shakespeare we don't only offer, as you do, a glib lip-service to human nescience and then go ahead with all manner of bastard certainties; we act and feel, and 'live and move and have our being' in a wholesome atmosphere of ignorance which is like muddy water to sticklebacks or gravelly shallows to minnows.

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But you will protest, 'If we are going to get the benefit of good hope in our absolute ignorance of the nature of the next world, we must also be prepared to admit the possibility that our ignorance may be an embroidered catafalque over the black silence of a million billion coffins!'

I suppose it may. But my retort to you is that there *has* to be an element of risk, a *toss-up* with a chance of loss and a chance of gain, in any plunge into the unknown.

Lamb thinks that any conceivable 'other world' would be so pure, chilly, weird and alien that it would be extremely unpleasant after the homely pleasures we are familiar with here below. But this is to assume that our chastened, frightened ghost, a poor shivering 'animula vagula', is just as earthly in its cravings as we are, and amid the glacial austerities of the next world would be left cowering in the outer dark, longing for the 'sweet assurances' of a human look and the wanton warmth of sunshine upon grass.

But what right have we to assume that this is the case? We do know — not by logical reason but by practical experience — that we can summon up a living sorcery, like a great scale-armoured sturgeon from the bottom of the sea, and we know too that this calling up of abnormal strength is accompanied by a feeling that there are immense reserves of this same power waiting to be tapped.

Is it not a case therefore of common sense to believe, since we can call up out of the depths of ourselves a power that seems to have no connection at all with the usual scientific psychology, a power that evokes a sense of boundless reserves lying below the water-line of ordinary consciousness, that this mysterious 'below', or 'beyond', is the extreme opposite of Nothingness?

But to return to the elder brother of our hair-streak friend. Having enjoyed his little supper, this worthy man is smoking cigarette after cigarette — for he has saved up for the evening's excess — and as he holds his youngest daughter on his knee is allowing himself various outspoken criticisms of his younger brother's nervous attitude to soldiering.

This isn't spitefulness; it is a piece of shameless and unscrupulous kindness to his wife, who, smoking a cigarette herself now, can be sent to bed *in* good spirits by one device only — namely by an amusing discussion of her brother-in-law and his wife.

Now the man couldn't possibly amuse his wife — least of all start her

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off on one of those lively animadversions upon the couple in question which were her chief joy—without being what we call 'humorously cheerful'. He can do it without being amorous, without being witty, without being spiritual, without being scrupulous.

He has indeed been decidedly unscrupulous in offering up his brother's wife so that the close of their evening should be happy, and that even the cat should be allowed to remain asleep by the fire when they went to bed, instead of being shut out for the night.

But now as he looked through the strands of his little daughter's hair at a gleam of sunset upon a particular ornamental protrusion on a lamp-post outside that deviated a little from the perpendicular, he was aware of a feminine figure obviously lingering as it passed along the pavement with its head turned towards the interior of their room. His eyes, as he sat by the fire with the child on his knee and the cat at his feet, broke at that instant several distinct laws; the law of the Science of Optics, the law of Jesus, the law of Marriage, and rushed to meet, which was obviously impossible, the eyes of the figure that was passing the window; and when the figure was gone and he knew it would be lingering at the newspaper-shop a few doors off, his hands broke a much simpler law by automatically placing his daughter on her feet.

But a second later he had picked her up again; and a second after that he was acting exactly as he had been doing before; calmly continuing to offer up his sister-in-law as a sacrifice to the delicate task of sending his wife to bed happy.

. 'No! You'll have to wait, young woman,' he said to himself, 'and you'll have to walk home alone.'

And soon afterwards when his wife began the elaborate process of the 'black-out' he experienced such a wave of overpowering gloom that it was almost unbearable.

Nothing seemed nice to him at that moment, nothing romantic, nothing comforting, nothing real. An ash-coloured greyness and a nameless depression seemed to him to shudder down on the whole of London, accompanied by a jarring and scraping sound, as if thousands of featureless devils were scratching the words '*sick of everything*' upon a vast air-raided shelter that shut in the world.

And very soon his wife's back became transparent. And through his wife's back and through the black-out arrangements she was making,

and through the opposite houses, he saw a vision of himself advancing upon a line of bayonets.

And now we must be bolder still with this poor man and recognize that until he realized that *that girl* was deliberately waiting for him at the newspaper shop, he had been giving himself up to a curious parallel between his private struggles with his various demons and the public prosecution of the war.

Without any movement but that of lighting cigarettes and of relaxing his tired limbs, he'd been drifting that evening upon every emotional tide that had ever carried him. As is proper and right the man's attitude to all these things was an attitude of forced cheerfulness and natural humour. He had achieved these merits by a free use of the incomparable technique of 'Hell! Let's have another Drink!'

For it had been by lying down on his face, so to speak, that he had dodged the impact of the particular aspects of life which he found intolerable. Nor did he take any particular credit to himself for the astuteness of this device.

His attitude to himself was that of a water-rat swimming across its native ditch, not of Lord Byron swimming the Hellespont.

Being an ordinary nobody, there was no consistency about his attitude to life. He was as much a bundle of paradoxes, as much a meeting-place of endless incompatibilities, as the unfathomable Multiverse itself. If you had asked him why he hated the Nazis but didn't hate the Germans he couldn't have given you any logical answer. If you had asked him why he hadn't made the excuse of getting a paper, or another packet of cigarettes, and had followed *that girl* to the corner shop, he couldn't have given you any answer at all. 'Afraid of my wife!' is what he would have said to one kind of tavern-questioner. 'They're all alike!' is what he would have said to another. But his real motives could only have been expressed in a complicated Shakespearean soliloquy, a soliloquy full of that wisdom of the masses handed down through the centuries, where humour is as irrational as life, and whose common sense as illogical as the inheritance of humanity.

Both these commonplace brothers, whose acquaintance we have so cursorily made, would be at their height of illogicality **in any statement of their** general views upon politics. But if you questioned **either of them in detail**, emphasizing the reality which must **underlie these generaliza-**

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tions and indeed often refute them, you would soon discover to which of the various schools of human thought they instinctively belonged, namely to the school of libertarian individualists.

Everything about these two men would puzzle as well as infuriate Adolf Hitler. How can they be so impulsively anarchistic when, as Lord Haw-Haw is for ever explaining to them, our whole system depends upon tradition and privilege and the exploitation of the poor?

Well, since they would be completely unable to give Lord Haw-Haw, or Hitler either, any logical answer, and since to put an end to their obstinate individualism the Gestapo would have to beat them to death, it doesn't seem incumbent upon me — their infirm and faltering interpreter — to think out a substitute for their irrational silence.

CHAPTER IX

THE SECRET OF SENSATION

THERE IS no subject of deeper or subtler interest than an analysis of our sensations of life-enjoyment when we are alone and in the marginal intervals between our work and our play. These sensations often have the animal in them. They often revert to the reptile and the vegetable; and sometimes, one might fancy, even to the mineral!

But it is these thousand and one sensations, flowing, changing and intensifying, relaxing; sometimes finding us porous and sometimes deliciously drugged and stupid, which constitute far the larger part of 'the pleasure which there is in life itself.

Montaigne was one of the first great writers to make a definite cult of this important section of life; and it is of course the whole secret essence of what we get from Wordsworth. Among moderns, the ones who have given themselves up to it most are Walt Whitman, Walter Pater, Marcel Proust, and Dorothy M. Richardson.

There are plenty of writers who have described every possible variety of erotic sensation and every possible variety of alimentary sensation; nor are there wanting endless descriptions of the feelings evoked by opium and alcohol and tobacco; but how few, putting aside the names I have mentioned, concentrate upon this living mystery!

All we writers love to write about the erotic; but many of us live out our lives without being more than cursorily acquainted with lust and with epicurism and with the pleasures of sex. But everybody who draws breath, even the present tyrant of Europe, must be aware of natural sensations to which I am now referring.

But I fancy that when you examine the system of education and the routine of training by which the Nazis, thinking only of military prowess, have enslaved their people, you will find that there is very little leisure left between the bouts of feverish strain and the languors of hysterical relaxation.

The human senses are like telegraph wires stretched from pole to pole and crossing lonely and unfrequented morasses; and if you play roughly

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and brutally with these wires, if you throw too tense a burden or too muffling a weight upon them, although, till they are actually broken, they will go on carrying their messages of life and death, what they will no longer do is to respond to the faint whispers of the winds wandering freely where they will, and drawing forth strange magical sounds when they meet these suspended chords.

Now what Wordsworth means by 'the pleasure which there is in life itself, and what Proust and Dorothy Richardson are for ever engaged in isolating and analysing, is something whose thread, like the telegraph-wires across the moor, is potentially continuous, but yet is being actually subjected to all manner of vexing interruptions.

The curious thing is that it is possible for living organisms to experience a great variety of the sensations of life at the same moment. And it is because of this that the particular life-cult I am advocating at this crucial and deadly moment is concerned with the difficult task of consciously enjoying the sensations that of necessity accompany the condition of being alive.

And it is in this matter that intellectual people so often depart from the solid wisdom of the ordinary human tradition. Intellectual people have a tendency to put the stress upon what the reason selects as the greatest prerogatives and privileges of the human race; whereas this 'pleasure which there is in life itself is at once sub-rational and super-rational.

It is sub-rational in its sensuousness, like the feelings of an ox or a sheep lying on the grass and chewing the cud; whereas it is super-rational in those 'intimations of immortality' that come to it through what we used to call 'Matter', come to it through all the pores of the skin, come to it through that mysterious humming of the pre-natal navel-string, through which the lost memories of all the generations go sounding on into the unknown future.

My advice to any bewildered 'Intellectual' is as simple as 'bathing in Jordan' to the Lordly Leper; *and as unacceptable!* 'Give yourself up' is what I tell him, 'as completely as you can to all these half-physical and half-mental sensations which come to us at certain moments and bring with them as their chief burden the feeling that we are actually mingling, body and soul, with what are called the "inanimate elements" around us!'

What our 'intellectual' and 'artistic' friends seem unable to grasp is that these inanimate elements into which we experience at such times the

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sensation of passing need not **be** beautiful or picturesque; need not in fact lend themselves in any way at all to the purposes of the artist. They can be *matter* in the form of ugly roads, ugly railings, ugly walls, ugly stumps, ugly chimneys, ugly warehouses, ugly pavements, ugly canals, ugly lamps. They can be *matter* in the form of bonfire-smells, gasolene-smells, tar-smells, lime-smells, paint-smells, mud-smells, quite as often as *matter* in the form of hay-fields or flower-beds. It makes no difference into what chemistry of what elements, into what 'melange' of mystery 'where the streams empty' your soul merges itself.

It needn't be beautiful at all. All it need be *is to be there*. A patch of sky, a stretch of masonry, a clump of burnt grass, a few swaying nettles, a **thin** rain in your face, a black cloud on the horizon, a little dust, a little asphalt, a little gravel, a little trodden grass, a little dirty water in a puddle, any of these will serve.

In fact any form of matter will serve that has an objective existence outside your own body. But in mingling your soul — through your sensations — with these things you are really mingling it with the souls of your ancestors, you are calling up again, like bodies raised from the dead, **all** those surprises and shocks and raptures of inexplicable happiness that brought, in *their* day, such thrilling feelings, at such odd moments, to our grandparents!

And now, reader, you begin, I am sure, to see quite clearly why it is necessary to cultivate the difficult virtue of humility in regard to these primal sensations. We have to protect ourselves from the arrogance of the beautiful as much as from the arrogance of the true. We are disciples of the *life* of Life, not of its superiorities.

The most precious thing in our existence is the oldest thing. It is also the most irrational and the most un-intellectual; *and it is continuous*. It flows down the ages. It binds the generations. Thus it is that humility is the innermost secret. Thus it is that by discovering the cosmic value of humility Jesus is the greatest of all philosophers.

We are linked with our forerunners and we are linked with our descendants, not by love, not by reason, not by passion, *but by sensation*. A man enjoys the sensation of life; a woman enjoys the sensation of life; and the rhythm is repeated that once beat in the pulses of Adam; the systole-diastole that throbbed in the heart of Eve.

All this elemental chemistry, all this masonry, all these pavements and

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roads, **all** this expanse of ethereal sky, it is nothing but material for **the** soul to embrace! The power that quickens the sensation of life springs from within outwards; and though it moves in reciprocal alternations and recurrences between self and not-self, it leaps up from the heart of **the** persecuted and the injured, not from the out-breathing and in-breathing of an All-Powerful Absolute. 'The pleasure which there is in life itself is created by our own individual soul and by our energy from within. And this is more natural than the reliance upon any external Creator. When things are hard and we are tempted to squeal like the Homeric pigs rather than grasp our spears like 'the divine swineherd' we find by experience that we can — when really hustled to the breaking-point — call for effective help *to ourselves* alone, and to that portion of ourselves that already dwells in **the** 'black-out' of the next Dimension.

And since the fountain of our life-sensations springs from within, and has to flow outward in order to return full-circle, we may note that as long as neither we nor those bound to us are suffering extreme pain, it is not at all essential for our enjoyment that we should live in the Lake Country. As long as the air *is* the air, though less pure than might be, and as long as the sky *is* the sky, though more hidden than it ought to be, and as long as there are patches of the ancient flesh of our planetary home that we can touch with hands or feet, and *some* difference between day and night, it doesn't matter that there is no grass, no trees, no water, no plough-land; it doesn't matter that we are 'inland far' from the eternal sea.

Now the curious thing is that though most of us respect the sensation of living and cling to it obstinately and isolate our conscious enjoyment of it with tenacity: it is a thing that few consciously realize in themselves as being the chief purpose of our life.

And yet it *is* the chief purpose **of** our life; but as with so many other subtle things in the life of an ordinary man it needs a sensitized medium — a 'sensitive plate' as they say — to give it expression. One would have thought that the monstrous gravity and concentration of the German attempt to conquer Europe and make its inhabitants helots for a thousand years would have shaken the faith of our younger generation in the superiority of a life of sensation over every other life; but instead of doing so it apparently has strengthened our young people in their obstinate refusal to accept this contemptuous disparagement of every ideal of **life outside the struggle to be on top.**

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But it doesn't matter very much what these young people think, still less what they think they think. The important thing is *what they are*; and, second to that, how what they are affects what they think they think!

When we approach such complicated, treacherous and inflammable material as our attitude to ourselves the safest course is to combine savage self-laceration with a certain profane and blasphemous and humorous suspicion of all consecrated and sanctified remorse.

I implore my reader to pause for a moment at this point and analyse as closely as he can exactly what he does in himself, or what he feels he does in himself, when he makes an effort to keep up his spirits on any tragic occasion.

As far as I am concerned I am sure I do two things; and I am very anxious to know how far I am normal in this matter. Do, therefore, reader, try to imagine yourself what you would do if a supernatural photographer of the soul suddenly uttered the command: *Enjoy yourself!* I think what you would do would be to send down into your secret soul what might be called a volitional bucket which you would haul up full of magnetic energy ready to be applied to any task.

This volitional bucket conveys to your mind as it goes down the impression of retreating backwards into a level of existence *behind* the one wherein its energy is to be used.

Well! you have retired into your soul; and you have possessed yourself of supernatural magnetism. What are you going to do with it if you are to fulfil the commands of the kind of conscience which I desire to arouse in you?

Well! What do you see around you? What do you hear, feel, smell, taste, imbibe out of the atmosphere? What do you apprehend by telepathy from your neighbour's thoughts? Your surroundings probably are of a mixed character. They smell both sweet and foul, they sound both melodious and harsh, they taste both appetizing and nauseating; they appear both hideous and enchanting. There are few mortal surroundings at any given moment that don't contain *some* appeal to eye, ear, taste, touch, smell or mental telepathy.

Well, our conscience has commanded us solely and simply to enjoy the stream of life as it flows past; and what I need now is some image by which I can suggest to you the seizing upon what you like best in your surrounding and the possessing yourself of it as if by an erotic embrace.

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Now it is quite clear that what some of us are tempted to do at these depressing and gloomy crises in our existence, is to call up before our mind some personal triumph, some personal possession, some personal success, or at least some personal *hope* of triumph or hope of possession, or hope of success, by means of which we shall be over — 'uber' — *all the others*.

Such a comfort as this is of course the ancient heathen way; a way diametrically opposite to the one I have presumed to call 'the Kingdom of Heaven'. It is moreover a way that has the serious strategical error of being cruelly vulnerable to collapse, to looking a fool, to being 'a complete failure!'

When we analyse by introspection the ordinary man's spontaneous and instinctive way of enjoying life, it certainly seems to be, in all three of its specific aspects, the direct opposite to what might be called the principles of our present enemies.

If Hitler trains his young people to be satanically sulky, satanically harsh, and satanically proud, surely we could hardly hit on a better definition of 'the Kingdom of Heaven' than a *Triad*, as the Welsh call it, in which the extreme opposites of Satanic gravity, Satanic pride and Satanic cruelty are recognized, as the secret of the world — namely humorous cheerfulness, indiscriminate kindness and reckless humility.

Oh, how commonplace all three of these words are! And what a soft, slavish, contemptible, degenerate creature a man must be who is obsessed by all three of the wretched qualities they express!

And what a born conqueror the man is — gloomy with self-pity, exalted with the intoxication of superiority, and as devoid of humour as an executioner's block!

But it would not, I think, be only from the Nazis that criticism might be made against humorous cheerfulness, indiscriminate kindness and reckless humility. The intrinsic element of snobbishness in all aesthetic taste is roused to fury by these 'milk and water' definitions; and it is useless for us to retort that the uttermost aqueducts of this Dimension are the Milky Way and that what issued from the side of the God-Man was water.

'But how', you will say, 'can you dare to select such poor-spirited sentimental qualities as these to represent a secret as terrible, as tragic, as magical, as horrible as the Secret of Life?'

I *dare* for the simple reason that these are the characteristics **that go to make an unconquerable person.**

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'But what', you will say, 'of the great name of *Duty*? And what of *Patriotism*? And what of *Love*?' Well; let us consider duty first; and I presume by 'duty' we mean responsibility; and, if so, 'duty*' obviously includes patriotism. It also includes industry, and it also includes faithfulness in the matter of a person's life's work, in fact it includes everything that we imply in the expression 'men of good will'.

Now it seems to me that all these admirable characteristics, and indeed all the social virtues included in the word 'duty', are so forced upon us by the pressure of custom that we may safely leave them to look after themselves. They are Society's affair; and if we don't pay at least our minimum debt to Society we shall quickly suffer for it.

But what of love? Now this matter of the nature of love and the desirability or the infinite peril of love, carries us very far. For myself, after reading many times what Jesus is reported to have said and what St. Paul certainly *did* say, I swear I am tempted to discount entirely that part played by love in what I may call the chosen *continuum* of our life, I mean the part of our life upon which we constantly direct the effort of our will.

For just as we can safely leave what is called 'duty' to the pressure of necessity and custom, so also we can safely leave love to heal those human wounds and hurts and confusions which it is for ever creating.

In any case it is ridiculous to say that we *ought* to love, or that we must try to *cultivate* love, or that if we haven't got love we must hasten to get it. Love is a thing, like happiness, totally beyond the reach of the will. We can will to make the gesture of enjoying ourselves; we can will to be kind, to be cheerful, to be humble; but we cannot will to love.

'But', you will say, 'what about Art and Beauty? Doesn't some deep categorical imperative command us, as Goethe maintains, to cultivate our aesthetic sense?'

I cannot think so! I confess that as an ordinary person, and a person trying to repeat the Breviary of the Rabelaisian and Shakespearean 'Kingdom of Heaven', it is revealed irresistibly to me that the human race could get on perfectly well, yes, could survive and be perfectly happy, without art and without beauty! It wouldn't exist of course without Nature; but, as it has often been explained to me by sophisticated persons, Nature is the great stumbling-block to artists and aesthetes, containing as she apparently does, a good deal that is quite devoid, like the crude colours of the rainbow, of the subtler aspects of the Beautiful.

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But what of the Poetic? Ah! Here there is something which *is* essential to common human enjoyment, something that is not the prerogative of the leisured and the educated, something that is almost as important to life as drink or tobacco.

Poetry, and not Love, is what makes the world go round; and poetry can harmonize with kindness and humility, whereas Art is often their vicious and murderous enemy. What we want from one another is praise, not love; and it is kindness that praises. We don't want sympathy; for in our hearts we know that every soul is absolutely alone.

We want to be admired and we *want to be left alone*. And above all we don't want to be made responsible for the lives of others! The Good Samaritan carries his neighbour to the Inn and pays his bill; but he doesn't attempt to make himself responsible for the injured man's soul; and he doesn't care what a rascal the fellow may be. The subtlest evil in the world is successful competition, the sense of being superior to someone, and it is extraordinary how much freer of this deadly vice ordinary people are than intellectual people.

The underlying purpose of everybody's life is twofold; an intensification of life, and an escape from life, and these two are really one.

When you intensify the moment, as you do when you grasp your surroundings with this interior clutch of enjoyment, you forget everything in your past except your past's *poetical essences*. Now by 'poetical essences' I mean those vignettes of long-remembered occasions which in their hour thrilled you with a special kind of pleasure.

Some of these occasions were complicated and involved. Others were very simple. Some perhaps contained — I freely admit it — what might be called aesthetic impressions. But more often they were negligible fragments of roadsides, not beautiful at all. The important thing is that it is these *memories* that add the overtones to our intensification of the moment. Many of them carry with them the feeling as they reach us that they are not so much definite memories of our own experiences as vague race-memories reaching us from the experiences of our ancestors.

All the intensifications of life which our ancestors forced themselves to enjoy have their immortality in our gestures of enjoyment whether they bring us happiness or not.

And in the same way our own forced gestures of enjoying our surroundings will be carried forward to our children and to our children's children;

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for in this sensation of enjoying life, and in this alone, is the continuity of the generations preserved, and the poetry of the life of the generations indestructibly established. This sensation of enjoying life is a race-sensation as much as it is an individual sensation and it, and it alone, can span with a continuity of planetary consciousness the long spirals of our time-dimension as they unroll themselves across their background of space.

What is not properly realized and what has never been adequately analysed by our intellectual class is the precise manner in which the majority of ordinary people experience their life-sensations and the precise way in which these sensations come and go. Since it is by their sensations that the majority of people live, how strange that the exceptional sensations of the Great and the Important are so much easier to describe than our own.

I am not now speaking of our more lively — it would be unfair to say cruder — appetites, and their satisfaction. I am speaking of those less obvious but not less transporting pleasures which have nothing to do with our erotic feelings or with satisfying hunger or thirst. I am speaking of those sensations that so often seem to reach us — that almost always *do* reach us — through all our senses simultaneously, and that seem to be touch, taste, smell, hearing and seeing, *all in one*. These are the feelings that seem to pass through the very pores of our skin and *yet to come from far away*.

Inland they are generally connected with the movements of the clouds or the wind or the feel of the air; *on the coast* they are generally connected with the waves. But they reach us so indirectly that in the one case all the sensations of touch and smell and sight can be called up by the sound of a train's whistle, and in the other by the screaming of sea-gulls.

It is a miracle of design how the senses work together. It is as if the whole mysterious organism that calls itself 'I', or 'me', but that feels itself to be something much larger, much more mysterious, much more complicated than any 'me' or any 'I', were able to embrace existence when it comes to this grand life-sensation with its whole being at once!

I said there was nothing of the erotic in this 'pleasure which there is in life itself'; but perhaps I spoke too quickly. Who knows the Limits of the kingdom of Eros? Who has charted the Isles of the Blest in *all* his territorial waters?

It certainly *feels*, when we make the psychic gesture which is the subject

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of my present discourse, whether we are embracing the elements, or embracing the walls and windows and furniture of a room, as if these things were a *fused* or *interpenetrating* dimension, *through which* we were swimming or flying or diving, or, in a cosmological sense, *making love*,

I am concerned with the ordinary person in all this and not with some exceptional genius or artist; and I am sure I am right in saying that the ordinary person's greatest enjoyment of life comes *in intervals* between one moment of his work and another moment of his work, however monotonous; and often with more frequency just because it *is* monotonous.

It is at these moments that those *vignettes of memory* reach us that come from out of the far-off past and are so mysteriously transporting.

And the peculiar nature of these *vignettes of memory* is such that although they are memories of our own life, and not particularly striking or dramatic, or notable in themselves, they carry with them certain curious undertones, under-fragrances, under-tastes, such as you might imagine rising up in the consciousness of cattle and sheep, as they rest and chew the cud, or in the consciousness of birds between their flights, or offish as they poise themselves in mid-stream with easy motions of fins and tail.

