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SPANISH CHARACTER

And Other Essays

By Irving Babbitt

DEMOCRACY AND LEADERSHIP.
ROUSSEAU AND ROMANTICISM.
THE MASTERS OF MODERN FRENCH CRITICISM.
THE NEW LAOKOON.
An Essay on the Confusion of the Arts.
LITERATURE AND THE AMERICAN COLLEGE.
Essays in Defense of the Humanities.
ON BEING CREATIVE.
SPANISH CHARACTER AND OTHER ESSAYS.

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
BOSTON AND NEW YORK

SPANISH CHARACTER

AND OTHER ESSAYS

BY

IRVING BABBITT

With a Bibliography of his Publications and an Index to his Collected Works

Edited by

FREDERICK MANCHESTER

RACHEL GIESE

WILLIAM F. GIESE



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PREFACE

BESIDES the six volumes which make up the main body of his works, Irving Babbitt published a considerable number of essays, addresses, and reviews — many of the last being less reviews than independent expressions of his thought. Fourteen of these pieces are here brought together.

They supplement the existing books, including the posthumous *Dhammapada* volume, in a variety of ways. Characteristically, Babbitt is intent on the solution of philosophic problems: in 'Lights and Shades of Spanish Character' he appears rather in the rôle of a detached literary essayist. Characteristically, he deals with men not as individuals but as representatives and transmitters of ideas: in 'George Sand,' 'Diderot,' and 'Matthew Arnold,' he is largely engaged, as in *The Masters of Modern French Criticism*, in giving what he called rounded estimates. The essays on Croce, Racine, and Pascal are his most substantial treatment of these significant figures, the last-named of which was long the subject of one of his courses. He was profoundly interested in Indian philosophy, especially in Buddhism: 'Indian Epigrams' and 'Interpreting India to the West' are important additions to what the previous volumes offer on this topic. 'Are the English Critical?' and 'Mat-

thew Arnold' are substantial essays in an important field only incidentally touched elsewhere. 'Humanist and Specialist' and 'President Eliot' are late expressions of his views on education, a subject on which he expected, had he lived, to write a second book. The essay on style, an address before the American Academy of Arts and Letters, is his only general treatment of this topic. 'What I Believe' is perhaps the best brief summary of his philosophy that he ever wrote.

It was evidently Babbitt's practice in publishing a new volume to draw freely on his uncollected essays, with the result that readers of the present book may occasionally come upon a passage already familiar to them from the principal works. It has seemed better to incur a certain amount of such repetition — altogether it is not great — than to sacrifice otherwise desirable pieces. The texts appear here as originally printed save for the omission from reviews of a few short passages of no permanent interest, the correction of a few obvious inadvertences, and some adjustments of a purely formal kind.

The Bibliography of Babbitt's publications was prepared mainly by Mr. Louis Harap, of the Philosophical Library, Emerson Hall, Harvard University.

The Index, which was prepared by Miss Rachel Giese, includes topics as well as proper names, and covers the six books published by Babbitt himself, the essay on Buddhism in the *Dhammapada* volume, and the articles here assembled.

PREFACE

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LIGHTS AND SHADES OF SPANISH CHARACTER[1]

THERE is something enigmatical and peculiar in the makeup of the Spaniard — *du je ne sais quoi*, as a Frenchman might express it. In trying to fathom Iberian ways of thought and feeling, we are frequently forced to fall back on the supposition of a recent writer, that 'there is something Spanish in the Spaniard which causes him to behave in a Spanish manner.' I remember that when I visited Spain, a few years ago, I was somewhat disappointed in the appearance of the country itself, though it has all the beauty of line and color of a land for the most part devoid of turf and trees. I found, however, an ample compensation in the interest afforded by this intense idiosyncrasy of the national temperament. Abandoning the beaten paths of travel, I spent several months journeying over the Peninsula on foot, from the Pyrenees to Gibraltar. In this way, I was enabled to get beyond the French civilization of Madrid, and penetrate to the old Spanish civilization which still lingers in the villages and provincial towns. But even with these opportunities for observation I was often at a loss to formulate my impressions of the Spaniards. This arose partly from the strong Moorish and Oriental element which combines in them so strangely with

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European traits, partly from Spain itself being pre-eminently the land of puzzling anomalies. Both in the country and in the national character a shining virtue usually goes hand in hand with an egregious fault. In no like area in Europe, perhaps not in the world, do there exist such extremes of dryness and moisture, heat and cold, fertility and barrenness, such smiling landscapes and such dreary desolation. And contrasts such as we find between the arid steppes of Aragon and the *huerta* of Valencia, between the bleak uplands of Castile and the palm groves of Elche, between the wind-blown wastes of La Mancha and the *vega* of Granada, are not without counterpart in the character of the inhabitants. What, for instance, can be affirmed of a Catalan which will also hold true of a native of Seville? I remember that a theater audience at Madrid thought it the height of comic incongruity when a stage valet declared that he was a mixture of Galician and Andalusian. (*'Yo soy una mezcla de Gallego y Andaluz.'*) It is hard, indeed, to avoid a seeming abuse of paradox and antithesis in speaking of Spain — 'that singular country, which,' in the words of Ford, 'hovers between Europe and Africa, between civilization and barbarism; that land of the green valley and barren mountain, of the boundless plain and broken sierra; those Elysian gardens of the vine, the olive, the orange, and the aloe; those trackless, vast, silent, uncultivated wastes, the heritage of the wild bee; ... that original unchanged country, where indulgence and luxury contend with privation

and poverty, where a want of all that is generous or merciful is blended with the most devoted heroic virtues, where ignorance and erudition stand in violent and striking contrast.'

We almost refuse to credit Madame d'Aulnoy's account of the mingled squalor and magnificence, barbarism and refinement, that existed at Madrid toward the end of the seventeenth century, when Spain, isolated from the rest of Europe, was still free to express her antithetical nature. Throughout nearly everything Spanish there runs this chiaroscuro, this intense play of light and shade. In the history of what other nation do we find such alternations of energy and inertia, such sudden vicissitudes of greatness and decay? On the one hand, Spanish religion in the sixteenth century culminated in the Inquisition; and on the other, it attained to the purest spirituality and Christian charity in Santa Teresa, Fray Luis de Leon, and San Juan de la Cruz, the last of the great mystics, the splendid sunset glow of medieval Catholicism. The brilliant literature of the Golden Age died away abruptly into platitude and insignificance. Among the masterpieces of this literature itself we pass with little interval from heights of mysticism and strains of lyric eloquence to the works of the picaresque writers, recounting the exploits of rogues and vagabonds. Spanish society, which until recently had no middle class, suggested to Cervantes the perfect antithesis of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza; and in Sancho Panza himself, the Spanish peasant of Cervantes' time and of

today, there is the contrast between his shrewd mother wit and his ignorance and credulity. Spain has left almost entirely uncultivated that intermediary region of lucidity, good sense, and critical discrimination which France has made her special domain.

Perhaps the first requisite to getting a clear notion of the Spaniard is to realize in what respects he is *not* like the Frenchman. We should not allow ourselves to be misled by any supposed solidarity of the Latin races. In certain essential traits the Spanish differ from the French almost as much as the Hindus from the Chinese, and in somewhat the same manner. The chief thing that strikes one in French literature is the absence of what the Germans call *Innigkeit*, of inwardness, it is the subordination of everything in man to his social qualities; among the Spaniards, on the other hand, there is vastly greater capacity for solitude and isolation. In France, reason, insufficiently quickened by the imagination, easily degenerates into dry rationalism; whereas in the land of Don Quixote the imagination tends to break away from the control of the senses and understanding, and is unwilling to accept the limitations of the real, and then follows the inevitable disenchantment when the world turns out to be different in fact from what it had been painted in fancy. *Engaño* and *desengaño*, illusion and disillusion, eternal themes of Spanish poetry!

Intimately related to this intemperate imagination of the Spaniard is his pride, his power of self-idealization, his exalted notion of his personal dignity. He is

capable of almost any sacrifice when appealed to in the name of his honor — the peculiar form his self-respect assumes — and of almost any violence and cruelty when he believes his honor to be offended. The Spanish classic theater revolves almost entirely around this sentiment of honor, which is medieval and Gothic, and the sentiment of jealousy, which is Oriental. It was by working upon his pride and sense of honor far more than upon his religious instinct that Rome induced the Spaniard to become her champion in her warfare against the modern spirit. He looked upon himself as the *caballero andante* who sallied forth to do heroic battle for Mother Church.

This self-absorption of the Spaniard has interfered with his acceptance of the new humanitarian ideal. Don Juan, in Molière's play, tells his valet to give alms to the beggar, not for the love of God, but for the love of humanity. In fact, since the time of Molière man has been substituting for the worship of God and for the old notion of individual salvation this cult of Humanity, this apotheosis of himself in his collective capacity. He has idealized his own future, and thus evolved the idea of progress. He has dwelt with minute interest on his own past, and has thus given rise to the historical spirit. He has ministered with ever increasing solicitude to his own convenience and comfort, and has sought to find in this world some equivalent for his vanished dream of paradise. The individual has so subordinated himself to this vast common work that he has almost lost the sense of his

independent value. 'The individual,' said M. Berthelot only the other day, 'will count for less and less in the society of the future.'

The Spaniard, however, refuses thus to identify the interests of his individual self with the interests of humanity. He is filled with that subtle egotism, engendered by medieval religion, which neglected man's relation to nature and his fellows, and fixed his attention solely on the problem of his *personal* salvation. In the olden time, it was not uncommon for a pious Spaniard, on dying, to defraud his earthly creditors in order that he might pay Masses for the welfare of his soul; and it was said of such a man that he had 'made his soul his heir.' The Spaniard remains thus self-centered. He has little capacity for trusting his fellow men, for co-operating with them and working disinterestedly to a common end; he is impatient of organization and discipline. And so, as someone has remarked, he is warlike without being military. We may add that he is overflowing with national pride without being really patriotic. He still has in his blood something of the wild desert instinct of the Arab, and the love of personal independence of the Goth. 'You would rather suspect,' says an old English author, speaking of the Spaniards, 'that they did but live together for fear of wolves.' As a public servant the Spaniard is likely to take for his motto, '*Après moi le déluge*,' or, as the proverb puts it, '*El último mono se ahoga*' (The last monkey gets drowned).

In the Spaniard's indifference to bodily comfort and

material refinements we find traces of the Oriental and medieval contempt for the body.

> *Le corps, cette guenille, est-il d'une importance,*
> *D'un prix à mériter seulement qu'on y pense?*

However, those happy days of Spanish abstemiousness which Juan Valera describes have passed, never to return; that golden era before the advent of French cookery, when all classes, from grandee to muleteer, partook with equal relish of the national mixture of garlic and red peppers; when window-glass was still a rarity in the Peninsula; when, if a tenth part of the inhabitants of Madrid had taken it into their heads to bathe, there would have been no water left to drink, or to cook those *garbanzos* (chick-peas) so essential in the Spanish dietary. But in spite of the spread of modern luxury, which Señor Valera looks upon with ascetic distrust, the Spaniards still remain in the mass the most temperate people in Europe.

The cruelty of the Spaniard — or rather, his callousness, his recklessness of his own life and of the lives of others — is another medieval and Oriental survival; and then, too, there underlies the Spanish temperament I know not what vein of primitive Iberian savagery. Madame d'Aulnoy relates that on a certain day of the year it was customary for court gallants to run along one of the main streets of Madrid, lashing furiously their bare shoulders; and when one of these penitents passed the lady of his choice among the spectators, he bespattered her with his blood, as a

special mark of his favor. Insensibility to the suffering of animals, though general in Spain, is not any greater, so far as my own observation goes, than in the other Latin countries. Possibly, medieval religion, in so exalting man above other creatures, in refusing to recognize his relations to the rest of nature, tended to increase this lack of sympathy with brute creation. The Spanish peasant belabors his ass for the same reason that Malebranche kicked his dog — because he has not learned to see in it a being organized to feel pain in the same way as himself.

Closely akin, also, to the Spaniard's medieval and aristocratic attitude toward life is his curious lack of practical sense and mechanical skill. 'The good qualities of the Spaniards,' writes Mr. Butler Clarke, 'alike with their defects, have an old-world flavor that renders their possessors unfit to excel in an inartistic, commercial, democratic, and skeptical age.' Juan Valera admits this practical awkwardness and inefficiency of the Spaniard, but exclaims, 'Sublime incapacity!' and discovers in it a mark of his 'mystic, ecstatic, and transcendental nature.' The Spaniard, then, finds it hard to light a kerosene lamp without breaking the chimney, much as Emerson made his friends uneasy when he began to handle a gun. Unfortunately, Nature knows how to revenge herself cruelly on those who affect to treat her with seraphic disdain, and on those who, like the Spaniards, see in a lack of prudence and economy a proof of aristocratic detachment. '*Qui veut faire l'ange fait la bête.*' After

centuries of mortal tension, man has finally given over trying to look upon himself as a pure spirit. (Indeed, in the case of M. Zola and his school, he has tried to look upon himself as a pure animal.) He has been gradually learning to honor his senses and to live on friendly terms with Nature. The Spaniard, however, has refused to adjust himself to the laws of time and space. He is unwilling to recognize that the most sublime enterprises usually go amiss from the neglect of the homeliest details. He has failed to develop those faculties of observation and analysis by which man, since the Renaissance, has been laying hold upon the world of matter with an ever firmer grasp. The splendid sonorities of the Spanish language serve in its poetry as a substitute for the exact rendering of nature, and take the place of a precise mastery of facts in the speech of the orator in Cortes. The Spaniard is reluctant to mar the poetry of existence by an excessive accuracy. Steamboats are advertised in Spanish newspapers to start at such and such an hour *more or less* (*mas ó menos*). Procrastination is the national vice. As I walked along the alameda at Saragossa, shortly after arriving in Spain, the words I caught constantly rising above the hum of voices were, '*mañana, mañana por la mañana, mañana*' (tomorrow, tomorrow morning, tomorrow). 'In Spain,' says Ford, 'everything is put off until tomorrow — except bankruptcy.' 'A thing in Spain is begun late, and never finished,' runs a native proverb (*En España se empieza tarde, y se acaba nunca*); and again, 'Spanish succor

arrives late or never' (*Socorro de España ó tarde ó nunca*).

Along with this Oriental disregard for the value of time there is a dash of Oriental fatalism. I remember once talking the matter over with an old peasant, as we walked together over the pass of Despeñaperros into Andalusia. 'In this accursed world,' he ended by saying, 'a man who is born a *cuarto*' (a copper coin) 'is not going to turn out a *peseta*' (a coin of silver). A curious comparison might be made between this true Eastern fatalism of the Spaniard, the fatalism of predestination, and that fatalism of evolution which seems to be gaining ground with us.

Another Oriental and medieval trait in the Spaniard is his lack of curiosity. '*Quien sabe?*' (Who knows?) is the formula of his intellectual indifference, just as '*No se puede*' (It is impossible) is the formula of his fatalism. The modern world is coming more and more to seek its salvation in the development of the reason and intelligence; and from this point of view Renan is consistent in exalting 'curiosity' above all other virtues. Christianity, on the other hand, may justly be suspected of having insufficiently recognized from the start the rôle of the intellect, and at times has inclined to show a special tenderness toward ignorance. Pascal was but true to the tradition of the Christian mystics when he branded the whole process of modern scientific inquiry as a form of concupiscence — *libido sciendi*, the lust of knowing. When he felt the rise within him of the new power of the reason which threatened the in-

tegrity of his medieval faith, he exclaimed in self-admonishment, 'You must use holy water and hear Masses, and that will lead you to believe naturally and will *make you stupid.*' Spain, for several centuries back, has applied with great success this panacea of Pascal for any undue activity of the reason. The abject ignorance into which she has fallen is the result, then, partly of Christian obscurantism, and in part of Oriental incuriousness.

Which is worse, after all, some of us may be prompted to ask in passing, this incuriousness of the Spaniard, or that eager inquisitiveness of his antipode the American, which leads him to saturate his soul in all the infinite futility of his daily newspaper? Spain may at least owe to her ignorance some of that wisdom of little children so highly prized by Christianity. 'There is more simplicity, kindliness, and naïveté in Spain than in the rest of Europe,' writes Wilhelm von Humboldt to Goethe. Other Western countries are showing signs at present of intellectual overtraining. The impression we get from a typical Parisian Frenchman of today is that the whole energy of the man's personality has gone to feed the critical intellect, at the expense both of what is below and of what is above the intellect — of the body and the soul. The critical intellect of the Spaniard has been so stunted and atrophied by centuries of disuse that he has lost the very sense of his deficiency. Education is as truly the last object of his concern as it is the first of the American's.

Juan Valera, who has analyzed with great acuteness the causes of Spanish decadence, says that Spain's head was turned in the sixteenth century by her sudden accession to world-wide dominion, coinciding as it did with her triumph, after seven centuries of conflict, over the Moors. She became filled with a fanatical faith in herself, with a 'delirium of pride,' and since then has hugged with desperate tenacity, as embodying absolute and immutable truth, those medieval forms to which she ascribed her greatness. In the meanwhile, the rest of the world has been quietly changing from a medieval to a Greek view of culture. It has been discovering that growth is not in one, but in a multitude of directions, and that the nation no less than the individual is greatest which can take up and harmonize in itself the largest number of opposing qualities. France, indeed, has been almost fatally crippled by her attempt to carry into modern times the principle of medieval exclusiveness. Sainte-Beuve traces to the persecution of the Jansenists and the expulsion of the Huguenots a loss of balance in the French national character. It was perhaps no idle fancy that led the Parisian Nefftzer to exclaim, as he heard the boom of the German guns about the city in the siege of 1870, 'We are paying for Saint Bartholomew's Day!' The history of Spain bears still more tragic witness to the truth of Emerson's saying that exclusiveness excludes itself. Nearly all her skill in finance, manufacture, and agriculture departed from her with the banishment of the Jews and Moriscos;

and the Inquisition shut that intellectual element from her life which was needed as a corrective of her over-ardent imagination and narrow intensity.

However, modern ideas have fairly got a footing in Spain during the past forty years, and new and old have been arrayed against each other with a truly Iberian vividness of contrast. This battle between medieval and modern is the favorite topic of recent Spanish literature. It has been treated, often with great power, by novelists like Galdós, Alarcón, and Valera, and has inspired the work of poets like Nuñez de Arce and Campoamor. It is curious, this spectacle of a nation hesitating between contradictory ideals. Spain looks doubtfully on our scientific and industrial civilization, and in the very act of accepting it feels that she is perhaps entering the path of perdition. She does not share our exuberant optimism, and has misgivings about our idea of progress. She cannot, like other Western nations, throw herself with fierce energy upon the task of winning dominion over matter, and forget,

> In action's dizzying eddy whirl'd,
> The something that infects the world.

She is haunted at times by the Eastern sense of the unreality of life. It is no mere chance that the title of the most famous play of Spain's greatest dramatist is *La Vida es Sueño* (Life is a Dream). This note, which is heard only occasionally in English, and notably in Shakespeare, recurs constantly in Spanish from the

Couplets of Manrique to Espronceda. Wisdom, often for the Spaniard as always for the Oriental, reveals herself by some strange process of solitary illumination, comparable to the awakening from a dream. 'The mysterious virgin,' she calls herself in Espronceda's poem, 'on whom man bestows his last affections, and in whom all science becomes mute.'

Soy la virgen misteriosa
De los últimos amores, etc.

Whereas Bacon, speaking for the West, says that the way of knowledge is one that no man can travel alone.

We might augur more hopefully of Spain's attempt to enter upon the path of modern progress if she had been more happily inspired in the choice of a model. Wilhelm von Humboldt, one of the few philosophical observers of Spain, remarks that her greatest misfortune is her geographical position. All her ideas come to her through France, and France is above all dangerous to her. In that ideal cosmopolitanism of which Goethe dreamed, each country was to broaden itself by a wise assimilation of the excellencies of other nationalities. The actual cosmopolitanism which has arisen during the present century has perhaps resulted in an interchange of vices rather than of virtues. I have sometimes been tempted to see a symbol of this cosmopolitanism in a certain square at Florence whose fine old native architecture has given way to a cheap imitation of the Parisian boulevard; and over the front

of one of these modern structures appear in flaming letters the words 'Gambrinus Halle'!

In theory, Spain should have sent hundreds of her young men to German universities and to English and American technical schools, in order that they might thus acquire the scientific method of the Teuton and the practical and executive instinct of the Anglo-Saxon. She should have fostered among her sons an interest in commerce, in manufacture, and above all in agriculture; they should have been encouraged to go forth and reclaim the waste tracts of their native land, plant forests, and heal that long-standing feud between man and Nature which in Spain is written on the very face of the landscape.

Instead of this, she has turned for her exemplar to France, to the ideal, infinitely seductive and infinitely false, embodied in Paris. She has been guided in this choice by her incurably aristocratic instinct. It is estimated that in the days of Spanish greatness only three million out of a population of nine million consented to work; and Spain still remains a nation of aristocrats. Every true Castilian still aspires to be a *caballero*, or horseman; the Spaniard is unwilling to come down from his horse and put his shoulder to the work of modern civilization. I find in an old English author the following judgment on Spain, which has lost little of its truth: 'The ground is uncultivated partly through the paucity and partly through the pride of the people, who breed themselves up to bigger thoughts than they are born to, and scorn to be that

which we call plowmen and peasants.... And if you take men of that nation, before they have spoiled themselves, either by getting some great office at home or else by much walking abroad, to seek some employment or fortune there, you shall find them for the most part to be of noble and courteous and quiet minds, in the very natural constitution thereof. Whereas, if you show them a new and sweeter way of life, either at home or abroad, it intoxicates them so with the vanities and vices of the world that they are many of them quickly wont to suck the venom in, and become the very worst of men. So that naturally I hold them good; and that by accident and infection they grow easily to be stark naught.'

The Spaniards, then, have sucked in the venom of the Parisian boulevard, and have raised up in their capital a showy façade of borrowed elegance to which nothing in the country corresponds. I know of no more startling contrast, even in Spain, than to pass suddenly from some gray, poverty-stricken village of Old Castile into the factitious glare and glitter of the Fuente Castellana at Madrid. The highest ambition of thousands of young Spanish provincials is to swagger about in close-fitting frock coats, and seek for political preferment, any meaner occupation being unworthy of such noble hidalgos. Government places are few compared with the number of applicants; they are ill paid and of uncertain tenure, and the officeholder has little choice except to steal or starve. The vicious traditions of the old absolutism have thus

united with the new frivolity to produce in the modern Spanish official that harmonious blending of corruption and incompetency with which we are familiar.