More than the mere occasion it is, more than the turn of the road, bend of the river, grouping of the trees, darkening of the avenue, lighting of the lamps, that becomes the stage-set for your in-rush of unexplicable emotion. There is another element in it; and upon this 'other element' depends its whole drift.

Nor is it difficult to imagine that this other element is the very thing that links us to the beasts of the field and birds of the air. Their minds are no more dulled with 'stupid being', as Miss Stein calls it, than are ours.

Indeed I seem to see the whole creation, not only, as St. Paul says, 'groaning and 'travailing in pain together', but 'chewing the cud' of delicious life-sensation together.

It doesn't need any particular aesthetic, or poetic, or philosophic element in our consciousness to teach us the heavenly trick, the wayward, chaotic, magical trick, of instinctively selecting from among the innumerable *vignettes of sensation* those that contain the largest quantity of what might be called the *stuff of immortality*.

The simplest among us makes this selection among his memories as easily and spontaneously as a fish uses his fins, a bird his wings, a plant its tendrils, an insect his antennae. To each according to his nature comes the

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particular memory as if some inner secret wheel were going round; but the main direction of this memory, the main polar-pull of this procession of mental equinoxes, answers the magnetic attraction of loneliness, where the souls who crave both solitude and equality purge themselves of their possessions.

And those myriads of failures in the earthly struggle, those failures that Matthew Arnold calls 'the world's poor routed leavings', but that the Anarchist Whitman salutes as the inheritors of eternity, are indeed of the very stuff of the Kingdom of Heaven. Nor have they now any great effort to make. All they have to do is to call up their soul from the threshold of Hades *and have faith in its strength* — For there is none other that fighteth for us, but only Thou, *O Soul*..

It remains a mystery, this unrecorded law by which the vignettes of memory revolve and by which it is decided in what order they shall present themselves to the consciousness that awaits them. And at this moment the question arises, 'Can we deliberately throw our consciousness into the receptive state required and wait, like a pirate's paramour, the black flag's return from the enchanted islands?'

I think we can, and I think we can go on increasing our powers in this direction; but I don't think there's any reason to make much effort, because without any effort at all most ordinary people, as they begin to lose their energetic middle-age, return to the vegetative sensitivity of extreme youth, when such visions, reverting to a still *earlier* youth, or even 'to that immortal sea which brought us hither', come of themselves and ride like swans upon the mystic waters!

Such vignettes of remembered sensation are the happiest moments of the ordinary person's life, and I suspect the ordinary person experiences many more of these divine revelations than someone who is what National Biographies would call 'a great man'.

But the point is that the soul which is immersed in competition, in the struggle for possession, for acquisition, for retention and the soul whose whole life is spent in feeling superior to other souls, is at a grievous disadvantage in this matter. As I have remarked before it is your *infant* and your *old person*; not your lively youth or your responsible man or woman in their prime, who is the dedicated recipient for these birth-right privileges of the human race.

A beautiful example of the misleading folly of the intellectual class is

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the repulsive expression 'Infantile Fixation' used as a term of reproach. The Kingdom of Heaven is the true 'Infantile Fixation'.

The harm that these modern Dictators do to humanity is precisely what Carlyle wanted done to us all; the forcing us out of our sensations into exhausting mass-production, production which never seems — as it *ought* to do, and *would* do in a libertarian community — to increase that solitary happiness of the individual, which alone is in harmony with the nature of the pilgrim soul.

Why is it that so many of these vignettes of sensation have to do with the wind? I think because of all things in the world the wind is most adapted to that essential loneliness of the individual soul wherein is our true life.

I have a profound inkling that the planetary moment has come when the stress laid upon what is called 'love' and all this tyranny of what is called 'love' will be lifted from human life. Half the nurseries of human existence are produced in the name of 'love'. It is extraordinary how superstitious the most free-thinking among us is when it comes to this sacrosanct thing. The mere sound of this fatal syllable carries a consecration, a sanctity, a prerogative, a sacred claim, a solemn and awful distinction.

And yet the immortal part of us doesn't live by love but by sensation. The first and last experience of all living things is not the experience of love but the *sensation of loneliness*. We are born alone and we die alone and the most exquisite feelings of our life reach us when we are alone. A true love-affair recognizes this. Half the love-affairs of the world lead to misery and tragedy because they refuse to recognize this. What is the very centre of the life of love? *The Family*, that system from which so much cruelty, so much morbidity, so much unhappiness, so much frustration springs!

But bad as the Family is, all expedients yet made for getting rid of it *are far worse*. If it is hard to enjoy the immortal sensations of loneliness for which the soul is born in family-life, it is ten times harder, well! it is practically impossible, to enjoy them in the appalling groups and crowds which have been substituted for the family.

But no loving family, no gregarious friends, can prevent a man dying; and when you are dying you are at last really alone, as alone as you have been with your thoughts when you were 'happy thinking'.

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There *are* lovers — as I have hinted — privileged by some weird intimacy with both the method and the secret of what I have been calling the Kingdom of Heaven, who have the magical power of loving each other and yet leaving each other alone. It was towards this ideal of human segregation that both Nietzsche and Walt Whitman pointed the way.

But the ordinary working-man has anticipated these prophets; and it is from him and not from them that the argument draws its strongest force. The worthy man I have been attempting to describe, whose consideration for one woman was more powerful than his romantic attraction to another, had before he went to bed a still sharper test of this same commonplace 'kindness* the mere mention of which would cause intellectual readers to murmur, 'Boy-scout; Mark Tapley; Polyanna'.

What happened was simple enough. The youngest of our friend's brood became 'stuck', iji his home-lessons over a difficult sum, and called on his father to help him. This took at least twenty-five minutes, as Providence had denied to this good man any gift for juggling with figures.

But as the child was copying out the final result, which an unusual stroke of luck had precipitated, our friend had time to practise the delicate art of calling up a few of his favourite 'essences of memory'.

And there came into his head a little coppice of trees surrounded by a hedge at the side of a road near the town of Stafford under which he had been reading *Little Dorrit* when a vehicle passed him conveying the most unpleasant pair of rich people he had ever seen in his life and whom he had roundly cursed for raising so much dust.

And there came into his head a path near the city of York between a river-weir and a railway-embankment where he had seen a feeble elderly clergyman of a studious complexion unwillingly catching and eagerly releasing, at the despotic commands of an imperious little boy, a couple of languid-winged 'Meadow-Brown' butterflies that had drifted that way in the hot afternoon sun.

It was during an epoch in his life when he had been travelling for the firm for which he now worked in a humbler capacity that he'd received these impressions; but why these particular scenes should return to his mind so vividly as he watched his son laboriously copying those figures was a complete mystery. But suddenly, even while he was thinking that there must be some cause in the secret workings of the soul for these things — lo! another 'vignette of sensation'! And he found himself

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walking over a river bridge built of a queer pale-reddish stone somewhere outside the city of Carlisle, where the romantic effect of a herd of cattle feeding on extremely green grass close to the masonry of a market square came rushing over him making him feel mysteriously happy, as if the motion of his son's lips repeating 'eleven and carry one — fifteen and carry four' — were an incantation calling up some ineffable promise of which he had kept only the outward symbols.

One of his girls had just run out — 'to post a letter' she'd said — and left both doors open; and the wind had changed since he'd come in and was now blowing up the street. What secret, in regard to the nature of the soul and the mystery of life, was it, he thought, that brought it about that such things as a bridge in Carlisle, a railway-bank in York, a dusty road-side near Stafford, none of them unique, none of them distinctive, none of them particularly striking, gave him such intense happiness in retrospect, happiness certainly independent of that unfortunate epoch in his life when he had proved himself such a miserable failure?

His pupil in mathematics slipped off to bed while he was still pondering these things; but his wife was upstairs, the girl was not back yet, and the front door still open. He began to pray that his wife wouldn't realize that their daughter was still out. He recalled a row between them of a fortnight ago when the girl swore she would run away and disappear.

With the weight of this painful thought upon him he got no pleasure from the door being open and the wind coming in. But he knew that under more normal conditions it was just such a breath of air as the one now blowing up the street that would have brought him the feeling he enjoyed more than any other among all his 'essences of memory', the feeling that this breath of air came straight from the salt-marshes by the sea.

But the fact that his daughter was staying out at that hour far longer than was necessary even if she'd had to go to a post office a mile away took every pulse of pleasure out of this heavenly moment. But the man, according to his usual custom, began to *force himself*, in spite of his worry, to make the gesture of embracing this far-voyaging breeze that reached him over the roofs of Soho.

But so hard was it not to keep expecting the voices of his wife and daughter lifted in recrimination — that for a second or two he suffered a spasm of nervous pain, the curious pain we endure when a desirable

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sensation we are being debarred from enjoying is within our grasp and yet *not* within our grasp.

The air that reached him through that open door must have voyaged so far that it carried with it *vignettes of sensation* which the man had completely forgotten. In his travelling days he had been in places far from London; and the air was full of these places. Over rock-pools this air reached him, over ridges of pebblestones and sandy wastes where the horned-poppy and sea-lavender grow. Over wet larch-woods it came, where rain-fed toadstools swell and wax plump, and afterwards slowly sink, and soften and moulder, till they lose their identity amid the leaves of the wood-sorrel. Over high chalk hills with their hieratic beech woods it journeyed; beech woods that in their time had cradled and confined so many risen, so many sunken suns, that the romance of lost battles and broken armies and divided loves, hung always amid their dark stems and virginal green; hung there now, while the voyaging wind whirls away towards railway yards and slag-heaps, across coal-shafts and blackened huts, till its strength fails and its feathers droop in the 'black-out' of the city.

But though the wind through the open door was full of these far-off impressions it wasn't till it brought him a memory that lacked the faintest pretensions to beauty or distinction that he felt any comfort. This image — the one that turned his gesture of enjoyment into real enjoyment — was his memory of a crude advertisement painted on the shoddy fence of a filling-station near a public house called the New Inn which had been erected some twenty years ago. He had been puzzled then by the surge of ecstasy that the look of this filling-station, combined with the crude cheerfulness of this small, neat hostelry, had aroused in him; but now whenever this feeling returned he simply accepted it as one of those inexplicable mysteries that lie at the root of life.

On this occasion the feeling lasted for less than a couple of seconds; and then there came over him, for he had a telepathic certitude that his daughter was at hand, a sickness of heart with regard to the whole of life; nor did he fail to add to his hurt by wondering *what it felt like* to have a plan's foot pressed upon your body so that his bayonet could be pulled out.

It was then that he began to behave as his brother had done when he bent over the yellow potentilla. He set himself to summon up the

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miraculous magnetic power that lies at the root of every human soul. And on the strength of this he was enabled not only to make the interior gesture of enjoying what just then he *couldnt* enjoy, but to derive real satisfaction simply from making this defiant effort.

Thus by the time the house door *was* shut, and the two feminine voices — one demanding the liberty of loving and the other asserting the authority of love — *were* raised just as he expected, he had been carried on this heavenly air into that immortal *over-land* which his lonely soul had been building up all its life; and was now using as the stuff of its celestial fabric, not only the winnowed moments from his own lifetime but from those of the generations of his fathers before him.

This is that over-land of a person's memories, in which are mingled both the clear-cut impressions from individual loneliness and the obscure and wavering impressions inherited from the lives before us.

When somebody tries to probe into the nature of our feelings about the Intimations of Immortality that are evoked by these *vignettes of sensation* or, if you prefer, these *essences of memory* our retort can be that since the next Dimension *is* the next Dimension, and our minds are absolutely limited by Time and Space, we are confronted by something beyond all imaginable darkness. We are confronted by 'annihilation'; but it is the annihilation of the present machinery of perception not of the life of the soul. We are confronted by that wall, that adamant wall, which naturally looks like annihilation because it absolutely destroys the familiar. For it is the inherent fatality of the laws of the mind itself that separates us from the reality of the next 'stratum' of Being in the Multiverse of endless Dimensions; and this separation between the mind and what lies outside Time and Space throws and must ever throw humiliating discredit upon the insolent claims of the astronomical world to be all there is.

The presumptuous persons whom we call philosophical teachers must, if they are to attune themselves to the pulse-beat of the Dimensional rhythm, die to the arrogance of their negligible superiority, and be reborn as ordinary human souls!

That *Liberte*, *Eqnalite*, *Fraternite*, of which our three historic Latin countries have made so blasphemous a bonfire, is not a mere inscription to engrave upon a Musee de Cluny; it is the blood and breath and magnetic life of every soul born into the world!

What the ordinary person instinctively feels about the way we live

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implies that our human senses are humoured and abused and governed and directed and driven; yes! and finally deserted, by an unifying central force which is at once in us and outside us, and which is generally called the soul.

It is easy to sum up what has happened in our time. Individual men and women in great numbers all over Europe have ceased to believe in the soul. This means the substitution of *behaviour istic*, mechanistic, obedient Bully-Boys for men who stand on their own feet. An ordinary human soul not only contains God and Jesus and the Holy Ghost; it contains the Eternal Rebel 'called', as William Blake says of this great spirit, in its absolute and unconquerable loneliness . . . 'by all the names divine, of Jesus or Jehovah' —

Thou art still
The Son of Morn in weary night's decline,
The lost traveller's dream under the hill.

But a vast number of Europeans have ceased to believe in the soul. They believe in the illusions of the mind. They believe in what they call the 'State', and in what they call the 'Race', and in what they call their 'Leader'.

But all these things are the merest playthings in the nursery of the soul; they are for the soul but the soul is not for them. The soul of a living creature, of any living creature, is more miraculous than Leonardo's Mona Lisa; more important than the Elgin Marbles; more precious than the Will of twenty Caesars!

And it is because Europe had ceased to have faith in the power of the soul, that is to say in the power of the lonely, equal, *anarchistic* individual, that she has been betrayed.

There is a story that the old gods, hunted from Europe, *took refuge in these Islands*. Well, let us hope that the hunted human soul, the mother of all the gods, has done the same! Hitler can mesmerize many, cajole many, terrify many, and torture many, and he can boast that his hypnotized legions are the 'master-folk' of the world; but let him be confronted by any cockney nobody from Shoreditch or Mile-End, any north-country nobody from Mersey-side or Clyde-side, and 'damned is he who first cries "hold, enough!"'

The power of the ordinary commonplace Britisher reaches its consum-

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mation in his humour. There is an occult power in this humour — into whose substance, like pearls in brandy, all kindness and all humility have melted — which when it is tossed in a tyrant's face makes his worst fury look foolish.

Tyranny, like lust, has a portentous gravity; and when it is opposed to the death by any form of reckless humour it is driven beside itself. It foams, it shrieks, it loses its head completely, *'And the herd plunged down a steep place into the sea I*

But the ordinary person hasn't the remotest idea whence comes the power in him which can face the 'topless towers' of tyranny without quailing.

Automatically he summons it up, automatically he uses its help. He may not otherwise be a mystery to himself; but the power he draws upon in the unknown depths of himself is the culmination of mystery. If he did try to put this phenomenon into words he would probably give you some touchingly superstitious explanation. And it would be the correct one; for the soul of man, that supreme magician, is desperately and grotesquely superstitious.

But when it came to the point he would admit frankly that he hadn't the remotest idea whence the power arose that suddenly made him so formidable!

In order to conquer these Islands, Hitler, like Faust's *famulus* in Goethe's play, has caused to be made in his scientific laboratories a frightful Frankenstein — the German Race in a psychic trance, with himself as their over-soul!

Like the artificially-made man of Mary Shelley's story this appalling Automaton moves faster, more effectively, more dangerously, than it is possible for a man born of woman to move.

And at the beginning of the dividing of the waters all must go down before this demonic aggregate, possessed by the Devil whose name is Legion and yet whose name is One. What can humour, what can criticism, what can the difference between the true and the false and the just and the unjust, mean to creatures whose whole life depends upon a single obsession, the obsession of being *iiben*

The whole secret of the German success has been that they wanted it so much! They wanted it beyond all else. And this 'wanting' which knows no flickering second of doubt reveals a simplicity of mind that is at once

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beautiful and horrible. It is a simplicity that sobs with ecstasy and howls with glory; but one thing it never does; *it never weeps for shame.*

With the spiritual sensation of humility it has simply nothing to do. And how simple, when you really consider it, was the science of these incredible German victories!

Between Hitler and the privileged classes of all the countries he has conquered, classes who prefer order to life, and uniformity to conscience, an invisible chain was forced. And this chain is still held in the hands of the Demon who now obsesses the artificial heart of this towering Frankenstein of Reaction.

But as in the fairy tales of this child-like race there is always some magic touch that can defeat the two-headed Ogre, so it will happen now' And the magic that can exorcise the demon from the Automaton it has galvanized is 'the one touch of nature that makes the whole world kin\

If the Germans have derived their will to conquer from a mystical worship of their leader, the common man of this island derives his will *not* to be conquered, from his sense of humour. And let us note a further curious fact. This sense of humour, that renders our common man invincible, is indissolubly mingled — so that the two have become one — with that same supernatural force which the common man draws from the unknowable Dimension which surrounds our world.

The ordinary man's humour in these islands has therefore a supernatural power behind it; for it taps a spiritual force that comes from outside the astronomical universe. The Dionysian Fihrer and his male Bassarids have made a soap-bubble as big as the Western world; and only one thing can give us the sorcery to prick this bubble; and that is the common man's conviction that the whole spectacle of this de-humanized Enormity is neither awe-inspiring nor terrifying, neither demonic nor irresistible, but only comic.

There is a strange law of duality in every form of life; and there is also a law of contradiction. The appearance of these monstrous Dictatorships is an infalible sign that the evolution of humanity has reached a point when huge centralized Governments are going to disappear. As poison in the physical body comes out in boils, so poison in the 'body politic' comes out in Dictatorships. This alarming phenomenon is itself a sign that Nature intends to use this war to enable 'the common or garden' man not

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only to dispense with the advantages of 'governing classes' but of 'governing parties' and 'governing prophets'.

All over the civilized world, though not yet with any mental uniformity, still less with any effective organization, there is a rising tide of human distrust — I might almost say a rising tide of human indignation — directed against *government from above*.

Nature herself, mediating between the self-protective cunning of the individual, without which the nation would perish, and the despotic edicts of authority, has at her disposal irresistible reservoirs of magnetic force.

It is this unorganized and shameless spirit, composed of the healthy resistance of every individual to every government, which like water seeking its level, and like the influence of women all the earth over, makes the world go round. Without its incessant pressure, without its unconquerable cunning, there would soon be nobody left alive for any government to govern! Imperfect virtue is the only virtue, and imperfect citizenship is the only citizenship.

There is a margin left over in all lives; and it is a very elastic one. It belongs to the individual soul and is enlarged by humility, strengthened by kindness, defended by humour. Across it, as chance permits, blow the winds of our race's memory, populating its solitude by airy tongues.

In a book entitled *Solitude and Society* Berdyaev finds the secret of the soul in what he calls *communion with* some other personality; and only by this breaking up of the vicious circle of its egoism does the soul grow, expand and create for itself its immortality.

Quite correctly does he regard the objective 'communications' attained by modern invention as totally worthless in the growth of the soul. Quite correctly does he condemn the bureaucratic tyranny which Stalin has substituted for the Revolution he has betrayed. Quite correctly does he curse mass-production, mass-hero-worship, mass-capitalism. Quite correctly does he reject Nazism and Fascism and the whole Totalitarian idea. But having given the individual soul its liberty from Church and State and Race and Government, what must this disciple of the Fourth Gospel do but impose upon us, in place of these, the soul's *communion with God*.

Modern machinery, he tells us, and modern mass-opinion produce in all free souls a tragic loneliness; and there is only one cure for this loneli-

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ness, only one way of liberating the hermetically-sealed prisoner of itself, namely its communion with some other soul.

And when this is achieved, even though it be with nothing more than the soul of an animal or a plant or a stone, the establishing of an *us* in place of the *me* by breaking that terrible ego-centric circle which is the condition of the 'lost', presupposes a communion with God.

Thus argues the great christian Apologist; but the experience of ordinary people in this tragic hour, when once its significance is grasped, gives the soul a freedom compared with which such a totahtariaii Cosmos is a prison-conservatory! No, the souls that sink into themselves draw their magic power from a part of themselves that is *already outside* Berdyaev's vicious circle, already outside the categories of Time and Space. But since our minds cannot function save in terms of Time and Space, every soul has its reservoir of recovery in the absolutely unknown in a region that contradicts all the laws of Science, in that *un-hierarchical* 'Kingdom of Heaven' where two and two make — five!

CHAPTER X

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE WAR

IT seems as though there are still some intellectuals among us who enjoy the feeling that they are doing something for the world by discussing the question of war-aims.

Now it is one of the most pathetic aspects of a mentality of this kind that it seems compelled to discover a reasonable motive for human action.

Hitler in *Mein Kampf* has made clear to us not only the art by which 'leaders' can fool the people, but also the art by which we can all, leaders included, fool ourselves. There is no question in Hitler's mind as to *why* he is fighting.

And the answer to this 'why' explains the absence of definite 'war-aims' on both sides. Hitler's words are 'Order' and 'lebensraum': masters and servants; and the conquest of neighbours.

But since he cannot tell how slowly or how quickly his neighbours will yield, or how much force it will take to overcome them, or how many of them Fate will throw into his hands, it is obvious that his 'war-aims' will change from day to day with the fortunes of war; obvious that it is vain for him to formulate anything final.

And since Hitler cannot formulate his *war-aims* till he knows how far his war-weapons are going to carry him, it is obvious that we, who are *m* the position of defence, can have only one possible war-aim, namely to defend ourselves from Hitler; and this, considering Hitler's nature, means only one thing, namely to destroy him.

But it isn't only Hitler with his unpredictable moves who relegates war-aims to the sphere of the academic and the problematic. There is also God, or Destiny, or Evolution, or what Matthew Arnold used to call 'the Stream of Tendency, not ourselves, that makes for Righteousness'.

For it is clear that some mysterious planetary Power, personal or impersonal, is at work on the affairs of this up-heaving world.

We must therefore conclude either that there is *no* 'tide in the affairs of men' and *no* 'divinity that shapes our ends', in which case to concentrate

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on Hitler's destruction, considering what he is and what we are, is no more than what is natural to us; or if there is such a Power it is clear that it is not only using Hitler's weird ferocity for its mysterious purpose but using also our own implacable determination to do Hitler down. Hitler and ourselves can do the necessary destructive part in this making of history; but when the New World comes it will emerge independent of our neatest plans. And this the common man with an instinct much profounder than the intelligence of any Intellectual knows perfectly well.

The common man is a Shakespearean Sceptic where the regeneration of the world is concerned. He knows that life is hard under any conditions: and likely to be *harder than ever before* if Platonic Philosophers planned the world according to reason. He knows that the only Revolution that could possibly bring himself and his fellows — the quiet harmless, unintellectual, ordinary people — a real step forward would be the abolition of Government and especially of Revolutionary Government.

But since all Governments are invariably opposed by would-be *alternative* governments and since he himself has never been educated in the complicated and terrific economies of a world-upheaval, he feels extremely diffident about the steps to take. It isn't that he regards our capitalist government as the best of all possible governments; it is rather that he distrusts all the alternatives at present submitted to his observation. These indeed appear to carry to an extreme point every single aspect of government that to the independent soul makes life intolerable.

What he feels in his heart is that there is nothing true, nothing beautiful, nothing interesting, nothing desirable, when you examine life with thoroughness, except the growth, experience, and enjoyment of the individual soul.

And there is no individual soul that does not, simply by reason of *being* a soul, loathe the Nazi-Fascist system. Never in fact has such an Embodiment of what the natural man instinctively hates, and has hated from the foundation of the world, risen up with such deliberate intention to beat down those imponderable things by which the soul lives, grows, expands and enjoys itself.

It has always been necessary for the soul to play the deceiver and to conceal what goes on behind the facade of its owner's personality. The soul of a man is naturally and instinctively what is called *anarchical* and even what is called *antisocial*.

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And properly so; for its strength, its inspiration, its power to endure, not to speak of its skill in forgetting the unendurable, spring from itself and not from society; and the less one soul has to do with other souls the more deeply can it enjoy those eternally recurrent sensations that are our only evidence of Immortality. The soul to whom has been revealed the inmost mystery of sensation naturally shrinks from contact with other souls.

It *can* only touch these others at one single point in the circumference of each; but even in such infinitesimal contact the two souls run the risk of being transformed into blood-suckers.

Berdyaev's advocacy of communion with *other selves* inevitably leads — indeed one suspects all the while that this subtle Apologist intends that it *shall* lead — to communion with God.

But the soul of man left to itself doesn't want, doesn't need, doesn't seek communion with anything *but the Inanimate*. The help it requires it can get and this 'help from itself takes the place of help from God.