However, we must remember how little these *afrancesados*, these café-haunting Frenchified Spaniards of Madrid, really represent the nation. In Spain, even more than in France and Italy, the germs of promise for the future are to be sought anywhere rather than in the upper classes. Even among the upper classes, if we are to judge from recent literature, there are those who do not accept the French ideal of *l'homme moyen sensuel*, who would have the Spanish character come under certain modern influences, without therefore sacrificing its own native gravity and religious seriousness. It is encouraging to note in many of the Spanish books published of late years something of that robustness and virility wherein lies the natural superiority of the Spaniard over the other Latins. Spain has as yet no decadent writers, no Zola and no Gabriele d'Annunzio.

To speak, then, of the lower classes, there is a singular agreement among those who have really mingled with them as to their natural possibilities for good. 'I have found in Spain,' says Borrow, 'amongst much that is lamentable and reprehensible, much that is noble and to be admired, much stern, heroic virtue, much savage and horrible crime; of low, vulgar vice very little, at least amongst the great body of the Spanish nation.... There is still valor in Asturia, generosity in Aragon, probity in Old Castile.' But how

far will these old-world virtues of the Spanish peasantry be able to withstand the contact with nineteenth-century civilization? Will not the profound poetry of their simple instinctive life fade away at its touch, and the racy originality of their native ways be smothered under its smug uniformity? Will they be able, in short, to make the difficult passage from the medieval to the modern habit of mind without falling into anarchy and confusion? More than any other land, Spain came under the control of that Jesuitical Catholicism issued from the Council of Trent which has poisoned the very life-blood of the Latin races; which, rather than lose its hold upon the minds of men, has consented through its casuists to sanction self-indulgence; which has retarded by every means in its power the development of those virtues of self-reliance and self-control that more than any others measure a man's advancement in the modern spirit; and now that the Spaniards are escaping from the artificial restraint of their religion they are left, passionate and impulsive children, to meet the responsibilities of nineteenth-century life. From my observation of the common people, I should say that already the power of the priesthood is broken, that respect for the institution of monarchy is undermined, and that there is a rapid drift toward republicanism joined to a profound distrust of the present rulers. The *desengaño*, or rude disillusion, they are likely to experience before the end of the present struggle may result in some fierce outburst, boding disaster to the political jobbers

at Madrid. Yet no prudent man would risk a prophecy about Peninsular politics; for Spain is *le pays de l'imprévu*, the land of the unexpected, where the logical and obvious thing is least likely to happen; and that is perhaps one of the reasons why she still retains her hold on the man of imagination.

Whatever comes to pass, we may be sure that Spain will not modify immediately the mental habits of centuries of spiritual and political absolutism. In attempting to escape from the past, she will no doubt shift from the fanatical belief in a religious creed to the fanatical belief in revolutionary formulae, and perhaps pass through all the other lamentable phases of Latin-country radicalism. Yet if space allowed I could give reasons for the belief that there are more elements of real republicanism in Spain than in France or Italy. This remark, as well as nearly everything else I have said, I mean to apply especially to the Castiles, Aragon, and the northwestern provinces, the real backbone of the Peninsula.

In any case, those who have a first-hand knowledge of Spain will be loath to place her on that list of 'dying nations' to which Lord Salisbury recently referred. She is still rich in virtues which the world at present can ill afford to lose. It remains to be seen whether she can rid herself of the impediments which are rendering these virtues ineffectual. Will she be able to expel the Jesuit poison from her blood? Will she learn to found her self-respect on conscience, instead of on the medieval sentiment of honor, and come to rely on

action, the religion of the modern man, rather than on María Santísima? Chief question of all, will she succeed in taming her Gotho-Bedouin instincts, and become capable of the degree of orderly co-operation necessary for good government? Alas! the Spaniards themselves relate that the Virgin once granted various boons to Spain, at the prayer of Santiago, but refused the boon of good government, lest then the angels forsake heaven, and prefer Spain to paradise.

ARE THE ENGLISH CRITICAL?[1]

SOME rather large claims have been made of late for English literary criticism. A main purpose of Professor Saintsbury, for example, in writing his general *History of Criticism* was plainly to depreciate French criticism and critics, notably Boileau, and to exalt English criticism and critics, notably Dryden, Johnson, and Coleridge. 'One of my subordinate (and not so very subordinate) objects in writing the larger book,' he avows in his *History of English Criticism*, 'was to vindicate our literature from the charge of being second-hand and second-rate in this matter.' Both the general *History* and this new volume, which is mainly extracted from it, strike one as examples of conscious, and even more perhaps of unconscious, chauvinism.

It would perhaps be possible to make allowance for Professor Saintsbury's personal and racial sympathies and antipathies, and so get the benefit of that 'vastly extensive learning' for which Lord Morley rightly praises him, were it not that the sympathies and antipathies often color not merely his interpretation of the facts, but his statement of them. Thus he says that 'Dryden declined to bow the knee to William of

[1] *The Nation*, March 21, 28, 1912. Review of *A History of English Criticism*, by George Saintsbury.

Orange, while Boileau persistently grovelled at the feet of William's enemy.' A reader dependent on Professor Saintsbury would infer that Boileau was a greater flatterer than Dryden. If Boileau praises Louis XIV, he is, of course, merely doing what virtually all the writers of his time did, and did sincerely, just as Spenser and the other men of his age were still more extravagant in their praise of Elizabeth. It is typical of Professor Saintsbury's method that, without vouchsafing any explanation, he should arrive at an estimate of Boileau almost diametrically opposed to that of Sainte-Beuve, who, on Professor Saintsbury's own showing, is the great authority here, the man who knew the seventeenth century as no one else has known it; and that with an equal absence of explanation he should depart in important respects from Johnson's estimate of Dryden, though Johnson, again, on Professor Saintsbury's own showing, is not only a great critic, but at his very best in his *Life of Dryden*. Boileau's stern integrity in general, even in his dealings with Louis XIV, is beyond question, whereas of Dryden's relation, not merely to one but to many patrons, Johnson remarks that 'in the meanness and servility of hyperbolical adulation, I know not whether, since the days in which the Roman emperors were deified, he has been ever equaled.' One would be ashamed to mention facts so familiar were it not that Professor Saintsbury, who ranks today almost as the official critic of England, has seen fit to obscure them.

ARE THE ENGLISH CRITICAL?

I

I believe that a truly judicial comparison of the English achievement in the critical field with the achievement of other countries, especially France, would lead to conclusions curiously different from those of Professor Saintsbury. Pope said that 'critic learning flourished most in France.' This saying would seem about as true for the period that has followed Pope as for the period that preceded him. England has had, of course, a number of great critics, but the *genre* itself has occupied a somewhat secondary place in English literature. In criticism the English have always been more or less derivative and parasitic. For the best part of a century they took their theories of art readymade from the Continent; and then with the Restoration the French influence, or rather another form of the French influence, supervenes. According to Addison, 'a few general rules extracted out of the French authors, with a certain cant of words, has sometimes set up an illiterate, heavy writer for a most judicious and formidable critic.' Later the Germans displace the French. Hazlitt complains of 'those among us who import heavy German criticism into this country in shallow, flat-bottomed unwieldy intellects.' Still later, Matthew Arnold makes clear at least his own affiliations when he says that Sainte-Beuve has a position of supremacy in literary criticism of the same order as that of Homer in poetry. In short, English criticism is largely a history of foreign influ-

ences. In this field the English have been constant borrowers, and only occasional lenders. Certain English critical works, notably Addison's papers on Milton and Burke's *Inquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful*, acted on Germany in the eighteenth century — works that, though marking the maximum of English critical influence abroad, are in themselves somewhat second-rate performances, even judged by the standard of the best English criticism.

Not only has English literary criticism been comparatively uninfluential on other countries, it has been comparatively uninfluential on English literature itself. Nothing is more striking in French literature, on the other hand, than the intimate relation that has always existed between criticism and creation. The first important piece of modern French criticism, Du Bellay's *Defense and Ennoblement of the French Language*, sets forth the conception of literature and poetry that Ronsard and the other members of the Pléiade actually tried to practice. Later on, the more narrowly classical school of French poetry takes its rise, or, as Sainte-Beuve puts it, struggles painfully forth from a man who was a critic rather than a true poet, Malherbe; and this, of course, indicates a weakness as well as a strength. Examples might be multiplied of the way in which an important creative movement in France has been preceded or attended by an important movement in criticism. In England, criticism and creation have too often worked at cross-purposes, or the same man has worked at cross-purposes with himself,

according as he has been criticizing or creating. For example, the requirements that Sir Philip Sidney lays down for the drama in his *Defense of Poesy* are very nearly the opposite of what one finds in the actual drama of the time. The Elizabethan critics are always harping on the need of observing decency, i.e., decorum, in plays, whereas the Elizabethan dramatists no less constantly violate decency both in their sense of the word and ours. At bottom, there is an unreconciled gap between the critical theories of the Renaissance, based on the dogma of classical imitation, and the romantic spontaneity of the English imagination.

The opposition between English genius and foreign rules is also felt during the later period of French influence. We may note that with the advent of this influence at the Restoration we have about the first serious attempts to criticize contemporary writers, and very nearly at the same time the rise of a class of professional critics. 'Till of late years,' says Rymer, 'England was as free from critics as it is from wolves, that a harmless, well-meaning book might pass without any danger.' An Elizabethan playwright did not have to reckon, as did the playwright of the Restoration, with professional critics in this sense.

> To poison plays, I see some where they sit,
> Scattered, like ratsbane, up and down the pit,

says the author of the Epilogue to Congreve's *Mourning Bride.*

Now, the critics who had thus come into existence were as a class formalists; their influence made for a tradition of sound prose, but the critical creed they had adopted allowed very insufficiently for the free play, and even for the very existence, of the creative imagination; and that is why we find in Dryden, the representative critic of this age, a constant struggle between his pursuit of the new formal correctness and his admiration for the achievements of the great Elizabethans, the 'giant race before the flood.' The opposition is very well brought out in his saying that all Spenser needed to be a true epic poet was 'to have read the rules of Bossu.' In the eighteenth century Johnson did succeed in formulating the neo-classical point of view with a certain consistency in that masterpiece of English prose, the *Lives of the Poets*. But he thereby put himself out of touch with the creative forces of his own age, which were once more beginning to run toward romanticism, and at the same time he missed much of what was most poetical in the English literature of the past. Of the fifty-two poets whose lives he has written we should recognize only about half a dozen as having been poets in our modern sense at all; and in several of these Johnson depreciates precisely what we should regard as most poetical. In short, England has never had a great critic, like Boileau, whose work is in intimate sympathy and accord with a great creative literature, itself responsive to the main currents of national life.

II

'The edicts of an English Academy,' says Doctor Johnson, 'would probably be read by many, only that they might be sure to disobey them.' This aversion of the English for an institution like the French Academy is due, according to Matthew Arnold, to the fact that they are on the side of the man of genius as against everything that would seem to curtail his imaginative freedom in the name of a central standard. I believe this aversion of the English is due not only to their more imaginative temper, but also to what we may define as their love of humor and humors. We sometimes hear in this country the charge that the English are lacking in a sense of humor. If we are to judge from their literature, we should have to conclude, on the contrary, that they are the greatest race of humorists the world has ever seen. The Englishman likes everybody to abound in his humor, and is always partial to a genial idiosyncrasy. He feels affection for a man who is an 'original,' as people used to say, or as we should say nowadays, a 'character.' Virtue itself, as Addison tells us, is endeared to the Englishman by being combined with a certain flavor of oddity. Dryden is one of the first to note this predilection of the English for humor; but perhaps Sir William Temple brings out the point still more clearly in his *Essay on Poetry*. 'We have more originals' (than other countries), says Temple, 'and more that appear what they are; we have more Humour, because every man follows his own, and

takes a pleasure, perhaps a pride, to show it.' It is possibly significant of deep differences of national temper that the word humor (*humeur*) when taken by itself has come in French to mean ill humor, and in English good humor. The Frenchman sees things intellectually from the point of view of the central standard, or if he departs from the standard it is in the name of some logical standard of his own. In either case he lashes with ridicule those who deviate from the norm; in other words, he is naturally a wit. The Englishman is no less naturally a humorist both in the older and the more recent sense of the word — that is, both in the sense of the man who abounds freely in his own humors, and in that of the man who renders with genial sympathy the humors of others. From the Prologue of the *Canterbury Tales* to a novel of Dickens, illustrated by Cruikshank, England has had a series of humorous masterpieces the like of which is not to be found in any other literature.

Even the English eighteenth century, which might seem at first glance an age of smug conformity and correctness, is extraordinarily rich in originals. One of the characters in Smollett's *Humphrey Clinker* announces with delight that he has discovered a family made up entirely of originals. The rich humorousness of the time also appears in the drawings of Hogarth and the Letters of Horace Walpole. A great humorous creation like Squire Western is taken from the very heart of English life. In the contempt Western expresses for lords and the court set in general, 'Han-

overian rats,' as he calls them, he is to be contrasted with the French *hobereau*, or country squire of the period, who felt himself ridiculous if he were not aping Versailles. Arnold rightly comments on the inferiority of Addison as a literary critic to La Bruyère, on Addison's intellectual lukewarmness, and lack of centrality. But La Bruyère has created no character comparable to Sir Roger de Coverley. In short, La Bruyère is vastly superior to Addison as a critic, but very inferior to the Englishman in geniality and humor.

III

English literature, then, has possessed in a pre-eminent degree imaginative fervor, geniality, and humor. It has also possessed pre-eminently moral earnestness. Now, it is desirable that the critic should on occasion show geniality and humor, and it is still more important that he should be imaginative and morally in earnest. But all of these virtues are not primarily critical, and so it comes about that much that is most admirable in English literary criticism is admirable for virtues that are only secondarily critical. For example, Sir Philip Sidney succeeds in throwing the golden glow of his imagination over the stalest commonplaces of Renaissance criticism, and in his *Timber or Discoveries*, Ben Jonson succeeds in bestowing upon these same commonplaces moral weightiness. Both Sidney and Jonson are almost entirely lacking in critical originality. Take again Doctor Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*. In this work Doctor Johnson shows himself

a great and genuine critic, but he shows even more greatness as a moralist. What most interests us in the *Lives of the Poets* is not the literary judgments — they are often flagrantly inadequate — but the profound and somewhat melancholy wisdom of life. We may go further and say that Johnson the moralist often prevails too completely over Johnson the critic. 'The poems of Doctor Watts,' says Johnson, 'were by my recommendation inserted in the late collection, the readers of which are to attribute to me whatever pleasure or weariness they may find in the perusal of Blackmore, Watts, Pomfret, and Yalden.' We cannot conceive of Boileau allowing his love of edification to triumph so completely over his literary sense. If the critical thus yields to the moralizing vein, even in so genuine a critic as Doctor Johnson, what are we to expect in lesser Englishmen? I am enough of an Aristotelian to believe that the excess of any virtue becomes a vice. Moral earnestness, acting in a mechanical and one-sided way, has often been fatal among men of our race, not merely to literary criticism, but to art and literature themselves, and in general to that whole side of life that is associated with the sense for beauty. The Middle Ages were artistic, even if they were not critical; but in the atmosphere of Puritanism, both art and literature, as well as the criticism of art and literature, were well-nigh impossible. Carlyle was only faithful to the spirit of his Calvinistic forbears when he expressed his wish that the devil might fly away with the fine arts.

There are also examples in English of the way in which a certain imaginative and emotional excess has been fatal to critical judgment. Perhaps it would not be possible to find in any other literature a man so gifted as Ruskin and at the same time so whimsical and intellectually irresponsible. Few things, again, are so contrary to the true critical temper as the extraordinarily narrow emotional vehemence of Carlyle.

We should also note that various periods of English criticism, especially one of the most brilliant of all, the period of Coleridge and De Quincey and Hazlitt, have been poisoned by the intrusion of an element that may in its proper place and measure be a virtue, namely, the passion of party and politics. 'This political criticism,' says Hazlitt, thinking especially of Gifford and the *Quarterly Review*, 'is a *caput mortuum* of impotent spite and dullness till it is varnished over with the slime of servility and thrown into a state of unnatural activity by the venom of the most rancorous bigotry.' Yet Hazlitt has shown in his own *Letter to William Gifford* that the rancor of the Jacobin may be at least equal to the rancor of the Tory.

IV

It has been assumed in all that has been said hitherto that the chief virtue of the critic is a certain poise or balance. If, as Tennyson was fond of asserting, a true critic is an even rarer apparition than a true poet, the reason doubtless is that it is harder to find a man who is balanced than one who is inspired. The writer or

artist who is creative in the narrower sense of the word is usually too much imprisoned in his own gift to have this critical poise. When Poe, for example, says that the perfect poem must have not much more and not much less than a hundred lines, and that the most poetical subject in the world is the death of a beautiful woman, we simply smile and think of *The Raven*. The true critic, on the other hand, has to have a knowledge and sympathy broad enough to compass all the modes of literary expression, and then — an even more difficult task — he must bring this knowledge and sympathy under the control of the strictest judgment. Only in this way can he hope to render a verdict that will finally be ratified by the good sense of the world. For if the French neo-classical definition of genius, as only sublimated good sense, is too narrow for genius in general, it is admirably adequate for the genius of the critic.

To say of a critic that he has poise and good sense is merely a way of saying that his point of view is not peripheral, but central. The romantic critic would expand in knowledge and sympathy, and this is well; but he would do nothing but expand, and so comes, like Professor Saintsbury, to identify judgment with appreciation and enjoyment. Judgment and appreciation, however, do not move in the same but in opposite directions; they belong respectively to the centripetal and the centrifugal powers of personality. The real test of the critic is his ability to mediate between these extremes; to have the appreciation and at the same

time the back pull toward the center. Without this mediation he will attain, not judgment and taste, but merely romantic gusto, joined, it may be, as in the case of Professor Saintsbury, to 'vastly extensive' though not always accurate learning.

Professor Saintsbury would have us believe that we cannot react from the purely expansive virtues without becoming dogmatists; that concentration is not possible without contraction; that our only choice is between formalism and unrestraint, between the neoclassic narrowness and 'falling,' as he has so happily phrased it, 'forever and forever through the romantic void.' But the time may come when people will refuse to accept this vicious dilemma. If it should appear that the process of moving towards the center may be as intuitive, as free from mere formalism, as the opposite process, the romantic flank will be turned and the way opened for an entirely different order of criticism. In the meanwhile, Professor Saintsbury is going on repeating eagerly half-truths that might have been a useful counter-irritant a century or so ago to the current conventionality and lack of perceptiveness, but which are an encouragement to the men of today to fall in the direction in which they already lean, that is, to plunge still more deeply into anarchy and impressionism.

V

Thus far in my comparison of English criticism with that of other countries, especially France, I have been

trying to show that it has suffered from the superabundance of certain virtues — imaginative fervor, moral earnestness, geniality, and humor. We still have to consider how far it has been affected by certain positive deficiencies in the English.

In the first place, they would seem, as compared with the French, to lack taste (using the word in a somewhat literal sense). In this sense, taste, as Voltaire says, is a 'prompt discernment like that of the tongue or palate, and which like it anticipates reflection.' The taste of the critic should be the literary equivalent of that of the connoisseurs in Sancho's story who were able to detect the flavor of iron and leather in the wine; their verdict being afterward confirmed by the discovery of an old key with a leathern thong at the bottom of the hogshead. Sainte-Beuve, like Voltaire, was fond of insisting on this analogy between taste in the literary and taste in the physical sense, and he adds that he had noted that doctrinaires were nearly always indiscriminate eaters. M. Guizot, for example, would have eaten cardboard and never known the difference. Now, I believe that we may detect a certain coarseness in both the physical and the literary tastes of some of the great English critics. Dryden confesses that he prefers Juvenal to Horace, and there is something about this preference that coincides with what we know about Dryden's taste in food — a taste that was hearty rather than delicate. Doctor Johnson piqued himself on culinary refinement and boasted that he could write a better cook-book than

had ever been seen in England, but from what Boswell and others tell us we should infer rather that he was a huge and indifferent feeder.

After all, the critic is simply a man who knows a good book when he sees it, whether the book was written yesterday or a thousand years ago, and who, if the book is good, can also tell what is its class and degree of goodness. Now, a gift of this kind must always in some measure be intuitive. According to Professor Saintsbury, it is 'beyond controversy' that 'Boileau has left us not a single impartial and appreciative criticism of a single author, ancient or modern.' If this means that Boileau did not warm up to real excellence, it is palpably false, as the 'Second Satire' to Molière and the 'Seventh Epistle' to Racine would suffice to prove. Boileau was not only capable of the 'enthusiastic appreciation' which, according to Professor Saintsbury, is the 'highest function of criticism'; he was also capable of that judgment which is in reality its highest function. He probably made fewer mistakes in his actual verdicts than did any other critic of whom we have record; and this not because he had a code of rules, but because he backed up the rules with an almost infallible literary intuition. Johnson had the same rules, but comparatively little of the intuition; and so he praises Blackmore's *Creation*, and calls *Lycidas* disgusting, and declares Fielding a barren rascal and disparages Gray. We can at least understand Cowper's point of view when he writes to Unwin: 'I am convinced, by the way, that he [Johnson] has

no ear for poetical numbers. Oh! I could thresh his old jacket till I made his pension jingle in his pocket!'

The love of fine and artistic speech would almost seem with the French an inborn aptitude. I am not, to be sure, setting up any theory of racial fatality. The French may lose their taste; indeed, there are signs of late that they are losing it; it is likewise possible that certain critical virtues that have in the past been somewhat rare among Englishmen may in the future become common. Still, the members of the French Academy, who, as we are told, spent three months examining critically one of Malherbe's poems without getting beyond the first stanzas, seem to be the legitimate descendants of the ancient Gauls, one of whose chief ambitions was, according to Caesar, to express themselves discriminatingly (*argute loqui*).