To many people, I fully admit, the feeling of drawing help from 'the depths of themselves' gives them the impression — as indeed it did to our 'green hair-streak' friend of my last chapter — that they are drawing help from God. And so they *are* in one sense; but not in Berdyaev's sense, and not in the sense of the Fourth Gospel. They are drawing help from what St. Paul calls 'the Christ in us'. In simpler words they are drawing help from the part of us which extends into a Dimension beyond the astronomical world; the part of us, or rather the part of our soul, that contains 'Jesus and Jehovah' as well as:

The Son of Morn in weary night's decline,
The lost traveller's dream under the lull.

What a grand and natural justice there is in the fact that in the subtlest art of all, the art of life, the intellect is at a disadvantage compared with the instinct of the simple!

The instinct of the simple, for example, takes for granted that there are — whatever our optimists say — aspects of life so horrible and so awful that all we can do is to forget them.

The instinct of the common man accepts, just as Rabelais and Shakespeare and Cervantes and Montaigne accepted, the fact that life cannot be faced in its entirety; and that 'Hell! Let's have another drink!' is not a

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desperate counsel of despair but a sagacious hint from the depths of a profound common sense.

Rabelais and Shakespeare and Cervantes and Montaigne — these are the greatest geniuses of our Western World and all these have the same philosophy.

Nor is there any difficulty about interpreting to the common man this philosophy of the four greatest geniuses of our hemisphere; for the simple reason that they all four did with their easy and inspired humour what I, their humble disciple, am trying to do with my pettifogging and meticulous solemnity, that is to say go to the common man himself for their attitude to life and death.

Why have so many of Shakespeare's lines become proverbial? For the same reason that Rabelais and Cervantes make so much of proverbs and are perpetually quoting them — because they are in constant psychic relation — in *communion* as Berdyaev would say — with the common man's attitude to life.

Nothing is more disturbing to the professional philosopher than the common man's obstinate inability to see the world as that sort of 'block universe' which was so irritating an aspect of orthodox metaphysic to the shameless American intelligence of William James.

The common man sees the world — as Shakespeare and Montaigne did — as a Plurality or Multiverse. Now it is clear what *this* means. Nothing less than a lessening of the importance of the One and Only God.

In a Plurality of Worlds there is much less scope for a single divine authority than in a rounded-off *block-universe* even though its margins *do* stretch out to infinity! The idea of a Multiverse, wherein the ultimate reality is the Many rather than the One, is a thoroughly profane and secular conception of things.

Such profanity, such secularity, such freedom from mystical sanctimoniousness, is, I make bold to claim, *implied* in the 'Kingdom of Heaven' of which Jesus was always speaking, though he did not himself realize the full implication of this. He does however leave what we might call the atmosphere of the 'Kingdom' much freer from the over-scented hot-house air of a hushed *mysterium tremendum* than St. Paul does.

St. Paul's tone always takes on a certain excited whisper, as if under the electric discharge of a battery of reverential awe, when he talks of the secret mysteries of God which existed before the 'Foundation of the World'.

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The most characteristic exponent of the atmosphere evoked by belief in a Multiverse rather than a Block-Universe is Walt Whitman; and it is to be noted that Whitman has acquired the secret of poetical reverence for the whole stream of life, 'Mélange my own, the seen and the unseen', while he treats roughly, carelessly, sacrilegiously, mischievously, and even wantonly, that element of hushed and portentous unction, the lowered voice, the pious gravity, the bowed head, which are the usual accompaniments of the worship of God.

But lest, as St. Paul would say, 'the unrighteous should glory' as they contemplate the particular effect of belief in a Multiverse rather than a Universe, we must emphasize again that the whole meaning, purpose, or quality of God — the essential reality of God in fact — isn't lost in this transformation.

All it has done is *to go home*; in other words to retreat into that hidden portion of each man's soul, out of which, in hypostasis after hypostasis, it originally came.

Humility is still the most potent, the most miracle-working of all the gifts of the spirit, but instead of being evoked by an awe-inspiring Presence outside the threshold ordinary experience, it is evoked more and more by the simple contacts of ordinary life.

Let me put it in plain words. Since our confidence in Something that inspires us, since our gratitude to Something that saves us, must now be directed to the soul, and since all souls are equal, we are driven to the exciting conclusion, redolent of mischievous humour, that God has deserted 'his Heaven' and has taken refuge, like Saturn from the thunderbolts of Jupiter, in the corporeal shapes of all living creatures.

How ridiculous is our notion that because a midge dancing in the air, or because a cow chewing the cud on the grass, possess forms grotesquely different from our own that therefore they must necessarily be lacking in that inner life which with us is everything! If you want an example of the stupid conceit of *race* could anything be more preposterous than the solemn manner in which philosophers will tell us that the 'lower animals' have consciousness but not self-consciousness? Have these sages entered into the feathery and furry and scaly bodies of the creatures whose consciousness they describe? Have they the remotest conception of what it feels like to love as a dog loves, to alternate between the surface and the bottom of a pond like a newt, to enjoy the tender growths at the tops of

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trees like a giraffe, to sail for ever and aye round the world like a whale?

But until they have entered these bodies or at least have been inspired by a psychic imagination equal to that of the greatest poets, it remains a comical and pitiful ambition in them to think they can cross the slippery *eel-bridge* into the consciousness of the king of *any* castle!

And granting both these phenomena, the multiplicity of universes and the equality of souls, does not the humorous cheerfulness which we have presumed to note as a hall-mark of 'the Kingdom of Heaven' compel us to regard with some amusement the extraordinary claims which human beings make in the secret places of their proud bosoms?

If the respect paid by poor people to rich people is a standing affront to a philosophic mind, what are we to think of the respect paid by rich people to themselves?

You would suppose they would chuckle to themselves sometimes, these people, and that the 'upper classes', in their bewildering gradations, would chuckle to themselves even more, at the respect paid them.

But none of them do! They take it as much for granted as a hawk takes it that he isn't a wren; and a rhinoceros that he isn't a zebra.

There are many revolutionaries who suggest that there are limits to the justice of private property; but which of them suggests that there are limits to the desirability of private property? We all assume this desirability; and though there are revolutionaries who regard the rich — as Keats said he regarded 'every gentleman' — as 'natural enemies', it must still be admitted that with our theoretical disapproval of these people there mingles not a hittle practical respect.

But how strange all this is. Custom and habit! But there is much more in our feeling about it than moral indignation against injustice. Indeed the common man's whole attitude to rich people and to the privileged classes is a very complicated and curious one.

Part of it is undoubtedly purely humorous. Upper-class people are to him like amusing creatures at the Zoo. They are all a little silly; all a hittle blind, all a little funny and childish. They are so ignorant of the shifts and tricks and necessities and devices of ordinary life that to us who watch them and cater for them and are so pathetically delighted to be recognized by them as pseudo-equals — though God knows we don't give them the credit of being able to face life as we have to face it! —

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they present themselves under the semblance of *pets*, Angora Cats or kennelbred Dogs, with whose care we are proud of being associated!

When the present writer was preparing for College, some half a century ago, an inexhaustible topic of debate among thoughtful Six-Form boys, was the old question: What is the Purpose of Life? It would be of extraordinary interest to me if I could get replies to this question from a number of young people after these fifty years. The question would have to be answered in a single sentence of not more words than the years of the catechumen's life, and on the model — though probably not to that tune — of: 'The purpose of life is to serve God and to enjoy Him for ever'.

Now assuming a belief in a Multiverse rather than in a Universe and assuming a social ideal so much the extreme antithesis of the Nazi-Fascist one that it might even be said to indicate a tendency to what used to be called 'Philosophical Anarchy', what would we reply to this question? I think I would boldly reply: *'The Purpose of life is to force ourselves to enjoy life while we keep the laws of kindness and humility.'* I suppose to many minds this simple answer to so tremendous a question seems hardly oracular enough.

But it is above all important in this nice matter of announcing Life-Purposes — which is really as difficult as to announce War-Aims — to make sure we *can* speak, with full representative confidence, on behalf of the ordinary man. For suppose our ordinary man had a run of bad luck, and was at present in a Workhouse or an Infirmary, might it not conceivably seem an ironic mockery to the heart of such a person to expect him to answer in Goethe's words: 'Resolve to live in the Whole, in the Good, and in the Beautiful'?

But as he takes his orders from the Matron, or refrains from cutting short the confessions of Brother Maudlin, or treats himself to a long session of reverie at the window, or makes his mug of tea last as long as a miser's pint, is it an impertinent and Utopian joke to ask him to force himself to enjoy life while he forces himself to suppress his maliciousness and his pride?

For what's the use of having a 'Purpose of Life' that doesn't apply to all the denizens of the Life-Parade of our Particular Dimension? To learn the rudiments of a 'purpose' that is really commensurate with our planetary predicament we ought to go to our fellow-pilgrims and sojourners, to the animals and birds and fishes.

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How untiringly these creatures 'seek their meat from God'! How obstinately and patiently they force themselves to go on with their monotonous job of eating to live! How fishes float, birds hover, insects dart, and cattle and sheep chew the cud!

All these tribes of creatures force themselves to enjoy life; for such 'forcing' and such 'enjoying' is the urge of their whole nature, the urge that drives them to feed and propagate and fall into long reveries.

You will deny, perhaps, that they force themselves? Well! I lay no stress on that particular word if you can find another. But some word we *must* have — if we've spent any length of time with animals — that denotes the exercise of an heroic endurance combined with an obstinate cheerfulness or at least with an amazing absence of whimpering, as they pursue their quests of hunger and their quests of desire.

There have been inspired poetical writers both in ancient and modern times who call upon us to cultivate pride and taciturnity and ruthlessness and superiority and aristocratic haughtiness by imitating lions and tigers and kites and falcons and eagles. But the flaw in this argument is that evolution has moved on and the life-urge, that branched off from lions and eagles into doves and serpents, found its premonitory and prophetic note in the devotion and attachment and miraculous faithfulness and cheerfulness — of dogs.

My claim is that the natural way, the intended way, the Utopian and Golden-Age way, of enjoying life is by a cult of sensations. But I can imagine many persons indignantly retorting that the whole trend and tide of evolution is in the direction of quality, and that no attempt of mine to give this sensation-cult an occult significance, by introducing the soul, changes the fact that it is on *quantity* rather than on *quality* that I am laying the stress.

No, no! It is on *equality* rather than quality that I am laying the stress! And why? Because I have the authority of the 'Kingdom of Heaven', spoken of by Jesus, for maintaining that only by acknowledging equality do we attain to quality.

I would indeed go further and roundly declare that so deeply does this paradoxical *equality-quality* enter into every human choice and so deeply does it enter into evolution, that in this particular case of forcing ourselves to enjoy 'the pleasure which there is in life itself we are urged to the effort by no other power than conscience.

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All souls are, so to speak, *amphibious*. Part of their life is outside this present Dimension; and doesn't the fact that the mysterious thing we call conscience, this demonic power that is always troubling us and tormenting us to do difficult things, seems — as Kant most rightly hinted — to come from outside the whole astronomical world suggest that between this hidden portion of all souls and this strange Imperative there exists a reciprocity that like themselves is outside time and space?

Why else, as we experience a particular quiver of emotion, when under some accidental shifting of the wind, or swinging of the sail, or turning of the smoke, or bending of the road, we catch the elements about us, our familiar earth, air, sky and water, under a new and thrilling light, is the conscience within us stirred to a sympathetic response, as by experience we know it is, as if we felt a moral as well as an emotional glow?

But some will say: 'How can you disregard all the religious and cultural and aesthetic and philosophical traditions of both the Christian and the Buddhist worship? How can you have the presumption to suppose that your private interpretation of Shakespeare's private interpretation, of the common man's common human illusions, can be truer than what the great professional Interpreters of Confucius or Christ or Buddha asseverate as the secret of the Universe?'

And some will add: 'And even granting that such presumption is law^f-ful what has all this to do with Hitler?'

In reply to the first objection I can only say that on this devilish, though incense-sprinkled excuse of the traditional, have been perpetuated some of the worst historic crimes against the free development of the individual soul.

And as to the second point, isn't this tellurian war admitted by most of us to be a battle to the death between democracy and totalitarianism, with the common man unable to help being grateful to the Russian people, Stalin or no Stalin, for resisting what is worse than Communism?

And if it is this sort of battle — a battle of opposite temperaments out of which spring opposite ideas—can you regard the thoughts of the individual soul as outside the issue? If they *were* outside the issue why do all the governments of the world keep addressing them in such high-pitched voices? In this little pamphlet of mine one individual soul at any rate takes upon itself to return the compliment.

And the view of every individual soul as to the *Purpose of Life* has everything to do with our war to the death with Hitler.

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And as to Jesus and Buddha and Mohammed and their 'traditions', hasn't the simple democratic individual a right to follow the bold methods of all these Sages and carry their ideas a bit further? 'He is a man. They were no more. His own humanity let him adore!'

And it seems to the present writer that the moment has come, in the stress of this desperate war, to make this 'bit further' have to do with substituting what might be called the humility and equality of the soul's lonely and separate sensations for all the vast traditions of mystical theology.

The comical thing is that any living entity should base its enjoyment of life on competition with other entities or on its superiority to other entities. In the nature of things this must be an extremely shaky pleasure; for if we're superior to some, we're always very inferior to others. Oh, for heaven's sake let's renounce the whole business of comparison and competition!

Even Hitler didn't *make himself*. Providence or chance — or the Devil it may be — moulded his skull to the shape it is; and arranged that lock over his forehead which is the most Napoleonic thing about him. Where is an ordinary man superior to Hitler? Only in having the common sense to see that kindness and humorous cheerfulness and the power of drawing up endurance from the depths of his own soul are more wonderful than being worshipped by eighty millions and conquering two hundred millions! Why not turn our 'bit further' into a renunciation of those arbitrary rewards from a Totalitarian God of which there are too many references in the Parables? Why not make an infinitesimal advance butli upon the Saviour's love of being loved and anger when he wasn't loved, and upon the Apostle's 'it profiteth me nothing'?

Why not go a hair's breadth further on; and in the spirit of it all, if not the letter, refuse even so much as to consider the question whether we possess or don't possess the particular kind of love so beautifully described in that chapter of the epistle to the Corinthians *not to have which* renders even our 'giving our body to be burned' a sad, profitless, and unbusiness-like investment.

Why not, in plam words, move those difficult furlongs further upon the long 'Highway of Conscience', till we reach that lonely milestone upon which is written: 'No Rewards asked or given'? It is at that milestone on the soul's pilgrimage that Mr. Nonentity leaves his superiority

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in the art of profitable love to take care of itself as he leaves many other fame-bringing virtues and excellencies.

Nor does the magnetic energy which he saves up in this manner prove to be ineffective in increasing his power of embracing the elements and drawing strength from beyond Time and Space.

Hitler's attack upon what humanity has struggled for so painfully and with so many hypocritical set-backs and confused treacheries through two-thousand years has naturally, by emphasizing the preciousness of what we've won as we face the battle to keep it, winnowed the consciences of the men and women of this Island as they have never been winnowed before.

How true, considering everything, are Mr. Churchill's words: 'Never has there been a time when so much was owed by so many to so few' — and if this applies to the angels it also applies to the devils.

We have only to think of what the world would be like under Hitler and his Gestapo to realize that what is threatened most of all is this very thing I have been struggling to articulate all through this book — namely what comes to us on every casual wind and wave and on every wayward light and shadow, the right to be careless and reckless and lazy and inefficient and solitary and absent-minded, the right, as Whitman says, to *loaf and invite our soul* What our careless and absent-minded and humorously detached young men are now doing — and the process certainly seems to be emphasizing the equality of all souls — is simply defending the right of a human being to be a human being. For a human being is *not* born, as Totalitarian Governments assume, to work and obey and propagate families! *A human being is bom to enjoy himself.* If, as so many ghastly Fifth Columnists are now insisting, we have all to do penance for a lifetime in sackcloth and ashes because for ten years Hitler has forced his people to make guns in place of eating butter, let them understand that this *Ynys Prydain*, as the old British Bards call it, was and will be impenitent in this matter!

Our young men have already shown Hitler that man for man they can be more than a match for his cohorts without changing their opinion that marching and drilling are more comical than they are awe-inspiring.

If he forces them to make guns and planes, they'll make them; but it will always be with the reservation that the pleasures of life are the essential things; and the war a crazy interruption. If Hitler forces them

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to play the game, they'll play it until he realizes that easy-going, slack-limbed, independent humorists, who prefer their private hobbies to the rise and fall of nations, can fight like devils, just simply to stop him.

The curious thing about this war is that it has become a struggle between a race whose strength lies in a drugged solidarity of ecstatic hero-worship and a race whose strength lies in the careless and humorous resources of each individual's independent soul.

It's a battle between a race whose leader has hypnotized it into a preparation for land-war such as the world has never seen, and a race whose individuals, aided by a thousand years' tradition, take to the sea as to their native element.

It's a struggle between land-supremacy, where the individual is reduced to the vanishing-point, and sea-supremacy where the individual is everything.

And now, on the top of this, we have our young men's recklessly individual supremacy in the air. The rapidity of France's collapse is still a mystery. Not all the enemy's preparation, not all his new style of fighting, quite explains it. One can only remember that it is the nature of a Frenchman to hate *other* Frenchmen worse than he hates the Germans. While Catholic and Republican, like two saurians, gnaw at each other's bowels the carrion-crow pecks out both pairs of eyes.

Why is it that our ordinary man doesn't hate every gentleman? I don't think this is because our aristocracy is cleverer than the French aristocracy, though incidentally it is so. I think it comes from our dramatic instinct. We are too amused at these people to hate them!

Our attitude towards them is indulgent. We keep them like beautiful pets and are prepared to pay the tax! But it also comes from the life of innocent sensations — animal, vegetable, and I might almost add, *mineral* sensations — which our ordinary people, including dole-men and tramps, cultivate so intensely. In spite of the fact that Proust describes the sensations I have in mind better than anybody except the poet Wordsworth and Dorothy Richardson, I cannot believe that the ordinary Frenchman enjoys 'the pleasure which there is in life itself as deeply as the ordinary Englishman. He is ten times more of an epicure; ten times more of an artist; ten times more skilful in the little amenities and arrangements of life, not to speak of his recognized superiority in the professional and historic *ars amoris*.

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But I doubt if winds and waves, mountains and seas, rains and dews and vapours, affect him as they affect us and I doubt if any Frenchman can understand our Wordsworthian passion for sitting alone over our fire waiting for the kettle to boil.

And with all his wit and with all his sardonic criticism a Frenchman is much more serious than we are. Sometimes I am tempted to think he is as serious as a German! Whereas the real truth is we're not serious about anything but Sport and Nature and the Sensation of being alive.

The Frenchman takes his own language much more seriously than we take ours. And all the niceties of art and all the intellectual subtleties of criticism he considers as of the first importance. He puts literature in the highest possible place, and he permits himself at appropriate moments to express his views on philosophy in modulated periods.

It might indeed be said that while the ordinary Frenchman enjoys wine and love and literature and art, the ordinary Englishman enjoys himself. And I think it is for this very reason that the honour of resisting Hitler to the bitter end has fallen upon us rather than upon France. In the pursuit of religious and aesthetic refinements it is possible to forget the atmospheric disturbance caused by the eruption of Germans from Germany. But when you 'don't care for reading*' and 'don't know very much about classical music' and are unable to look forward to a well-cooked meal, you are perforce thrown back upon what is left, namely Nature and your Garden and your Dog.

Our lady-friend may not be available. Our dinner may not be cooked. There may be no wine in the house. But the broad-beans are doing well; and the wind is blowing up for rain; and the fish are biting. Who knows indeed if it isn't a peculiarity of Nature, with her erratic, spacious ways, to prefer a man who isn't too industrious, isn't too tidy and thrifty and saving, isn't too occupied with literature and art? In other words, it is extremely possible that Nature favours easy-going men who have time to listen to her and can enjoy her at her worst. She likes young people who prefer holidays to post-office-savings, nursery-garden-catalogues to Ontological Truth, and the poorest highway-tea to the best boulevard brandy.

Nature had taken thousands and thousands of years to evolve the independent liberty-loving British soul. Nature cares nothing for purity of race. To her 'the reed is as the oak'. What she aims at in humanity is unending variety and infinite individualism.

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Hitler offers us in lucid and logical words a New Europe under a German Peace. 'Work and Obey' will be the motto; and a new human society will arise, of scientific authority, of organized 'strength through joy' and of drilling from cradle to grave.

Dickensian whimsicalities, back-garden bowling-greens, amateur fishing smacks, horse-racing and football pools, settles in inn-bars and backgammon politics, all will pass with the passing of their garrulous patrons.

Even so much as to refer to public affairs unless in terms of extravagant approval of authority will be forbidden. Hitlerian Europe will have fulfilled the long cherished desire of all despotic governments; and between one well-drilled slave and another there will be no more difference than between a Mosaic jot' and an Hebraic 'tittle'.

O happy age! O age when all disturbing freedoms and eccentricities are blotted out! O age of mass-obedience, mass-industry, mass-mysticism, mass-love!

What a climax to twenty thousand years of evolution! Hide your heads, Rabelais and Montaigne! Hide your heads, Shakespeare and Dickens! Let the Marseillaise be silent and Charlie Chaplin throw away his cane. Let those old Pirate-Anarchists of Britain take to their Seven Seas. Europe will henceforth have one logic, one reason, one Master-Race.

There will be no more degenerate poetry, no more degenerate levity, no more degenerate pleasure. *Consummatum est*. Evolution is at an end. Heil, Ideal Ant-Heap! Heil, unexampled and never before-seen Bee-Hive! Heil, Queen Hitler!

The unlucky thing however for this perfect termite-world will be that Nature will declare war upon it. Nature hasn't taken all her centuries of exquisite contradictions and delicately-adjusted paradoxes, to yield without a struggle to this ruthless Perfection.

Between Nature and the lonely individual human soul there is a deep and mysterious bond. Nature never reveals her secretest magic upon the drilling ground. Not 'strength through joy' but joy through eccentricity' is *her* motto.

And just as Hitler's system combines the unpleasantness of a society *above* the protection of the law with the unpleasantness of a society *below* the protection of the law, so it combines the solemn gravity of homicidal cruelty with the solemn gravity of pious hero-worship.

Hitler is anti-Christian and anti-Semitic and anti-Libertarian, **but** he is

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also *Anti-Pagan*. He is what you might call a *professional heathen* and as such he is not really profane at heart. He is not profane in that shameless scandalous, humorous way that makes our English Shakespeare the most *secular* of all great writers, and an everlasting stumbling-block to religious and moral fanatics.

Hitler's deliberate and, as he thinks of it, *scientific* ruthlessness is just as solemn and inhuman, just as gloomy with moral compulsions, as the sanctimoniousness of Mr. Dombey. It implies a gloating over defeated enemies which is in its essence just as full of grave veneration for Brute Force as a Fundamentalist preacher is full of grave veneration for Simple Faith.

But? it is precisely this kind of gravity that creative Nature during the last two thousand years has been trying to eliminate in favour of a more kindly, more cheerful, more humble, more whimsical attitude to life.

The Germans are our first cousins. We've got — as Hardy pointed out in the last war — enough in common to understand a good deal in each other, whereas neither of us understood any segment or fragment of the French nature. But there is some aboriginal strain in all Britishers, as if we had drifted here from Lost Atlantis, that makes it impossible for us to take war seriously. It isn't exactly that we're Pacifists, for, that is taking war seriously. It's that we're essentially *amateurs*; amateurs at *this* game as at all others!

Consider our Navy, for example, which is our supreme example of *professionalism*. How perfect is every Navy-man's success in putting his professionalism in its precise place! The Navy is one of the few human Organisms that our planet has produced. It is more than an Institution. It is more than a class or a community. It is, if I may be permitted to say so, the Catholic Church of the Sea; only it is more indigenous, more integral, and if one is permitted to coin an expression, answering to autochthonous more 'autothalassian'.

How the special God of Britain — for as Dostoievsky most truly and rightly says, every race has its own God, created the living germ of the Navy, nurtured and nursed and moulded the Navy, founded on the slippery waters the traditions of the Navy, none but Himself can say.

When Britain first at Heaven's command
Arose from out the azure main
This was the charter . . . the charter .. .

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We ought to read more history! The best History of England is only of one reign—J. H. Wylie's *History of England under Henry IV*—Four vols. London 1884-98—and it is clear from Wylie's documents that in those early days the Merchant Marine used to play the part of a Royal Navy.

The laws of the sea are different from those of the land; and the sea develops in the souls of its men a larger, nobler, more chivalrous temper than the land.