Possibly it is the keen and intuitive response of the Frenchman to the concrete work of art that has kept him in spite of his logic and love of abstract reasoning from flying off like the German into the intense inane of aesthetic theory. We are told that during his last illness Boileau set out to read one of Crébillon's plays, but finally threw the book across the room exclaiming that the play was so bad that it was shortening his life. It is also related of Sainte-Beuve that during his last illness he got so excited in the course of an argument with Gaston Boissier as to the merits of Ovid that his physician had to warn him to desist. Now we may be sure that neither Boileau nor Sainte-Beuve would have been greatly stirred by learning that some Ger-

man professor had just written a series of volumes to prove, let us say, that beauty is a process of 'infeeling.'

VI

Mention has just been made of the French love of logic. Though this has not led to an excess of aesthetic theorizing, it has given to French criticism method and coherency. In England we find distinguished individual critics, in France an almost symmetrical succession of critical schools. There is a sort of logical rhythm that runs through French criticism, just as there is a logical rhythm that runs through the architecture and streets of Paris compared with the architecture and streets of London. The French of course have often suffered from the excess of this their prime virtue of logical thoroughness. John Adams's saying that man is a reasoning but not a reasonable animal, would seem to apply with special force to Frenchmen. The English are fond of comparing with this logicality of the French the superior merit of their own habit of muddling along. But the superiority of the English to the French is a moral one. The English lack of clear and logical thinking is a grave defect even from the purely practical point of view. However that may be, ideas, especially since about the middle of the eighteenth century, have been uncommonly scarce in English as compared with French literature. In their stanchness and mental inflexibility the English have something that recalls the ancient Romans, whereas the intellectually versatile French have more in com-

mon with the Greeks, even though we should have to add with one of their own moralists that they are only Greeks in profile.

Critics have at times been so numerous in France that they have had to fall to criticizing one another, like the sword of Hudibras which

> ate into itself, for lack
> Of somebody to hew and hack.

Taking the word in a broad sense and allowing for many individual exceptions, we may affirm, indeed, that the French have often suffered from an excess, the English from a deficiency, of criticism. For criticism with its tendency to dissolve everything and to call all things into question has very grave dangers, dangers of which the Athenian jury had a dumb inkling when it condemned one of the greatest representatives of the critical spirit, Socrates. The intellect is fatal to earnestness, says Emerson; Goethe has said still more wisely that everything that emancipates the intellect without giving us a corresponding self-mastery is pernicious. Many Frenchmen seem to have more intellect than their character entitles them to. As M. Faguet puts it, the French character does not measure up to the French mind. On the other hand, one not infrequently encounters in England men who are giants of character, but who remain intellectually infantile. Goethe was not really inconsistent when he expressed great admiration for the Englishman and then said almost in the same breath that the 'Englishman is

properly speaking without intelligence' (a saying by the way that merely repeats the substance of Dryden's line: 'Like true-born Britons, who ne'er think at all').

The natural opposition between character and intellect is pleasantly expressed by Bagehot's boast that in 'real, sound stupidity the English are unrivaled.' This saving stupidity, according to Emerson, masks and protects their perception as the curtain of the eagle's eye. Burke, who could be on occasion one of the keenest of critics in his own field of political thought, shows a similar satisfaction in the intellectual imperviousness of the Englishman when he compares the radicals of his day to a few grasshoppers — 'the little, shriveled, meager, hopping, though loud and troublesome, insects of the hour, who make the field ring with their importunate chink, whilst thousands of great cattle repose beneath the shadow of the English oak, chew the cud, and are silent.' This is to renew the error of Aristophanes, who refused to distinguish between Socrates and the sophists and thought it possible to check the inevitable advance of intellectual self-consciousness by falling back on a stolid Toryism. The natural working out of such a point of view is seen in the recent pathetic exhibition of Lord Hugh Cecil and his aristocratic friends with their resort to lung power, when it is so perfectly plain that only brain power will serve. Things have already reached a pass where the only hope for the conservative is to oppose a first-rate criticism of society to the second and third-rate criticisms we are now

getting from the Socialists and other radicals. Unfortunately, the present crisis is finding the Englishman intellectually unprepared. His mental constitution has not been gradually hardened and inured to our modern contagions. The danger is that when he does catch ideas they may prove, like measles for the South Sea Islander, a fatal disease. It is not unusual for an Oxford student, on breaking away from traditionalism, to become an anarchist.

VII

Another positive limitation of the English that appears in their criticism and is almost too familiar to insist upon, is their insularity. 'For anything I see,' said Doctor Johnson, 'foreigners are fools.' Something of this faith still survives in the average Englishman. In the seventeenth century Saint-Évremond complained that Frenchmen were incapable of getting outside themselves, and even went to the point of calling a man a foreigner in his own country. Nowadays this is a trait that we should associate rather with the English. I remember, indeed, once asking an English acquaintance at Paris whether he did not feel very foreign among so many people whose language he could neither speak nor understand. 'No,' he replied, 'but these people seem very foreign to me.'

Both the insularity and intellectual imperviousness of the English are more or less bound up with the splendid convention of the English gentleman. The English gentleman is distrustful of thought, but prides

himself, and rightly, on being great as a man of action. Scott, the best example of the gentleman in English literature, happens to be also one of the greatest of English humorists. He can scarcely be said to display any interest in ideas except as they may be used to illustrate either individual or national humors, as we see, for example, in his treatment of the Covenanters. In striking contrast to the richness and variety of his Scottish and other humors is the monotony and colorlessness of his ladies and gentlemen, and that, as I conceive, is because his ladies and gentlemen are all governed by the same convention. Scott shows too much Tory complacency; he is too unconscious of the undermining by the French Revolution of the whole social order upon which the convention rests. In his preface to the *Human Comedy* Balzac records his indebtedness to Scott; but Balzac differs from Scott in no respect more than that his whole work is dominated by a logical idea — the attempt, namely, to show the moral disintegration that has resulted in French society from the Revolution. His novels are really a caricature of the modern French, a sinister and lurid picture of the fatal triumph of egoism in a society that has broken away from traditional religious restraint. Balzac's conception is, if not fundamentally false, at least very one-sided, though I note that M. Paul Bourget, himself a reactionary, to be sure, declares in a recent essay that Balzac has shown himself a wonderful diagnostician of the ills that have actually fallen upon modern France. The point I wish to make, how-

ever, is very similar to my previous point in comparing Addison and La Bruyère. Balzac is more intellectual and critical, Scott more genial and humorous.

VIII

In my enumeration of the virtues and defects of the Englishman and their relation to literary criticism, I have failed as yet to speak of what is perhaps the master-instinct of the whole English-speaking race — the instinct for practicality. What logic and ideas the English have had, they have put mainly in the service of utilitarianism and scientific positivism. One is sometimes inclined to think that Bacon catching his last illness while stuffing a chicken with snow in an attempt to discover the principle of cold storage is more typical of the English race than Shakespeare in the act of composing *Hamlet*. Students of comparative literature know that the foreign influence of Shakespeare, even his influence in Germany, is easily exaggerated. But wherever in the world we see smoking factory chimneys looming on the horizon we have a tribute to the potency of the Baconian influence. The gap between this utilitarian side of the English-speaking race and its imaginative side is too wide, just as the gap is too wide between Oxford and an English manufacturing town. The great representatives of the utilitarian and positivistic tradition — Bacon himself, Newton, Hobbes, Locke, Hume, Adam Smith, Bentham, Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer, Darwin — have had ideas aplenty and at times plenty of logic, but in matters

artistic and literary have been little better than Philistines. It would be easy to run down the list from Newton, who could see in the finest statues only stone dolls, to Herbert Spencer, who went to Homer 'to study superstitions,' but was so bored that he could not get beyond the sixth book; and finally to Darwin, who confessed at the end of his life he could see nothing in Shakespeare.

The ultra-utilitarians are not only as completely lost for art and literature as the Puritans, but their point of view is far more catching. We see the waves of utilitarianism rising higher and higher every year in France and Germany, and even threatening to engulf the Gothic turrets of Oxford. It is doubtful whether in a world so completely devoted to utility there will be any room for art and literature as these terms have been understood traditionally. Here again the right attitude is that of the Aristotelian. Practicality, the Aristotelian would admit, is one of the main virtues of the peoples of English descent, along with imaginative fervor, moral earnestness, geniality, and humor; but practicality pursued mechanically and one-sidedly may become a vice. And this utilitarian excess would seem to have been reached, not only in England and America, but more or less in the whole Occidental world.

IX

It would carry me quite beyond the limits of the present subject to discuss the means by which we may

hope to recover sound literary standards and guard against the present drift toward a scientific and industrial materialism. One of the most obvious needs is that we should revive in ourselves the sense of literary tradition. To this end it is urgent, if I may venture to repeat what I have said elsewhere, that students and teachers of English and other modern literatures should co-operate cordially with the representatives of the ancient humanities instead of tending to ally themselves as now with the utilitarians.

But though we need to revive our sense of tradition, we cannot afford to be mere traditionalists, lest we suffer from that lack of ideas which is the chief lack I have noted in English, and I may add in American, criticism. Our holding of tradition must be in the highest degree critical; that is, it must involve a constant process of hard and clear thinking, a constant adjustment, in other words, of the experience of the past to the changing needs of the present.

Who are to be our models for this right critical interpretation of the past? They are curiously hard to find in the nineteenth century, in spite of the fact that it is commonly supposed to be the most historical of centuries. There prevailed during this period two main attitudes toward the past which may be defined, respectively, as the scientific and the romantic. The man with the scientific attitude is chiefly concerned with investigating and establishing the facts of the past. The romanticist, for his part, revels in the mere picturesqueness of the facts or else takes refuge in the

past from the present, uses it, as Taine would say, to create for himself an alibi. But the past should be regarded primarily neither as a laboratory for research nor as a bower of dreams, but as a school of experience. Where, then, is the man who has been fully initiated into tradition, and at the same time knows how to bring it to bear upon the present? Even Sainte-Beuve does not fully satisfy us here. He was one of the victims of that naturalistic fatalism that has lain like a blight upon the human spirit for the past fifty years or more. 'Man,' he says, 'has the *illusion* of liberty.' What is the use of knowing the past if one is not free to profit by the knowledge? We think by contrast of Goethe (whom Sainte-Beuve himself calls the king of critics), and of Goethe's saying that the chief benefit one may derive from a total study of his work is a certain sentiment of inner freedom.

Goethe, indeed, comes nearer than any other modern to what we are seeking; not the romantic or scientific Goethe, it should be added, but the humanistic Goethe, who is revealed in the conversations with Eckermann and others, and in the critical utterances of his later years. For Goethe, after having found in *Faust* the happiest formulae for the two main forces that were to dominate the nineteenth century — scientific positivism (*Im Anfang war die Tat*) and Rousseauistic romanticism (*Gefühl ist alles*) — lived long enough to repudiate the romanticism, and, while holding fast to the science, to insist that it should keep in its proper place. As an actual practitioner of the art of criticism,

he seems to me inferior to the best of the Frenchmen; but as an initiator into the critical habit of mind he is incomparable. He has assimilated not merely tradition, but all traditions, and that without ceasing to be a modern of moderns. As Sainte-Beuve puts it, he keeps watch for every new sail on the horizon, but from the height of a Sunium. He would use the larger background and perspective to round out and support his individual insight and so make of the present what it should be — not the servile imitation, nor again the blank denial of the past, but its creative continuation. 'To the errors and aberrations of the hour,' he says, 'we must oppose the masses of universal history.' He would have us cease theorizing about the absolute and learn to recognize it in its actual manifestations. This particular form of the humanistic art of seeing the One in the Many would seem especially appropriate to an age like ours that differs above all from other ages, Greek and Roman antiquity, for example, in having at its command a vaster body of verified human experience. Goethe can, therefore, be of more help than any English or French critic in solving one of our most pressing problems: that of finding standards to oppose to the scientific and utilitarian excess, on the one hand, and, on the other, to the excess of romantic impressionism. In his general *History* Professor Saintsbury says that Goethe's high standing as a critic is a 'superstition, now somewhat stale'; which suggests that we might begin our reaction against romantic impressionism by reacting against Professor Saintsbury. His

own reputation as a critic may turn out to be the real superstition. That this reputation should be as great as it is, is perhaps in itself a proof that the English are not critical.

MATTHEW ARNOLD[1]

Two or three good articles on Matthew Arnold have been written, notably that by Mr. W. C. Brownell in his *Victorian Prose Masters*, but Professor Sherman has the distinction of writing the first good book. Without being blindly partisan, Professor Sherman is himself a convinced Arnoldian, and so his interpretation has something of that 'indispensable personal gusto' of which he speaks....

I

Now that Arnold and his message have been put thus persuasively before Americans, one is naturally tempted to inquire what value this message is likely to have for them. In answering this question, it is well to insist with Professor Sherman on a point that is often missed — on Arnold's essential modernity. What is more, one may affirm that Arnold was misunderstood by his contemporaries, not because he was less modern, but because he was more modern than they, and that he is still misunderstood for the same reason. One needs, however, to protect this statement by a definition of the word modern. This word is often used, and no doubt inevitably used, to describe the latest thing; but it is not in this sense merely

[1] *The Nation*, August 2, 1917. Review of *Matthew Arnold: How to Know Him*, by Stuart P. Sherman.

that men like Goethe, Sainte-Beuve, and Renan use it — Renan, for example, when he speaks of Petrarch as the 'founder of the modern spirit.' It is not in the sense of the latest thing that Arnold uses the word in his address on *The Modern Element in Literature.* According to all these men, the modern spirit is synonymous with the positive and critical spirit, the refusal to take things on authority. The Greeks of the great period are, according to Arnold, modern in this sense and therefore much nearer to us than the men of the Middle Ages. Practically this positive and critical temper has been fostered by physical science and the type of progress that is due to science. This positivism has been more or less inimical to tradition ever since the Renaissance, but the decisive collapse of outer authority took place in the course of the eighteenth century. What supervened in many individuals upon the discrediting of all the forms of the past was a great spiritual isolation, a feeling of vacancy and forlornness; life no longer seemed to them to have any center or meaning. The old order had lost its hold on their intellect, but still retained its hold on their imagination. Perhaps no Englishman has expressed more perfectly than Arnold in his poetry this particular form of nostalgia. Arnold, it is true, did not continue to wander disconsolate 'between two worlds, one dead, the other powerless to be born'; but if he finally threw in his lot with the modern spirit and the future, it was only after a severe struggle. He had, as Professor Sherman says, a 'somewhat unhappily divided per-

sonality.' He was later to praise the Greeks, not only for being positive and critical, but also for achieving what we too must achieve if we are to carry through our modern experiment successfully — the union of imagination and reason. This union is far from perfect in Arnold himself. His dominant note when he is most himself imaginatively is elegiac. He even seems at times, as someone has complained, to reduce the Muse to the rôle of hospital nurse. His reason so disapproved of this use of poetry that he actually withdrew for a time his *Empedocles* from circulation. On the other hand, when he set out to write poetry that would satisfy his reason, his imaginative fire seemed to desert him. Professor Sherman remarks of the very austere *Merope* that it will seem to some 'a melancholy illustration of the disaster in store for a poet who sets out on his progress attended by an inspector of schools, a professor, and a critic.'

II

It was not unusual toward the middle of the nineteenth century for a man to adopt like Arnold a positive and realistic attitude and at the same time to cast many a lingering look behind, to feel, so far as the struggle between the old order and the modern spirit was concerned, that his heart and his head did not belong to the same individual. Wherein Arnold differed from the ordinary man of this type as well as from his contemporaries in general was in the completeness of his positivism. Those who prided them-

selves most on their modernity were positive only according to the natural law; as for the human law they were simply for getting rid of it along with the traditional forms in which it had got itself embedded. But man, Arnold insisted, is the creature of two laws. In addition to his ordinary self of passing impulse and desires he has a permanent self that is felt in its relation to his ordinary self as a power of control. As a matter of experience, man can find happiness only in so far as he exercises this control. To deny such a conflict in man between a law of the spirit and a law of the members is simply to avert one's face from the facts and so to fall short of being completely positive and critical. The result of such an evasion is moral anarchy, all the more dangerous, one may add, when combined with an increasing grip on the natural law, or what amounts to the same thing, an increasing mechanical and material efficiency.

To be an active and militant humanist along these modern lines was an extremely rare achievement during the last century not merely in England, but on the Continent. One can scarcely find any equivalent among the Frenchmen who were in so many respects Arnold's masters. Sainte-Beuve, for example, was active and militant, but as a servant of the natural law. His humanism was on the whole epicurean, something that resided less in his character than in his sensibility. Anatole France is as a matter of fact nearer to Sainte-Beuve in the quality of his humanism than is Matthew Arnold.

Arnold's remedy for anarchy — the failure to rise sufficiently above the level of one's ordinary self — is, it is hardly necessary to say, culture. The warfare that Arnold waged on the Philistine in the name of culture is not to be confused with the romantic revolt from convention. To the respectability of the Philistine, Heine opposed, Arnold complains, positive disrespectability. So far from favoring Bohemianism, Arnold was not willing to pardon any outer irregularity even in a Dante. What the romanticist attacked first of all in the Philistine was his lack of aesthetic refinement; what Arnold attacked first of all was his lack of wholeness. The opposite of the man who is aiming at totality is the man who suffers from a stunted growth, who has partial and provincial views. 'I hate all overpreponderance of single elements.' This sentence more perhaps than any other that could be cited gives the key to Arnold's prose writings. In working out his model of a rounded human nature that he sets up for imitation he turns to the past; for if the positivist is not willing that the past should be imposed on him as a dogma he admits its validity as experience. The human law is not susceptible of final abstract formulation. It is many-sided and elusive. For this or that aspect of it we need to go to this or that country or individual or period. Greece can supply certain elements, Judea certain other elements, to the man who seeks to live proportionately. Arnold always assumes a core of normal experience, a permanent self in man, and rates a writer according to the degree of his in-

sight into this something that abides through all the flux of circumstance, or, as he himself would say, according to the depth and soundness of this writer's criticism of life. It was inevitable, as Professor Sherman points out, that Arnold should be comparatively indifferent to that great fetish of modern scholarship, the historical method, which tends to deny the enduring scale of values, and to see everything relatively, to account for everything in terms of time and place.

The few writers, chiefly poets, who seem to Arnold to tend to imaginative wholeness, to combine ethical insight in an eminent degree with excellence of form, or, as he would say, high seriousness of substance with the grand style, he puts in a class apart; they differ from other writers not merely in degree but in kind. This general distinction, which goes back to Aristotle, is surely sound, and those who have sought to discard high seriousness in favor of intensity or some other criterion are simply compromising poetry and literature; they are playing into the hands of the utilitarian, who would relegate literature to the recreative side of life, who has no place in his scheme of things for the literature of wisdom, literature that ministers to leisure in the Aristotelian sense. It must be granted, however, that Arnold is not always as clear or consistent as he might be in the working out of his main distinction. When we ask him for a definition of the grand style in poetry and of the special quality of imagination, the ethical imagination, as one may say, that underlies it, he supplies us instead with brief passages from the

great poets that we are to use as touchstones, a method not always easy to reconcile with his previous assertion that the worth of a poem is determined, not by separate passages, but by its architectonics, its total structure. He fights shy of theory because 'the critical perception of poetic truth is,' he feels, 'of all things the most volatile, elusive, and evanescent.' So far as he means by theory the merely metaphysical, every type of positivist will sympathize with him. But there seems to be something more than this in his avoidance of theory — some survival, namely, of the romantic fear of precise analysis. I have already mentioned Aristotle, and as a matter of fact Aristotle is almost necessarily the master of those who, like Arnold, seek to put humanistic and religious truth on a critical basis. Now two things are needed to make the complete Aristotelian: in the first place, hard consecutive thinking in working out principles, and in the second place, the utmost flexibility in the application of them. For, though fixed principles exist, one must grant Bergson that life in the concrete is 'a perpetual gushing forth of novelties.' If one is to bridge correctly the gap between the general law and the particular instance, one cannot be too finely perceptive, too 'undulating and diverse.' Unfortunately, Arnold seems at times to carry over into the realm of principle, where hard consecutive thinking is the prime requisite, the fluidity that is only permissible in the realm of practice.

Inasmuch as high seriousness of substance and the grand style coexist only in the best poets, Arnold is led

to set up the best poetry as a substitute for philosophy and religion; to proclaim that what is best in philosophy and religion themselves is their unconscious poetry. Various correctives to statements of this kind may be supplied from Arnold himself, yet, even so, this remains his dubious side. One may affirm that the man of today will be more aided in his struggle toward standards by the study of Aristotle (perhaps the most modern of the ancients), especially of the *Ethics* and *Politics*, than by reading Homer, the chief of poets; and one may at the same time refuse to go to the opposite extreme with Plato and indict Homer for his lack of religious seriousness. Yet Aristotle's excellence of substance, so far from being associated with the grand style, is associated with something that at times comes perilously near jargon.

In the *Ethics* the most uncompromising analysis kindles at last into religious insight. Arnold got from Christianity much that Aristotle did not have. His attempt to bring this Christian truth into line with the modern spirit in the form of culture has in it much that is admirable, but seems to fall somewhat short in both the keenness of analysis and the insight. Of much of the opposition that Arnold aroused he himself has given the correct explanation: 'More than half the world can never accept the person of whom they learn, but kick at the same time they learn.' We can nevertheless understand the uneasiness of those who felt that he did not perceive the full gravity of the situation that has been created by the weakening of the

traditional beliefs. Nor is it certain that he has rescued the full soul of truth from these beliefs in his definition of religion as morality touched by emotion. Jonathan Edwards, who combined genuine religious insight with the most unacceptable form of theology, insists in one of his sermons that religion is more than mere intellect or morality or emotion; it is above and beyond all these; it is a 'pure supernatural light.' The early Buddhists, who carried into this question an almost more than Aristotelian thoroughness of analysis, recognized a stage in meditation when religion is still mingled with emotion, but as the meditation deepens, the emotion disappears and gives way to unalloyed peace — *alta rerum quies*. The problem at bottom is whether in his dealings with religion Arnold rises far enough above the naturalistic level, which in his case means the stoical level. Professor Sherman suggests this problem very happily when he detects the autobiographical note in Arnold's comment on the final inadequacy of the philosophy of Marcus Aurelius. The point might be further elucidated by contrasting Arnold with Tennyson. Arnold did not, like Tennyson, accept the Victorian compromise; intellectually he is more firmly knit than Tennyson, superior to him, as he himself says, in being in 'the main movement of mind' of his epoch. But there has passed into some of Tennyson's poems, into *Crossing the Bar*, for example, or the *Ode to Virgil*, a something that is simply not found in Arnold, a suggestion, at least, of the pure supernatural light.

III

If Arnold did not quite succeed in bringing religion into accord with the modern spirit without any sacrifice of its essence, he was surely on the right track even here. On the other hand, he not only worked out a positive and critical humanism that is very sound in itself, but he saw with admirable clearness the rôle that the humanistic idea should play in a democracy. In this respect he was ahead not only of his own time, but of ours. The England of his time still felt the reaction that had followed the struggle against revolutionary radicalism and Napoleon. So far as 'the main movement of mind' interfered with the stock notions of the middle class which was succeeding in power to the aristocracy, it was simply for getting rid of mind. Arnold bent his chief efforts against this intellectual imperviousness, but he did not therefore wish to go back to the sheer expansiveness of the revolutionary period — its throwing off not only of outer but of inner checks. But what has actually been coming about both in England and in America has been just that — a resumption of the main expansive movement, a resurgent radicalism, attended more and more by the advent to power of what Arnold terms the populace. A writer like H. G. Wells harks back over the heads of the Victorians, as Professor Sherman pointed out in the *Nation*, to revolutionary Utopists like Shelley.

To say that most of us today are purely expansive is

only another way of saying that most of us continue to be more concerned with the quantity than with the quality of our democracy. But this attitude raises very grave questions. Democracy is now going forth on a crusade against imperialism. The whole teaching of history is that the upshot of a certain type of democracy — and there are signs that this is the very type that is being developed — is imperialism. The only way to avert this danger may be to recognize the aristocratic principle, the need of standards and discipline. In that case Arnold, in working for a qualitative and selective democracy, showed himself more hard-headed and realistic, more modern, in short, than most of us. Anyone who should succeed today like Arnold at his best in being completely modern, positive, that is, according to both the natural and the human law, would make our eager progressives, the editors of the *New Republic*, let us say, seem almost archaic. Even an editor of the *New Republic* may, it is true, be modern enough to see that democracy needs discipline. In that case he looks for this discipline to some form or other of 'efficiency,' an excellent thing in its place, but when thus lifted out of its place, leading straight to that Philistinism or worship of mere machinery against which Arnold waged lifelong warfare. Not to get beyond the idea of material organization as a remedy for moral anarchy is still to linger in the zones of illusion peculiar to the nineteenth century.

Arnold looked, so far as he looked to any outer

agency for securing a qualitative democracy, to an education that was to be held up to high standards by the state and was in turn to supply the state with thoroughly trained leaders. The contrast between the man who is positive according to both the human and the natural law and the man who is positive only according to the natural law comes out in his debate with Huxley on the rival claims of science and literature. Huxley, however, was comparatively moderate in his naturalism. The full peril of trying to bring the whole of human nature under a single law is seen rather in Herbert Spencer, who believed in man's descent from the anthropoid ape and worked out a scheme of education which puts an undue emphasis on this connection. In maintaining that Arnold's solution of the all-important problem of getting a sound leadership for democracy is a sort of compromise between Carlyle and J. S. Mill, Professor Sherman is ingenious but not always convincing. It seems hardly possible to secure a humanist by mediating between a romanticist and a utilitarian. One hesitates to grant Professor Sherman that Carlyle's temper was 'soundly conservative' or that his psychology, even in his old age, was that of the true Tory. A full discussion of this point is not here possible. Let us simply ask ourselves what Doctor Johnson, perhaps the last of the great Tories, would have thought of anything so eruptive and irrational as Carlyle's notion of the 'hero'; whether he would, like Carlyle, have seen in the French Revolution 'a Truth clad in hellfire' and rejoiced in its

'bursting through formulas and customs.' The securing of a high quality of leadership through the interplay of education and government is as a matter of fact the central idea of Aristotle, an idea that Arnold completes from Christianity. Professor Sherman himself suggests as much when he writes: 'By taking thought Arnold had become ardently progressive.... He aimed at something like the democracy of Athens — without the slaves. He aspired toward a society in the grand style for everybody.... That remote ideal he had in mind when he called himself a Liberal of the future.' Arnold, if not quite so sanguine as this passage implies, wished at least a society in which the failure of anyone to measure up to the best standards should be due to inner, not outer, hindrances.

IV

Arnold, then, wished to go with democracy, but on condition — and in this he showed the true modern spirit — that it should be a qualitative and selective democracy. He held that a democracy of this type might in forming its standards derive much aid from criticism. For an example of what he meant by criticism one may turn to his comments on our American democracy. It is interesting to read after the lapse of more than thirty years his address on *Numbers* and his essay on *Civilization in the United States*, and ask ourselves whether we have corrected what he perceived to be our main peril — the drift toward commonness, the lack in our national life of 'depth and savor.' In

many respects this drift toward commonness, some might maintain, instead of being checked has been accelerated. 'The Americans are an excellent people,' Arnold wrote from Boston in 1883, 'but their press seems to me at present an awful symptom.' This symptom has become still more awful. We have witnessed since then the rise of the scarehead and the comic supplement. It was said of the people of ancient Miletus that, though they were not fools, they did just the things that fools would do. A glance at a current display of our newspapers and popular magazines suggests that, though we are not fools, we are reading just the things that fools would read. An American of the present day reading his Sunday newspaper in a state of lazy collapse is one of the most perfect symbols of the triumph of quantity over quality that the world has yet seen. Various views have been put forth as to the essence of democracy. If a man went simply by what he saw, he might be tempted to affirm that the essence of democracy is melodrama. It is the eagerness for the melodramatic thrill to which our newspapers and our 'movies' cater. It is melodrama that attracts the five million or more readers of the novels of Harold Bell Wright.

Charlie Chaplin, it was recently announced 'officially,' is to receive $1,075,000 for appearing in eight films. This and similar facts would seem to throw some light on the passion we are developing for 'whatsoever things are elevated.' Goethe's warning against the bondage of the commonplace that Arnold was so

fond of quoting (*Was uns alle bändigt, das Gemeine*) needs to be supplemented by another sentence of Goethe's as to the source of this bondage: 'The pursuit of pleasure makes common' (*Geniessen macht gemein*). Our old Puritan standards, Arnold notes, inculcated reverence, and in so far were a corrective of commonness. But from the point of view of the moral realist the main movement in this country would seem to have been from Puritanism toward epicureanism. We are, to be sure, very 'idealistic'; but our 'idealism' resolves itself largely on analysis into the very thing to which Arnold objected — into having an almost religious regard for the average man and deferring unduly to his opinions as expressed in shifting majorities. If the various symptoms of commonness I have been citing show anything, they show that the average man we have thus idealized is increasingly epicurean; he is for making the most of the passing moment with scant regard for any abiding scale of values. 'Good time' are the magic words that many Americans of today seem to see written in great blazing letters on the very face of the firmament. If this drift continues, we may, in spite of our 'progressiveness' and 'idealism,' develop a psychology not unlike that of the Roman decadence. It is not sure that the optimistic temper that Arnold admired in Americans and singled out for special praise in Emerson is entirely unconnected with our religion of the average man and the absence of standards it presupposes. It is easier to be buoyant if one thinks with the Ohio lady of whom Arnold tells,

that excellence is common and abundant, than if one holds with Arnold himself that 'excellence dwells among rocks hardly accessible, and a man must almost wear his heart out before he can reach her.' Yet a buoyancy that is won at the expense of standards may turn out to have its drawbacks.

The majority, says Arnold, following the sages, is unsound. If we are to get quality in our democracy, it will not be so much through endless schemes for uplifting the average man as through increasing the size of our 'remnant.' This doctrine of the saving remnant has been denounced as priggish. It is the exact opposite. A man to belong to the remnant must be humble, must feel the need of looking to some standard set above his ordinary self. Anyone who thus looks up has some chance of becoming worthy to be looked up to in turn. If a considerable group of individuals thus take on the yoke of a common standard, it will tend by its concerted effort and the force of its example to leaven the whole social lump. Part of our failure to achieve a sufficiently large remnant with high standards Arnold connected with our education. He was 'more than doubtful about our pullulating colleges and universities.' The changes in our education since his visit can scarcely be said to have met his objections. Those who have been shaping our educational destinies during the past generation or two have in point of fact been even nearer in spirit to Herbert Spencer than to Huxley. Our reformers said with truth that the old college curriculum needed broadening. What they

have actually done is not to broaden this curriculum, but to change its essence. The main trend has been away from an education that was, in intention at least, partly humanistic, partly religious, to an education that is partly sentimental, partly utilitarian. Our latest exponents of 'this brisk and flourishing movement,' as Arnold calls it, are working with a veritable gusto to get rid of what vestiges of humane standards we still have. Here again the proper procedure is not to attempt a mere return to tradition, but like Arnold to oppose to a one-sided positivism a thoroughgoing positivism, to insist on the facts in human nature that our Abraham Flexners simply fail to grasp.

I have perhaps been overstating the case that might be made out against us from a strictly Arnoldian point of view. Arnold's main contention, however, can scarcely be said to have lost its force: that we are too much taken up with the quantity and not enough with the quality of our democracy. If we let our ordinary selves run riot, it may be well to reflect, the resulting harm will not be confined to the aesthetic sensibilities of a few 'highbrows.' Our only choice, as I have said, may prove to be not between a qualitative and a quantitative democracy, but between a qualitative democracy and imperialism. The great foe of democracy, a foe that has repeatedly been fatal to it in the past, is anarchy, and the corrective of anarchy, we cannot repeat too often, is not efficiency (as the term is now understood efficiency moves on the merely naturalistic level of man's being), but humanistic or

religious discipline. If we are to have such a discipline we must have standards, and to get our standards under existing conditions we must have criticism. 'What the Americans most urgently require,' says Arnold, 'is a steady exhibition of cool and sane criticism.' So far from having solved this problem, the 'human problem,' as Arnold terms it, we have not as yet even faced it fairly. We have no end of clever people, but clever people without standards. Professor Sherman not only joins to unmistakable brilliancy a concern for standards, but he is getting at his standards in a thoroughly modern and positive way. We may hope that in this respect he is a precursor, one of those sharpshooters of whom Arnold speaks who go in advance of 'the elephantine main body' and prepare the future.

CROCE AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE FLUX[1]

ENOUGH of Croce has already been translated to make it possible to form an estimate of him without going beyond English. The task is further facilitated by Signor Piccoli's excellent exposition of his philosophy from a Crocean point of view. Many of our intellectuals who are in revolt against what they deem to be Puritanism have, on learning that Croce stood for free expression in art, inclined to welcome him without inquiring too narrowly into the underlying doctrine. Anyone who makes such an inquiry will find the whole subject singularly difficult. According to Signor Piccoli, he will have to grapple with 'a coherent and austere theory of knowledge of a kind that in the modern decadence of philosophical studies and of general culture is rapidly becoming unintelligible even to the most highly cultivated.' My own conclusion, after much reading of Croce, is that he combines numerous peripheral merits with a central wrongness and at times with something that seems uncomfortably like a central void. To state this conclusion without supporting it adequately is to run the risk of seeming at once arbitrary and ill-natured; to support it ade-

[1] *Yale Review*, January, 1925. Review of *History: Its Theory and Practice; The Poetry of Dante; Ariosto, Shakespeare and Corneille; Goethe* — all by Croce; *The Reform of Education*, by G. Gentile, with an introduction by Croce; and *Benedetto Croce*, by F. R. Piccoli.

quately would require a volume. It may be possible, however, to make a few general distinctions that will enable the reader to judge for himself whether he is likely to agree or disagree with Croce in the main trend of his thinking.

One may perhaps best start from his own statement that there is no permanent problem of philosophy. Those who believe in the need and possibility of standards will insist that there is a permanent problem — what Plato calls the problem of the One and the Many. Unless there is something that abides in the midst of change and serves to measure it, it is obvious that there can be no standards. Plato himself is an idealist in the sense that he refers the mere flux of life to a world of ideas that transcends it. No small confusion is introduced by the fact that Croce, an arch-enemy of Platonism and indeed of every form of transcendence, likewise calls himself an idealist. His type of idealism is in the main that of Hegel but without the Absolute. He is indeed a chief example of that substitution of Hegelian 'ideals' for Platonic 'ideas' that is, according to Mr. P. E. More, the great calamity of modern philosophy. Croce himself seems to be aware of something seriously wrong with the present situation. In the Introduction to *The Reform of Education* by his fellow 'idealist' Giovanni Gentile, he makes a plea for a 'new Christianity' or a 'new Humanism,' and goes on to express the hope that we may thus be rescued 'from intellectual anarchy, from unbridled individualism, from sensualism, from skep-

ticism, from pessimism, from every aberration which for a century and a half has been harassing the soul of man and the society of mankind under the name of Romanticism.' This is a ringing manifesto; unfortunately, coming from Croce, it does not ring true. The Hegelian idea of development which he has adopted in an extreme form is, as he himself points out, a culminating expression of the romantic movement in philosophy. Moreover, the work of Vico, perhaps his chief spiritual ancestor next to Hegel, is in his own phrase a 'rich and organic anticipation of romantic thought.' In general, nothing could be more romantic than Croce's cult of intuition in the sense of pure spontaneity and untrammeled expression, his tendency to reduce art to a sort of lyrical overflow that is not disciplined to any permanent center of judgment in either creator or critic and the consequent identification of genius and taste.

The result of Croce's failure to see the One in the Many and so to impose standards upon the flux is a weakening or obliteration of boundaries. In his central trend indeed he may perhaps be best defined as a neo-Hegelian confusionist. He not only denies the validity of *genres* in literature and art, but finally identifies religion with philosophy and philosophy in turn with history. Since everything is a matter of process, since the reality of a thing is revealed only by what it has become, history, or at least a certain kind of history, tends to be the final beneficiary of all Croce's merging of frontiers. His book on *History* is

therefore of extreme importance for the understanding of his point of view. Here as elsewhere it is possible to bestow hearty praise on the peripheral excellencies. In his survey of the theory and practice of history from Greco-Roman times to the present day he has brought to the support of his own great learning that of the Swiss Fueter. According to this book, American professors of history suffer from the pseudo-scientific haughtiness of the German specialist. The superstition of the 'document' has taken the place of serious thought. In that case they have much to learn from Croce. If they refuse to follow him to the end, the reason may be, not their supposed imperviousness to ideas, but their common sense. When Croce declares for example that the man who seeks to cut individuals out of history 'has cut out with them history itself,' a sensible person can only applaud; but when he asserts 'that history should not apply to the deeds and the personages that are its material the qualifications of good and evil, as though there really were good and evil facts in the world, people who are good and people who are evil,' one becomes aware of some fatal omission in his philosophy. After virtually denying the existence of types, he makes of history so pure a type that anyone who affirms, let us say, that Abraham Lincoln was a better man than Nero departs in so far from the historical attitude. The historian is not to reject or condemn or in general indulge in 'negative judgments'; for according to the Hegelian dialectic, nothing, not even the Great War, is evil *per se*. It is

merely the necessary thesis of some antithesis, the conflict between which will be resolved in a higher synthesis, which is destined to be superseded in turn. How are we to know that all this process is really progress or improvement? To have any assurance on this point one seems to need some goal, set above the flux, toward which the historical development is moving. According to Croce, there is no such goal and no beatitude or felicity (as has been traditionally supposed) with reference to it.

Croce's identification of history and philosophy is in interesting contrast with the familiar view of Aristotle that poetry is more serious and philosophical than history for the simple reason that it is less implicated in the flux, freer in other words to disengage the typical and the representative from the welter of the actual. Needless to say, Croce rejects this view of poetry as a creative imitation of the universal in favor of his own view of poetry as expression and lyrical spontaneity. In his application of his critical method to various great poets he says much that is admirable — a person of his vast learning and intellectual brilliancy could hardly fail to do so. He is perhaps at his best in his negative judgments — in his rejection, for example, of various irrelevancies that have sought to impose themselves as criticism of Dante and Shakespeare. There remains, however, the question as to the central adequacy of the method, a question that forces itself upon one with special insistency in the case of the volume on Dante. According to Croce, the religious

and reflective element of the *Divine Comedy* has no importance, at least objectively. Its structure is a hindrance rather than a help to the enjoyment of the poetry. The work is to be regarded, not architectonically, but as a collection of lyrics.

That such a view of poetry should lead to depreciation of the intellect and of conscious art is inevitable. Mr. Spingarn, for example, assured us a few years ago, in the name of Croce, that the 'art of a child is art quite as much as that of Michelangelo.' This no doubt goes beyond anything that Croce himself would sanction. It is however permissible, according to Sainte-Beuve, to study the faults of the master in the exaggeration of the disciples. Even more significant perhaps than Croce's attitude toward the intellect is his attitude toward the will. Dante, though a profoundly reflective poet, puts his final emphasis, not upon the intellect, but upon a higher will ('His will is our peace'). If there has been any loss in the passage from the medieval to the modern point of view it is surely here — in the weakening, namely, of man's sense of his dependence on a higher will. Signor Piccoli remarks that Croce's view of the will has much in common with that of Bergson. Bergson for his part has recently avowed that his philosophy of *élan vital* is imperialistic; the vital urge coincides practically, he says, with the will to power in individuals and nations. Anyone who feels the need of some effective counterpoise to the free expansion of the lust of domination will evidently not find what he is seeking

in either Croce or Bergson. Their appeal is to something that is at the opposite pole from the pursuit of peace — to the love, namely, of change and motion for their own sake, to the psychic restlessness that is the inner equivalent of the unparalleled increase of power and speed in the outer world. In general, the strength of Croce and other recent philosophers of the flux is less in themselves than in the fact that they have the whole age as their accomplice.

Papini, the only other living Italian thinker who rivals Croce in international prominence, has devoted to him one of his 'Slashings' (*Stroncature*), in which he makes shrewd thrusts at his neo-Hegelian confusion. Unfortunately he does not offer the right avenue of escape from this confusion. If Croce practices criticism in a way that is subversive of standards, Papini has based his *Life of Christ* on a blank denial of the critical spirit. Perhaps no one has seen more clearly than Goethe the problem involved in being a true modern, in other words critical, and at the same time maintaining standards. Croce's failure to do justice to this aspect of Goethe is one reason why his treatment of him seems singularly inadequate.

PASCAL [1]

I

DURING the last ten years or so there has been a marked reawakening of interest in Pascal. This Pascal revival differs from the Rousseau revival that has taken place during the same period in being French rather than international, and also in being less easy to interpret. The return to Rousseau evidently bears a close relation to the great wave of radicalism that has been sweeping over the world. As the author of a recent work on the *Social Contract* remarks, the proletarians hope to use the dogma of the sovereignty of the people to oust the bourgeois even as the bourgeois used it to oust the aristocrats at the time of the Revolution. But why this interest in Pascal, especially the side of Pascal that seems most remote from everything modern? The sympathy that appears in so many French writers is also manifest in the new *Life of Pascal* by Lord St. Cyres....

His treatment of the more mystical element in Pascal seems to reflect in some measure the reaction against intellectualism which is attaining such large proportions, and of which pragmatism is perhaps the best known, though by no means the only, manifestation. The treatment of Pascal's conversion especially

[1] *The Nation*, November 17, 1910. Review of *Pascal*, by Viscount St. Cyres.

is evidently colored by certain theories of James's as to the rôle of the subliminal in religious experience. The great scientific intellectualists of the last century, who were striving to establish strict causal sequences between phenomena, looked with less favor on the 'thunderclaps and visible upsets of grace,' and in general on the appeal to pure intuition that one finds in Pascal. 'Converts are no friends of mine,' said Goethe, whose unfriendliness to Pascal in particular is well known. Sainte-Beuve never tires of trying to prove that men remain after conversion about what they were before. This point of view explains the final coldness toward Jansenism that comes out so clearly in the postscript to the sixth volume of his *Port-Royal.*

We may doubt whether the special kind of sympathy for the intuitive as compared with the rational that seems to be on the increase just now is a real advance over the sturdy intellectualism of a Sainte-Beuve or a Goethe. The intellect is at best only an intermediary power; the first things and the last are equally hidden from it. What knowledge it has of either it must owe to intuition. Yet the slighting of the intellect in the name of the higher intuitions that has appeared in the more ascetic forms of Christianity has always been unfortunate. We may suspect that the slighting of the intellect in the name of the lower intuitions, that has assumed so many forms from Rousseau to James and Bergson, is exposed to an even more certain retribution. Most of the early Port-Royalists were themselves sturdy intellectualists and

philosophically at the opposite pole from pragmatism. In Lord St. Cyres's phrase, they defended 'a highly mystical, intuitive religion by rows of serried formulae marching past in battle array.' But in spite of all their logic and rationality, they put their final emphasis on the miraculous, on violent overturns of the natural order, and so prepared the way for the *convulsionnaires* and the Diacre Pâris, for that eighteenth-century Jansenism into which Sainte-Beuve said that nothing in heaven or on earth could induce him to enter. There is already something convulsive in Pascal's conception of religion.

If this were the whole story we should have to agree with those who regard Pascal on his purely religious side as obsolete. For example, the writer of the review of Lord St. Cyres's book in the *Spectator* declares that the Pascal that really counts for the reader of today is the Pascal of the *Provincial Letters*, whereas what we have in most of the *Pensées* are the last lingering shadows of medievalism that have not yet been banished by the bright sunshine of the modern spirit. This point of view is all the more misleading in that it is at least half true. The *Provincial Letters* have the obvious advantage over the *Pensées* of being not mere fragments, but the finished product of a consummate literary artist, of the creator, one is almost tempted to say, of French prose. For if the empty form of the modern French phrase was perfected by writers like Guez de Balzac, it was Pascal who gave this form vital content. A Frenchman who set out today to write like Mon-

taigne would be an intolerable mannerist; but Pascal's French has aged very little in either syntax or vocabulary; it remains the kind of French that every Frenchman would like to write, 'if he only could.' Through the French influence on writers like Dryden, Pascal may be said to have contributed to the establishing of a standard of sound prose in English.

If, however, the *Provincial Letters* show Pascal at his best as a literary artist, they are inferior to the *Pensées* in human interest. Pascal's attack on Jesuitical morality was intended for immediate effect, and so is at times too implicated in the local and ephemeral. Religion, again, in the *Provincial Letters* often appears as a mere occasion for the sparrings of theologians. Such distinctions as those between contrition and attrition, sufficient grace and efficacious grace, leave us cold. In the *Pensées*, on the other hand, we are made to feel that the doctrine of grace is at the very heart of Christianity; it is, in fact, the doctrine that in its triumph best measured the force of the recoil of Christianity from ancient naturalism and that in its decline has best marked the steady encroachments of modern naturalism on the inner citadel of faith. It is, in a sense, the distinguishing doctrine of Christianity as an historical belief.