Take this war as a struggle to the death between land and sea; is it not on the face of it more likely than the power which draws its spirit from the sea would if it won the struggle have a healthier, freer, humbler, kindlier, more generous influence in the re-building of the shattered world?*

But whether the 'common or garden' Britisher, who at this moment — and it doesn't really matter whether he represents the navy or army or air-force or home guard — is risking his life and enduring devilish hardships with a reckless good-nature, conceals from himself the fact that he cherishes at the bottom of his heart a certain irrepressible, natural, healthy desire that the close of this war may discover him among the living rather than among the dead, or whether his love of country or passion for the Service has grown to such a pitch that such considerations have actually ceased to exist, it remains that there is something in the nature of the sea as it penetrates to the most inland portions of an island as small as ours that evokes a frame of mind that is obstinately resolute and almost reckless in its fighting quality without for a moment losing its healthy and indeed humorous preference for being alive rather than being dead.

We read of German boys clinging to each other, as they enter the firing-line, in a drugged ecstasy of gregarious exultation. Hitler's name is on their lips; Hitler's image — taking the place of all the older religious symbols — is in their hearts. They are in a condition of mystical intoxication.

The temper of our men in the face of danger and death is at the extreme opposite pole. It is doubtful whether the figure of any living man, or any dead man either, animates their courage.

And not only are they not drunk with ecstatic mysticism, they keep, as far as I can make out, their normal wits about them. You would suppose that their whole life had been passed in a series of desperate adventures.

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Indeed, so self-possessed they seem to be, and so little in need of any mystical 'dope', that their humour seems to have the power of resembling the humour of Falstaff while their behaviour resembles the behaviour of Henry the Fifth! And this difference between the contrasting belligerents goes deeper yet.

The Navy displays its courtesy and its chivalry, its protective rather than self-protective instincts, from desperate moment to moment in the mid-stress of its cruellest encounters. The airmen act as if occupied in some new but not overpoweringly exciting sport, involving difficult and dangerous technique, but completely bounded by its own professional horizons, and as detached from any mystical worship of ideological men-gods — or air-gods either — as hard-working shrimp-catchers are detached from speculations about the lost continent of Atlantis.

And if these things are true of the Navy and Air Force, our Soldiers are a living and over-powering proof that our Islanders take a different view of war from that taken by our enemies. The main idea of each individual soldier is to enjoy himself as much as possible in *the intervals* — even if they be but a few hours — of his soldiering; and this habit of mind, instead of diminishing his spirit as a soldier, increases it. He obeys his command; he fights with discipline; but just because he isn't drugged with any mystical ecstasy, just because he doesn't regard war as the noblest of human activities, just because he has no ideology save 'King and Country' he keeps his head from moment to moment, and with all his discipline he fights as an individual, just as, in his precious off-hours, he enjoys himself as an individual.

His enemy is taught to live *in order to fight*. He on the contrary fights in order to live. And his fighting is made more formidable by the fact that he keeps so considerable a portion of his soul detached and, as it were, in *reserve*. It is indeed from the portion of his soul which remains 'in reserve' that his miraculous self-reliance springs and that power of initiative and of *acting on his own* which is so impossible to his enemy.

The young German soldiers have been taught — and taught by solemn and ferocious experts — to throw their whole soul into war, as the noblest of all possible ideals, and to worship their leader, as the noblest of **all** possible leaders.

Our young soldiers do their duty by King and Country; but their

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souls are **their** own, and they regard all 'leaders' as something between an unfortunate necessity and a never-ending joke.

And this refusal to include every portion of their soul in the duty they so faithfully offer up to their country, has as its consequence their power of living in the sensations of the moment and of enjoying themselves even while the pillars of the world are shaken. I don't say that the rank-and-file of our enemies are lacking in thrilling emotions, nor do I say*that they lack courage. They are obviously inspired, drugged, obsessed. Indeed, they are *possessed*, by one of the most exalted of all human emotions, the emotion of sacrificing themselves for a man-god!

Like the debauched angels described by Milton, these simple-hearted aboriginals of the Baltic, led by their magnetic Medicine-Man —

. . . fill all the Plain;

A multitude, like which the populous North
Pour'd never from her frozen loins, to pass
Rhene or the *Danaw*, when her barbarous sons
Came like a Deluge on the South, and spread
Beneath Gibraltar to the Lybian sands.

It doesn't matter that their man-god has many of the attributes of the Devil. Simpler minded and purer races than theirs have fallen into the same infuriate error. My argument doesn't rest on the devilishness of Hitler or on the infatuation of his ecstatic dupes, but on the extremely cool heads, you might even say the humorously cool heads, of the 'common or garden' defenders of *our Island*,

How have Hitler and his Germans over-run Europe? Well! Firstly by wanting to do so more than anything else in the world. Secondly by preparing to do so to the sacrifice of everything else. Thirdly by worshipping Hitler to the exclusion of everything else. One want: one purpose: one god—there lies the miracle!

And meanwhile Europe had many wants, many purposes, many gods. It is a case of the old metaphysical opposition of the One against the Many; of the 'logical Block-Universe against the real, living, mysterious, anarchical Multiverse; and in this struggle—which is a true 'tragedy' in the strictest Hegelian sense—the One is bound to win at first, just because it *is* one; while it cannot win eventually—for the same reason! But the worst thing done by this poor mad Prophet of the Efficiency of Destruction isn't the over-running of Europe: it is the

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over-running of the souls of Europeans. He has done what he *has* done by the very outrageousness of this enormity; for when a man is 'possessed' — that is to say, when there's *Somebody Else* in the 'garnished' chamber — the 'seven others' are never far away.

And just because this weird person, whom in my district we call 'That man' shares with the Devil some psychic power over human souls, and as far as we can see from the grievous spectacle of the Quislings, not only over German souls, it becomes an *occult crisis* in the history of the world whether this soul-obsessing Personage *can be stopped*.

Well! it is precisely here that the 'common or garden' inhabitant of this Island rises up. For living as he does in harmless sensations; divided, as he usually is between some eccentric hobby carried on at the back of his house and the necessity of supporting his family, glancing, as he frequently does, at his own authorities with anything but a mystical eye, going so far as to regard the whole sublime spectacle of World-Events 'sub-specie' — *the circus*, he is the dedicated opponent of everything Hitler embodies.

Hitler represents a scientific mysticism that is as devoid of levity as the gloves of an undertaker; a mysticism shot through by solemn lies, and repeating, like the Ghost of Hamlet's Father, the wrongs that Germany has endured from the foundation of the world. The role to be played by this *master-race* is an eminently serious and solemn one: namely, to rule *for their good*, and if possible through their own aristocratic natives, under a reasonable, logical, and mystical despotism the disturbed, quarrelsome, nationalistic, communistic, capitalistic, anarchistic, masses of ordinary Europeans.

It has been made entirely clear that many of the privileged classes in Europe would far sooner submit to Hitler than share with their fellow-countrymen those rights, privileges, royalties, and increments, which they regard more necessary to happiness than freedom or solitude of soul.

One has to admit a doubt sometimes as to whether these traitors would in the long run be allowed the fruits of their submission; but meanwhile it is clear that the real opposition to being made into obedient, mystical, industrious helots comes from the individual free souls among us like Mr. Churchill and like the rank and file of the nation. *He must be stopped*. That is Mr. Churchill's refrain; and that is why Mr. Churchill answers to our mood, represents our mood, and *is* our mood; personifying, as no

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Prime Minister has ever done before, the **British** people. **He** represents us by his deep instinct that it's absurd to talk of enacting a New World when it is Hitler's New World that has to be fought off, tooth and nail! Fought off, not bought off. The danger is a psychic one as well as a physical one. It is an occult danger; it is what you might call a *fourth* dimensional* danger.

It is a parting of the ways in the history of the human race. We are not fighting against flesh and blood, but against something invisibly catastrophic, abysmally sinister. Hitler threatens to force upon the world — largely by bribing its rulers to betray the people they rule — a system of life, of *life*, mind you! not just politics or economics, which smooths out, hammers out, beats out, planes out, flattens out, that vital mystery in the individual soul that enables it to summon to its aid magnetic energies from another Dimension.

This is a much deeper thing than a battle for Empire. There are plenty of Intellectuals among us who can think out striking plans for a New World; and a book-worm like myself, who has a mania for the past, is well able to criticize these inventions. But there is only one path to a, desirable New World and that path lies in the direction of variety, diversity, plurality, and *All Power to Ordinary Men and Women!*

It is Physical Science — as the twin-crimes of bombs and vivisection show — that has 'run amok' and made the Hitler-Phenomenon possible. The Church can invent tortures for heretics without calling in 'the secular arm'; but as the Stuarts used to say 'No Bishop, no King', so we can say 'No Science, no Hitler'.

When we are threatened, on a gigantic and scientific scale, by an attempt to transform the lonely and the solitary into a mass-movement drunk with love-hate, by an attempt to transform the endlessly diversified souls of men and women into the busy, obedient, mystical fuhrer-worshipping *one soul* of a totalitarian wasps' nest, the battle becomes a battle *to get hack*; yes! to get back out of a horrible cul-de-sac, into the old human historic tide of natural evolution!

CHAPTER XI

THE HUMOURS OF THE DEMOCRATIC MAN

THE mysterious Power behind evolution in our present Dimension is clearly less interested in new animal types than in the improvement of human character. It is driving evolution in the direction of more humility, more kindness, more humour, more enjoyment, more solitude, more independence; in a word towards the opposite of everything in the Hitler system!

And curiously enough it is just because this historic tide was moving steadily to the next great 'bank and shoal of time' where a war like this would be too monstrous and mad to happen, that the Dictators were enabled, by appealing to everything in human nature that is belligerent and revengeful and unscrupulous, to prepare for domination by explosion and destruction. The historic tide was flowing forward; but the Dictators took advantage of this easy, slowly-moving advance towards a better world, took advantage of all decent people's hatred of war, and began dynamiting the sea-banks and bombing the breakwaters of evolution itself!

Our Capitalistic Democracy is as prolific of abuses as a Sussex beech-wood of toadstools; but like the ferns that grow between these fungi the souls of men have learnt by long use and wont to adapt themselves to ancient wrongs, and as they move to and fro among the most monstrous shames they seldom fall into hopeless despair or miss the flickerings, broken but recurrent, of sunrise and sunset.

Nothing is more interesting than a real detached Proustian analysis of the secret and evasive motives that lie behind our professed political views. How large a part does the emotion of hate, and the emotion of malice, and the emotion of personal dislike, play, each one of them, in forming those casual opinions which we announce to our friends and enemies as the winnowed and sifted conclusion of a long experience. Malice and uncharitableness play the largest part of all. I am sure that I speak truly, for I myself am a living example of what I am analysing, so also is everybody I know.

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I confess that when I encounter certain types of well-to-do persons I long for a revolution; but I long for it purely and solely — for it presents itself to my mind as an *aesthetic propriety* that such people should be made to hop and skip — for the hustling and rattling of these particular rogues; but in cooler blood I find myself doubting whether ordinary people such as touchy dole-men, and liberty-loving tramps, and old-age pensioners, and impecunious caterers for the pleasures of the crowd, and even factory-workers and farm-labourers, would be rendered solidly happier by a complete upheaval.

If there *were* a complete upheaval, the danger is — so it seems to me — that the Personages thrown up to be our new Government would still, however revolutionary they were, retain the unpleasant habit of all Governments; namely the confusion of their own power with *our* welfare.

The annoying thing is that all the abuses of our system could be remedied if we all wanted other people's welfare along with — I won't even say equally with — our own. The worst of it is that the strongest urge in many of us towards a universal upheaval is not so much an intense desire for the welfare of the poor, as an intense desire — at least this is how I feel about it myself — for the discomfiture of the rich.

Capitalistic Democracy is a rough-and-ready patchwork of many scandals and much anarchy, of many abuses and much injustice, but shocking as the whole idea of private-property must seem to a Platonic mind, at least it thrusts an insurmountable spoke into the wheel of any ambitious tyrant; and this perhaps is the reason why all tyrants make scapegoats of Jews.

Capitalism is full of monstrous abuses; but at least it is illogical, irrational, chaotic, *and as such in harmony with nature*. And as for Democracy, it is the natural offspring of what William James calls a pluralistic, strung-along world. It is as much the characteristic offspring of a *Multiverse* as Hitler's solemn hierarchical tyranny would seem the offspring of a closed Hegelian circle, or of what William James calls a *Block-Universe* \

This is the whole difference between us and Hitler; and this is what makes it unnecessary for us to declare any other war-aims than the destruction of Hitler. If I were a dog in danger of being strapped down by a fanatical vivisector I would feel no immediate necessity to formulate *alternative methods of research*, whether medicinal or psychological. My

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sole purpose would be — and would most rightly be — to get my teeth into the throat of my torturer.

And the point is that with us Britishers the great urge to fight Hitler to the death was born Below, not from Above. The aristocracy were for appeasement; for making terms. And why *did* Hitler attack and conquer Europe? To reform human society? To inaugurate a wonderful new era for the human race? To create a free Europe, composed of equal federated peoples? Not at all. He has explained it in *Mein Kampf*. He started this war for one end alone. To put Germans *uber alles*, on the top, over the others, above the others, as the 'herren-folk' for whom the others must toil.

And it would seem — if we and the United States win in this war — it will be because Capitalism, bad as it may be, is more *human* than totalitarianism; and because our English blood drives us on to come into closer and closer contact with the elements. For it would appear that what some call the 'spirit-world', but which I prefer to call the *Next Dimension*, has its thinnest and least obstructive wall where we are in closest touch not with love or with religion or with philosophy *but with the elements*. Now this has nothing to do with the difference between city-life and country-life; for a man can be quite as alone — more alone very often — in a great city than in a country village. It has to do with 'communion', to use Berdyaev's pet word, with the so-called Inanimate.

And it is because sailors, and air-men, too, are more constantly aware of the Inanimate and more constantly pre-occupied with the Inanimate that they grow to be closer than others to the mysterious Unknown which surrounds us all.

Of the nature of this Unknown — into which we all pass at death — they know no more than the rest of us, that is to say they know *nothing*; but without knowing a thing we can feel nearer or further from a thing, and these men by their perpetual consciousness of the Inanimate feel nearer than we do to what I call the Next Dimension.

It has been a surprise and a shock to Hitler to be resisted as the whole population of this Island, heartened by a leader with so grim and so humorous a fortitude, has resisted him; but I can tell him whence the magic power comes for this resistance. It comes from the fact that, religious or irreligious as we may individually be, we possess the power of drawing strength from that portion of our soul which is already outside Time and Space.

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Beyond our sensations we cannot pass. Beyond our temporal and spatial sensations we know nothing. But by forcing ourselves in these days of stress to enjoy the elements in place of enjoying love or religion or philosophy our souls grow ten times more formidable; and not only more formidable; they grow more adjusted to the Pluralistic character of the system of tilings.

The chief point that Hitler made in *Mein Kampf*, the point that was the key-stone of his Ideal Europe, was the point of Order: order first, order second, and order last.

Now I protest that troublesome and inconvenient — especially to the rich and the privileged — as any rebellious initiative is, there is something vital, healthy, natural, and *living* about it which is totally absent from almost all embodiments of order.

Hitler says we want to *Balkanize* Europe; i.e. to keep it sovereignly disturbed. But the worst thing in life is not to be Balkanized. The worst thing in life is to be dead. The grand secret of our judges' interpretations of the Laws of Britain is that they follow the curves of our own 'Balkanized rebellious humours. 'Order' without 'yield and give' is just a cloak of despotism. First plunder: and then to prevent the loot being divided — order\

What the ordinary man wants most in life is to be left alone — but left alone to enjoy himself with his private hobbies and vices and idlenesses and manias. In the pursuit of these and of sufficient leisure and cunning and money to enjoy these, the ordinary man, and much more the ordinary woman, go their devious and secretive ways, within and without and round and about whatever deadly and appalling kind of *Order* the 'status quo' of the moment may be.

But this cunning-craftiness of ordinary people, this foxy adjusting of oneself to the convolutions of order, is what makes the world go round. It is 'the one touch of nature'. And the lively interchange of understanding between all the millions and millions of poverty-harassed experts-in-dodging-order is not a very promising portent, from Hitler's point of view, as to that thousand years of domination towards which he is so confidently advancing.

Hitler's 'Gestapo' represents 'Order' pure and simple: *the Order of the Swastika*, or in other words the order of the Insect-World. Those disturbing elements, which are the urges of Nature and Evolution, those

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mysterious revolts in the souls of men which have from time immemorial driven humanity forward on its long, spiral ascent, are to be brought to a *dead end*. Upon them all, over them all, is to be laid and pressed down, the 'iibcr alles' of the super-imposed German Will.

The wholesome element of anarchy in our Western World, that *Freedom of the Spirit*, which Berdyaev praises only to betray, is to be hammered down and pounded flat. A world of galvanized, obedient, industrious *insect-men* is to take the place of the natural divergencies of historic evolution. Well, there it is! And now let us freely admit that our fault is hypocrisy; and not only in high places, for we are all guilty. Yes, guilty are we all but there *is* an element of self-protective pragmatic *faith* in this moral tone; and—heaven save us!—compared with the sardonic way the Nazi rulers utter their brazen lies, this hypocrisy of ours seems like a rusty species of cloudy foggy truth. Think for instance of the Nazi lies about 'the new Order of Europe', free at last from the tyranny of the British Navy.

Europe is to be really ruled by reason and science: and reason and science together will exercise a beautifully impersonal compulsion against which of course there will be no sentimental appeal.

All the troublesome and ridiculous little nations—and oh, how absurdly littleness and pride go together!—will be forced to give up their historic independence. Nature and History have been too indulgent to these weaklings, not only allowing them non-German customs and culture and poetry, and non-Nazi systems of government and police, but going so far in this degenerate tenderness as to permit them to retain all those old restless prejudices, irrational affiliations, mythological apathies and antipathies, such as are naturally offensive to the steel-clad will of an enlightened master-race.

Well! It is the growth of science without a proportionate growth in human character that has given these Dictators their chance. If Hitler won this war he would take Europe and clap it upon a vivisection-table and bolt the doors of his Research Laboratory so that the screams shouldn't be heard.

One of the worst things Science has done is to increase enormously the power of *government*—of all governments. Considering that the salvation of our race lies *in* the free anarchical instincts of individual men and women, this strengthening of the *rulers* at the expense of the *ruled* is the

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worst threat to the evolution of humanity since the Mongolian invasions of the Middle Ages.

As long as Democracy insists that the votes of ordinary people should hold the balance and give a deciding tilt to the scales as to the Majority-Party our individual independence isn't *quite* lost. This terrible new power with which science — absolutely indifferent how such power is used — has endowed government *is still there* but as long as we can do something, though it doesn't go very far, to *change the persons* who rule us, at least we're spared falling into the hands of a 'Leader' upon whose caprices there's absolutely no check, legal or moral, until death ends him or us.

And as we contemplate each one of the world-dictators at this moment it is borne in upon us that our innocent belief that the Machine of Tyranny will break up with the death of the tyrant is too good to be true. What Science, in her unscrupulous betrayal of civilization, has done, is to place, like an irresistible Varangian Guard, her pitiless Robot-Frankenstein Machines at the gates of every Bastille in the land, so that although some individual Dictator may have 'gone to his own place', and his soul be on the point of being tried by some Celestial Gestapo, the *Institution of Dictatorship* is still extant; and it is likely enough that it will remain extant though used by other hands. The most difficult thing in the world is for us, for *us our selves*, to harness to our will this terrible power of non-moral Science; not to speak of the fact that in our hurry to get rid of individual rich men we have allowed 'the State', a far worse oppressor than any Jewish financier, to get hold of all the money!

Hitler promised his armies that if they conquered France the world would be theirs for a thousand years. And indeed matters *were* pretty crucial for a while, till as Homer would say, 'Zeus hung his scales in heaven'.

Who knows? At that fatal moment perhaps *more* than Hitler's thousand years were at stake! Who knows that we mightn't have been sharded and ossified and hornified with the appropriate insect-husks for two thousand years of obedient industry! Our war-aims? Of course we can't, and indeed had better not, try to formulate them.

In the first place they are too *organic*, that is to say *too living*, to be logically tabulated; on the other hand they are so simple that to state them in any elaborate programme would weaken their force.

If Hitler is right about the German purity of race, it must be the mixture

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of blood in *our* sailors and airmen that endows them with the curious chivalry that tempers their courage by sea and air. Perhaps it is the sprinkling of Celtic, Norman, Danish, and shall we say 'Iberian' blood that causes such fanciful notions to percolate through Anglo-Saxon veins!

But there is much more in it than this. And here really — in spite of all our selfishness and hypocrisy — we arrive at the gist of the whole situation. It is a fight to the finish for the rule of the world between our *mixed* race' and the German *pure* race: and just because of our greater respect for the individual soul of a man or woman, just because of our refusal even in the midst of war *to take war altogether seriously*, yes! just because — selfish rogues as many of us are — we are permeated and impregnated by the notion that the laws of chivalry are never to be abrogated, it will be better for the world to be dominated by us, who are by nature a race of humorous amateurs and self-centred anarchists than by the Germans who are by nature a race of sentimental professionals and mass-production mystics.

Let the world choose between us! The world may very naturally be heard muttering, especially as famine begins, 'A Plague on both your Houses!' but most independent minded private persons of whatever race they are, would sooner be dominated — if fate demands that someone *has* to play policeman — by a race with an ingrained passion for *laissez-faire* than by a race that in its horrible scientific efficiency is prepared to liquidate and vivisection and plant and transplant, until some huge inverted Tower of Babel, some monstrous Mystagogic Ant-Heap of the Pax Germanica, is substituted for our old, troublesome, quarrelsome, chaotic, historical *humanity*.

And if the desperate world wonders sadly whether the only choice lies between Big Criminals and Big Interests we can only reply, as Shelley did, that humanity will at last 'renew its winter weeds outworn*'. But meanwhile the world must confess that nothing that our Sea-Power can do to it, hardly anything that our slave-owning Profit-Shares can do to it, can equal the debasement of being transformed into a tragic-comic Aryan Homunculus, doing gymnastics in the Hive's *Sports-Platz*, not 'for sport', or for anything as 'degenerate' as Pleasure, but because a conquered people must follow its conqueror in making the bricks of 'Obedience, Discipline, and Strength through Joy', out of-which we are rebuilding the Bastille.

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If— which the old gods of historic humanity forbid! — the world *were* conquered by Hitler, the only alternative for individual free souls would be either to die passively resisting — which would be far worse than to die fighting — or, for the remainder of their days to play the pretender, hiding their feelings, sinking into that portion of themselves which belongs to another Dimension, and secretly and *de profundis*, 'making the fig' at the 'master-race' of Idiots who brought evolution to an end!

This is of course what to a limited extent we all have to do anyway, under economic, domestic, local, and class tyranny; but if 'That Man' got the better of us, we should be, as the unfortunate Europeans are already and as the German civilians have been for some time, 'lifeless images pushed from behind'.

But thanks to the gods of sea and air Hitler *hasnt* conquered us; and, as long as he is beaten off, the turbulent tide of history still seethes and foams at the parting of the ways. Strange to think how no drama ever written is as heavy with the weight of planetary destiny as the one in which we were all playing a part to-day!

Strange to think, for those of us who, following William James and Walt Whitman, reject the smooth, neat, morbid, rounded-off all-of-a-piece universe, so dear to the Hegelian mind, that this awe-inspiring parting of the ways should offer alternatives so tremendous as to be little short of cosmogonic. There, before us, are the two roads — the road of laborious and obstinate responsibility wherein we endure much *but are still men*; and the road of easy submission to defeat, along which we are spared the pain of thinking and the tragedy of deciding, while in our blue or black or brown uniforms of discipline and obedience we escape what Dostoievsky's Inquisitor told his divine Prisoner was the Hell of Freedom, and for all time have become comfortable, and orderly, and peaceful, and scientific, *and doped!*

For unthinkable aeons of the mystery of Time the original sea-spawned monads of life struggled forward; till at last they became the lonely independent souls of men, souls free and equal. Many have been the dangerous and almost fatal turnings which by the help of the gods they have safely passed. But now has arrived the most dangerous turning of all; and the free souls of men are in their worst peril.

Materialistic science has gathered her battalions, has redoubled her research laboratories. She has been embraced by Pride of Race and has

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sacrificed her all to conceive machines beyond number. She has given birth to Robots; she has suckled Frankensteins. 'Only yield up your soul,' she cries, 'and that means nothing, *for the soul is nothing!* But yield it up! The Fihrer is loving; the Fihrer is more than loving; the Fihrer rewards good parasites with the right to have slave-parasites; and he rewards good bees, good ants, good beetles — with locks of his own hair.

The interesting thing is that the secular and shameless humour of the ordinary Britisher is the best armour for the free human soul that has ever been discovered. Never mind if it is illogical! Life is made up of contradictions and paradoxes.

The Universe is a Multiverse. Good and evil, truth and falsehood, life and death, are for ever exchanging masks. The tragic but godlike free-will of the human soul is infinite. The miracles of the imagination are past finding out; and the gods of creation are beyond counting. The soul is 'back of everything'; and the more the soul is protected by a tough, secular humour from the tyrannies 'that do so easily beset it' the more power it can summon up from the Next Dimension.

The Germans make gods of Experts; and the French love to show their wit by criticizing experts. We are such weird devils that we don't know the difference between experts and amateurs!

But we know the difference between a person who's a 'character' and a person who isn't. But almost every ordinary Britisher *is* a 'character', and not unrarely they clash. In no country in the world is philosophy and art and literary criticism treated so disrespectfully. 'Every man in his humour' is our motto; and just because of our disparagement of talent and our neglect of genius, *both these things flourish*. What a characteristic life of a British genius was the life of *Kean*, our greatest actor! No individual geniuses can *stand* as much as ours can; and this peculiar toughness comes from the fact that they, like the rest of us, have acquired the trick of fishing for the supernatural, as Emily Bronte did, in the reservoir of their own souls.

In the depths of this reservoir are all the religions and all the philosophies of the world. But the free soul has *no truck* with the awful gravity of any *Tremendum Mysterium* that must be obeyed or we're done for! The mellow humour of the 'common or garden' Britisher is as deep as life. It is deeper than any moral unction or any religious terror. Beachcomber making sport of Politicians, Charlie Chaplin making sport of Dictators,

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Dickens making sport of Professors, Shakespeare making sport of Demagogues, and even Milton having his grim jest at the expense of all Abracadabrists — they are all fighting for the freedom of man's solitary, individual, and lonely soul — the soul of a man *in his back-garden*

But the grandest thing our *extra-skin* does, which leads one 'Intellectual' to complain that 'cultivated Europeans' find us 'deplorably insensitive', is to protect the *Conscience* in us from casuistical seductions. Protected by our profane humour the 'Stream of Tendency, not ourselves, that makes for Righteousness' intensifies itself till it brings 'murmurs and scents of the infinite sea' beyond Time and Space!

Our notorious hypocrisies are simply an obeisance to this.

And it is from this new-old Conscience that the common man derives many of his most individual thoughts about religion. He reads the very Scriptures with a 'tough' mind. He detects for example that sometimes a little too much is made in the Parables and Epistles of those rewards by which the All-Powerful encourages his obedient servants. He feels a trifle uneasy, for instance, in the presence of a verse like this from St. Paul: 'But we have this treasure in earthen vessels in order that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.'

The stress on humility is absolutely right; but a humorist would suggest that it is an unworthy conception of God to make Him as avid of glory as a Totalitarian Dictator. The common conscience of Humanity, perhaps an inheritance from some Lost Atlantis and its 'Age of Gold', perhaps a premonition of some 'Age of Gold' in the future, commands us not to think about reward at all, but 'because Right is Right' to follow Right.

It is this same tough humour, combined with a realistic conscience, that makes an ordinary person feel uncomfortable when, while Jesus is praying that God may glorify His own Name, a voice from Heaven is heard saying, 'I have both glorified it and will glorify it again'.

The present writer used to fall into the mistake of assuming that 'humour' was a tiresome tendency to utter 'wise-cracks' and to show your gregariousness by the making of bawdy jokes and the telling of tedious stories.

But I now see that it goes much deeper than these levities; that it is in fact a basic attitude of the solitary human soul confronted by the unfathomable Multiverse. And I now see that not only is real humour

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bound up with humility and kindness, but it is a living yeast, quickening the common man's sensations with something that cannot be uttered.

We might indeed parody Portia's words and boldly announce that the quality of humour is not strained; but like the Wordsworthian Over-Soul, it 'rolls thro' all things'. It is an attitude of the human soul that goes back to the Golden Age and without sanctity or dogmatism acknowledges no God but the God within its own breast.

Humour is essentially a solitary thing, not a social thing, though it works in society. It is the lonely soul's way of asserting itself against the mob, against the intoxicating mass-dope of the ant-heap. It is that withdrawn, good-natured, quizzical look with which conscience, that 'tough custodier', regards an invasion of its preserves. Its humility is unbounded; for its spirit depends, as Shakespeare makes Falstaff say of himself, as much upon being a cause of wit in others as upon being witty itself.

But this wit isn't just being funny. It is a tone, a temper, an atmosphere, a mood, *a look*. It is so with Dickens; it is so with Chaplin; it is so with 'every' common or garden Britisher. In fact a person is tempted to feel that it is an attribute of the loneliness of the great Ocean itself, that 'commensurate antagonist of the Earth' as Lamb calls it, when it contemplates with irresponsible amusement the portentous illusions of the Land.

No one can be honestly humble-minded as well as disinterestedly kind and stoically enduring without a pinch of this same magical salt. Life in its depths is war — no war, no life! — and this subtle spiritual essence, whereof the business of cracking laborious jokes is a sorrowful parody, is the spirit's supreme weapon of defence.

Real humour is the shrewdest judge of all in human affairs. It is humour that will write the historical condemnation of these Dictators and of their pet traitors in every country.

It is humour that recalls what was taught in the 'Golden Age' as a revelation from the Next Dimension; namely that all souls, including the Lord Jesus' own, *are equai*; and that no *one*, certainly not an all-powerful Deity, has a right to 'glory'.

Those who have approached with their own senses the mangling and the pain of human flesh and blood will associate Hitler with certain intolerable and unpardonable crimes. Such persons at any rate will not be indignant with me for still continuing to assert that you have to go deeper than *this* life, deeper than *this* Dimension, to reach that 'bottom'

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where Rabelais tells us 'good hope' is to be found. Such persons will agree with me that if this astronomical world is all there is, the oracular saying, 'Bon espoir y gist au fond' would simply mean *No horror can last for ever*.

The real secret of Jesus is to be found in a perfectly simple compulsion that sometimes seizes us as we ponder on his reported sayings; namely the compulsion to identify ourselves with every soul we approach, whether it be that of an angel or a devil, a louse or a mouse, a Saint Francis or a Nero, a Goethe or an Uncle Tom. And this doesn't mean identifying ourselves with the crimes or the stings or the devilries. It means recognizing that here is another solitary entity, tossed by fate into the same world as ourselves who, if you prick it, bleeds, who if you prod it, squirms, who if you feed or flatter it experiences an emotion of tearful gratitude.

The deadly interest of this war is that it goes so deep. I mean *the quarrel* goes so deep. Like all real tragedies the issue is a spiritual one.

It is not a struggle between materialism and idealism. Hitler, like Satan has *his* Ideal; and we have read in *Mein Kampf* what it is. It is that the race bom to rule *shall* rule. Hitler's professors of the College of Mystagogy are at this very moment teaching the 'master-race' in the most intricate and elaborate details, the art of ruling the world.

What is *our* Ideal as opposed to this? Ah! here lies the whole point of the argument. Here is the straw upon which we pick our quarrel. Hitler is a *monist*. He is the would-be Boss of a Block-Universe.

Well! What ideal do we set up against Hitler's? *We set up none!* There lies the whole issue. Hitler wants to build up a New World on German lines. We want, at all costs, *to stop him from doing this*. We want to destroy the foundations of his New World in the first stage of the building! But what alternative New World do we offer humanity?

None! That is the whole point. Being Pluralists and believing in a Multiverse, it isn't incumbent upon us to inflict any Alternative System upon the different races and cultures of Europe's historic and independent countries. Let them be policed and kept from bloodshed and crime, as private people are by the Law, by some kind of a formidable enough League of Nations.

Then they can wrangle about boundaries and customs and governments till Doomsday! Who is Hitler, and indeed *who are we*, to invent

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rules and regulations for the life of countries as old and historic, as proud and idiosyncratic, as we are ourselves?

This is a clash between two Worlds: the world as those who are monists would like to see it and the world as those who are pluralists would like to see it. The clue to the whole war lies in this; and since the system of things is pluralistic through and through we are bound to win.

But meanwhile a voice arises: what to do when you're *bombed out*? Not only once or twice or three times. What to do when you're bombed out seventy-times-seven times?

Well! Forget it! Forget the horrors of each one of the seventy-times-seven! 'But isn't it cowardly,' you say, 'to refuse to face the reality?' All right, my brave friend, *jace it*! Just start on your career of really and truly facing it and you'll soon be howling in Bedlam. If you *can* face it you haven't seen — well, what God sees! No, no; you mean no harm, but you are a shameless liar.

Like the rest of us you have carried your bandages and your paddings and your dopings about with you; and the tenderest of all the nepenthes from the lap of the Great Mother have you carried, *whatever you say*. I mean this same divine power to forget.

And what is the best way to forget? By forcing yourself to make the gesture which gives its unity — such as it is — to this little book; the gesture of enjoying the elements around you, however transmuted and muffled they may be by claustrophobic cluttered-up interiors threatened by annihilation!

As the discerning reader has not failed to note, what I am seeking to analyse is the mental gesture — instinctive and spontaneous with most of us — that is our deepest retort to this obsessed 'Heil Hitler!'

What does a person naturally do, with mind, feelings, spirit, will, when he is overpowered with wretchedness? Does he not inevitably draw upon the hidden force, nameless and indescribable, because it is beyond this Dimension, of his own soul? And how does he use this power when he gets into contact with it? He uses it to enjoy — we must give this word a liberal interpretation — the Not-Self around him. In other words he simplifies the scene whether it be sordid or stuffy, or frivolous, or destitute, and deliberately forgetting the horrors he has witnessed, he presses against the ultimate Barrier where it is *thinnest*.

If you compel me, as you have every right to do, difficult as it is, to

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put into coherent words what the human animal really feels and does, and observes itself doing, during the subtle and complicated process of mixing itself with the elements, I should answer, that it puts into practice the unphilosophical, irreligious, anti-social, anarchistic *Embrace of Life* at the point when the partition that divides it from the Next Dimension is most porous — namely where there is least sex, and least love, and least hate, and least superiority to others and least competing with others, and least possibility of crying to ourselves, 'This is mine and not yours!'

The reader will realize that I say 'unphilosophical' and 'irreligious' only in a logical and doctrinal sense. In reality all religion and all philosophy, from the 'Being and Not-Being' of Hegel to the 'Dying-to-Live' of Jesus, is included in this gesture of *embracing the Not-Self*

Now it must be remembered that all life, from infancy up, is a battle; and that when we individually indulge in this *Embrace of Matter*, where Matter comes nearest to 'breaking through' into whatever it is that is beyond Time and Space, a man after all, for all his serviceable hands and knees, is a beast chewing the cud, and a woman after all, for all her well-washed children, is a mermaid combing her hair; and both have to hold their own against others *or they perish*.

They have to hold their own against others to live at all, even though the wisest gesture of their life is to give up comparing themselves with others. Thus is hypocrisy inevitable; for the further our detachment from competition goes and the more effective becomes our escape from ordinary human rivalry, the more clearly does the crazy, inconsistent, shameless paradox emerge that it is necessary for us to cultivate — and at the same time, too; and what is that if not hypocrisy? — *both good and evil*

The way to react from Hitler — that mad Queen-Bee of destruction — so as to set between him and us the widest possible space, is to cultivate loneliness. This you can do in your mind while you are being kind and enduring and humorous; as a good warden, a good soldier, a good sailor, a good doctor, a good workman, or even a good target.

The gesture I am advocating is of course a paradox or it would be devoid of living truth. It is illogical or it would be devoid of creative power. Our healthy fighting instincts find here a rallying-point that can play the part of that heroic watchword 'Equanimity' while at the same time they shake off the pettiness of possession.

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The 'act of the mind' we speak of can, in the secular psychology of everyday life, prove to be a private and individual Pentecost.

Such a Private Pentecost, by some curious law of nature, we all need, if we are to keep faith with our solitary souls as well as with our duty to the race. And you must remember that it is entirely unessential where you may happen to be as you practise this magical act of calling the Next Dimension to your aid. We can be anywhere; we can do it anyhow, we can conceal it as deeply as we please; but we must force ourselves — that's the grand point — to enjoy whatever aspects of the elements about us lend themselves most easily to our peculiar taste.

It doesn't matter how or where we make this gesture or upon what: but the point is that we should make an intense effort when we do it, and that the magnetic power necessary to do it should be forcibly drawn from that part of ourselves which *feels as if it were* outside Time and Space.

It is queer how we can all make magnificent efforts —as this War shows — to get through so many difficult external duties, to endure so much, to risk so much, to achieve so much, to forget ourselves so much; and yet, when we fall back mentally and physically upon our normal life-stream, what slack, careless, drifting passivity!

Out of ourselves has gone the best of ourselves in our self-reliant defiance of Hitler; but when we return to the normal tide of our ordinary sensations we just He back and float on the waves of fate.

In such interludes we become passive, porous, receptive, formless and purposeless. Much of this subsidence of our life's energy is a deep recovery-device of Nature herself; but there is a *residuum* of relaxation which indicates a curious and noteworthy inertia.

What is happening to us in these precious moments during which we are lying back upon the life-stream? Well, as I have just admitted, in a large measure we are simply enjoying a thoroughly deserved rest.

But there is something else in this; and it is something that merits the closest attention. It isn't, by any means, that we have *drifted* through life. We have learnt to handle our job with no mean success. We have picked up, even though it has been by hazard, a fairly liberal education. We have come to be competent in action and resolute in decision.

But though we have secretly used much self-control in the erotic sphere, and though we have practised rigid moderation and even austerity in matters of eating and drinking, in regard to the confused pressure of

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sensations which in its *ensemble* makes up what Whitman calls: 'Melange my own, the seen and the unseen, Mysterious Ocean where the streams empty', we are as absent-minded and ignorant and unpractised in the art of concentration, as a fisherman, accustomed to the fretting eddies of a rocky stream, trying his luck from a boat on the waves of the sea!

For one thing the mental art of forgetting our worries and apprehensions, as we try to use all our senses upon what surrounds us, treating the stuff whereof our impressions are made as Milton's Lucifer treated chaos —

O'er bog or steep, through strait, rough, dense, or rare,
With head, hands, wings, or feet. . .
And swims, or sinks, or wades, or creeps, or flies,

is a secretive and solitary process, the motions of which are 'hard to analyse, although quite conscious and deliberate. For another thing we have to make a deep dip into the hidden sorcery of our soul and we have a right to do this with the god-like pride of all equal souls; and indeed we *are* in a queer way acting the part of that oldest of Conjurers, the Tricky Hegelian god who separates himself from himself in order to realize himself! And it is just because the most casual and accidental 'melange' of impressions makes up Walt Whitman's 'mysterious ocean where the streams empty', and includes the sights, sounds, tastes, smells, impacts and immensities of the whole circle of Time and Space, that it is very difficult and nearly impossible to describe the feelings we experience. Who can describe the motions of a creature of the elements embracing the elements of which he is made?

But though hard to analyse, this, and not less than this, is what all we ordinary people are fumbling after, in our vague dim careless way. But careless as we may be in these planetary concentrations it is on the strength of them that Hitler will eventually be overcome.

We fight him with our off-moments; we fight him with all the hobbies and caprices and fancies and imaginations and 'loafings and invitings of the soul' with which Nature has encrusted the identity of a Britisher as thick as caddis-worms are encrusted with those bits of stick and grains of gravel; but we fight him too, in the intervals of our more strenuous labours, with something much more, as the poet says, 'deeply interfused'. We fight him — and it is for this as well as with this we fight — with all those ultimate sensations of life that are the soul's supreme and solitary prerogative.

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But, as I have presumed to hint, we ordinary people are often singularly careless and irresponsible in the way we sink down into what we know perfectly well is the essential secret of things. Men are less wise **than** women in this matter. It does seem queer—though I suppose in a Dimension of Life like the one with which we're at present wrestling it is natural enough — what efforts we can make to get through difficult external tasks; and yet, when these tasks are intermitted, how little energy we have left for the primordial sensation of enjoying *matter* in general, and those elements in particular through which we seem to approach the nearest to the next Dimension.

Life in itself, as Heraclitus said, is *a Bow bent in Battle*; and yet on the* strength of one of those mysterious paradoxes that lie at its root, it is also incorrigibly feminine.

This is easily proved. Let a man watch carefully, if only for one day, the behaviour of the woman he knows best; and he will soon discover that she deals with Life as if Life were another woman. He will notice, for instance, that instead of thinking only of what ought to be done, or thinking only of what mistakes have been made, she will give herself up — taking the whole situation together in every single detail of what actually has happened, whether it could have been prevented from happening or not — to an excess of emotion that seems to *his* mind to be wasteful, profitless, and futile, leading to no result, and wearing *him* out, in the mere contemplation of it. But the strange thing is that it doesn't wear *her* out. On the contrary she thrives on it! Secretly in his heart the man is always thinking: 'If I want to keep her in good health I must supply her with occasions for emotional outbursts/

What he notices with especial interest is that her emotion completely disregards the *nature of the mistake* that led to the occurrence; and disregards the new method that will now have to be followed — to which his mind leaps at once — to avoid a recurrence of the disaster. What her emotion concentrates upon are the worst and most unhappy details of the disaster itself, considered quite apart from the lesson to be drawn from it as to how to avoid it in the future. Upon every aspect of these unpleasant details she insists on dwelling, bemoaning them separately, bemoaning them in combination, and giving herself up so entirely to them she that even imitates in facial expression — as far as such a thing is possible — the **unliappy details of the calamity.**

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What the man feels as he contemplates all this — the effect upon the woman being just ten times a greater shock to him than what caused it — is that she must, for all her bitter eloquence and for all her tears, be deriving some deep passionate secret pleasure from the whole affair. She must, he thinks, enjoy the drama of the shock, whatever the shock is, and enjoy too, in a wonderful liberation from normal tension, her own passionate abandonment.

She must also derive, he feels, a delicate satisfaction from the sympathetic agitation, clearly revealed in his own solemn face. In brief both the spilling of the milk and the tragic emotion roused in herself by the spilling of the milk are equal portions of that intoxicating drama of life which reconciles her to so many unbearable things.

She behaves to Life as Life behaves to us: and to clinch the resemblance, neither Life nor the daughter of Life experiences the faintest difficulty in *forgetting the whole occurrence*.

It is this power in women that makes it unnecessary for them to go through the process that the simplest man has to go through, when by various mental and moral devices he recovers his equanimity after an emotional shock.

But it is these shocks — spilt milk, spilt blood, spilt faith, spilt passion — 'the expense of spirit in a waste of shame' — that make it so hard for him to forget his worries. If this resolute seizing upon the inanimate 'Not-self around us, a Not-Self composed, as all planetary stuff must necessarily be, of some transmutation of the chemical bodies of earth and air and fire and water, does bring us nearer, as I suggest it docs, to the Unknown Dimension which lies on the other side of Time and Space, it also carries us further from the 'spilt milk' and the 'spilt blood'. We can in fact embrace this Inanimate Not-Self with such absorbed distraction, as we press forward against the world-barrier, that we experience the sensation — and it is the most intoxicating illusion in life — that we are actually sinking into the living body of Space-Time and even on our way to pass through it into whatever lies on the other side.

It is from the illusion that we are passing through the barrier between this Dimension and the next, that we enjoy those obscure and delicious fancies from which so many ecstatic visions and mystical systems spring. In fact mysticism might be defined as the illusion that by sinking into Nature we can reach the Absolute.

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Perhaps the mistake arose from the false start that Hegel made when he jumped over the 'Kantian' Critique as if it were a mere Logical Ditch, instead of the Adamantine Wall of our present Dimension.

But mysticism is almost always connected with Pantheism; and Pantheism itself is inevitably connected with the 'block universe' system; whereas Kant's reduction of Time and Space to our own mental categories leaves the vast abysses of Being free and unfathomable.

Yes it leaves them free; unsounded by either the sweet intoxication of mysticism or the savage sobriety of science. But *conscience*, as Kant most properly felt, brings with her a certain rarefied air, one of the few rarefied airs that reach us at all in this world of things 'that won't bear thinking on', and if conscience begins tormenting us because we're trying to forget the horrors of life and are losing ourselves in the elements — even in the 'transmogrified' elements of a civilized slum — what can we say save that God has indeed changed places with the Devil?

CHAPTER XII

THE METAPHYSICS OF THE WAR

Do what we will to beat it off, the worst scoundrels among us have some sort of conscience; enough at all events to stir up just that particular kind of remorse which most of all militates against those planetary sensations I have been so obstinately describing!

The misery that we conceal from our friends when our conscience is really troubling us is often the result of the appalling manias bred by what we call 'love'. Nothing would be more salutary for those among us whose lives are tormented by conscience than to read a wise and philosophical *History of Love*.

There is something about sex — and apparently it has been so from the beginning — that touches our human conscience *to the quick*. No historical problem is more challenging than the question as to how it came about that the ancient spiritual teachers of our race with almost a united voice proclaim the importance of chastity. Love and Lust — well! these words carry a longer and a more tragic story down the ages than any others.

But what *was* it that made these men turn and rend the desire that begat them? Was it *the same fear*, fear of being upset and hurt and made unhappy by lust, such as these highly-strung Sages felt with regard to *pain* when they advocated the unworthy and ignoble and un-Homeric doctrine of Indifference to both pain and pleasure? What perversion originally was it, for it certainly was no cosmic categorical imperative, that led these wise men to regard lust as wrong? Love and Lust! It is from some weird incense, drawn from the fiery smoke of these two, that religious mysticism derives its dusky and dubious sublimity. What did 'the Love of the Saints' really mean, and what did St. Paul really mean by his mysterious 'charity'? We get into deep waters when we try to understand the connection between the erotic and the mystical.

But the whole purpose of this book has been misunderstood by anyone who thinks that the planetary sensation I have been advocating as the secret under-life of every human soul has any connection with what we call *mystical love*.

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I would go further and say that for all its humility and suppression of competition what I have described has nothing to do with what is meant by idealists when they use as Berdyaev is always doing that accursed word 'spiritual'. The sensation I am trying to analyse and also to advocate is really and truly a fusion of cold, dry, bare *metaphysic* with delicious *sensation*; only I refuse to *play false* with either side in my capacity as 'liaison officer' between the common person and the intellectual person.

What I am trying to suggest is a way of satisfying both the senses and the cold dry reason; and, though a paradox, it is actually a synthesis of the organic desires of the Animate, and the beautiful and terrible endurance of the Inanimate. •

A war like this compels us all to come to terms with the two Dragons at the root of the Tree of Life, which Merlin showed to Vortigern; the Dragon of the *Inert Malice of Matter* and the Dragon of *Self-laceration*.

These two Monsters of the Abyss moan and hiss in their writhings about each other; but such is the soul's power of forgetting frightfulness in a pluralistic world that we can force ourselves to embrace the oddest surroundings — queer and mixed-up and uncomfortable as they are — and wring the essence out of them; for their essence *can* be nothing less than the stuff out of which this whole Dimension is made; and as such the only barrier to what is beyond Time and Space.

And now we arrive at what is the whole point of this book. What is it in the life-awareness of the ordinary 'Mr. Nobody' that we have a right to set up as the secret purpose of the life of all souls; that we have a right to set up against the Hitler idea of power? For it is with the feeling of power, with the feeling of power over others, that Hitler has been impregnating the receptive minds of his Germans, until we are confronted by nothing less than a Partmg of the Ways in the evolution of humanity.

No one whose supreme purpose of life is power will ever be found giving up his soul to the planetary sensation I am describing. And, be it noted, Hitler has no precedent for his *power ideal* among the animals, reptiles, and birds who live by prey. Lions and Tigers and Hawks and Eagles are strong and fierce in order to live. They never, as Hitler teaches his simple Germans to do, deliberately cultivate their 'Tearful symmetry' *in* order to get the thrill of being stronger than sheep and cattle and ducks and geese.

The man couldn't have done what he's done if he hadn't had Prussia as

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his spear-head. The Prussians, one may be permitted to fancy, must always feel in what might be called their 'nerve recurrence', a dim memory of certain Mongolian ancestors who cared nothing for any other earthly sensation save the feeling of being the ones on the top.

For Hitler and his entranced and fanatic people are not content, like lions and tigers, to enjoy the *sensation* of their own strength. If such had been their aim they would have become a race of *athletes*.

The sensation they seek, or that Hitler has taught them to seek, is one sensation alone — the sensation of being above. To be above, it is for this that they seek 'strength through joy'; it is for this that they give up butter and honey and all the delicate delights of the uncommitted and critical intelligence.