II

Some slight anticipations of grace may, indeed, be found in the pagan philosophers, especially in Plato, when he says that virtue is 'neither natural nor ac-

quired,' but 'comes to the virtuous by the gift of God' (*Meno*). But Plato and the other Greeks could not hold the doctrine of grace in the true Christian sense because they were 'terribly at ease in Zion,' that is, they lacked humility — the sense of absolute dependence on a power that is above both nature and human nature. The doctrine of grace, as elaborated by Saint Augustine and revived by the Jansenists in almost more than its primitive austerity, was intended to sharpen a contrast not normally present to the pagan consciousness — the contrast between the utter sinfulness of man and the infinite righteousness of Deity. The gap between the human and the divine is absolute and only to be traversed by a twofold miracle — inwardly by the miracle of grace, outwardly by the miracle of the redemption. For the Jansenist, as Lord St. Cyres puts it, 'Nature soon became one vast, unholy chaos, one shaking quagmire of corruption, in the midst of which rose, stark and lonely, the storm-swept citadel of Grace.' Without the twofold miracle, and left to his own resources, man is helpless. The only thing noble in him, says Pascal, is reason, and yet, he adds, nothing is more 'contemptible' than reason itself, being as it is the everlasting dupe and plaything of the imagination. In the name of grace, Pascal thus seeks to discredit both the reason and the imagination, the two faculties by which the modern man must live. We are forced at last, like Voltaire, to 'take the side of human nature against this sublime misanthropist.'

The difficulty with the doctrine of grace in its ex-

treme forms is that it strikes one as an attempt to prop and buttress a tottering theology by establishing a spiritual reign of terror. This is especially so in the use of the doctrine by its last great exponent, Jonathan Edwards. Without grace and conversion, according to Edwards, men are suspended over the pit of hell by a slender thread that is likely to be singed asunder at any moment by the fire of God's wrath, 'however moral and strict, sober and religious, they may otherwise be.' We cannot blame the world for having risen in revolt against so horrible an obsession, for refusing to be frightened into heaven. But the reaction against the theological terror has resulted in turn in an almost equally violent and dangerous extreme.

'Listen, my children,' said Mother Angélique to her nuns a few hours before her death, 'listen well to what I say. Most people do not know what death is, and never give the matter a thought. As for me, I have feared it all my life and never let it out of my mind. But my worst forebodings were as nothing compared with the terrors now upon me.' In deliberate opposition to such expressions of the theological terror Rousseau imagined the elaborate complacency and self-satisfaction of the dying Julie, whose end was not only calm but aesthetic (*'le dernier jour de sa vie en fut aussi le plus charmant'*). To the notion that nature is utterly corrupt and that men are 'vipers spitting their venom at God,' he opposes the assertion that man is good and nature beautiful (or, as someone has

summed up the doctrine in its Christian Science form: I am lovely, and the world is lovely, too). Instead of making the breach in the soul between sin and righteousness so wide that no amount of good works can avail to bridge it, Rousseau declares that there is no breach at all, that evil is introduced into the soul from without; in other words, he lays the blame for evil, not on the individual, but on society; he gets rid of the theological terror by undermining the individual's sense of his own responsibility.

Not only the sentimental naturalism typified in Rousseau, but every other main current, both of the Catholic and the non-Catholic world, has been running steadily away from the doctrine of grace. From the point of view of material success no enterprise was ever so surely foredoomed to failure as Jansenism. For the virtue of absolute humility the Catholic Church has been tending to set up the very different virtue of absolute submissiveness to outer authority. The non-Catholic world, again, has been moving more and more toward a naturalistic and humanitarian view of life that is neither humble nor submissive. Good observers from Burke to Jules Lemaître have noted the entire absence of humility in Rousseau. The exultation of the scientific naturalist in man's power is as fatal to humility as Rousseau's exultation in man's goodness. As a sample of the humility of a certain type of scientist, we may take the following from Clifford:

'The dim and shadowy outlines of the superhuman deity fade slowly away from before us; and as the

mist of his presence floats aside, we perceive with greater and greater clearness the shape of a yet grander and nobler figure — of Him who made all gods, and shall unmake them. From the dim dawn of history and from the inmost depth of every soul the face of our father Man looks out upon us with the fire of eternal youth in his eyes and says, "Before Jehovah was, I am."'

If Luther had anticipated that figure of 'our father Man' with the fire of eternal youth in his eyes (the fire, he would have said, rather of eternal lust), would he have undertaken the Great Schism? All the efforts of Luther and the Jansenists have availed very little to arrest the drift of the whole world away from the doctrine of grace to the doctrine of good works. In their emphasis on good works as well as in their emphasis on submissiveness the Jesuits have merely exaggerated the modern Catholic tendency. Lord St. Cyres points out that Ignatius Loyola was the most 'resolute of utilitarians.' Loyola lays almost as much stress on the idea of service as any of our present-day humanitarians. According to the Jesuit one may be saved merely by being serviceable and submissive; according to the humanitarian, merely by being serviceable and sympathetic. Both Jesuit and humanitarian obscure the reality of sin, of the individual struggle between good and evil, the Jesuit by unduly encouraging the individual in the hope that he may cast off the burden of his sin upon the priest and the priest's power of absolution, the humanitarian

by encouraging him unduly in the hope that he may cast off his burden on society. Both Jesuit and humanitarian emasculate the doctrine of good works not only as it might be, but as it actually has been formulated. For, if Plato anticipates but faintly the doctrine of grace, Aristotle sets forth very adequately the doctrine of good works. Aristotle, who would attach the individual by a thousand bonds to society, who even makes ethics only a branch of politics, does not, therefore, fall into the humanitarian error of making social service the goal of the individual. Society is chiefly important in the eyes of Aristotle for the aid it may give the individual in realizing his higher self; it works upon him and gives him the preliminary training in right habits only in order that it may prepare him for the supreme task of working upon himself. Everything in Aristotle, indeed, converges upon the idea of habit — an idea at once scientific and humanistic, the means by which one gradually ascends from the goods of instinct to the goods of reason.

The supernaturalist is prone to look with disdain on so uninspired a method. Thus Jansen speaks contemptuously of Aristotle and his little, choppy phrases that are unable to rise above the things of earth (*'Minutiloquio suo sola terrena perscrutatus est'*). In a similar spirit Holbein drew his picture of the prelates and doctors of the Church, turning their backs on Christ, the Light of the World, and following Aristotle into the abyss. But Aristotle can be one of the most impressive of writers when the passion that so often lurks

beneath his syllogistic dryness actually flashes to the surface. Starting as a pure naturalist with the sense of vital growth and development, he rises gradually and without confusion of the planes of being to humanistic discipline, conceived as a mediation between extremes, until from the very apex, as it were, of the humanistic virtues he glimpses a truth that transcends even the law of measure. 'A man ought not,' he says, 'to entertain human thoughts as some would advise, because he is human, nor mortal thoughts because he is mortal; but as far as it is possible he should make himself immortal and do everything with a view to living according to the best principle in him, which, though it be small in size, yet in power and value is far more excellent than all.'

Aristotle is thus related on the one hand to the keenest and hardest-headed of our modern scientists, and on the other to Dante in his vision of the empyrean. He has perhaps been surpassed as a naturalist and certainly surpassed as a supernaturalist, but like the other great Greeks he remains unsurpassed in his humanism; and it is the humanistic virtues that are needed to give meaning to either extreme. Perhaps the world would have been a better place if more people had made sure that they were human before setting out to be superhuman. Thus Pascal, who speaks so excellently of the humanistic art of mediating between opposite virtues and occupying the middle ground between them, was not himself a humanist. He conceived of religion only as a sort of 'mortal

leap' from naturalism to supernaturalism. 'God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob,' we read on the slip of parchment on which he recorded his conversion, 'not the God of the philosophers and the scientists.' On the face of it there is something incongruous in the fact that the man who made the Great Experiment and invented the arithmetical machine, and established the first line of omnibuses at Paris, should be the same man that wore hair shirts and declared that sickness is the natural state of the Christian. Nowadays we are nearly all of us hardened and impenitent naturalists and from the Jansenist point of view altogether graceless. If we have any religion at all, we are likely to get it, like Aristotle, through nature and not like Pascal in violent opposition to nature. In general the Aristotelian method of fixing our attention upon the orderly reaping of the reward of the good works we have wrought on ourselves and the world, and of the habits we have disciplined ourselves into according to the standards of right reason, is perhaps in itself more wholesome than the Jansenist emphasis on thunderclaps and visible upsets of grace — the tremendous spiritual romanticism of Saint Augustine.

III

Having granted so much, we should hasten to add that the doctrines of grace and conversion are, after all, only the theological expression of certain profound and, we may surmise, permanent aspects of human nature. Christianity of the Augustinian type

has at least the advantage of setting in sharpest relief the actual dualism between the higher and the lower self of man that even the Aristotelian naturalist is constantly tending to dissimulate and slur over. As a matter of fact, the example Aristotle set of an orderly ascent from the naturalistic to the humanistic virtues and from the humanistic virtues to religious insight can scarcely be said to have been largely influential. The main drift of the ancient world after Aristotle was toward stoicism and epicureanism, two opposite, but as Pascal insists, equally impossible views of life. This is indeed Pascal's great central generalization that he has expressed most adequately perhaps in the 'Conversation with M. de Sacy' that is usually prefixed to the *Pensées*. Purely naturalistic explanations of man will, according to Pascal, necessarily oscillate between stoic pride and epicurean relaxation. In either case man will remain forlorn because deprived of any firm center in himself, of any principle that he may oppose to the vast swirl of phenomena, the endless flux and relativity of nature.

Many of the *Pensées* are simply a recasting of Montaigne, whom Pascal takes somewhat unfairly as a type of the pure epicurean; for there is in Montaigne, along with epicureanism, a genuinely humanistic element, and the skeptical mask that the humanism assumes is itself a legitimate reaction from the 'horrible mania of certainty' that possessed the theological ages. When pressed into the service of the violent logic of Pascal, Montaigne loses all his geniality, and some-

thing, too, of his shrewdness and good sense. Nevertheless, the *Pensées* that still have the most interest for us are those that establish the general contrast between the man of faith and the naturalist, whether stoic or epicurean. For the modern world, like the ancient, has turned away from its traditional disciplines and is moving more and more toward a pure naturalism; and it is not difficult to detect in many apparently ultra-modern points of view a mere refurbishing of stoical and epicurean tenets. We do not need, for example, to go very deep into Sainte-Beuve to find the epicurean despair of human nature, or, if we wish a still more recent and obvious epicurean, we have him in Anatole France. We should, again, be struck by the resemblance between Taine's attitude toward life and stoicism, even if we did not know that, like many other nineteenth-century stoics, he actually sought a rule of life in the desolate and pathetic Marcus Aurelius.

Various observers have been struck by the analogy between certain symptoms that are appearing in our contemporary society and those that appeared in late Roman society, though few would go into such refinements as Signor Ferrero, who claims that Americans of today correspond psychologically to Romans of the first century, Europeans to Romans of the second century of the decadence. An analogy of this kind is always incomplete and, of course, entirely unsafe as a basis of prophecy. So far as the analogy exists at all, it is to be traced to a common cause — the hopelessness and helplessness of a pure naturalism in dealing

with ultimate problems. Mr. Chesterton says we have already reached the Heliogabalus stage in this country. We are very far from having reached that stage as yet, though we may reach it in time if we think we can discard all our traditional sanctions and discover a sufficient substitute for some principle of authority, either within or without ourselves, in miscellaneous humanitarian enthusiasms. As a matter of fact, the American situation does not differ very greatly from the European one, except that we combine our increasing criminality and suicide and divorce and other familiar signs of naturalistic disintegration with a more unflagging optimism. Europeans are readier than we to admit certain modern equivalents of the *taedium vitae* that afflicted ancient Rome. A writer named Fierens-Gevaert, who published a book a few years ago on *Contemporary Melancholy*, takes as self-evident that the underlying mood of cultivated Europeans is pessimistic, and proceeds to a regular inventory of the maladies of the modern soul:

> Infections of unutterable sadness,
> Infections of incalculable madness,
> Infections of incurable despair.

The picture is probably exaggerated, and in any case would scarcely apply to England, though even in England there has been a marked falling off in what may be termed the Victorian exuberance.

Our modern world, to be sure, has, even when seen from Pascal's special angle, certain advantages over

the ancient. According to Pascal, the great resource of fallen man is to divert himself; in this way he can lose in some measure the sense of his own wretchedness (*'la misère de l'homme sans Dieu'*). Now, when it comes to diverting ourselves, we moderns are very superior. The modern descendant of the Roman noble who 'made a feast and crowned his head with flowers' has automobiles and can look forward to aeroplanes. He can count on an unending succession of scientific toys that will divert him and beguile him from uncomfortable reflections on the essential problems of his own being. In the words of Milton, 'There be delights, there be recreations and jolly pastimes that will fetch the day about from sun to sun, and rock the tedious year as in a delightful dream.' We not only have our delights, but are willing to pay for them. It is estimated that this country is now spending six hundred million dollars a year on automobiles, moving pictures, and phonographs.

There may be some, however, who, without sharing Pascal's unduly ascetic attitude toward 'diversion,' are, on the other hand, unable to acquiesce fully in either a stoical or epicurean naturalism; who, in Pascal's words, feel the need of discovering some firm island of faith in the midst of the 'horrible flux of all things.' Any wholesome revival of Pascal must depend on his power of appeal to persons of this kind. It is to be feared that some of the French interest that has been shown in Pascal during the past few years has been reactionary in the wrong sense. For example,

Victor Giraud, applying to Pascal his own phrase, says that he remains the master of all 'sorrowful seekers for the truth.' This insistence on the mournfulness of the religious quest would seem unfortunate. It reminds us too much of the old gentleman who remarked that he once set out to be a philosopher, but cheerfulness would keep breaking in. The Pascal whom it is possible and desirable to revive is not the Pascal who, according to the legend, saw an abyss ever yawning at his side, but the Pascal who summed up his experience of religion in the words 'Joy, certainty, peace.' Of course, many of the best of the *Pensées* are of a comparatively secular character, ranging in topic from government to literary criticism. Of the strictly religious *Pensées* the most admirable are those that deal with the general contrast between faith and worldliness. After deducting everything that is morose and ascetic and medieval and narrowly theological, the residuum of pure religion perfectly expressed is sufficient to make of the *Pensées* not merely a great French book, but one of the great books of the world.

RACINE AND THE ANTI-ROMANTIC REACTION [1]

I

SINCE the flickering out of symbolism a few years ago, there has been a singular dearth of fresh initiative in French literature. The French themselves do not seem sure whether the present is merely a period of pause before the starting of some new movement, or whether they are definitively entering the stage of Alexandrian impotence. Even the novel, the literary form that flourished above all others in the last century, is showing signs of exhaustion. When I inquired of a distinguished Frenchman last year as to the outlook for the novel, he simply replied: *C'est fini.* Meanwhile, amidst the existing lassitude, we may note curious symptoms of dissatisfaction with the nineteenth century, and its aftermath in art and literature. It was in France, in the writings of Rousseau, that certain romantic and naturalistic points of view first found powerful expression. It is in France, the most intellectually sensitive of modern nations, that we now see the beginnings of reaction against the fundamental postulates of Rousseauism. Few books have been more talked about of late than M. Lasserre's brilliant and virulent attack on French romanticism.

[1] *The Nation*, November 18, 1909. Review of *Le Romantisme français*, by Pierre Lasserre, and of *Jean Racine*, by Jules Lemaître.

Rousseau is not merely an ancestor of romanticism, according to M. Lasserre, he is a complete embodiment of it; and Rousseauism M. Lasserre defines as an 'integral corruption of the higher parts of human nature.' If M. Lasserre's opinion of Victor Hugo in particular is to gain currency, the worshipers of Hugo have done well to make haste and celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the *Légende des Siècles*, for by the time of the hundredth anniversary the glory of Hugo will have become a mere memory, like that of Ronsard in the seventeenth century.

It is not, however, M. Lasserre's attitude toward this or that author that is chiefly significant. As he himself says in the preface to one of the later editions of his book, his aim is not so much to attack the romantic and naturalistic movement in its flowers and fruit, as to pour a little poison about its roots. Unfortunately, M. Lasserre's book tends to be extreme, and, in the French sense, reactionary. A year or so ago I chanced to be strolling along one of the narrow streets that skirt the Quartier Saint-Germain, and came on a bookshop entirely devoted to reactionary literature; and there in the window, along with books recommending the restoration of the monarchy, was the volume of M. Lasserre, and other anti-romantic publications. Now, I for one regret that a legitimate protest against certain tendencies of nineteenth-century life and literature should be thus mixed up with what we may very well deem an impossible political and religious reaction.

II

My purpose is not, however, to discuss M. Lasserre, but a topic suggested by another book that belongs to the same anti-romantic movement, a book that has likewise been much talked about and that has gone through many editions. The volume in which the most gifted of living French critics, M. Jules Lemaître, exalts Racine is a natural pendant to the volume in which he recently attacked Rousseau. In the case of the lectures that went to the making of both volumes, there was the same rolling of fashionable equipages in front of the Salle de Géographie on the Boulevard Saint-Germain. But in spite of the applause of the dowagers of the *beau quartier*, the *Racine* is a successful book, far more than the *Rousseau*, partly, perhaps, because the author is more at home with art than with ideas. In defending tradition no one ever got farther than M. Lemaître from the dryly traditional. There is, indeed, something rarely entertaining in all this impressionistic trepidation of style, devoted to the praise of an age and author that are supposed above all to have been decorous and conventional.

M. Lemaître has a love of Racine that admits of few doubts and reservations. He would agree with Boileau, who put his friend's plays on a level with those of Sophocles; or with Voltaire in the following century, who declared that *Athalie* is the 'masterpiece of the human spirit.' The romanticists, to be sure, rose in revolt against Racine; but if Racine is now coming

into such high favor again, it is partly, says M. Lemaître, as a reaction against *le mensonge et l'illusion romantiques*. And he goes on to praise Racine in a way that is itself more suggestive of the romantic ardor than of the classical coolness of temper.

For example, he says that 'Racine unites and fuses in himself the two fairest traditions of our humanity: the Hellenic and the Christian.' We should say, on the contrary, that though Racine united in himself these two traditions, it is of the utmost importance to add that he did not entirely succeed in fusing them. We may doubt whether the seventeenth century in general was fully successful in its attempt to reconcile the two great disciplines it had inherited from the past. Thus, Boileau's theory of the epic implies that in the ordinary relations of life a man should be a Christian, but when he sits down at his writing-desk, a pagan; and this can scarcely be regarded as satisfying. Now Racine had likewise been trained in the 'two antiquities,' classical and Christian, but he differed from nearly all the other writers of his time in having a thorough knowledge of Greek as well as of Latin — a knowledge that ranges from the Attic tragedians to the late pastoral romances; his Christianity, again, was not of the somewhat easygoing and Jesuitical type that was current in his century; but, as a youth, he had been steeped in the severe and ascetic faith of Port-Royal. In short, he had been initiated into an unusually pure form of the two great traditions, and the result was an inevitable conflict, not only within

himself, but with the outer world. Of a noble and dignified presence, and perfect in all the accomplishments of the *honnête homme*, Racine was fitted to be the ideal courtier. His Jansenism alone stood in the way; for it was his Jansenism, and not the more or less mythical petition that he presented to Louis XIV in behalf of the suffering common people, that led to his partial fall from favor at court, and is supposed to have hastened his end. It was not, again, so much the efforts of his enemies against *Phèdre* as the struggle between the humanistic elements in his training and the reawakening scruples of his Jansenist boyhood and youth that caused him at the age of thirty-seven, and in the full maturity of his powers, to renounce the writing of plays. The attitude of the Jansenists toward the stage, we should recollect, was very similar to that of the Puritans in England. Just as the Puritans called the theaters the 'devil's chapels,' so the Jansenist Nicole denounced playwrights as 'poisoners not of the bodies, but of the souls of the faithful.'

Joubert says that the talent of Racine is in his works, but Racine himself is not there. We may, at least, say that, in spite of *Athalie*, Racine failed to express fully his religious side in his plays, differing in this respect from dramatists like Sophocles and Aeschylus, who were conscious of no such opposition between the sacred and the profane, for whom the drama, indeed, so far from being under the ban of religion, was closely associated with it. Possibly this is one reason why we do not get in Racine, in spite of

his extraordinary mastery of the psychology of the passions, any equivalent for those passages in which Aeschylus and Sophocles seem to sound the very depth of human destiny.

III

Most of us would reproach M. Lemaître less for the romantic and impressionistic bent he betrays even in his classicism than for his failure to adjust his treatment of Racine to the international point of view. This is indeed a grave defect, though it is not, like the same defect in the volume on Rousseau, fatal. M. Lemaître's own reason for dismissing so lightly the international verdict on Racine is very simple: There is, he says, in Racine a something that is forever inaccessible to foreigners. It is no doubt because of this inaccessible something that the gap between the native and the foreign estimate of Racine is wider perhaps than in the case of any other French author. We must note, for example, the almost entire failure of any translation or adaptation of Racine to gain a foothold on the English stage or in English literature; so much so that a recent French writer, after reviewing this record of failure, decides that '*les Anglais n'ont pas la tête racinienne.*' In Germany, Lessing objected to Racine for not being sufficiently classical; A. W. Schlegel objected to him for not being sufficiently romantic; and examples might be multiplied to prove that the German head is at least as un-Racinian as that of the Englishman.

Now, what the cultivated Frenchman admires in Racine, according to M. Lemaître, is reason, exquisite measure, supreme clearness, delicate sensibility tempered by judgment — in brief, the truly classical virtues. What the foreigner objects to, on the other hand, may be summed up in the word artificiality, a pervading suggestion of the somewhat hollow pomp and grandiosity of the court of Louis XIV — an element, in short, that is pseudo-classic rather than truly classical.

If we are to arrive, then, at an intelligent estimate of Racine, it should seem necessary, above all, to determine in what respects he is genuinely classic and in what respects neo-classic or pseudo-classic, not failing to note at the same time certain other respects in which he is inspired rather by the spirit of romance.