And our ordinary democratic 'nobody' has an instinct about all this that is much sounder than the thoughts of those who discuss war-aims.

And Nature in her large carelessness has a deep and secret prejudice against a race that fights so desperately and so earnestly to get the feeling of being the one above; and so she sets herself, as time goes on, to support the race whose life-purpose is less single-hearted. That is the difference, and let the inhabitants of the round world decide whether they prefer to be dominated by a race who treats any advantage it may get in war as hardly a virtue at all, or by a race who gravely and ferociously sacrifice every rule of the game in order to win, and when it wins knows neither pause nor rest till it gets its one supreme joy — the joy of saying to its fallen foe: 'Do you feel my weight upon you now? Do you feel it now?'

What Hitler has done, in these years of vivisectioning the German people into his own likeness, is to make a race of *colossal insects*, heavily armed, and urged forward by one desire alone, the desire to be the master ants in an ant world. I confess I do not share some people's prejudice against this tyrant on the ground of his being so humbly born. Nor does he offend me by being unable to give the glory to great intellects which it is the 'last infirmity' of great intellects to feel they have a right to expect.

My quarrel with him is a much more serious one. I regard him quite literally as an Enemy of the Human Race and one who wishes, as Nietzsche wished — only where Hitler chooses the Insect-type, Nietzsche chose the Olympian-god type to — *substitute a different Being* for the natural, reckless, careless, anarchistic, liberty-loving erratic creature that History has evolved.

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Historic Man has made appalling mistakes. He has committed abominable crimes. But one thing he has refrained from doing. He has refrained from trying deliberately to go behind evolution and set back the Time-Clock.

It is against the lonely and separate identity of the human soul that this astonishing Person has set himself. And each individual soul among us, linked through its life-sensations with all the human centuries behind us, rises up to resist this attempt to Germanize humanity, and to turn untidy, disobedient, disorganized, anarchistic, humorous *men* into well-housed, well-washed, well-organized, well-fed, well-disciplined *Man*. For Man in this sense is not God but Swarm.

In his way, it cannot be denied, Hitler has, like Milton's Satan, his own lowering and demonic kmd.of grandeur. It is Nietzsche — though he would without question have been banished from the *Reich* — who says that the greatest act possible to an 'Higher-Man' is to mould the remote future of humanity over the heads of many generations. And it is on this sublime but appalling prospect that our solemn and fuliginous enemy is at present gambling.

It is in this monstrous seriousness of the Germans that the world's danger lies. It was the great Goethe who said 'Earnestness alone makes Life Eternity'. But to these Walpurgis-Valkyrie 'Higher-Men' of murderous solemnity we must retort that man was made in the image of the Eternal; and that the Eternal is the one who laughs last.

Not for nothing does Goethe make Mephistopheles the laughing one and Doctor Faustus the grave one. To the mind, even of this noblest of all Germans, laughter was necessarily sardonic — a cosmic-comic flea-song!

What the whole Anglo-Celtic race ought to do, in both the Old and the New World, is to summon up the Ghosts of the *Immortal Laughers*. Let the great secular free spirits of Rabelais and Shakespeare and Cervantes and Dickens and Charlie Chaplin laugh this scowling Chimaera off its prey!

For what Hitler, the Black Magician, has done, is to hypnotize, with the help of the Prussians, his mass of innocent Germans into a horrible Renaissance of the Dark Ages. He has brought back the most dangerous aspect of *mysticism*, namely that superstitions, sanctimonious *fanatical awe*, under whose cloak the worst historic crimes have always been committed.

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He has cursed the Hebrew Scriptures only to put himself and his sinister 'swastika' *in their place*. Against the Nazi philosophy, justifying its horrible *insect-order* on mystical grounds, we must set up the profanity of Shakespeare and the ideal anarchy of Walt Whitman.

One of our most satisfying acts of defiance to *this* present Dimension — this Dimension which our scientific materialists regard as all there is, but which contains such abominations that 'Hell! let's have another Drink!' is a natural commentary upon it — is undoubtedly to concentrate upon the Inanimate; for it is the Inanimate which approaches most nearly to the Next Dimension.

Allow me to pretend that you are reading these lines within four walls, surrounded by ordinary bourgeois furniture and painfully aware of a good many things that are more comfortable than beautiful.

Have I made myself clear as to what the gesture of 'embracing' all these tiresome objects really amounts? It is as if this accidental collection of unappealing things, by which you are confronted, have somehow got themselves out of the way; and you found yourself floating off into less cosy regions of what used to be called Matter or, earlier still, the Four Elements. Your four walls and the objects within your four walls may not present themselves to your senses in the same stimulating manner as does the patch of sky you glimpse through the window, or the flame of your gas-jet or the flickering of your candle; but these drab, tarnished, familiar, homely things are composed of 'Matter', whatever 'Matter' is, and they can dissolve into it and become a portion of the world's primordial chemistry, if you stare at them long enough.

They are therefore — these absurd and flimsy, or these stark and desolate objects — a living portion of the barrier that separates us, I will not say from 'Eternity' for that word revives too much of what we want to forget, but from the *next* 'round world' in this strung-along plurality of worlds.

And how curiously they combine the porous and the opaque, these things which confront us at the end of our tether! What do *we* *feel* as we drop our mental anchor under this ultimate world-wall that looks porous but is adamant? What do *we* *feel* as we vainly try to plunge through this impenetrable barrier of form and colour? To put it as carefully as I can, I think it may be said that we feel as if we were sailing along the cliffs of *the last promontory of matter*.

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The curious thing is that there is absolutely no trace of mysticism in what we feel. But there is a strange awareness of a certain ease and contentment of conscience. Our conscience — which along with our soul has its being in *two worlds* — is clearly convinced that we are on the correct path!

Now this is surely significant. We should almost be inclined to expect that our conscience, from whatever quarter it comes, would condemn as selfish and idle folly all this hovering at the last bastion of our ill-starred world.

Berdyaev, and other yet simpler believers, are certain that this mysterious voice of conscience is *the voice of God*. This is the grand argument of Cardinal Newman. But when once we have accepted William James' Pluralistic World it appears by no means so certain that Conscience 'comes from God', whether in the Monotheistic or Pantheistic sense of that famous word. We mustn't forget the historic fact — which no doubt is proved by every man's personal experience — that atheists, in spite of what John Bunyan says, have in many respects more conscience than religious people. The honest truth is *we have no knowledge about the mystery of Conscience* save that, like the soul to which it belongs, it is *amphibious* and inhabits in two worlds.

One of the paradoxes of life is that the most important things in this world do not belong to this world, and it is our secret knowledge that they do not — I refer to the soul and its conscience — that makes all this savage and solemn gravity with which Hitler and his fellow-scientists go to work to vivisect Humanity appear simply comical.

But what makes it harder to express in clear language the common parson's precise feeling as he enjoys this Elemental Sensation at the Wall of the World is the fact that it is for ever being heightened by feelings resembling those which Proust has described in connection with his famous *Madeleine* dipped in camomile tea.

But what *is* clear, and is not hard to articulate, is the list of teasing, worrying, remorse-creating mental attitudes that have to be sloughed off ere we can force ourselves to enjoy the divine sensation that emanates from the barrier of the world. Every single one of these must be whistled down the wind.

Mystical worship of the Master-Folk, of the Divine State, of the Super-Leader, of the Sacred Community — away with them all! What have the

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free, separate, lonely Natives of an unfathomable Multiverse to do with being above each other and superior to each other?

Our independence is as philosophical as it is anarchical; and yet we are only ordinary men, not savage revolutionists. Many a 'Caveat!' emerges when a person of my Derbyshire caution encounters such a clever apologist as Nicholas Berdyaev! How craftily he tells us that each individual human soul can only escape its insane, ego-centric Hell by communion with another soul!

It is clear to see what he is driving at, as he goes feeling his way along the adamantine walls and tapping the slippery buttresses of Destiny so as to find a *chink* through which to hear the Beating of the block-universe's Human Heart! The ego-centric self according to Berdyaev is necessarily — just because it is ego-centric — a sinful, wicked, mad, *unhappy* self! It must therefore break this tragic iron band that is keeping it mad and making it so desperately unhappy. It must at all costs break the circle of itself! It must melt in sweet love on the bosom of another; and what Other nearer and clearer and dearer than all the rest, if not the Bosom of God?

At the beginning of time the Mystics of our race discovered the honeysuckle navel-string that connects Religion with Sex. This navel-string *has to be cut* before a really separate and independent soul can be born.

Modern apologists for religion are marvellously deft at constructing artificial navel-strings! Thus the poor escaped free anarchistic soul — the 'Ego and its Own' — mustn't be allowed to breathe its deep happy breaths in the dark, sweet, natural spaciousness of that divine loneliness, from which sex and love and birth enticed it into bondage!

The deep free soul knows well — though it can prove nothing — that the 'imperial palace' from which it has been enticed into this astronomical 'prison-house' isn't a thick, sanctimonious, opaque, loving-hating *block-universe*, but a multiverse of unimaginable Open Seas before whose free winds this ridiculous Fihrer and his lurid Gestapo dissolve like fetid bubbles.

The soul of an ordinary democratic man, as it steers its way through the reefs and shoals of life is not by any means the unhappy mad creature that it is Berdyaev's cue to make it. Men and women have gone mad ere now, but it has not been from loneliness; it has not been from that super-

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sensuous embrace of the elements which is the reward of loneliness. It has been from Philosophy. It has been from Religion. *It has been from Love.*

Hitler, like Luther's 'Ancient Prince of Heir, has risen with his mystical swarm to kill the lonely soul of man. What are the crimes of our crafty capitalists and of our quaint and still more crafty aristocracy compared with this? These subtle rogues may have feathered their nests with the very hairs of our heads, but they are human, the sly rascals, they are only too human; and to speak the truth there are many of us simpler ones who in our poor way share the spoils of these high-sea piracies!

We are not an immaculate or saintly race, whether we be rich or poor; but there are limits to what we can stand, and Hitler's scientific devilries go beyond these limits. Our present leader suits us so well because he hits our humour; for when we begin playing in earnest the game of * Follow my Leader' it is essential to find in the one we choose our faults as well as our virtues.

Yes, we take Mr. Churchill growlingly and humorously; and Mr. Churchill takes us growlingly and humorously. He doesn't call *us* a master-race; and we don't call *him* a super-man.

And we can beat Hitler without transforming ourselves into a mystical and ecstatic swarm. Our Empire was mostly patched together by independent adventurers; and what we won we can keep without becoming a swarm.

Moreover as we can keep it, so also we can transform it. We shall turn it eventually no doubt into our own kind of easy-going free community, without being betrayed into any tricky despotism whether masquerading as Revolution or as Reaction.

Why have we allowed a minority of us to be so rich, another minority so destitute, and a third — the majority of us — scrambling along so cheerfully in a short-sighted, untidy, irrational pleasure-loving way?

Shall I tell you why? Because we are a race of stubborn, obstinate, pleasure-loving individuals, who whether tragically destitute, or simply poor, or fabulously rich, are more concerned with the enjoyment — such as it may be — of the passing moment, or with the 'grim gaiety' — such as we can muster up — of what you might describe as lifting your beer-mug to 'Here's hoping!' than with putting the limbs of life into a plaster cast for a thousand years.

Our more purely intellectual journals scoff at our Government for its

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slowness in transforming itself into a revolutionary government. But the common-or-garden Britisher remains so deeply involved in the passing moment, its sensations, its drama, its necessities, all of which things, as they occupy his obstinately lonely soul, are given an individual emphasis and seem far more important than any social Renaissance or Reformation.

And not without reason. For it has been proved again and again in the disappointing improvements made in the lot of the ordinary man by revolutionary governments that no one really knows what *is* important to the ordinary man except the ordinary man himself.

And what *does* the ordinary man want? Well, it seems that the ordinary man wants three things most of all; things that could be summed up in the simple jingle: 'Butter to his bread, Love to his bed, and Pay while his holidays rest his head!'

Is not Hitler's Pied-Piper whistlings of his people away from these things the most startling psychological achievement of our time? My friend Bax holds the view that this Spartan cult of the two Despots is a natural reaction against the Utopian visions of our democratic Intelligentsia. I cannot share this view.

It seems to me that revenge for humiliation, together with mystic nationalism and a passion for saying to the vanquished: 'Do you *feel* me above you? Do you feel my weight?' are quite sufficient to account for this *Swarming of the Teutons*. The fact, moreover, that Matthew Arnold's 'Stream of tendency, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness' is up to something and is using Hitler as God uses the Devil is clear to the most ramshackle prophets of to-day.

And we may be sure of this, that whatever large issue it may be the intention of Destiny to bring about, all manner of side-ripples will be discovered taking shape all along the track of this great wave!

What Hitler does for us is exactly what the Devil did for Faust. He has forced us by his attack on the highest values evoked by evolution to carry such values a step further. He has forced us to shake off our worldly ambitions and all our longing for success and for recognition and for being 'loved and understood' and to substitute for these things the magical pleasure of one supreme sensation. And by means of our humility and of our *stripped condition* in the enjoyment of this sensation we suddenly discover that we have grown light enough and airy enough to share the feelings of the generations, the feelings of people dead long before we

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were born. This is the most thrilling pleasure there is! For the feelings of the generations become our feelings; and an unearthly sense of immortality steals over us.

By reason of humility our soul has grown so porous to the elements and so identical with the souls that were before us that rivalry and competition and comparison and the whole corruption of 'superiority' and 'inferiority' dissolve away.

Sensation has saved us from rivalry with others, saved us from worrying about others, saved us from thinking to ourselves that our brains, our genius, our character, our philosophy, our morality, our God, are all superior to the brains, genius, character, philosophy, divinity, displayed in our friend, in our son, in our husband, in our wife, in our neighbour, in our dog.

Above all has this lonely sensation saved us from the morbid, solemn, introverted, contemptible conceit of what we like to call our *spirituality*. One admirable trick in this connection is to think of ourself as a skeleton.

Nothing brings down a person quicker to 'basic reality' than feeling his skeleton, as he moves about, or feeling his skull as he lays him down; and if he can feel his arms and legs and even his profile in this bony manner, when the superiority of 'spirituality' or of 'intellectuality' becomes a temptation, it would be mightily 'behoveful' to him, as Don Quixote would say.

This war is as great a purger of spiritual pride as it is a destroyer of the sense of property. The ordinary human being can safely be left to find ways of indulging his amorous propensities; but surrounded by pain and tragedy and loss, harassed by fear of the unknown, the soul within us begins to acquire a new feeling of proportion; begins to fall back upon the oldest sensation of all, the sensation that is as free from possessive love as it is free from sadistic lust, the great planetary sensation of the Self embracing the Not-Self.

Berdyayev's subtle device for setting the Hound of Heaven on our trail is based on a lie. The self that is alone is *not* mad or in danger of madness. It is the only entirely sane entity in the world. There is always the Non-Self confronting it; and that the fact that the Non-Self is sub-human when it is confined to walls and floors and furniture and ceilings and pavements and roads and grass and mould and sunshine and rain and clouds and sky, is all to the advantage of the self.

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It means that there'll be no love or hate; and it means that the endless generations of the past will stretch out, through us, as through an open window, towards the endless generations of the future! There will be no love and no lust; but there will be a feeling of continuity and immortality; and there will be a feeling of peace beyond understanding.

And the curious thing is that although the Good, considered as a Platonic Ideal commensurate with the True and with the Beautiful, is no discovery of this plunge of the soul into 'the pleasure which there is in life itself', something emerges, something is felt, that satisfies our conscience more completely still.

The great Categorical Imperative that brings with it the impression of coming from outside the whole astronomical universe rolls through us at these moments like a magical wave; and we feel that we are obeying the Law of our Being in this Dimension. We envy no one, we are jealous of no one, we are superior to no one. And beyond all this there comes into prominence one of those ultimate contradictions which reveal the fact that this is a multiverse, and not what William James calls a 'block-universe'.

It is when an ordinary man forces himself, as most of us do without trying to analyse what we're doing, to draw upon that portion of his soul which is for ever outside this present astronomical Dimension, and in spite of pain and anxiety and worry makes the mental gesture of 'enjoying' the Not-Self which surrounds him at the moment, that he experiences the basic contradiction to which I refer. For he feels himself to be absolutely alone and yet at the same time he feels himself to be enjoying the supreme sensation of Hfe along with the innumerable company of what Homer calls 'the powerless heads of the dead'.

One thing this war has certainly done already and done for those in the less dangerous, as well as in the most dangerous zones, and that is to bring into vivid prominence and endow with a piercing interest the kindred topics of Chance and Pain.

Many people feel that the part played by chance in the whole drama of existence is alone enough to turn this 'Hell! Let's have another drink!' into a justifiable philosophy; a philosophy that is most suitably and most properly adapted to the life of our present Dimension.

And indeed it would seem that a greater or a less degree of realization of the appalling and unbridgeable gulf between those whom chance favours

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and those whom chance damns is as good a test as to whether a writer is to be trusted or not as could be found.

Indeed it presents itself as the final condemnation of the Dimension in which we live that there should be this abysmal gulf between those who are lucky and those who are unlucky. This gulf is so terrific, that as it yawns beneath us it turns most of our moralists and all our optimists into conventional humbugs.

And if the random felling of Hitler's bombs brings home to us the gulf between lucky and unlucky, the pain of the wounds inflicted on those who are worst- hurt — indeed the whole mystery and horror of unbearable pain — tugs at our nerves and reduces to a straw on the wind the difference between man and man.

What do the eloquent moralistic poets really, in their heart of hearts, feel about extreme physical pain? I cannot regard any prophet as an entirely honest prophet who has not consciously, openly, and frankly, run away from the horror of extreme pain.

Nearly all our poets, except the chaotic, pluralistic, anarchistic Shakespeare, dodge facing this issue. However, the 'common or garden' man does, in his moods and caprices, for he is riddled with many neurotic whimsies, most savagely face it.

Frightful are the fancies of the ordinary man, though he doesn't always reveal them to his family. He can see himself, for instance, in the hands of the 'Gestapo'; for it has reached his ears how Hitler's enemies, like the Inmates of Dante's Hell, have to 'leave all hope'. Hitler has indeed succeeded in tapping — just because he is a fanatical mystic — certain medieval reservoirs of cruelty that have been hermetically sealed for generations.

It seems clear that for all the years he has been hypnotizing Germany he has deliberately educated his young Nazis in the art of punishment. And when you consider the nervous vibrations that we all conceal at certain epochs in our lives it is impossible not to detect here a conscious exploiting, for his own ends, of that vein of erotic ferocity that has always been youth's most sinister temptation.

But the interesting thing about the cruelty inculcated by Hitler is that it isn't so much human cruelty as *insect-cruelty*. This no doubt is how, in the *armoured chamber* of this weird being's own conscience he justifies what he does. He thinks of it no doubt as *tribal cruelty*, necessary, and

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therefore justified, for the benefit of the German race. A parallel de-humanizing of conscience we are indeed in the position of being able to study at home; for the attitude — Science above Humanity — of those who practise vivisection among us is marked by the same fanaticism.

Such an attitude is not devoid of its own infernal logic. For the moment we allow *any* reasoning, however rational, to contradict that Categorical Imperative in favour of mercy and pity and chivalry which brings with it the sense that it comes from outside Time and Space, we are traitors to the *Conscience of Humanity*; though no doubt* we may reap many furtive rewards as frantic servants of an hideous and inhuman Idol.

Consider the difference between our feeling for our present Prime Minister and theirs for their insane man-god! A comfort indeed it is to hear Mr. Churchill express in deep-growling English-historic tones exactly what lies at the puzzled, startled, angry, indomitable pit of our Londoners' stomachs.

But what a difference! No cold, false, calculated devilish sarcasm; only the grim instinctive wrath of every common man; but for all that with a dangerous rumble — 'which let their wisdom fear' — yes! and a most wholesome touch of irresponsible, secular Shakespearean ribaldry which is every Tom's and every Jack's profane inheritance.

Churchill's our man, just because we can't shiver and shake before him like obedient Frankensteins in the presence of their Man-God's machines! We see him humorously and he sees us humorously; and by God! we're with him to bomb these sullen Dervishes of the Goose-Step back where they belong.

Hitler has told his ensorcellized followers what they're fighting for; a thousand years of German domination. Just think what that would mean! Mystical adoration of the totalitarian Total by its native swarm, and such a scientific enslaving of the rest as was never seen since the days of Nebuchadnezzar. We all know the faults of the British Empire. And they are shocking enough. Who knows *that* if not we? Reformers have been telling us about them ever since the Trial of Warren Hastings.

But because all we ancient and independent merchant-nations have committed grievous and more than grievous sins against the backward peoples of the earth, is that any reason why we must go into the *German reformatory* with our heads cropped, the swastika branded on our backs, **and** the Vichy Book of Penitential Prayers in our hands?

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Robert Burns confessed that the happiest moments of his life were when he was *happy thinking*; and I am always a little puzzled by my inability to feel the indignant pam which many declare they feel because this machine-age has destroyed so many 'creative' arts and crafts; for it is always coming into my mind that since the purpose of a human soul is the enjoyment of 'the pleasure which there is in life itself these things are of secondary importance. There is one grand advantage that mechanical work has over 'creative' work; namely, that even while we are bearing our fair share of life's burden, our imaginations are free to create their own creations —just as God is said to do — *out of nothing*.

This is the whole point! To sing such a song as is done in 'artistic circles' about the importance of 'creative' work, is to imply that our competitive instincts, our rivalries, our longings to be more 'creative' than our neighbour are nobler things than 'the pleasure which there is in life itself.' What we should say to ourselves every day as a kind of planetary orison is: 'O soul of my soul, make me realize *that the purpose of life is to enjoy life*, not to be superior to others in doing "creative" work!'

Carlyle was a true Fascist. That's why he made a hero of Frederick the Great. And Carlyle's exaltation of ruthless Heroes, and mystical, cock-a-hoop creative Bullies is pure Nazi-ism. Let the great *Categorical Imperative*, that has been evolved by humanity through so many thousand years that it feels as if it reached us from outside Time and Space, utter *its word*.

'Humility, Humanity, Humour' is what we hear from *that* source; not 'Be superior to ordinary poor devils by your genius for Creative Work!' And it's absurd to abuse dull work. Dull work is the mother of imagination and contemplation. Dull work helps us to draw near to the barrier between this Dimension and the next. It keeps us from taking this Dimension too seriously. It keeps us wanton, wayward and democratic.

How often it happens that in our rest-moments during dull work there glides through our minds, like silent messengers on velvet sandals, the most thrilling memories! Memories? They're much more than that! Nobody knows *what* they are. *They're like Proust's little cake*. They carry wordless intimations, these shadows of leaves, these flickerings of flames, these train whistles in far distances, these dead grasses on crumbling walls, these creaking sign-boards, these derelict rails, these road-side puddles

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ruffled by chilly winds! They are the things we've seen when we've been 'happy thinking'. They're the unknown alphabet of thoughts beyond thoughts, yes of those mysterious *sensation-thoughts*, that are the deepest thoughts of all.

The tragedy of this war is the tragedy of life all the world over, only concentrated a hundred-fold. Why should I be warm by a fire and free from pain while others are in appalling pain or in black misery of cold?

Jesus said there's no reason why; 'but except ye repent ye shall all. . .' Ah! There's our old acquaintance. The ex-commercial traveller, turned munitions-worker! It's a couple of weeks now since he came home one night to find that his wife and youngest daughter had been buried so deep that it had been impossible to get them out. They hadn't been got out yet. *They were there still*. Had they died quietly? Or had they struggled? And who had done this to them? *He* had done it — only *he*. Our rulers had tried 'appeasement'. They hadn't known him for what he was. They hadn't ears as close to the ground as ordinary people. And the intellectual writers say this is a war for markets.

But ordinary men haven't studied Political Economy. They tend to take things personally. Indeed they take God Himself personally and the Devil too. It isn't an intellectual way of reacting to life; but, as Bergson says, the Intellect is constitutionally unsuited to deal with Life. It is more at home with chemicals. But our simple-hearted friend is now staring through his half-opened door, where, across the street, it is horrible to him to see a little pallid sunshine falling on the second half of the word 'Repairs'. He is going over and over and over in his mind his last conversation with his wife.

But after awhile he 'makes an effort' as we say; though of course not being a philosopher, what he *really* does is to pray to Jesus. And something in his own soul — outside this Dimension altogether — answers his prayer. And the ugly stone-work he is looking at dissolves into the ugly iron-work he is looking at, and both dissolve into the sun-flickering haze behind them, which, in *its* turn, dissolves into the unthinkable immensity of the grey sky.