The neo-classic element in French tragedy goes back, of course, to the Aristotelian commentators and literary casuists of the Italian Renaissance. Perhaps the most striking feature of this neo-classical regulation of the drama from the very start is its tendency to apply rational rather than imaginative standards, even to the point of abolishing the distinction between the world of poetry and the world of logic and everyday fact. Any play that overstepped the bounds of ordinary reality or failed to develop with a strict logical sequence was condemned as 'improbable.' This somewhat narrow and mechanical conception of dramatic verisimilitude is mainly responsible for the most famous

of all the rules, the unities of time, place, and action, of which the second is not in Aristotle at all, and only the third can be said to be truly Aristotelian. The three unities, along with the *liaison des scènes* (the 'scenes unbroken'), another expression of the demand for logicality, have been summed up in the lapidary verses of Boileau:

> *Qu'en un lieu, qu'en un jour un seul fait accompli*
> *Tienne jusqu'à la fin le théâtre rempli.*

Unlike Corneille, Racine moved with perfect ease among all the rules that the neo-classic disciplinarians had imposed upon the stage. Indeed, it is in Racine, if anywhere, that all this regulating of the drama must find its justification. From a minute study of treatises like that of Heinsius (*De Tragoediae Constitutione*, 1611), he absorbed the quintessence of the Aristotelian lore of the Renaissance. As a result, he has attained in several of his plays, not simply a strictness of structure, but an actual perfection of dramatic technique that is unsurpassed in ancient or modern literature; and this is no mean merit, even though it does not in itself take the place of the divine spontaneity of Greek art at its best.

The neo-classic rules fell in with Racine's own tendency to concentrate — to portray only one passion and to take that passion itself in its very crisis and culmination. Racine is more interested in the psychological drama than in the outer action in which this drama finds expression. A recent writer

(G. Michaut in *La Bérénice de Racine*, 1907) has maintained that the most Racinian of Racine's plays — the play toward which his whole conception of dramatic art tended — is *Bérénice*, which comes near realizing the popular notion of French tragedy as a five-act conversation. Yet the psychological drama in *Bérénice* is intense, and it is a better acting play than many a romantic melodrama crowded from beginning to end with tumultuous incident. It is also to Racine's concentration that we must ascribe in part his lack of 'local color,' all the concrete and picturesque details that diversify human beings in time and space, a lack for which he has been reproached by critics from his contemporary Saint-Évremond to the present day. Like all the classicists, Racine aimed to represent human nature in its essence rather than as locally modified, but was often too prone to identify this essential human nature with forms of human nature peculiar to his own time. 'The French poets,' says Dryden, 'are generally accused that wheresoever they lay the scene, or in whatsoever age, the manners of their heroes are wholly French. Racine's Bajazet is bred at Constantinople; but his civilities are conveyed to him by some secret passage from Versailles into the Seraglio.' At all events, Racine had the virtues of his limitations and did not allow himself to be diverted from the real business of the drama to the pursuit of the local color that was the fetish of the romanticists of 1830, and that M. Lemaître has attacked so amusingly.

IV

One of the ways in which the neo-classic writer becomes pseudo-classic is by failing to distinguish between the permanent laws of good taste and what Lowell calls the parochial by-laws of etiquette. The ancients, says Lessing, knew nothing about politeness. Seventeenth-century French tragedy, on the contrary, is permeated by a refined social convention; and Racine, who was at once an accomplished humanist and a perfect courtier, was peculiarly fitted to achieve this fusion of the standards of the classicist and the standards of Versailles. The distinction between the polite and the vulgar is all-pervasive in his plays, from the chief characters who must be of a certain rank to the language which must be free from all plebeian taint. It has been said that Plato and the fishwives of Athens used the same vocabulary. At all events, words were not officially classified at Athens as 'noble' or 'low,' and the same is, of course, true of Elizabethan England. In commenting on the first scene of *Hamlet*, Voltaire is especially shocked that a mouse should dare to stir in tragedy. Exact comparison is not easy, but we may estimate that the ideas of dignity and decorum of his time restricted Racine to a vocabulary less than one half the size of Shakespeare's. From the charmed circle of convention in which French tragedy moves, everything harshly realistic is banished. Its personages seem to feed on nectar and ambrosia. Little is said about the mind's

action on the body, virtually nothing of the action of the body on the mind.

Racine was, of course, too good a classical scholar not to be aware of the difference in this respect between his own art and that of the ancients. He knew that if the art of the ancients was fastidious and selective, it was not squeamish. 'In our French poetry and even in our novels,' he writes, 'there is no more talk of eating than if the heroes were gods who were not subject to the need of nourishment, whereas Homer sets his heroes to eating on every occasion.' The *Odyssey* especially, we may add, is remarkable for the amount of eating and drinking it contains (the 'eating poem of the *Odyssey*,' as Fielding called it); so much so that when Odysseus would raise the spirits of the departed, he offers them the ghostly equivalent of a good dinner.

'This overdelicacy of the French,' Racine concludes, 'is a genuine weakness.' To understand how French society and literature came to move in this world of refined convention, we must, of course, go back to the beginning of the seventeenth century and the growing influence of women and the drawing-rooms at that time. We should note especially that the men and women who gathered about Madame de Rambouillet deliberately patterned themselves upon the heroes and heroines of the great literary success of the period, Honoré d'Urfé's interminable pastoral romance, *L'Astrée*. The *grand monde*, as conceived by Madame de Rambouillet and her group, is a

curious transformation of the pastoral dream that, in some form or other, has always haunted the human heart. 'So understood,' says Amiel, 'society is a form of poetry; the cultivated classes deliberately recompose the idyll of the past and the buried world of Astraea.' In entering a seventeenth-century drawing-room one entered an intensely artificial Arcadia, but an Arcadia none the less, from which the cares and concerns of ordinary life were banished and where one was free to discourse of love. This discourse of love, it is true, often ran into mere *préciosité*, into what has been termed wire-drawn and super-subtilized gallantry; but at the same time a great deal of real insight into the passions resulted from all this anatomizing of the heart.

Now the tragedies of Racine have been influenced in a marked degree by this love-making of high society. The young lovers of his plays — his Alexander and even his Pyrrhus — are first cousins to the pastoral youth (who are at the same time fine ladies and gentlemen) that sigh and languish through the numerous volumes of d'Urfé and his imitators. Racine, as we have said, was familiar with the Greek pastoral romances and had even met in one of them the very situation he afterward developed in *Phèdre*. But love in the Greek pastoral is something very different from that of the French drawing-room. If the ancients knew nothing about politeness, they likewise knew very little about gallantry. Love as understood by the *précieux* and *précieuses* goes back to the refinements of

the Italian Renaissance, which can, in turn, be traced to Petrarch, and ultimately to the cult of the 'lady' and the courts of love of the Middle Ages. The strenuously classical Rymer complains that the French will still be off on 'the wild-goose chase of romance,' and it is true that Racine's preoccupation with love as the supreme motive is romantic, rather than classical. At times, his presentation of love is not only romantic, but chivalric and medieval. The sole object of his Alexander in conquering the world is that he may lay his conquest at his lady's feet. Pyrrhus tells Andromache that as a result of her fair glances, he is burned by more flames than he ever lit in Troy. In *Phèdre*, Racine has altered the whole sense of the ancient legend, by making Hippolytus sigh for the charms of Aricia. 'Where the poet ought,' says Dryden, 'to have preserved the character as it was delivered to us by antiquity, when he should have given us the picture of a rough young man, of the Amazonian strain, a jolly huntsman, and, both by his profession and his early rising, a mortal enemy to love, he has chosen to give him the turn of gallantry sent him to travel from Athens to Paris, and transformed the Hippolytus of Euripides into Monsieur Hippolyte.'

V

We must not, however, dwell too long on the element of artificiality and convention in Racine. It is, after all, more or less superficial. What we most often

find when we get beneath the somewhat overdecorous surface of his Alexandrines is the keenest psychology and the severest realism. There is less that is far-fetched and fantastic, less of *précieosité* in his treatment of love than in Corneille's. At his best he utterly transcends the Arcadian affectations of the drawing-rooms. So much so that to these drawing-rooms themselves he seemed violent and even ferocious. There is more truth in this opinion than in the opposite charge of tameness which is often brought against him by foreigners. Racine is pre-eminent among the dramatists of the world for the mingled power and delicacy with which he has portrayed nearly all the aspects of love, from the mere refinements of gallantry to the ground-swell of elemental passion — passion that in *Phèdre* especially is heightened and intensified by Christian remorse:

Hélas! du crime affreux dont la honte me suit
Jamais mon triste coeur n'a recueilli le fruit.

We may learn from Racine what we have tended too much to forget since the romantic triumph, that the expression of emotion may be intense and at the same time restrained.

We may conclude, then, that foreign indifference to Racine arises in part from legitimate dislike of the pseudo-classic element in his work, but even more perhaps from failure to do justice to his genuinely classical virtues. For example, the attitude of seventeenth-century England toward Racine was due not

so much to a loftier and less conventional view of the drama as to a crude romanticism. The very public that was indifferent to Racine applauded 'heroic plays' inspired by the bombast and preposterous gallantries of inferior French writers like La Calprenède and Scudéry; just as many persons today may be counted on to prefer the rant and fustian of Hugo's *Hernani* to the exquisite art of plays like *Athalie* and *Phèdre*. The average Englishman or American is apt to see proof of his imaginative superiority in a failure to appreciate Racine; in nine cases out of ten it is proof rather of a limitation.

There is special reason just now why we should overcome such limitations and refresh in ourselves the sense of the sound classical virtues. M. Lemaître therefore does us a service in treating with such an easy and unaffected grace a writer who had a number of these virtues, and in not only feeling himself, but making others feel, that he is dealing with something vivid and vital. M. Lasserre also does us a service by his plea for a humanistic revival. The need of such a revival should be evident to everyone. With the spread of impressionism, literature has lost standards and discipline and at the same time virility and seriousness; it has fallen into the hands of aesthetes and dilettantes, the last effete representatives of romanticism, who have proved utterly unequal to the task of maintaining its great traditions against the scientific positivists. At the same time, if there is to be a humanistic movement, we may hope that it will be somewhat less

negative and more genuinely constructive than the one M. Lasserre and others are trying to start in France; that it will preserve, even in its severest questionings of the nineteenth century, a certain balance and moderation, a certain breadth of knowledge and sympathy, and so seem an advance and not a retrogression.

THE BICENTENARY OF DIDEROT[1]

THE distinction of Diderot, the bicentenary of whose birth falls this week (October 5), is to be a universal precursor of modern life. More perhaps than any other man of the eighteenth century except Rousseau, he deserves to be accounted, in Amiel's phrase, an ancestor in all things. 'The age,' he wrote to Grimm in 1765, 'always ends by coming around to my taste and point of view.... Do not laugh: it is I who anticipate the future and know its thought.' Now most of the revolutionary changes that have taken place from Diderot's time to ours rest, in the final analysis, on a reinterpretation of the word nature; and Diderot was successful in anticipating the future because he was so thoroughgoing a naturalist. In the *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville* he paints a picture of primitive life which is very close to Rousseau in its emphasis on man's native goodness, if not in the more than Rabelaisian crudity of certain details. But he was not, like Rousseau, an obscurantist; he would maintain the intellect in its rights if only in the interests of the investigator. Here is a chief reason why Goethe had a veritable cult for Diderot long after he had repudiated Rousseau. It is characteristic of the history of Diderot's writings that his masterpiece, the *Neveu de Rameau*, became known in France only through a retranslation of Goethe's translation more than fifty

[1] *The Nation*, October 9, 1913.

years (1821) after its probable date of composition. The more significant relationship between Diderot and Goethe appears, however, in a work like the latter's *Metamorphosis of Plants*. For Diderot is most original as a scientific naturalist, especially in his anticipations of evolution. Some of these anticipations were so bold that, so far from printing them, he ventured to represent them only as muttered by D'Alembert in the course of a feverish dream. What we find in the *Rêve de D'Alembert* (published in 1830) is, in addition to the cell theory, virtually all the essential hypotheses of the modern evolutionist. Nature is conceived by Diderot as a perpetual flux in which the higher forms of being develop by almost insensible gradations from the lower. 'Every animal is more or less man; every mineral is more or less plant; every plant is more or less animal. There is nothing precise in nature.' He foreshadows Darwin, not only in his hypotheses, but in his perception of the subordinate place of hypothesis in true science. He narrates a curious vision in which the rôle of experiment is revealed to him as opposed to mere theory. Experiment appears to him first in the form of a child; but as the child advances his limbs swell until he becomes an enormous colossus, and at his touch the air-hung Temple of Metaphysics falls with a crash — and Diderot awakes.

I

In a passage of this kind Diderot speaks in the spirit of the English positivists and utilitarians, and, indeed,

however un-English he may appear in his personal quality, he is more than almost any other French writer of his time a disciple of the English, from Bacon to the contemporary sentimentalists. *Jacques le Fataliste*, for example, is at once a pastiche of Sterne and a proclamation of scientific naturalism. We can, in fact, see in Diderot as perhaps nowhere else the interplay and deep underlying connection between the scientific and emotional aspects of the naturalistic movement. Conceiving nature as a pure flux, he proceeds, like the ancient sophists, to transfer this conception from the physical to the human plane. 'The first vow,' he exclaims, 'taken by two mortal beings was at the foot of a rock that was crumbling into dust; as witness to their constancy they called upon a sky that is not for an instant the same; everything was passing within them and about them, and they thought their hearts immune from these vicissitudes,' etc. As versified by Alfred de Musset, this passage became a favorite romantic theme:

Oui, les premiers baisers, oui, les premiers serments
Que deux êtres mortels échangèrent sur terre,
Ce fut au pied d'un arbre effeuillé par les vents,
Sur un roc en poussière....

We are thus constantly reminded in Diderot how much romanticists have in common with so-called realists and scientific evolutionists, especially in their relation to the traditional disciplines, whether classical or Christian. All the specifically modern uses of the

word nature are in germ in the following passage from the *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville:* 'Do you wish to know in brief the tale of almost all our woe? There once existed a natural man; there has been introduced within this man an artificial man, and there has arisen in the cave a civil war which lasts throughout life.'

Everything, then, that restrains 'nature' is to be dismissed as empty convention. Above all, there is to be no restraint on the most imperious of the instincts, that of sex. To the idyllic picture of the emancipation of this instinct in the *Supplément* corresponds the violent diatribe against the putting of restraint upon it in *La Religieuse.* 'What they call evangelical perfection,' Diderot complains, 'is only the fatal art of repressing nature.' Diderot would therefore turn away from the 'war in the cave,' that is, the struggle between good and evil in the breast of the individual, and fix his attention on the progress of mankind as a whole in knowledge and sympathy. On the positive side, as an expression of the Baconian and utilitarian ideal, the *Encyclopédie* derives from England. Yet contemporaries, who knew Diderot almost exclusively as editor of the *Encyclopédie,* were right in feeling that the significance of the work is more negative than positive — it is a huge battering-ram leveled at all the citadels of traditional authority. 'This work,' he writes to Mademoiselle Volland, 'will surely produce in time a revolution in men's minds, and I hope that tyrants, oppressors, fanatics, and bigots will not gain thereby.'

In general, Diderot's work has more unity on the negative than on the positive and constructive side. He is less a man of fixed principles than an impressionist. He is very 'natural' in his own sense, that is, very temperamental. He is a native of Langres, he explains, and the head of a Langrois is set on his body like a weathervane on a steeple (a mobility that Diderot refers in turn to the climate): 'I had in a day a hundred different physiognomies, according to the circumstance by which I was affected. I was calm, sad, dreamy, tender, violent, passionate, enthusiastic,' etc. He is so little capable of dominating and unifying his impressions, so little capable, in short, of composition, that he can scarcely be said to be a writer at all; he is rather, in Sainte-Beuve's phrase, the Homer of journalists. His collected works are a vast and confused improvisation. Though he has little true dramatic sense, his favorite literary form is the dialogue, and this is perhaps because he already inclines, like Renan, to set 'the two lobes of his brain to conversing with each other.' Some of his writings seem to proceed from the opposite poles of human thought. In general, his conception of genius is thoroughly romantic: the genius is the man who cannot control himself, and who aspires to stormy emancipation from neo-classical smugness. 'Poetry,' he says, 'calls for something enormous, barbaric, and savage'; and he continues in a remarkable forecast of the actual relation between the romantic movement and the Revolution: 'When shall we see poets again? It will be after times of

disaster and great misfortune; when the harassed nations begin to breathe once more. Then imaginations, shaken by terrible spectacles, will picture things unknown to those who have not witnessed them.'

But in the *Paradoxe sur le Comédien* he opposes to the central romantic doctrine of spontaneity, of free effusion, the no less central classical doctrine of imitation. Diderot, the most temperamental of men, living, in his own phrase, at the mercy of his diaphragm, is opposed to temperamental acting. The actor is not to be an emotionalist, but a cool observer, who works out with the aid of his intellect and judgment a model and then imitates it. Above all, he must avoid feeling his rôle while acting it. The *Paradoxe sur le Comédien* was published in 1830, only a few years before Musset's *Stances à la Malibran*. Musset takes the position one would have expected Diderot to anticipate. La Malibran is extolled because she so superabounded in 'soul' in the romantic sense, and shed real tears upon the stage. This emotional facility, says Diderot, is a sign not of genius, but of mediocrity. 'I am making no ordinary confession,' he adds, 'for if Nature ever fashioned an emotional soul, it is my own.'

Diderot is, indeed, a perfect example of *l'âme sensible*, the lachrymose and declamatory precursor of the true romanticist. A man would be ashamed, says La Bruyère, to display his feelings at the theater. In Diderot's time he would have been ashamed not to display them; for in the meantime the great discovery

had been made that man is naturally good and that the proper way for this goodness to manifest itself is to overflow through the eyes. It had become almost a requirement of good manners to weep and sob in public. At the performance of the *Père de Famille*, in 1769, we are told that every handkerchief was in use. The Revolution seems to have raised doubts as to the necessary connection between tearfulness and goodness. The *Père de Famille* was hissed from the stage in 1811. Geoffroy commented in his *feuilleton*: 'We have learned by a fatal experience that forty years of declamation and fustian about sensibility, humanity, and benevolence have served only to prepare men's hearts for the last excesses of barbarism.'

As to the dullness and badness of Diderot's actual plays, all are agreed. There is somewhat less agreement regarding the value and influence of the dramatic theories with which he accompanied them. His plea for the middle-class drama, his attack on the notion that only persons of a certain social rank had a right to be taken seriously on the stage, whereas others were to be relegated to comedy and farce, was part of a world movement that would probably have triumphed without him. The more original parts of his dramatic theory illustrate interestingly, at least, his attempt to get rid of the 'war in the cave' — in other words, his naturalistic denial of dualism. Instead of character he would put upon the stage professions or callings. Man is to be exhibited not as determining himself but as determined by his social rôle and environment — a

conception realized, if at all, not in the drama, but in the *Comédie Humaine* of Balzac. For the subtle shadings of speech that the great dramatists have needed to set forth the inner struggle of motives, he would substitute, so far as possible, pantomime, and for true dramatic action he would give us a series of stage pictures (what he calls a *décoration animée*), so combined as to preach a moral of general social utility. A highly melodramatic problem play done in moving pictures would seem to come very near satisfying all his requirements.

II

Diderot's notion of the drama, it has been objected, is too pictorial; his notion of painting, on the other hand, is too literary and dramatic. In his attack on the older or pseudo-classic confusion of the arts, based on the maxim *ut pictura poesis*, he furnished pregnant hints to Lessing; at the same time he prepares the way for our modern confusions arising from an emotionalism that overflows all barriers.

Opinions diverge even more widely regarding his *Salons* than regarding his dramatic theories, some looking upon him as the inventor, others as the corrupter, of the true criticism of art. As to the reproach that he sees in painting a sort of transposed literature, that he is less interested in the execution than in the subject or story, the obvious reply is that it would have been hard for him to see more literary intentions in the pictures of the time than the artists were them-

selves striving to put there. After all, a work of art should be something more than a triumph of technique. It should have an adequate human purpose. The true reproach to bring against Diderot is not that he put primary emphasis upon the subject, but that his conception of the subject should be satisfied by the *Mauvais Fils puni* of Greuze. Here again his weakness can be traced to his denial of dualism, and the consequent substitution of emotionalism for insight. He fails to temper the mere keenness of his relish, his infinite zest, with judgment, an inner mediation that is, after all, only one aspect of the 'war in the cave.' And so he has gusto rather than taste. His gusto usually shows itself in the warmth of his appreciation, and not, as often in the case of Hazlitt, for example, in the violence of his antipathies. 'I am naturally inclined to neglect faults and to grow enthusiastic over virtues. ... If there is a fine feature in a book, a character, a picture, a statue, it is on that my eyes rest: I see and remember only that; the rest is almost forgotten.' He is plainly a forerunner of the 'creative' critic in the neo-romantic sense, of the man who narrates the adventures of his 'soul' in the presence of masterpieces. The rôle of the artist is to be reduced to expressing the reaction of his temperament to any outer stimulus; and the rôle of the critic in turn to telling how his temperament is affected by this expression. What is eliminated in both cases is that element in human nature which acts as a check upon temperament.

III

The main problem, according to the older school, is not the mere expressing, but the humanizing of temperament. You must set up before you, this school maintained, an image of normal human nature, and then accept the curb on temperamental impulse imposed by the imitation of this model. The result of this restraint upon temperament is decorum. The process by which this great central doctrine of classicism degenerated into mere artificiality, by which decorum became identified with the usages of polite society or with academic routine, is well known. Diderot's rôle in the revolt against this artificial decorum is perhaps second only to that of Rousseau. I have already said something about his attack on artificial decorum in the drama. '*Ah! bienséances cruelles, que vous rendez les ouvrages décents et petits.*' There was an almost ludicrous opposition between the exuberance of Diderot's temperament and the limits imposed by decorum either true or artificial. Catherine the Great wrote to Madame Geoffrin that she was black and blue as the result of the thumps Diderot had given her in their interviews, and that she had had to interpose a table to protect herself from the violence of his gesticulations.