All the world of Matter, that is, of *Inanimate* Matter, is now reduced to something lighter than air and thinner than smoke. And our simple-minded friend accepts this transformation. But as he leans, at least that is how it feels to him, *against the Last Barrier*, it seems to him as though

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the next world must be so completely different from what he's fancied it to be that all he can do is have faith in Jesus. He is absolutely right. Where is Jesus if not in the depths of his own soul? Yes, concerning the next Dimension all we can say is that since our minds cannot get rid of Time and Space we can do nothing but *feel the barrier*.

But how strange that we should need this war, and moments *like these particular moments in this war*, to shake us out of our unkindness, fretfulness, and conceit!

And how strange that we should need the neighbourhood of extreme pain to keep us alive to the 'pleasure which there is in life itself! But this isn't so strange to the ordinary person as it is to some. Ordinary people have long ago learnt that philosophical optimists are elaborate and clever liars. Ordinary men know by instinct that true philosophy must provide some humorous substitute for 'Hell! Let's have another drink!'

Their love of inventing new panaceas keeps our intellectuals going; and this is as it should be. But for ordinary people nothing takes the place of forgetting. The Dimension of the Multiverse, in which we are at present Pilgrims and Sojourners, is compelled as Goethe says, only he calls it 'Nature', to nourish us all with certain vital illusions, else the strange Performance would blot itself out.

Earth's multitudinous progeny, from Field-Marshals to field-mice, have to learn the art of forgetting. *The secret of life itself is to forget life in the sensation of life*. Whenever you hear a philosophical Intellectual use the phrase 'escapism' as a term of reproach you may regard him himself as an 'escape' from a padded cell. Watch closely these people who are so afraid of 'wishful thinking': not one of them but is on the edge of a collapse. The next time anyone teases you with his 'healthy' realism ask him whether he realizes that 'in very old days they used to boil people to death in oil; and that Hitler's Gestapo has already begun to revive these happy times, doing it deliberately and as a *regular psychological method* like the burning of Negroes; in order to spread panic-terror all over Europe in the presence of its Masters for a thousand years. What we must have, therefore, if we're to be honest men is a way of apprehending life based on the undeniable fact that human beings have been boiled to death; and that Hitler regards mercy as mere democratic degeneracy.

Indeed for anyone who dares oppose the World-Federation of Obedient

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Insects there are punishments in reserve that make *our* cat-o'-nine-tails, that instrument which certain Ladies of Quality defend so ardently, seem like a flowering nettle* But it's better not to waste energy in the fury of hating. The common man's name for the enemy isn't Apollyon but Jerry.

And even if multitudes of Jerries have to be destroyed in the process of stopping Hitler, destruction is different from Inquisition. Well! It might not be unreasonably inquired at such a time, when we are liable at any second to be found scrabbling in the dust under which all we love lies buried, how we have the gall to enjoy ourselves at all.

But when you mix Saxons and Normans and Celts and 'Iberians' together, and leave the mixture to cool off on a foggy island for a thousand years, you get a queer race; you get a race with a ferocious power of endurance though with an inability to take anything in life seriously save the enjoyment of it. Logically the rich should be blamed much more than poor men blame them; but the fact remains that so abysmal is our power of enjoying life and so sympathetic are we with anybody else who is enjoying life — especially in 'uncreative' ways such as games, 'pools', hobbies, public-houses, walking, hiking, bicycling, or like Robert Burns just 'being happy thinking' — that with all the apathy which exists cheek by jowl with our poverty, we are, I will not say too kind-hearted and good-natured, but at any rate too pre-occupied with our funny little pleasures, which to foreigners are as mysterious as the pastimes of Martians, to bestir ourselves in bloody revolutions.

Every single one of us is *richer than somebody else* and we're all happier than Lord Haw-Haw; but the real secret of it is that *secular-minded* as we are — and as Shakespeare and Dickens show us to be — we not only enjoy the pleasure of being alive in this uncomfortable Dimension; but, taught by the traditions of the Seven Seas and by our island shrewdness, we've fallen into the habit of drawing help from the next Dimension; which certainly seems to be a much nicer one.

Yes, we're tough animals, and a queer lot. Not only can we forget; not only can we laugh; not only can we — perhaps profanely but certainly very instinctively —*pray*; we can also harden our hearts. And it is on the strength of our profane prayers and our hard hearts and our sea-washed toughness that we have finally and obstinately settled down, as you might say of a boat's crew, into a deadly 'swing' and a fatal 'feather';

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so that without haste, without argument, without thinking about it, without turning to the Right or Left we may eventually, *however long it takes*, drive these Gestapo Torturers back to their own place.

Hitler and his Nazis have a philosophy and therefore they will lose. We have none and therefore we shall win.

It is Destiny, it is Nature, it is Evolution, it is the conscience and common sense of ordinary humanity, that are behind us, compelling us to pull Hitler down. As to what Fate intends *after that* — the thing is too stupendous for human thought. One great advantage of the sensation-gesture I have been trying to define is that it is at the extreme opposite pole from that Logic of Hegel which is behind the perverse fanaticism of the Nazi doctrines.

In the climax of the planetary sensation I have been advocating what the soul really does is to worship itself. It bows down — and why not? — before first one and then another vision of the Multiverse as these are reflected in its 'glassy essence'. But each reflection depends on the mood of the soul itself, as all the Eagles and Vultures of the Not-Self move across its mirror. Yes, the Closed Hegelian Circle is what Hitler wants to clasp round all our necks, with the image of his own executioner's scowl on one side, and the Swastika of the Black Mass on the other!

This is an animal war, a war between two types of animal for the rule of the world. One type of animal is the humorous, critical, profane, anarchistic type. The other is the credulous, fanatical, authoritarian type. One carries as its brand the Hegelian closed Circle and the Serpent with its Tail in its Mouth; *the other has no brand at all.*

CHAPTER XIII

IMPERIAL INDIVIDUALISM

IN his secret heart the ordinary man never fails to feel that the whole business of life is a monstrous joke. It often strikes him as extraordinary that there should be such things as life and death at all; or that there should be such a thing as the limitless sky, or that there should be such a thing as Time with no beginning or end.

Now this deep inkling and furtive suspicion of the ordinary man that the world he has been born into need not be taken *altogether seriously* — may it not have come to him with the same authority as the Imperative about Mercy and Justice?

But when upon these horribly smoothed-out uniformities under the Swastika, *good to last a thousand years*, you begin to cast a free humorous critical glance, not without a spice of ribaldry, it will be made clear to you that Hitler's system of order has left the Path of Nature. Yes, you are forsaking that path along which — according to my brother Llewelyn's exposition — the ardent Paracelsus walked so gallantly all the years of his life. 'I do not praise myself — so my brother quotes him — 'but Nature praises me; for I am born of Nature and follow her'.

Yes, this thought which comes so often to ordinary people and apparently never comes to tyrants and dictators that there is something funny about the whole business, about this touchy, sensitized, put-upon self, and about the other touchy, put-upon selves, is a thought from the very heart of life.

But it is a babyish thought; and how curious, when you come to think of it, that we should cry 'Baby!' as a term of reproach! It is in our wisest moods that we ask the baby-question 'Why am I I, why are you you, why is God God, why is anything anything?' And indeed in this mood we are tempted to use the word 'phoney'; not, as our intellectuals used to do, for the war to stop Hitler, but for — 'the great globe itself; yea all which it inherit —'

No one has a right to say 'Immortality is certain' or 'Annihilation is certain'. All we have a tight to say is that this present Dimension, as it

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has been our destiny to experience it, contains things so horrible and appalling, that if we didn't drug ourselves, or Nature didn't drug us, we should have the look of cattle who have smelt the slaughter-house.

And considering the questionable nature of our present life, which both for good and bad the war has accentuated, it is surely a matter of simple wisdom to make the utmost of the one single solitary pleasure, sometimes even the one solitary vision, which in no possible, conceivable, or imaginable manner can be spoilt by competition, by love, by hate, by intellectual inferiority, by poverty or social humiliation, by conscientious worries and scruples, or by those anxious thoughts of 'first and last things' against which Mrs. Quickly warned Falstaff on his death-bed.

When you force yourself by the magic of the mind to transform the ugly, the desolate, the meaningless amid what surrounds you — and, oh! that the great Rabelais might have dealt with this subject in his Utopian-Evangelical 'Te Deum'! — when, I say, you force yourself to forget everything in the transformation of what surrounds you to the *earth-air-water-jire-partition* that separates you from what is beyond Time and Space, you will find that you have entered what I might call the freemasonry of the generations. For this primeval life-sensation is the one single feeling which we know for certain all living souls have enjoyed.

And along with all who have departed this life since the beginning, along with all those 'powerless heads of the dead', as Circe described them to Odysseus, who in their day, whatever was their Religion or their Philosophy or their Nation, came, as you're doing now, to lean against the Wall of the World while they enjoyed this miracle of sensation, you too, in this your moment, can forget what they forgot.

As it happens to all mechanical logicians, Hitler's most exasperating enemies are — though in his lighter moments he would refer to these gentlemen as 'Generals' — those who must have their joke even while they perish. 'Tis certainly unlucky for him that in his onslaught upon the Empire he should have to concentrate on the great Circus-City of 'mocks and mows', the city of which Dickens is the Lord Mayor and Charlie Chaplin Lord Provost.

Hearts in **other** quarters are as tough, but mixed with the ponderable barrage here there is an imponderable one, more devastating **to a tyrant than** anything else in the world, a refusal to **take** seriously his **portentous bodyguard of Giant Pain, Giant Destruction, and Giant Death.**

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And what are the psychic effects of all these bombings and of all this pain and destruction and loss of sleep? Well! one effect is to introduce, by means of outrage and tension, a new sense of proportion among us. We like less than usual to think of the ignobler aspects of our existence and the ignobler aspects of our Empire.

And if such aspects do come into our head, we secretly resolve — as if on the way to kill a Dragon we had beaten and robbed a fellow-traveller — that if we kill the dragon we will give ourselves up to justice!

'Imperial Hypocrisy at bay!' Lord Haw-Haw hisses with a voice like a Pandemonian Town Crier; but we ordinary people know very well that you can't live on this earth without self-contradiction and hypocrisy.

And the truth is there is more laziness even than hypocrisy in our indifference to these things; and I fancy many employers of black labour and many plantation-owners are looking forward somewhat uneasily to the people's after-the-war attitude to their activities.

Yes, one effect of these thunderbolts is the ancient, natural, and most human one of feeling the shame of our misdeeds. 'The People repented and the Lord turned his face towards them again.'

Yes, we have sinned; and as we harden our hearts against Hitler we make some pretty drastic moral resolutions. Here lies the whole point of the difference between us and the Fuhrer. *He* deliberately rejects every Categorical imperative. If his Germans could only be hoisted up, 'iiber alles' on the backs of our wretched Europeans of every race, custom, tradition and language, Hitler certainly wouldn't feel remorse, though he had committed the most horrible crimes since Nero.

But though some sort of private remorse for our public sins is one result of this rain of thunderbolts, another, more personal and more individual, is a deepening to a point of *prehistoric humility*, older than anything Christian, of our attitude to those among us who are braver than we are.

Jesus made humility the natural spring-board for the psychic dive after the Pearls of the Abyss; but when we meet our friends and relations now, escaped from death by the width of a sparrow's feather, we feel that our *very prayers* should be different in some way from what they used to be. *You* may be dead. *He* may be dead. *She is* dead! Isn't it an impertinence then, and an outrage, and an insult to flesh and blood, if we don't change the usual form of our prayers?

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And if the effect of Hitler's trying to frighten us into praying to *him* is to make us hesitate even to pray to Christ in our ordinary way, the third effect is to enhance tenfold the natural loneliness of each human soul. In one sense the war brings us together by forcing humility upon us; but in another sense it makes us as lonely as God Himself.

Very well then. *We are alone.* We are left facing this hoary Dimension of our Astronomical Illusion without help, or stay, or comfort, or support, or reassurance, or inspiration, or any other hope, save the supernatural power we draw from the mystery of our own soul.

Our own soul, extending beyond Time and beyond Space, is, and I speak with the utmost seriousness, the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. Within the soul is the beginning and end of all the Gods and all the Churches; while in its own Being it is never altogether caught in this Dimension of beginnings and ends.

William Blake was one who knew a good deal about the soul; but it is more alone than even *he* knew.

No soul-circumference is as limited as we suppose. Have we measured the soul-circumference of worms and slugs and midges? Have we descended into the fathomless identity of a louse? One effect then of being bombed by the man whose sole desire is to be 'uber' is to make us vow within ourselves that though we have never despised Black Men as Hitler does we will henceforth cease from regarding them as the means to enable us to grow rich with unnatural rapidity.

But the greatest effect of the whole thing is to shake us back into the primeval fellow-feeling of the Golden Age. This fellow-feeling is far older than Christ or Buddha. It is that prehistoric humility of the ancient paradisiac anarchy, the lapse from which still lingers in our race's memory. There has never been in history such a stirring up of the emotion of *Tyrannicide* as there is with us to-day. We can jest to the last and we can acquire an individual humility impossible to the serious and the solemn; but the depth of our resolve to put an end to *the phenomenon of Nazi-dom* if Hitler could once catch sight of it, where it lies within us, would give him a very curious shock.

If we mustn't call this present war against the most arbitrary of all possible governments a People's War, what in heaven's name *may* we call it?

Well! I think we may call it an Individual's War; for the people is

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made up of individuals and Hitler, though he de-individualizes others, is the devil of an individual himself. Our people's mistake was that we were opposed to arming for this war. We wanted to fight without arming but we felt it coming long before it came and have never been side-tracked by our aristocracy's desire for appeasement. It is to catch the rich that Hitler has thrown his nets into the fishpond. The rich saw him once, and many of them in Europe *still* see him, as the supreme enemy of the popular liberty they dread worse than slavery.

But with us in this Island the bluff has been called, the cards have been played, and we know where we stand. The bad rich are against us. The good rich are — ready for what they know must come! Yes; the revival of the most ancient of all cults in the world, the cult of *the Embrace of the Inanimate*, reaches us from below, not from above. The People have always been content to 'loaf and invite their souls'. The ordinary man doesn't want to be 'The Happy Warrior'. He wants to be the happy holiday-maker. But one of the laws of Nature seems to be that nobody *can* get a holiday without fighting for it.

Hitler has even now begun to promise his German Swarm that when he's got them safely fanning their wings on the top of a slave-Europe, with Poles to dig for them, Czechs to design for them, Danes to farm for them, and a 'School of Wisdom' to write their history, they shall have a holiday of twenty years! Of course, really, they wouldn't get twenty hours.

Everything about the mortal gesture of the particular life-cult I am struggling to clarify would be to Hitler's consciousness like a red rag to a bull. Most hateful of all to the Nazi mentality, and worthy to be punished by one of those Gestapo disappearances that have such an educative value, would be a *desire for loneliness* in the soul of a man.

Hitler and his swarm, the Cruel Lovable One and his infatuated adorers, ought in themselves to be a sufficient token to us as to how little of the real Nordic character has been left in this poor mechanized Reich. It ought also to be a warning against treating *Love* — which always brings with it its 'other side of the Moon', *Hate* — as the supreme test of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The supreme test of the Kingdom of Heaven is humility; but if you go further you will not only stumble upon such characteristics as simple benevolence, you may even reach that system-destroying, machine-

cracking, erratic personal force which has come to be called *a sense of the comic*.

That would-be Master of the World in Rabelais, the daring Picrochole, who behaves like Hitler to the hearth-loving Grangousier and is fully prepared without any pity to plunge all the poor Mr. Nobodies of Europe into catastrophic slavery, would certainly never encourage his subjects, as the good old Grangousier does, to regard war as a ridiculous anachronism.

There have been well-meaning Intellectuals who have laboured under the illusion that Hitler represents, in Spenglerian phrase, *the New Culture of the World*; and that to this 'New Culture* nothing but our lumbering Empire blocks the way. Russia, however, has changed this situation.

Hitler certainly represents an Unusual Culture; in fact he represents a culture that is completely sub-human; but it is only 'new' because until modern Science put almost supernatural power into the hands of any tyrant who cared to commit crimes enough to earn it, the ordinary conscience of humanity relucted at such 'new' experiments.

'Hypocrites! Hypocrites!' cries the Satanic 'Haw-Haw'; *and so we are*.

But since, as Croce so well says, all human virtue in its inherent nature must be 'imperfect virtue', *not* to have hypocrisy in you must either mean you are a saint or a devil. We have reason enough to repent of our national sins, as human beings *have always done* since the beginning of the world, and especially the Jews; for to have done wrong, and in a soul-searching hour to recognize it as wrong, is the way, under Nature's evolutionary method, the world moves forward.

The world-issue is clear betweenf us and Hitler; and the world has already given the verdict on our side. Our Sea-Empire is a lazy giant with many blind spots and many abuses, but if the only alternative is this mad prophet with his tantrums and tortures and monstrous machines, how can the world hesitate? The mental attitude we all of us adopt, as we go about our affairs, is of the most tremendous importance in the final overthrow of this man. If our souls are already, as I maintain is the case, outside the astronomical circle, they axe even now confronting the tyrant-soul of Hitler in a life-and-death struggle; a struggle between two invisible antagonists, a struggle where consciousness touches consciousness in a desperate telepathy!

Deep, deep at the snake's heart of the Nazi rule lies the death-poison of the accursed Hegelian System, that complete negative of the sea-

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horizons of the healthily imperfect, that *perfect* system, that Comic-Cosmic Death-Serpent with its tail in its mouth! You have only to look at Hitler's face to feel you are looking at a fanatical executioner.

No, no, we need have no fear that any great New World-Culture is stirring under the Swastika. Nothing stirs under death-masks but death-beetles. Of course the soul of a man is never entirely free; but as even Berdyaev allows, and as even Calvinist preachers assert, there is a margin.

In this margin the soul of a man *is* free; and what Hitler has done is to anaesthetize this free soul in his Germans. That is why with all their enthusiasm and with all their energy these young Spartans are only half-alive! The free part of their souls is still numb and *fee-fum*.

And it is beginning to go bad. That is why from this whole perfect machine there arises a smell of doom. Yes, a smoke of more than gun-powder hovers over this vast machine, the smoke of the decomposition of free souls. In huge gigantic mists of mephitic measure it rises up, choking the throats -of men and of gods.

We in these Islands have committed, in our long and fearful history, many unspeakable crimes. What went on in our Convict Settlements in Australia was worse than anything on Devil's Island. It makes a story that is so horrible — though played out to the end in morality's name — that when you read the accounts you agree with Sacheverell Sitwell that the human race is already damned.

And think of the brutality revealed in the fiction of Fielding and Smollett and in the story of the Industrial Revolution. Well, there is no need to unroll our own scroll of judgment further!

But let us confess the whole secret of our particular kinds of crime.

We Britishers have always had—and have still in a measure, God help us! — all the defects of unlimited individualism. As individuals we are born adventurers, and are capable of becoming pirates, bandits, extortioners, slave-dealers, exploiters, savage and greedy treasure-hunters of every complexion.

But like the Jews of the Old Testament — whom we admire so much and not unfrequently resemble — we can throw into our lonely remorse and solitary repentance all that individual vitality that displayed itself in the crimes of which we have such deep reason to repent.

And callous as we have been, and though we have often made our God as brutal as ourselves, we don't easily forsake Him; and it is inconceivable

to us to organize our life without Him. Thus our vitality, even when we **are** behaving abominably, is the formidable magnetism of a separate individual; and not the savagery — or the ecstasy either — of a nation. Individuals — God rest their restless and shameless bones! — *gave us our empire*; and when we contemplate the characteristic vitality of certain of **our** defenders, and even of certain of our rulers, at this crucial hour, it is impossible not to feel that *individuals will keep it for us*.

Oh, how right Spengler was when he made all the ripples and currents of each particular stream of Destiny carry into that Destiny's common movement philosophy, religion, art, politics, language, morals, and science] Where he went wrong was in underestimating the miraculous power of the individual. Our blood is so mixed — and of this we are proud, not ashamed! — that many of the most arbitrary and absolute characteristics of what Spengler analyses as the great historic 'Cultures' of the world are to be found contending in us *as individuals*. And indeed it is a wonder how as a race, with such paradoxes in our blood, we manage to live together at all!

But what Spengler missed is the part played by what ordinary people call 'humour' in the philosophy of history. I'm not referring just here to the humour of God, though it's hard not to note just now a good deal of *that* in the way things are happening. I am referring to that universal attribute in the common man which geniuses like Rabelais and Dickens and Chaplin so beautifully exploit.

Now humour of this kind is the life-sap of the individual soul. And it is wedded to two things — to a solitary detachment from mass-products of thought and feeling and to an independent refusal to fall into ecstasies about good Governments, good Rulers, and those energetic and unscrupulous Persons who are pathetically called by less humorous races 'great men'.

Lord Haw-Haw is always reminding us how fabulously rich our rich people are, and how wickedly they exploit us, 'and nothing said'.

Heaven forbid I should excuse these fine rogues. Let their conscience — as Milton makes Jesus say of the Emperor Tiberius — be their Tormentor! But what Lord Haw-Haw's employers cannot understand is the humorous indulgence with which we regard these people. They are our spectacle, **our** sport, our circus, our pet Museum Pieces, our Madame Tussaud's.

And after all, with all the brutalities in our long history, and with **all** the

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immoral vitality in our resilience, nothing can destroy the upspringing life-freedom in each one of our individual souls. This freedom is protected, guarded, defended by what is the climax of irritation to many — our feeling that the whole of life is a joke.

Aye! But how much philosophy lies hid in that word! For just as it is natural for Hitler to believe in what William James calls a 'Block-Universe' wherein the Logic of Hegel rounds off history with *the idea of the Reich*, so it is natural for the rebellious anarchistic humour in us to believe in a 'Multiverse' where the immortal soul of a human being is only one of a countless host of immortal souls, not one of whom is limited to this world of Time and Space, and to all of whom Hitler's 'uber alles' is as pathetic as it is comical.

Having driven Hitler from our island, we face no easy task. To restore Europe to its original freedom is no bagatelle. Besides, to certain minds anything is better than sovereign nations — especially little ones — raising barriers against each other. How salutary, you will say, if united under the Swastika, they fell into a sort of Millennial Trance, a Pax Germanica, in whose insect-god sight 'a thousand years were as one day'!

Salutary enough if it didn't smell of mortality and make you think of a hive of bees in a skull! Aye! But how the Third Reich reeks of chloroform* and disinfectant; and how the hum of its crowded hive has that terrifying note of the will-less monotone of the sub-human!

There is death on the air when the freedom of the human soul—like Father Zozima's body — is *beginning to stink*. But Germany herself is the unhappiest victim. The man has not only nailed the Swastika upon the coffin of Europe, he has branded it upon the soul of Germany. Well! the fight has only begun; and meanwhile the more savage grows Hitler's attack and the more obstinate grows our resistance the more deliberately we sink down into 'the pleasure which there is in life itself.

It cannot be denied that the German worship of Hitler partakes of the nature of *mystical love*; though this is mingled with equally intense mystical fear. And what does it mean? It means that he has made the German people even more simple-minded than they were before he corrupted them. Simple indeed they have become; for all subtle and sophisticated differences between good and evil are negligible to them compared with the difference between 'good for Germany' and 'bad for Germany'.

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This simplification of its conscience flattens out the human soul more than anything else. To choose, to select, to balance, to mingle, to take from somewhere and add to something, to indulge in casuistry, to pick and choose, to discriminate, these are the characteristics of a free soul with which it is fatal to interfere. If people want to damn themselves by their freedom, let them damn themselves! You can build up a war-machine on this mystical love-hate, and you can overrun your neighbours; but you can't build up a New Human Culture. I would be prepared to wager that I have more *malice* in my little finger than the most barbarous German soldier in his whole body. But in the long run — to quote Goethe again — Was the malice in Mephistopheles that stirred up the creative spirit in Faust. Without this malice — 'the first infernal' lifted to oppose the Creative Energy — the Dimension in which we live would nod and drowse and sink into sleep!

It was for this natural innocence and goodness and simplicity in his Germans that Hitler so roundly takes them to task in *Mein Kampf*. Well! he has filled these simple hearts with so much mystical love-hate now that the margin of free choice in their souls has dwindled to a vanishing point. Where we can be critical and malicious and mischievous — at the expense of our authorities as much as of our foes — Hitler's colossal but pathetic swarm can do, think, feel nothing except, '*Buzz-buzz! — iiber alles! heil Hitler! — Buzz-buzz-buzz!*'

The extraordinary detachment from mass-enthusiasm and mass-emotion that characterizes ordinary Britishers can be discovered in endless directions. And it's the whole thing! 'It is the rub', as Shakespeare would say. We refuse to become a mob, a mass, a swarm. We remain an agglomeration of individuals side by side in a common cause. It strikes us as perfectly natural for our soldier-friend to have as his neighbour in camp, shelter, kitchen, berth, tent, lorry, *some sort of foreigner*, of different tastes, ways, peculiarities, habits, customs from himself. It's a commonplace occurrence to hear a man say: 'Oh, he's a Frenchman but a very decent chap*'; or 'He's a Pole and a funny one too, but as plucky as they make them'.