Critics are wont to praise Diderot for his flashes of divination, his genial intuitions: and this praise is deserved so far as his intuitions of physical law are concerned. On the other hand, he is radically lacking

in perception of the human law and in the fine tact and sense of measure that arise from this perception. He is an extraordinarily complete type of the pure expansionist, of the man who lives in a 'wide-open universe.' The total effect of his personality is that of excess, of an unrestrained riot of intellect and emotion, of what the French would call *une verve endiablée*. 'He appears natural only when exaggerated,' said Madame Necker of him. 'Ideas that have got drunk and taken to running after one another' is a description of his theories by another contemporary. He often seems, however, far madder than he is, being in this respect the exact opposite of Rousseau. His works remind us only too frequently that decorum and decency are very nearly related, and that the words were indeed long synonymous. The work in which he has the memorable Baconian vision I have already cited, is not merely indecent, but criminally indecent; it is mildly described by Diderot himself as the 'pestilential exhalation of a sewer.' A Platonic gleam may rest upon his brow, says Sainte-Beuve, but look more closely and you will always see the satyr's hoof. 'He equaled Bacon and Aretino,' is the doubtful compliment of a contemporary couplet.

To his absence of decorum he owes largely what is in the eyes of many the chief of literary virtues — an amazing frankness of self-revelation. Anyone who has been through his writings, from his *Regrets on His Old Dressing-Gown* to the *Letters to Mademoiselle Volland*, will scarcely complain of any lack of intimate contact with the author.

An age like our own in which not merely ordinary mortals, but secretaries of state and presidents, have dispensed with decorum, and which, to judge by certain recent symptoms, is preparing to dispense with decency, should certainly recognize in Diderot one of its ancestors. Yet, after all, decorum is, in Milton's phrase, the grand masterpiece to observe. If the world ever works its way out of the present naturalistic imbroglio, the discarding of true along with conventional decorum may be seen to be about the worst instance on record (if I may be allowed the familiar phrase) of 'pouring out the baby with the bath.' To miss decorum is to become incapable of what is best in art and literature (not to speak of life itself); it is to lose the secret of selection and the grand manner. Diderot's weakness in this respect already foreshadows the latest predicament into which art has fallen — its helpless oscillations between a photographic literalness and incomprehensible attempts to symbolize purely personal emotion. To be sure, Diderot can on occasion say admirable things on the grand manner, as he can say admirable things on almost any other topic. He knew his classics and has written pages on Terence (in whom he saw a sort of ancestor of the *drame bourgeois*) which are justly celebrated. Yet we may question the high seriousness of a critic who calls upon the centuries to pass more swiftly, in order that they may bring with them the honors due to Richardson, and in the meanwhile puts Richardson on the same shelf with Homer; and who exalts Lillo, author

of *The London Merchant*, to the side of Sophocles. We should feel sure, even without the 'Plan for a University' which he submitted to the Empress Catherine, that he had no true conception of the rôle of the humanities in education, and that the total tendency of his mind is flatly utilitarian.

IV

Diderot, speaking as an eighteenth-century sentimentalist, would have us believe that men have only to return to nature, that is, to live temperamentally to become denizens of Arcadia; but in at least one of his works, the *Neveu de Rameau*, the Arcadian mist is dissipated and the actual state of nature is seen to be the struggle for life. To cast off all the laws and usages of the society in which one lives as mere conventions and obey only the promptings of temperament, is in reality to be a Bohemian; and Rameau's nephew is not merely a Bohemian, but also, in intention at least, a beast of prey. Life as he sees it is a universal scramble for power and pleasure. The prizes go to the strong and cunning, and the fools and weaklings pay for all the rest. Rationalism has undermined the traditional foundations of society, and is impotent to put anything in their place. Perhaps in no other work of the eighteenth century can one hear so plainly as in the *Neveu de Rameau* the sinister crackings of an edifice that is about to come down on the heads of its occupants.

The view of life set forth by Rameau's nephew is

already that of Rastignac and other similar figures in Balzac. It is no accident that the generation which worshiped Balzac also most exalted Diderot; the generation, namely, which became active about the middle of the nineteenth century and which called itself, in opposition to the previous romantic generation, realistic; which looked up to Taine as its representative thinker and found its extreme expression, not to say its caricature, in the novels of Zola. Diderot more than anticipates Taine and the determinists when he proclaims that 'there is no liberty, no action that deserves praise or blame, there is neither vice nor virtue, nothing that should be rewarded or punished. ... There is only one sort of causes, to speak properly — physical causes.' Does this attempt to reduce life to the usufruct of an aggregation of molecules, as one of the school expressed it, deserve to be called realism? Diderot's method of dealing with material nature is undoubtedly realistic; and in so far he is worthy of all praise. How about human nature? The Empress Catherine, whose knowledge of human nature, it will be generally granted, was real, so far as it went, concluded, after almost daily interviews with Diderot for several months, that he was not a realist, but a dreamer, a man whose imagination ran away with his sense of fact, and therefore in his notions of practical matters a utopist. To be able to judge correctly the persons one meets in everyday life would seem to be a fair test of the realist; and this Diderot was notoriously incapable of doing. A certain imaginative

deformation of reality is visible in nearly all the works of the school. Balzac's Paris, for example, is not real, but a lurid dream, the rather peculiar type of Arcadia projected by an imagination that is flying off at a tangent from reality. As Leslie Stephen put it, Paris, according to Balzac, is hell; but, then, hell is the only place worth living in. Zola's peasants, again, are not real; they are naturalistic nightmares. We should be careful not to bestow lightly the noble name of realist.

This whole dispute as to what is a real rendering of human nature reduces itself at last to a single question: Is the 'war in the cave' artificial, after all? Suppose it be true, as the humanist asserts, that deep down in the breast of the individual man, far more primary and immediate than either thought or feeling, is a power of control over thought and feeling, a something that may be defined experimentally as the back pull towards the center. In that case, the 'war in the cave,' so far from being artificial, the mere prejudice of outworn dogmatisms, is a fact of formidable import. To deny this fact in the name of 'nature' is to be guilty of a monstrous mutilation of human nature. Hope for the future may lie in the man who will plant himself resolutely on this fact and refuse to be drawn away from it into some phantasmagoria of the intellect or emotions; who will subject to a stern scrutiny from the point of view of this fact the fluent assumptions of both scientific and sentimental naturalists; who will deal with the 'law for man' even as the Baconian has dealt with the 'law for thing,' and look with

at least equal disdain on the apriorist and the builder of systems; who will take issue with the men of science, not because they are hardheaded, but because they are not hardheaded enough; whose complaint of the positivists will be that they are not sufficiently positive; who will be ready, in short, to react in the name of the modern spirit against the great expansive movement of the past century, of which Diderot is rightly held to be the universal precursor.

GEORGE SAND AND FLAUBERT[1]

THERE have been signs of late of a revival of interest in George Sand. Her reputation had suffered an eclipse during the triumph of naturalism. But now that naturalism has 'grown to a pleurisy and died in its own too much,' the younger generation of French writers is making earnest, one is almost tempted to say desperate, efforts to arrive at some form of idealistic art; and this movement promises to result in an increase in the vogue of George Sand, as it has already resulted in a falling off in the vogue of Balzac.

Taine says that there is in the whole history of literature no other writer whose career is as instructive as that of George Sand — no writer for the study of whose life there is such abundant material, and none to whom it is possible to apply so perfectly the method of Sainte-Beuve. The world at present shows signs of growing weary of the method of Sainte-Beuve as it has grown weary of naturalism; we are coming to be less concerned with the natural origins of a writer's talent, and more concerned with getting at this talent in itself, with measuring its absolute elevation, with finding out how far it is the product of the writer's will as well as of his environment. The life of George Sand lends itself even more to the latter method of treatment — the method of the new criticism — than

[1] *Atlantic Monthly*, October, 1898.

to that of Sainte-Beuve. Taine himself, with the sympathy he showed toward the last for the points of view most different from his own, has remarked that an admirable study might be made of the evolution of George Sand's character as revealed in her works. Nothing she has written is richer in material for a study of this kind than her letters, and among the letters themselves the most interesting are those she exchanged with Flaubert. Her talent as an artist reached its maturity no doubt in the country idylls, but it is rather in these letters to Flaubert that we are to seek the clearest and fullest expression of her character and views of life.

For the beginning of George Sand's career we need to turn, not to the correspondence, but to her autobiography — *L'Histoire de ma Vie* — especially to the chapters devoted to the years spent in the Couvent des Anglaises at Paris. It is well to remember that during her convent life she passed through a period of fervent Catholic mysticism. 'I feel,' we read in one of her later letters, 'a foretaste of infinite ecstasies, and of ravishments like those of my childhood when I thought I saw the Virgin, like a white blur on a sun floating over my head.' Her early letters contrast curiously in their simple and unaffected tone with those she wrote after coming under the influence of romanticism, toward the end of her unhappy married life with the Baron Dudevant. George Sand doubtless had real grievances against her husband, but her main grievance seems to have been that he was not a man of

genius. She finally decided on a separation, and early in 1831 came to Paris, and 'embarked,' as she expresses it, 'on the stormy sea of literature.' The years immediately following have been appropriately termed by Matthew Arnold the period of 'agony and revolt.' She strove to escape from every form of convention, and took delight in shocking all the ordinary notions of bourgeois propriety. She dressed in men's clothing and frequented Bohemian society. She informs one of her correspondents that her main item of expense is for tobacco. Like all the romantic writers, she professed the religion of passion, an ideal to which she has given expression in *Lélia*. 'For poetic souls,' she says in this work, 'the sentiment of worship enters even into the love of the senses.' Of this mixture of idealism and sensuality there is only too much in the whole modern conception of love. We find in Petrarch one of the earliest instances of this epicurean use of the religious sentiment, that would bring the ideal down from heaven and throw its celestial glamour over earthly passions. But the whole tendency has perhaps reached its culmination in the extraordinary product known as romantic love, that 'mortal chimera' which, in the words of M. René Doumic, 'has raged for a century in French literature — which has infected people's minds, perverted their ideas, disturbed society, undermined morality, and made thousands of victims, of whom George Sand and Alfred de Musset are only the most illustrious.' Her affair with Alfred de Musset, we need hardly add, as well as one or two

other like experiments in romantic love, ended for her only in disillusion — disillusion so complete that for a time she fell into utter despair, and contempt for herself and others. 'If I should tell you,' she confesses later to a friend, 'the point to which I pushed my abhorrence of everything, my horror of existence, I should seem to you to be relating an idle tale.' She speaks of her 'anti-social spirit,' of her 'hatred of all men,' and says she would not stir to save her neighbor's child from drowning. She was haunted by thoughts of suicide. 'Ten years ago,' she wrote in 1845 to Mazzini, 'I was in Switzerland; I was still in the age of tempests; I made up my mind even then to meet you, if I should resist the temptation to suicide which pursued me upon the glaciers.' She finally retired to Nohant, where she was to pass the rest of her life. Her youth, to use her own expression, had come to an end 'in the midst of convulsions and groans.' We can follow in her letters the process of reflection by which she arrived at a state of comparative calm. 'I have had a terrible duel with myself, a gigantic struggle with my ideal; I have been profoundly broken and wounded; now I am vegetating quietly enough.' Her return to sanity and self-possession was made easier by her freedom from self-love; for, whatever misuse she had made of the ideal, she had not used it to *idealize* herself. She was not 'infected,' to borrow her own phrase, 'with that immense vanity which characterizes the men of the reign of Louis Philippe.' She began to have doubts about the divine nature of ro-

mantic love. 'At present I am going to have the courage to say it,' she writes in one of her recently published letters to Sainte-Beuve: 'the loves which make us suffer are not the loves that God intended for us; and we are deceived in thinking so.' 'Let the reign of truth once come — and I believe in this reign of truth, though I know it will not be in my day — and what we suffered will no longer have a name in human language.'

In the meanwhile, a new form of faith was beginning to rise in the mind of George Sand on the ruins of the religion of passion. 'As for me,' she declares, 'the teachings of Leroux have resolved my doubts and founded my religious faith.' 'I am plunged in the doctrines of socialism. I have found in them strength, faith, hope, and the patient and persevering love of humanity — treasures of my youth, which I had dreamed of in Catholicism.' It is worth noting that almost at the same time that George Sand was thus arriving at the gospel of humanity, Renan, escaped from Saint Sulpice, was proclaiming the religion of science. It is curious to observe, in the case of both Renan and George Sand, how much easier it is to throw off the old dogmas than to free the mind from the forms of thought and feeling in which a century-long inheritance of Catholicism has molded it. Just as Renan in his earlier work arrives at the conception of a scientific infallibility, a scientific pope, a scientific heaven and hell, and even of a God created by scientists, so George Sand transfers to socialism the whole

vocabulary of Christian mysticism. She speaks of the 'social rebirth' to be brought about by France, that 'Christ of nations,' of 'social saints,' of 'social martyrs,' and so on. At the news of the outbreak of the Revolution of 1848, she hurried to Paris in boundless exultation. And then, on the complete collapse of all the social dreams and social dreamers, she again fell into deep discouragement. She found that Leroux, 'such an admirable man in the ideal life,' floundered hopelessly when brought into contact with reality. And Leroux, in this respect, was symbolical of the whole movement. She speaks of her 'utter depression' after the days of June. She had made the painful discovery that there entered into the composition of that humanity she had so idealized 'a large number of knaves, a very large number of lunatics, and an immense number of fools.' George Sand remained almost to the very end more or less the dupe of those three great words, Nature, Progress, and Humanity, the indiscriminate use of which has worked such havoc in the thinking of the past two centuries. Yet if she did not give up her dreams of 'social rebirth,' she at least saw that they would have to be adjourned to an indefinite future:

> And long the way appears which seemed so short
> To the less practiced eye of sanguine youth;
> And high the mountain-tops in cloudy air,
> The mountain-tops where is the throne of Truth.

It cost her 'a heavy effort,' she owned, 'to pass from vast illusions to complete disillusion.'

But she again mastered her despair, and in the very midst of the Second Empire, in the midst of the densest materialism the world has seen since the Roman decadence, she founded anew her faith in the ideal, and this time on a larger and surer base. She gradually awoke to the perception that the 'salvation of France was not to be through politics,' and that the indefinite future progress of humanity was not so important as the immediate definite progress of the individual. She saw that what was most needed was 'a new direction given to men's hearts and consciences.' 'They are the slaves of circumstance,' she declares of the politicians of her day, 'because they are the born slaves of themselves.' And again: 'Duty brings with it its own reward. Calm has been restored to my spirit, and faith has returned.' 'Everything passes away — youth, passions, illusions, and the desire to live. One thing only remains — the integrity of the heart. The heart grows not old, but, on the contrary, is fresher and stronger at sixty than at thirty, if only it is allowed to have its own way.'

It was toward the beginning of the last period of her life, the period of maturity and insight, that George Sand became acquainted with Flaubert. They were drawn together by a certain native distinction of character, by a certain delicacy and disinterestedness they observed in each other, but especially by the fact that they were impenitent romanticists in the midst of a generation hostile to romanticism. 'You will always remain twenty-five,' she wrote to him, 'in virtue

of all kinds of ideas which have become antiquated, if we are to believe the senile young men of today.'

Apart from these points of contact, it would be hard to imagine two persons in more radical disagreement than George Sand and Flaubert. She herself avows to him that 'there surely never were two workmen as different as we are'; and Flaubert, wondering at the large and easy improvisation of George Sand, replies, 'You don't know what it is to spend a whole day with your head in your hands, racking your miserable brain in the search for an epithet.' The letters they exchanged owe much of their interest to the way in which the traits of each writer are thus constantly thrown into relief by opposition and contrast. George Sand urges Flaubert to exercise his will, and Flaubert answers that he is as 'fatalistic as a Turk.' 'You believe in life and love it,' says Flaubert, 'and life fills me with distrust.' 'It's strange how little faith I naturally have in happiness. I had in my very youth a complete presentiment of life. It was like a sickly kitchen smell escaping from a basement window.' 'Yes,' replies George Sand, 'life is a terrible mixture of pleasure and pain'; yet 'we must suffer, weep, hope, *be* — in short, we must exercise our will in every direction.' 'You at the first leap mount to heaven,' he says elsewhere, 'while I, poor devil, am glued to the earth as though by leaden soles.' 'In spite of your great sphinx eyes, you have always seen the world as through a golden mist,' whereas 'I am constantly dissecting: and when I have finally discovered the cor-

ruption in anything that is supposed to be pure, the gangrene in its fairest parts, then I raise my head and laugh.' Flaubert talks of his need of 'extraordinary and factitious environments.' 'You might leave me,' says George Sand, 'whole hours under a tree, or before two burning sticks, with the certainty that I should find something to interest me. I have learned so well how to live outside of myself. I was not so always. I too have been young and subject to indigestions, but all that is ended.'

Finally Flaubert tells George Sand that the artist must not express his own feelings in what he writes. 'Not put one's feelings into what one writes!' retorts George Sand. 'I don't understand you at all — oh no, not in the least.' As a matter of fact, Flaubert had observed that the greatest works of art are impersonal; and not being able to conceive of a region of impersonal human emotion, he decided to eliminate emotion altogether, and to arrive at least at the impersonality of the naturalist. 'We must treat men,' he says, 'as though they were mastodons or crocodiles.' And so he resolutely cut out from what he wrote the very thoughts and feelings he was most burning to utter. 'It is odd,' writes George Sand, 'but there's a whole side of you which doesn't appear in your books.' It would be hard, indeed, to imagine a more curious contrast than that between the published work of Flaubert and the medley of interjections, ejaculations, slang, profanity, and obscenity we find in his letters.

Paradoxical as the statement is, Flaubert and other

French men of letters of the middle of the century who have been reproached with impassibility are in reality about the most subjective, the most completely self-centered, writers in literature. The whole psychology of the school of art for art's sake is revealed in these letters of one of its chief representatives. The men who profess this doctrine have, for the most part, carried over to art habits of thought, and especially modes of sensibility, which derive from Catholicism. Just as we have found in George Sand the gospel of humanity, and in Renan the religion of science, so we find in Flaubert the fanaticism of art. He preaches abstinence, renunciation, and mortification of the flesh in the name of art. He excommunicates those who depart from artistic orthodoxy, and speaks of heretics and disbelievers in art with a ferocity worthy of a Spanish inquisitor.

Unfortunately, Flaubert was unable to attain to that pure artistic ecstasy, that 'literary delirium,' to which he aspired. If he was at variance with George Sand, he was hardly less at variance with himself. He tells us that his intellectual origins are all in *Don Quixote*, which he had learned by heart before he knew how to read. There was going on within him, in fact, a warfare between medieval reverie and modern positivism not unlike that which Cervantes has symbolized in his masterpiece. Born in the period of transition from an age of sentiment to an age of scientific analysis, Flaubert hung suspended between two worlds, and was unable to enjoy the full benefit

of either. 'I have contradictory ideals,' he exclaimed, 'and the consequence is hesitation, halting, impotence!' If he burst into tears under the stress of lyric emotion, his first impulse was to observe himself in a looking-glass. He became the founder of naturalism, which he abhorred; on the other hand, if he tried to launch out into some vast poetical subject, he found that his lyric sense had been eaten away by analysis. Like many another writer of the present century, he tried to hide his lack of inner vitality under intellectual accumulation. He tells us that he had read and annotated three hundred volumes as a partial preparation for writing *Bouvard et Pécuchet.* What predominated in him, however, was his Catholic sensibility, and his consequent hatred of modern life. Indeed, we shall not understand Flaubert and one whole school of nineteenth-century artists, especially the so-called decadents, unless we see in them men whose souls are still steeped in medieval reverie, and who are unable to acquiesce in our modern rectangular civilization founded on scientific analysis:

Tout est bien balayé sur vos chemins de fer,
Tout est grand, tout est beau, mais on meurt dans votre air.

'I am a Catholic!' exclaims Flaubert. 'I have in my heart something of the green ooze of the Norman cathedrals.' And speaking of *Salammbô*: 'Few persons will guess how melancholy a man must be to try to resuscitate ancient Carthage. That is the Theban desert to which my horror of modern life has driven

me.' This horror of modern life grew upon Flaubert, until he came at last to live in a chronic state of indignation, in a white heat of fury at his contemporaries. 'I have written it,' he says of *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, 'in the hope of being able to spit into it some of the bile which is choking me.'

'I should like to see you,' writes George Sand, 'less indignant at other people's stupidity.' Flaubert, however, was unwilling to part with his indignation. It was pride and the sense of personal distinction, he is careful to tell us, which sustained him in his life of solitary devotion to art; he needed his indignation to assure himself that he really was superior to the people about him. 'If it were not for my indignation,' he confesses in one place, 'I should fall flat.' Unfortunately, we come to resemble what we habitually contemplate. 'By dint of railing at idiots,' writes Flaubert, 'one runs the risk of becoming idiotic one's self.' And he says of his two bourgeois, Bouvard and Pécuchet, 'Their stupidity is my stupidity, and it's killing me.'

George Sand takes Flaubert to task, with admirable tact, for thus tormenting himself with false theories of art. 'Talent,' she says, 'imposes duties; and art for art's sake is an empty word.' Beauty is not in itself a cause, but a result, the outcome of the harmony of all the parts either in the life of an individual or in that of a people. Beauty, we may add, is, in itself, only the element of illusion. The man who pursues it as a thing apart is trying to divorce form from substance,

and will spend his life, Ixion-like, embracing phantoms. 'O Art, Art,' exclaims Flaubert, 'bitter deception, nameless phantom, which gleams and lures us to our ruin!' He speaks elsewhere of the 'chimera of style which is wearing him out soul and body.' George Sand tells us that as she grew older she came more and more to put truth above beauty, and goodness before strength. 'I have reflected a great deal on what is *true*,' she writes, 'and in this search for truth the sentiment of my ego has gradually disappeared.' Flaubert, on the contrary, in becoming a *chercheur d'exquis*, in consecrating his life to the quest for beauty, had succeeded only in intensifying the sentiment of his ego and in irritating his nerves. Attaching an almost religious importance to aesthetic sensation, he had been led to humor all the whims of a morbid sensibility. He had fallen into the state which the French describe by the untranslatable word *nostalgie*, the desire to jump out of one's skin, to be where one is not; he had become the victim of that artistic hyperaesthesia from which so many French writers since Rousseau have suffered. He complains in his old age: 'My sensibility is sharper than a razor's edge; the creaking of a door, the face of a bourgeois, an absurd statement, set my heart to throbbing, and completely upset me.'