All this is easy for us because each of us lives in his own *separate* island-fortress and has always done so. The habits of a Pole or a Czech are only a little less peculiar than the habits of his more familiar mate. They are *all* peculiar, *all* exceptional, *all* unique, just as he is himself!

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We're an army, a navy, a merchant-marine, an air-force, a home-guard, a civilian population, of isolated individuals, contemplating each other with only a little more humorous indulgence than that with which we contemplate the sometimes quite clever, though scandalously unsporting, tricks of 'Jerry\' Hitler's one, single, obsessed, Hegelian world is confronted by a plurahty of cold-blooded, self-reliant, independent worlds, worlds that aren't easy to corrupt and intoxicate with either love or hate, worlds — or human identities — that aren't very different in war from what they are in peace.

I have several philosophic friends who often complain, as I do myself in my weaker, that is to say in my intellectual moods, of the harm done to the human intelligence by propaganda. But if you want to escape the danger to your intellect of this peril, the remedy is simple. Leave it, as the Forces do, entirely alone, except now and then for a bit of pure sport! Leave it to that amusing devil, Lord Haw-Haw.

Propaganda may be taken seriously elsewhere. It certainly isn't taken so by the common man of this Island. He knows his Government as well as a ship's crew know the Old Man who is its captain. A sly unspoken taking-for-granted of the tragical-comical hypocrisies of all well-meaning rulers is what we have imbibed with our mothers' milk. Aye! and how that dangerous word *mothers* brings us to a still more characteristic non-conductor to what might be called hypnotic mass-intellectualizing.

I refer to the instinctive attitude of so many of our real mothers on the subject of putting their children, with themselves or without themselves, *in another woman's kitchen*.

On this point there arises a beautiful and dramatic opportunity for the life-deep individualism of your 'common or garden' woman.

Quite properly from a rational and ethical point of view, in other words from a masculine point of view, we have to consider the preservation of the next generation.

Quite rightly, apart from its health, we have to consider saving the next generation from perilous nervous shocks. And yet in some strange and curious way when a mother refuses to take her children, or let them go alone, to another woman's kitchen, it is impossible not to feel the deep, inscrutable, irresistible pulse-beat of Nature Herself.

Animals will carry their offspring out of danger to safety; but they'll fight tooth and claw against the attempt of another mother-beast to adopt

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them! Just here, in the case of mothers and children, our intellectuals had their most sophisticated opportunity to be right. But it is a question whether they *were* right.

When you weigh rational and scientific foresight against the possessive individualism of women, Nature herself, the Great Mother of us all, tips the scales.

Every woman *re-creates*, in childhood as well as later, the human souls of whom she has obtained possession. What causes her the acutest pain she knows — a pain that psychically might be called the inverse of child-birth — is when this re-creative process is taken away from her by another woman. Her man, her child, is then set in line to become a perfect stranger. Her embryo-creation, subjected to the creative sorcery of another sorceress, is lost to her in a loss that is composed of all the imponderables in the world

This is the open secret that women share with each other, just as men share their philosophical detachment, and share too that insane lechery of theirs, towards which women's amused attitude is as much a proof of ignorance as it is of indulgence.

Of course it might be argued that the popularity of the 'New Deal*' in America and of our own drastic modifications of capitalism in the form of doles and pensions is a sign that we are deeply thankful for any move away from democratic individualism.

I cannot myself see it in that light. Isn't it rather a sign that we all jump at: any opportunity to have a more individualistic life than we'd have been able to live in the old unpleasant days when we'd have just had to starve or be clapped into the workhouse?

CHAPTER XIV

PERSONALITY HAS THE LAST WORD

THE idea that human individualism can only display itself under unbridled capitalism is ridiculous. Unbridled capitalism kills the goose that lays the golden egg. But because a person can manage to subsist on limited rations and on a minimum of 'Hell! Let's have another drink!' and yet enjoy with considerable relish the primordial sensations of being alive; *that* doesn't mean that a bloody revolution, substituting well-fed slavery for ill-fed freedom, would be the desired consummation.

What we ordinary men want is freedom from money-worry. We want security, and to know where we are. We want to feel easy about our families. We're not writhing with a devouring hatred of the rich. Take worry away from us: give us a life we can enjoy: and the rich can go to the devil.

Through the sardonic grimaces of Lord Haw-Haw Hitler has now for a whole year, in the transparent guile that tickles our fancy as much as the best Music-Hall turn, been trying to bribe us to betray our patriotism for the sake of the flesh-pots of Egypt. 'What stake in the country have you*?' cries Hitler through the wry mouth of Haw-Haw; and the mechanical Mask points its devilish finger straight at the pit of our stomach.

And if we're on the dole, or on the road, or are an old-age pensioner, we begin to ponder upon our 'stake in the country'. It isn't a stake anyway that can be weighed in the balance against a gold-brick. And that clearly is all the balance that Lord Haw-Haw can follow.

But there are other considerations, my Lord, and other feelings. There are even — though this may astonish your Master — feelings common to Mr. Churchill and ourselves; feelings connected with certain imponderables — negligible to you because they are invisible — such as History and Self-Respect, such as the spirit of this small Island and the stubborn independence of her preposterously mixed offspring.

There is much talk about the rearrangements we ought to make after this war: and apart from his lies and boastings to his people we know from

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Mein Kampf what Hitler's idea of a New Europe is. It is the very simple one of Master-Folk and Servant-Folk.

But for the ordinary individual, more concerned with his own private life than with States and Governments-and Boundaries and Minorities and Migrations, the pinch of this crisis — perhaps the supreme turning-point in the history of the world — is felt in no outward adjustments but in the changes going on within his own spirit. The possibility of Hitler *not* being crushed is like physical pain combined with a personal outrage. The in-sucking vortex of this final development of the Hegelian Universe swallows every horizon, blots out every vista, nullifies every choice.

The only possible *bodily* retort to such a consummation is of course resistance to the death, while our final *mental* protection against it, it seems to me, is this same gesture of planetary loneliness and of freedom from the whole emotional gamut of human love-hate — namely our embrace of the Inanimate. Nor is this any kind of spiritual or mystical consummation. Time and space are an integral and organic part of our powers of apprehension.

Without the framework of Time and Space there is for us simply nothing; no thinking, no seeing, no feeling; not even, as we say, a blank. The whole machinery of our apprehension of life stops dead. We have reached the end of our ropes. Our faces are pressed against the adamant *No further*. But there is this still to be considered: and in this lies our escape. Though we have come to this dead end; we know we have come to it and by the mere fact of knowing we have come to it we know that in reality we are, and have always been, *on both sides of the barrier* \

When therefore we go through the process of drawing magic power from the other side, what we really do is to use our imagination. My philosophical friends will smile at this admission: and retort, '*Precisely!*'

Well! Here is the point for disputation. I know well that no imagination can actually visualize the Condition of Being which exists outside our present Spatial-Temporal Dimension. I know well that when the Imagination concentrates upon what lies beyond Time and Space it can, in the nature of things, bring home no grist for its mill.

But there is a use to which the imagination can be put which allows for this; and, allowing for this, allows also for our consciousness that we are playing a sensible part when we gather up in an apotheosis of heightened common sense, and yet quite coolly and calmly, the various chances which

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Exist that the impression we have of drawing power from another Dimension *isn't* after all an illusion.

And with Time and Space intervening between us and the next Dimension of this unfathomable Multiverse there is no reason why the ecstasy of our embrace of the Inanimate should be regarded as anything holy or sacred. We have learnt from Shakespeare that there is *nothing sacred* in this Holy Inquisition sense. Or rather let us say that there is something more sacred than any of these Holy Terrors; and that is the right of an honest man to laugh at *all* terrors, whether holy or not.

And the gist of the whole thing lies here. All these supernatural powers and beings and existences and principles, all these super-natural 'thrones' and 'dominations', spring from, and return to, one sole creator, the unfathomable portion of our own soul, which sinks beyond the grasp of our understanding! Not the soul of Man in the Abstract, for *there* is trickery and treachery, but the soul of every single, separate entity is the only *sacred thing in itself*. And what reason is there that this shouldn't apply to 'all souls', from the soul of a bug or a dragon-fly-grub to the soul of Coeur de Lion?

One of the causes of Hitler's, amazing success on the Continent has been the stress he has always laid upon his people's mass-love for himself. He has been absolute master, for a long enough period, of his people's highest and lowest desires, passions, avengings, to have established the most extraordinary relation between a tyrant and his subjects that has ever existed. It is an obsessive relation; that is to say it is an impassioned sexual relation; resembling that between a queen-bee and her swarm; and also resembling that between two sadists whose passion can only reach a mutual ecstasy when they are tormenting a third. It is a horrible and at the same time a sublime example of mystical sex-love. It possesses therefore all the characteristics of a religion. It has its ritual gestures, its ritual sacrifices, its ritual murders. It has its obscene and horrific symbol. It has its 'full circle' of rapturous prophecy. It has its bloody beheadings, its bloody flagellations, its fantastical priestly lies.

Hitler is certainly a remarkable High-Priest; for it is a rare achievement to make a living idol out of yourself and be the chief sacrificer to yourself.

But the phenomenon is too monstrous, too weird, too unearthly, *too spiritual in a had sense*, and above all too successful in its initial hypnotic

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spell, to have the remotest chance of lasting. And, when it ends, the simple-minded German, or let us follow the kindly custom and call him 'Jerry', ought not to have to pay for the crimes of Hitler as a responsible person, but as a *Somnabulist*, mesmerized by a Black Magician.

Well! In Britain's challenge to this unearthly Charade we are privileged to be at once actors and spectators at a Dionysian Performance where Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides have pooled their talents.

The individual soul can only escape from religion by including religion; it can only escape from philosophy by including philosophy. For in all these world-upheavals both religion, as a thaumaturgic system, and philosophy, as a metaphysical system, will be found operating.

What a great thinker, but what a crafty old conjurer, Hegel was! All the movements that are most dangerous to human happiness in our age can be shown to be derived from Hegel. The Hegelians of the Left make a religious cult of materialism, the Hegelians of the Right become desperate converts to the Church, while the Hegelians of the Centre are the treacherous Fifth Columnists who stand on one leg, between the mad race backward and the mad race forward, uneasy gentlemen of the *Betwixt and Between*, watching the two clouds of extremist dust lose themselves on opposite horizons!

And the way to know the descendants of Hegel is an infallible one. *They hate and dread free-will*. They loathe the natural, healthy, every-man-in-his-humour, living disorder of free liberty-loving individuals.

And their block-universe philosophy, their closed-circle philosophy, is at the back of all their sacred tricks. In order to counter the unfathomably-pluralistic Multiverse, whose free children we are, with something authoritative and hierarchical, they love to invent cabalistical cults, secrets, systems, mysteries, movements, terrifying symbols and monstrous conspiracies. Dostoievsky's Grand Inquisitor putting the divine Anarchist in prison for the sake of the *comfort* of his people is the clue-word. They pretend to be mystagogic, demonic, demogorgonic; but the cynical leer of Mephistopheles shows through; while their followers carry on their innocent faces the spasmodic solemnity of sex-love.

Sacred! Sacred! Sacred! Rabelais understood them. See how they baptize themselves in the Font of the Absolute! See how they grow tipsy on the Opium of their Great One's love! They dance, these Dervishes of the One-and-Only, in the weeping masks of Revolution; but strip their

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masks away. and lo! the wizened monkey-faces of the Inquisitors of Reaction!

With the crushed grapes of their murderous: '*all-cry-the-same-thing-together*' their Bacchic thyrsuses drip, while the rhythm of their persecution-dance never deviates a step from its baton'd ecstasy of the 'tom-toms' of Totality.

Against all this how can the natural profane humour of honest nobodies' prevail, to guard what is, for all such knavish tricks, 'our dear home'? When you hear the hesitating doubts of some Hamlet-like Intellectual with his 'pale cast of thought', for God's sake remember that 'enterprises of great pith and moment *with this regard* their currents turn awry'.

It is true we are by nature incorrigible amateurs; but below our hobbies and our solitary eccentricities we have a certain savage vitality and deadly obstinacy which it is the pleasure of Providence to use for its own ends.

And Providence, knowing our hearts, knowing that even our worst hypocrisies are a sort of tribute to the 'Stream of tendency not Ourselves', hears our prayer for time, and *does* give us time.

Providence sees that we'd all rather be dead than submit to Hitler; and so Providence has decided to use us to hunt Hitler down. What the 'common or garden' Britisher craves and responds to is plain speech, and to feel that the thing is being put to him on personal grounds. The subtle story some of our Intellectuals tell him is such a tissue of contradictions that it carries its refutation on its own face.

He is told this is 'a war for markets'. Why then was it that our Prime Minister at Munich was ready to do anything to avoid war, while our working classes would have gone to war again and again on purely honourable grounds? And why didn't Hitler concentrate upon mercantile aims instead of military ones? Why does he always subordinate economics to politics and military strategy? And finally and above all why don't these clever exposers of 'a war for markets' take the trouble to study *Mein Kampf*?

The truth is, as I have been saying all along, 'a war for markets' is one of those intellectual catchwords — like 'inferiority complex' and 'wishful thinking' — that with all the appearance of sophisticated profundity haven't got a twentieth part of the natural wisdom of the homeliest

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proverb in the mouth of Sancho, or one might almost say *in the ears* of Dapple.

Fate is clearly, as we say, 'fed up' with the cold-blooded inhumanity of bad capitalists. But of one thing we may be certain; Hitler's ferocious anti-humanity isn't destined to be the alternative. The resources of the human spirit are wider and deeper than cold-blooded Financiers or tiger-blooded Nazis. *Providence is up to something of its own*; and the only way we can help it just at present is to drive Hitler back where he belongs.

But whether you prefer death to being under Hitler or not, I fully agree that it isn't a pretty sight to see a person over military age urging on others to face pain and death. But on the other hand how can anyone *in this island at this juncture* *not* come under some vibration from the pain and death incurred in our resolve that Hitler shall be stopped? One of the oldest stories known in Britain is the story of how King Arthur hunted the monster called the *Twrch Trwyth*; and in the speeding of this hunt there were many parts to play. My own role in this hunting of the *Twrch Trwyth* is the simple one of suggesting that there is such a tiling as helping to defeat Hitler by a secret motion of the soul which is akin to prayer but different from prayer. Any individual who recognizes that what is 'at stake' isn't his cash-box but his soul can practise a mortal 'act of faith' which means Hitler's defeat at the roots of life: for Hitler's ideas are based — as any free spirit who reads *Mein Kampf* can see — on the false premises of an anti-human philosophy.

Spengler was perfectly right in bringing together the manifold expressions of the human soul at each particular epoch into a cultural synthesis. What Hitler is trying to do is to suppress this natural succession of organic cultures and to freeze up the life-sap of Evolution itself in the deadly frost of physical and moral fear.

And since — as the common man alone seems to have the wit to see — this is a *personal* and *not* an economic war, I am doing something — little as it may be — *against Hitler* by analysing the particular life-sensation which is-r- of all our deeper planetary sensations — the one most reconcilable with the idea of that plurality of worlds which is a natural background of a plurality of Persons and Nations and Systems.

And the essential thing about this life-sensation is its implication of **the** soul's absolute *loneliness*. Instead of pretending to feel 'love', whether it be 'love*' according to Catullus, or 'love' according to St. Paul, or 'love-

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hate' according to Hitler, if we honestly force ourselves to '*act kindness*'⁹ — never mind what we *feel* — we shall have obeyed the Categorical Imperative that seems to reach us from outside Time and Space.

As a natural man, that is to say as an anarchistic individual or mingled selfishness and unselfishness, an ordinary Britisher feels the sort of intense gratitude to the Russians that he would feel if an earthquake saved him from a tiger.

But there is no pleasure from any earthly success, or from triumph over others, or even from the cleverest satisfactions of vice, that can approach the enjoyment, magical, miraculous, transporting, that the individual soul of a man attains when it frees itself from the competitive world and gives itself up to embracing the elements.

And this is what ordinary people in this country quite naturally do. And it is what gives an ordinary man's soul the freedom of our present Dimension, while at the same moment it presses against the Barrier where the generations have worn that barrier thinnest.

And as it presses against that barrier it often happens that memories of enjoyment—oh! of much more than enjoyment—come drifting into the soul's consciousness. What comes to us with these memories — wherein is concealed what Rabelais calls 'the good hope' — is the supreme justification of life in our present be-devilled Dimension.

And it is because the *Swarming of the Swastika* threatens to overpower the solitary life of the soul where alone such ecstasies reach us, that for us to think of 'not winning' is impossible. For Germans to think of 'not winning' is merely to awake from an opium-vision. But for us to think such thoughts is like the suicide of the insane. All our outward strife at this hour is the expression of a 'mortal strife' within; a strife against such a threat to human happiness as has not occurred in the whole history of the world.

Other tyrannies have threatened what we call 'Cultures' and 'Civilizations'. This one goes deeper than that. This one goes to the root of our individual existence. This one is a threat to those depths in the lonely human soul whence we derive not only our *freedom of will* but our enjoyment of the essence of life.

Oh, that I could convey, a simple man talking to his sophisticated friends—for to them and to none others I dedicate this book—how entirely a *personal matter* this war is! Our 'common or garden' Britishei

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— this incredible *hybrid* of Celt, Saxon, Dane, Norman, founded on the marrow-bones of Aborigines coeval with Crete and Egypt — knows with the knowledge of twenty-thousand years of life's battle — for in entering life we enter the oldest of wars — what this, the new world-war, is about.

You deceive yourselves, you clever thinkers! You are devoured by destructive spite and poisonous hatred, you Neo-Jacobins and Universal Liquidators! You are drawing a flotilla of red herrings over the pole-star track of a simple human situation, you Mephistopheles and Nihilists!

This war, like all the wars that have ever been, is *a war of persons*. Even a Swarm is made up of what once were individuals. Attila's hosts were only an agglomeration of individuals. So were Tamberlane's. So are Hitler's. A race of simple individuals they are, *not* 'fighting for markets' but hypnotized by Hitler into fighting to make other agglomerations of individuals, of less 'pure race, *feel them on the top*, into fighting for the precise and very thing that Hitler's Nazis have now got from the World's Fifth Column, the infinitely sweet cry: 'You are our Conquerors!' Persons and Personality are behind everything on the earth. Hitler — the swarm-evoker — is the Person responsible for this war. But the ordinary man among us, who knew this, was for ever being side-tracked by specious red-herrings till he found a Person after his own heart in Mr. Churchill.

This war is a war between the sort of persons the pure German race can become when they're *ordered* to become so, and the sort of persons that our Celtic, Norman, Danish, Saxon, Iberian people are, with orders *or against*

One of the most curious complications of the whole affair has to do with that ticklish and personal matter, the matter of courage and timidity. Does it not seem in any comparison between us and the Germans with regard to courage and timidity that with us these things are the same in war as in peace? Does it not seem to be with us an entirely personal matter, a normal matter, a matter of common sense and cool blood?

Whereas with them isn't it a specially-induced war-fever, fed by artificial stimulants and resembling drug-intoxication? Of course on both sides there are plenty of individual heroes who break all rules and scatter all generalizations in their heroism; but our 'common or garden' man is as a rule at once brave and cautious. He is prepared to sacrifice

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his life, but is not ashamed of those various quaint and homely **and even** comical expedients against the chances of unbearable pain or of sudden death that occur to all ordinary descendants of Adam.

It seems as if in a certain sense this presence of extreme pain and of violent destruction is *not such a new thing* to us as it is to the average German. I'm not referring to any definite experience of invasion or bombing. I'm referring to a certain sporting vitality which our race possesses and which is hidden up under the hobbies and eccentricities of our normal life. This lazy, sluggish, incorrigible, explosive vitality is a definite characteristic of ours; and is found in all classes.

No doubt it comes from being such a mixed race and from being islanders. It is expressed in all manner of ways that by no means 'suit the book' of those who are anxious to improve our moral condition. It is expressed, as Dickens so often shows, in the enormous life-zest that appears in the very unction of our hypocrisy.

But there is no doubt it also springs from habits and feelings that go back to very primitive epochs in our history and to old usages which, it must be confessed, had little 'relish of salvation' in them. It is, I believe, also connected with a certain psychic magnetism in us which in itself is neither good nor evil, but which gives to our power of resistance an appalling force.

The curious thing is, as was shown in both the Elizabethan days and Cromwell days, this magnetic force I speak of partakes of the nature of both religion and philosophy *without being one or the other*; and displays itself in at least three different ways; in cool courage, sly self-protection, and shocking recklessness.

It shows itself indeed with every circumstance of normality in peace just as much as in war, and out of danger just as much as in danger. It vibrates and pulses with what I can only describe as something kindred to the endurance of the animals we love so well; and it must be remembered that this quality is not by any means a Christian virtue but such as was displayed to a terrifying extreme by those bedeviled Australian convicts Sacheverell Sitwell talks about; by the women and children of our industrial revolution, and even by our little chimney-sweepers of a hundred years ago. In plain words, as no common people have ever endured such things so no common people have ever kept up such life-zest.

PERSONALITY HAS THE LAST WORD

Hitler's revenge upon us has been an affair of mass-hypnosis. We are a commonwealth of individuals, some very poor, some very rich. But, as in other fields of un-economic activity, we understand each other well enough in our present dangerous, obstinate, cold-blooded purpose of hunting this man down.

For Hitler has roused in us the same feeling that Philip of Spain roused in his day and Napoleon in his; an animal determination — and with us the word 'animal' is a noble word — not to stop till we're dead, or our enemy is done for. What we feel is no mere hate. In fact it might even be called a good-natured feeling; but it is all the deadlier and the more irresistible for that. It has become more than an emotion. It has become a *bodily condition*.

Like Hamlet we have in us 'something dangerous which let their wisdom fear'; and this 'something in us' holds good for those who are more cautious than the average as well as for those who are more heroic than the average.

It certainly seems as if the gods themselves drove our enemy to attack Russia. Russia, defending her own country, appeals to the ordinary Britisher, whether rich or poor, as Stalin dictating our social politics did not appeal; and with Russia as well as the United States on our side and with China and India *at least hostile to Fascism and Nazi-ism*, things look very different from the way they looked when France fell. Between Science and Propaganda the individual soul with its humorous detachment seems lost. But what ancient Athens gave, London has defended.

London is the oldest, largest, deepest, most formidable city in the world. Before Berlin was, London *is*. If Berlin's streets are of steel and concrete, London's are astral and psychic. Every name in London carries unconquerable life in it; every other name the mystery of the evolution of the world!

Hitler's bombing of London is the doom, not of London, but of his own upstart and besotted Reich. Before Troy fell, when the rubble of the Seven Hills was browsed by wild goats, before the Celts carried the terror of their bronze swords across Europe, travellers from Crete to Stonehenge must have knelt to pay, as they 'uncorded their bales' upon Lud's wharves, their tribute to the bloodless cult of the great Mother.

Long before those nurseling-urchins of the wolf-pack, Romulus and Remus, thought of lifting a stone upon the Seven Hills, the City on the

MORTAL STRIFE

Thames was founded by the God from the Sea who gave it his name. Ere Berlin was even a rooting-swamp for swine, in London's royal city the gods held converse with men and the daughters of men were loved by the sons of gods!

London has nourished greater poets in each of the four quarters of her circumference than Rome ever produced in the compass of all her walls. City of Chaucer and Spenser, City of Charles Lamb, Charles Dickens and Charles Chaplin, this madman's sole claim to match himself against you is his brute force and his monstrous lying. Your towers rise still; but if he were to lay you, to the palpable gaze of men, level with your river, *you* know, and your children know, with what answer you would answer him, you whose imponderable bulk, not made with hands, rises between Zenith and Nadir.

For every building that falls you lift up another in its place, a grander, fairer, nobler one! Your spirit answers this Magician from beyond the roll of your guns and beyond the roar of your aerial avengers; answers him from the freedom he cannot tame and the loneliness he cannot understand; answers him from no mass-product of perverted science, but from the heart of the humanity he has flouted, from the conscience of the pity he has disowned, from that invisible city without limits and without walls, which was, and which is, and which is to come, the City where man retorts to his fate with a laugh!