We are possibly justified in inferring from the life of Flaubert, and that of others of his school, the futility of art when not subordinated to some principle higher than itself. 'If anyone prefer beauty to virtue,' says

Plato, 'what is this but the real and utter dishonor of the soul?' Hardly anywhere else in literature will one find such accents of bitterness, such melancholy welling up unbidden from the very depths of the heart, as in the devotees of art for art's sake — Flaubert, Leconte de Lisle, Théophile Gautier. George Sand expresses a natural surprise at the agitation in which Flaubert lives at Croisset — 'that delightful retreat where everything breathes comfort and tranquillity.'

We need not suppose that George Sand was entirely right, and Flaubert entirely wrong, in the theory and practice of art. We can agree with Flaubert in thinking that composition with the great masters was accompanied by fewer throes and paroxysms, by less effort and anguish, than with him. On the other hand, composition with the great masters was not a pure improvisation, as in the case of George Sand; they did not write, as we are to infer she did, in a half-somnambulistic condition. 'I am a mere wind-harp,' she tells Flaubert. 'It is the *other* who plays upon my heart at will.... When I think of it I am filled with fright, and say to myself, I am nothing, nothing at all.' 'Genius,' George Sand never tires of repeating, 'comes from the heart' — a feminine theory of genius which offends less in the mouth of George Sand than when professed by men like Lamartine and Alfred de Musset. Yet it was a too unquestioning obedience to the promptings of the heart that kept George Sand from attaining perfection. 'Life,' she confesses, 'carries me off my feet.' She is swept away by her feelings and sentiments, her

affections and sympathies; so that Flaubert might well write of her: 'Madame Sand is too benign and angelical.' It may be said, in justification of Flaubert's view, that the New Testament in one passage promises the kingdom of heaven to the violent. It is the lack of power of concentration, of fiery intensity, and at the same time the lack of that infinite painstaking in detail possessed by Flaubert, which removes George Sand from the first rank of artists. 'I am not,' she admits of herself, 'the ideal artist.' 'I am too fond of sewing and of scrubbing children; . . . and then, besides, I am not a lover of perfection. I feel perfection, but I cannot make it manifest.'

The main event that came to disturb the tranquillity of George Sand in her old age was the Franco-Prussian War and the Commune. 'I am sick with the sickness of my country and my race!' she exclaimed, after the Commune. 'I wish that I had died without learning that barbarism is still so alive and active in the world.' And again: 'I judged of others by myself; I had done a great deal toward mending my own character; I had quenched useless and dangerous ebullitions; I had sown grass and flowers upon my volcanoes, and I fancied that everybody was capable of self-enlightenment and self-restraint. And now I have been all at once awakened from my dream to find a generation divided between idiocy and delirium tremens.' Flaubert, who, whatever his faults, was not a dupe of humanitarianism, declared, as early as 1848, that Leroux and the other Socialists were not modern men

— that they were still 'up to their necks in the Middle Ages'; and he saw in the Commune a manifestation of medievalism. George Sand, too, taught by experience, was rapidly ridding herself, during the last years of her life, of what was still medieval in her ways of thinking. This fact appears in her increasing distrust of absolute *a priori* formulae. She was gradually attaining to the insight to which Emerson has given expression in his essay on Compensation — the insight that no truth is true unless balanced by its counter-truth. 'Don't you see,' she says to one of her political friends, 'that the Catholic priest is supremely intolerant because he rejects *absolutely* the opposite view?' 'Down with the *priests* in power, whatever garb they may happen to wear. The Republic will take care of itself, if it is not imposed as a dogma.' 'The principles of '93,' she says elsewhere, 'have been our ruin; the Reign of Terror and St. Bartholomew's Day are an expression of the same spirit.'

With the disappearance of her last humanitarian hopes, the evolution of the character of George Sand may be said to be complete. 'I *believe*,' she writes to Alexandre Dumas *fils*, 'henceforward without illusion, and that is the secret of all my little strength.' This survival of faith is indeed the fact most worthy of note in a study of the inner life of George Sand. The great historical error of Christianity has been to confound faith with credulity; and for the vast majority of modern men, faith has perished along with the creeds with which it had been identified. It is the distinction

of George Sand to have rescued repeatedly the precious principle of belief from the wreck of false ideals, and to have had a faith so robust as to outlive shock upon shock of disillusion. In her old age she arrived more and more at a faith free from illusion — faith founded on the simple feeling, as she expresses it, that 'the whole is greater and better than we are,' and on the sentiment of the divine, entirely apart from any attempt to confine it in a formula.

'If man has drunk at the cup of eternal truth,' she says, 'he no longer takes sides too passionately for or against relative and ephemeral truth.' Together with faith, there entered into the life of George Sand joy, certainty, tranquillity, the sense of conduct, and the belief in the freedom of the will — good and desirable things all, which seem to be disappearing from the world with the disappearance of faith.

'I wish to see man as he is,' she writes to Flaubert. 'He is not good or bad: he is good and bad. But he is something else besides: being good and bad, he has an inner force which leads him to be very bad and a little good, or else very good and a little bad.' 'I have often wondered,' she adds, 'why your *Éducation Sentimentale*, in spite of its excellence of form, was so ill received by the public, and the reason, as it seems to me, is that its characters are passive — that they do not act upon themselves.' It is this power to act upon himself, precisely what is most human in man, that Flaubert neglected when he proposed to study men as he would mastodons or crocodiles.

The power which George Sand showed to act on herself is what gives her life its peculiar interest. She might justly say of herself, 'I cannot forget that my personal victory over despair has been the work of my will, and of a new way of understanding life which is the exact opposite of the one I held formerly.' How different is the weary cry of Flaubert: 'I am like a piece of clockwork. What I am doing today I shall be doing tomorrow; I did the same thing yesterday; I was exactly the same man ten years ago.' Or compare the life of George Sand with that of Victor Hugo, who, as the ripe fruit of his meditations, yields nothing better than the apotheosis of Robespierre and Marat.

Taine remarks of Sainte-Beuve that he was the only French writer of the present century, besides George Sand, who showed this power of continuous development. George Sand, however, is superior to Sainte-Beuve in that her growth is symmetrical, instead of being the expansion of a single faculty. She grew toward her ideal as the plant grows toward the sun, and not like the modern specialist, mechanically in one direction. We find in Sainte-Beuve something of that undue confidence in intellectual machinery, of that abuse of the brain, which has followed in the trail of the scientific spirit. 'Poor Sainte-Beuve,' writes George Sand, 'his intelligence has perhaps developed; but the intelligence does not suffice for the purposes of life, and it does not teach us how to die.' 'You have a better sense for total truth' (*le vrai total*), she tells another correspondent, 'than Sainte-Beuve, Renan,

and Littré. They have fallen into the German rut: therein lies their weakness.' And Flaubert writes to George Sand: 'What amazes and delights me is the strength of your whole personality, not that of the brain alone.'

Thus, toward the end of her career, George Sand became increasingly free from that nineteenth-century intellectualism which so marred the work of the closing years of George Eliot. 'I feel,' she writes, 'that I am coming to be less and less a Christian, and I perceive daily another light dawning beyond that horizon of life toward which I am advancing with ever greater tranquillity.' In spite of what George Sand says about not being a Christian, it would be easy enough to show that many of her faults and nearly all her virtues are a direct inheritance from Christianity — the Christianity of Saint Francis rather than that of Saint Thomas Aquinas. A study of her character, indeed, derives its main interest from the fact that she was able to make what Taine calls 'the painful transition from an hereditary faith to a personal conviction.'

We are living in an age when the principle of choice, the sense of direction, is more important than ever before, and at the same time more difficult of attainment. We are under special obligation to those who, like George Sand, have been successful in thus carrying over what was most vital in the old belief, and in combining it with what is most advanced in modern thought. In this respect, George Sand takes rank

with Emerson among the pioneers of the idealism of the future; and like Emerson, she remained true to the ideal without falling into morbid self-consciousness. She perceived no less plainly than Carlyle the degeneracy of the humanity of her day from loss of hold on the moral law, but she did not therefore have a vision of her contemporaries as a 'lot of apes chattering on the shores of the Dead Sea.' For this reason finally George Sand will be remembered not merely as a great literary artist; she will also remain in memory as one of the few who, in an age of great enlightenment and little light, have persevered in the cult of the ideal, in the exercise of *le sens contemplatif, où réside la foi invincible* — 'the contemplative sense wherein resides invincible faith.' And the passages that bear most striking witness to her use of this well-nigh obsolete sense are contained in her correspondence.

A CENTURY OF INDIAN EPIGRAMS[1]

It is refreshing to find in Mr. More's little volume of epigrams a book on India which is at once scholarly and attractive to the general reader. The new Renaissance to which Schopenhauer looked forward as a result of the study of Sanskrit has found as yet but scant expression in literature. For a century past German scholars have hewn from Sanskrit huge blocks of erudition, but there has been no successful attempt — except perhaps in the stanzas of Rückert — to extract from this crude ore of scholarship its residue of human wisdom and experience. Yet the problem raised by the meeting in India of the two extremes of Aryan civilization, of English and Hindu, and by the slow infiltration of Indian thought into the West, is in itself of real interest to all thinking men. Mr. More has rendered a service to those who wish to reflect on the larger aspects of the question by attempting to give in brief compass a faithful image of the ideals of ancient India. He has only in rare instances used his Sanskrit originals as a background on which to embroider his own poetical fancies, nor has he, like FitzGerald, read into them any of the moods of the modern agnostic.

It would hardly have been possible to make a literary rendering of the older Sanskrit writings, as anyone

[1] *Atlantic Monthly*, October, 1899. Review of *A Century of Indian Epigrams*, by Paul Elmer More.

will testify who has read a book like the translation of the Upanishads in the *Sacred Books of the East*, and has consented, for the sake of an occasional impressive passage, to struggle through dreary wastes of ineptitude. Mr. More has turned the difficulty by drawing for half his epigrams on the collection of stanzas attributed to Bhartrihari, a work which, as much as anything in Sanskrit, has a distinct personal flavor, and seems to belong to that brief period of the literature when it had attained to some degree of conscious art without as yet having fallen into entire artificiality. And then he has rounded out his 'century' by borrowing freely from the earlier sources. The stanzas of Bhartrihari are divided into three centuries, one for each of the 'paths' — Love, Worldly Wisdom, and Renunciation. Mr. More has imitated this division in the sequence of his epigrams, giving due prominence to the first and third of the paths, since, as he remarks, the Hindu conceived of but little middle ground between the ideal of the voluptuary and that of the ascetic.

> One walketh in Renunciation's way;
> Another fain would pay
> In Worldly Wisdom all his soul's large debt;
> And one in Pleasure's path
> With love still wandering on would all forget: —
> Three roads the wide world hath.

Mr. More tells us in his preface that the Hindu treatment of love, etc., is in many ways more akin to our own sentiment than is that of the classics. This romantic attitude toward woman is visible in whole

episodes of the epics, such as the story of Nala and Damayanti, and perhaps also in epigrams like the following:

> A flower whose fragrance none hath savored,
> A singing bird no ear hath favored,
> White pearl no jeweler hath bored,
> Untasted honey freshly stored
> In a clean jar, unbroken fruit
> That ripens now from virtue's root —
> Wondering I ask, O form unspotted,
> To whose delight, sweet girl, thou art allotted.

The Hindu conception of woman, however, in general reminds us of the one held in the Middle Ages. Gaston Paris, indeed, in his studies on old French poetry, has attempted to show how largely the medieval conception is derived from India. A portion of Mr. More's epigrams, then, have a real historical interest, in that they take us back to the far Indian origins of that ascetic distrust of woman which permeated medieval thought, and entered as so important a part into the monkish ideal — *mulier hominis confusio:*

> In woman is the cause of shame,
> For woman burneth hatred's flame,
> Through woman in this body's snare
> The soul is mewed — of woman, ah! beware.

Mr. More has taken as motto for his little volume a stanza of Emerson; and indeed one cannot help being struck by an analogy between the thought of Emerson — and, we may add, the thought of Tennyson in his old age — and the philosophy of India. This analogy,

if we consider it more carefully as it appears in the essay on the *Over-Soul* or in a poem like the *New Pantheism*, will be found, we imagine, to consist in a certain sense of the absolute. It is a familiar remark of Scherer that the chief achievement of nineteenth-century thought has been to weaken the faith in the absolute; but by this remark Scherer meant the absolute as visibly embodied in rules and observances, the attempt to imprison perfect and immutable truth in creeds and formulas. There is obviously little relation between this form of the absolute and the absolute of Emerson and Tennyson, which may be defined as a purely spiritual perception of the light beyond the reason, entirely disassociated from the faith in creeds and formulas.

> Fire is the Brahmin's god; the seer
> Knows in his heart the godhead near;
> Fools have their idol; but the clear,
> Untroubled vision sees him there and here.

It is in this inner sense of the absolute, this constant aspiration toward the central unity of life, that we are to seek, if anywhere, the message of India to the modern world. The disappearance of faith in a visible absolute, as understood by Scherer, has meant for the average man the lapse into pure impressionism. He has not as yet succeeded in creating by reflection a set of inner standards, to take the place of the outer standards he has lost. We of America, as being most completely emancipated from the past, from all respect for authority and tradition, are likewise the most impres-

sionistic. We are, to a degree almost unexampled in history, a nation of impressionists. Herein lies the secret both of our weakness and of our strength. We owe to this fact especially our freedom from exclusiveness and intolerance, those twin vices almost inseparable from the faith in an outer absolute. Our less lenient critics might also trace to this source a certain triviality and lack of elevation in our temper, an absence of vigorous personal conviction, a weakening of the sense of conduct, and a falling off in the stanchness of individual character. If these evils of impressionism are masked from us at present, it is possibly because we are still living on the capital of moral energy inherited from Puritanism. The study of Oriental philosophy, therefore, might find some justification if it gave even a few of us a means of escape from our impressionism — from that intellectual anarchy of the present which has so frightened thinkers like M. Brunetière that they are ready to return to the old conception of the absolute as embodied in Catholicism. In truth, if an effective resistance is to be offered to the arguments of M. Brunetière, some new vision of the absolute would seem to be needed to crown the edifice of modern rationalism, and reconcile the antinomies into which life resolves itself when viewed from the platform of pure intellect.

This new insight, if we are to judge from India, will bring with it a new sense of obligation, a new form of self-discipline, to take the place of that 'principle of restraint' the gradual disappearance of which fills

M. Brunetière with so much alarm. The goal toward which everything tends in Hindu philosophy is to enter into communion with the Atman, or true Self, the divinity hidden in the secret place of the heart, and then to subdue to its authority the senses and the turbulent passions of the lower self.

Seated within this body's car
  The silent Self is driven afar;
  And the five senses at the pole
Like steeds are tugging, restive of control.

And if the driver lose his way,
  Or the reins sunder, who can say
  In what blind paths, what pits of fear,
Will plunge the chargers in their mad career?

Drive well, O Mind, use all thy art,
  Thou charioteer! O feeling Heart,
  Be thou a bridle firm and strong!
For the Lord rideth, and the way is long.

The present, then, is perhaps one of those moments in the history of the West when its sense of certain truths needs to be refreshed and quickened by contact with the thought of the East. Entirely absorbed as we have been in the pursuit of the secret of power, it may be well for us, if we would avoid satiety, to turn at times to a country like India, which has given itself no less entirely to the pursuit of the secret of peace.

Like an uneasy fool thou wanderest far
  Into the nether deeps,
Or upward climbest where the dim-lit star
  Of utmost heaven sleeps.

Through all the world thou rangest, O my soul,
Seeking and wilt not rest;
Behold, the peace of Brahma, and thy goal,
Hideth in thine own breast.

Our endeavor to penetrate by analysis to the infinitely small may result in mere pedantry and immersion in detail, unless tempered by something of the Oriental's aspiration toward the infinitely large. The West tends more and more to pure activity, just as India, when most herself, has tended toward pure repose. Here again the half truth of the East may serve as a corrective to the half truth of the West, and may bring to pass that activity in repose which someone has defined as the classical ideal. We in America, especially, if we are not to spend ourselves in vain surface agitation, might profitably cultivate some feeling for the 'ultimate element of calm.' We should thus avoid the reproach of Ruskin, that as a nation we are incapable of rest.

The friend of classical culture will not be deterred from thus commending the thought of India by any fear that we may be led into the opposite excess of quietism. We appear at present to be in no danger of being too much preoccupied by the thought that the kingdom of heaven is within us. The danger is rather that serious attempts to interpret Eastern thought to American readers should fail of due recognition. There is, it is true, no lack of a certain kind of interest in things Oriental; no lack of people ready to listen to some Brahmin, specially imported for the occasion, as

he holds forth on the blessedness of dissolving one's self in the divine essence. One is tempted, indeed, to think at times that Orientalism, in order to attract one portion of the American public, requires a dash of charlatanry. How many persons who wax enthusiastic over Buddhism as set forth in the works of Mr. Paul Carus would shrink back if brought into direct contact with a Pali text, repelled by the virtues even more than the faults of their original! Nothing at bottom could run more counter to the gregarious and humanitarian instincts of the present age than that insistence on renunciation and meditation, on the essential loneliness of the human spirit, which is the burden of so many of Mr. More's epigrams.

> Alone each mortal first draws breath,
> Alone goes down the way of death;
> Alone he tastes the bitter food
> Of evil deeds, alone the fruit of good.

The real reason that the Indian point of view is so foreign to us is not far to seek. The main concern for the Hindu, as it was for the medieval Christian, is the salvation of the individual soul, whereas the interest of the modern man centers more and more in the progress, not of the individual, but of society. Bhartrihari is more akin in spirit to a medieval saint than to a nineteenth-century philanthropist, as appears in epigrams like the following, which is very nearly literal:

> O mother earth! O father air! O light,
> My friend! O kindred water! and thou height

Of skies, my brother! crying unto you,
Crying, I plead adieu.

Well have I wrought among you — now the day
Of Wisdom dawning strikes old Error's sway,
And the light breaks, and the long-waiting soul
Greeteth her blissful goal.

It is translations of this quality which make of Mr. More's little book a contribution to general literature. At the same time, its success, and the success of other work done in the same spirit, will serve as a measure of the legitimate interest taken in this country in the thought of the Far East.

INTERPRETING INDIA TO THE WEST[1]

I

BUDDHISM, as is well known, has practically disappeared from the land of its origin. The older and more authentic form of the doctrine known as the Hīnayāna, or Little Vehicle, is found today chiefly in Ceylon, Burma, and Siam; the less authentic form of the doctrine known as the Mahāyāna, or Great Vehicle, which is less a religion than a system of religions, is found chiefly in Tibet, China, and Japan. Doctor Coomaraswamy has undertaken to give an account of both forms of the doctrine as well as to sketch the development of Buddhist art through the ages. His volume may be found useful by those who wish to get a first rapid impression of a vast and difficult subject. But from this point of view it is only a compilation, and the author does not claim anything more for it. His book, he says, 'is designed not as an addition to our already overburdened libraries of information, but as a definite contribution to the philosophy of life.' It is as such that I propose to consider it. Most learned treatments of Buddhist philosophy in the Occident have a bad twist of some kind, and most popular

[1] *The Nation*, October 18, 1917. Review of *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism*, by Ananda Coomaraswamy.

allusions to the subject may be dismissed as absurd. Doctor Coomaraswamy had a chance to clear up a great deal of misunderstanding. One is disquieted, however, at the very start by his choice of epigraphs from Jacob Boehme, William Blake, Walt Whitman, etc. Perhaps the best way of setting forth what Buddha is would be to show in what respects he is not like the persons whose names appear in this list of epigraphs. The last epigraph from Buddha himself is indeed appropriate if only as an explanation of the inappropriateness of the list as a whole: 'Profound, O Vaccha, is this doctrine, recondite and difficult of comprehension, good, excellent and not to be reached by mere reasoning, subtile and intelligible only to the wise; and it is a hard doctrine for you to learn who belong to another sect . . . and sit at the feet of another teacher.' Doctor Coomaraswamy seems at times to hold a brief for Vedāntist as opposed to Buddhist teachings. He is at no time, however, a violent partisan of this 'other sect,' and the root of the difficulty is not entirely here: it is at least equally in a subtle infidelity not merely to Buddhism, but to the Vedānta itself, and in general to the spirit of ancient India. In this respect his book may be taken as typical of a whole class of books that have purported of recent years to interpret India to the West.

If one wishes to get at the true spirit of ancient India one needs to reflect on the definition of the divine as the 'inner check' which so struck Emerson when he came upon it in Colebrooke's essay on the Vedānta.

More than any other this phrase supplies the key to ancient Indian thought; this thought is in general highly astringent; it conceives, that is, of the good not as we do in terms of expansion, but in terms of concentration. It would seem indeed a matter of some importance whether one identifies the 'spirit that says no' with God, or, like Faust, identifies this spirit with the devil. The whole passage in which Faust thus glorifies expansion, and which M. Boutroux relates to recent German apologies for war, is in close accord with one side of Jacob Boehme, with whom Doctor Coomaraswamy is fond of comparing Buddha. Boehme is known to be a chief influence on another of Doctor Coomaraswamy's favorites, William Blake, in whom the tendency to denounce the restrictive principle as evil and to identify the good with expansive desire reaches a climax. Blake's saying that 'desires suppressed breed pestilence' has, says Doctor Coomaraswamy, been confirmed by psychoanalysis. It is rather odd that, thinking thus, he should wish to write a book on Buddha at all; for more perhaps than any other teacher, ancient or modern, Buddha proceeds on the opposite assumption. Let one read together Blake's 'Marriage of Heaven and Hell' and the Buddhist *Dhammapada* if one wishes to get about the most complete contrast in the history of human thought.

If Buddha was like other ancient Hindu teachers in stressing the inner check, he was unlike them in combining this astringency with an extremely positive temper. In the face of the sixty-two systems of phi-

losophy current in his time he declared the inanity of metaphysics. He looked with disfavor on those who had 'views.' 'The Tathāgata (Buddha) has no theories.' One is not to trust anything that is not immediate and experimental. 'In this little fathom-long mortal frame with its perceptions and imaginings is, I proclaim, the world.' Here is the Oriental equivalent of the fateful maxim that man is the measure of all things which was debated by the Socratic group and the sophists. It is in general in the Greece of this period that one should seek the true parallels to Buddha, and not among romantics like Blake. In his solution of the critical problem (for that is what is involved in the maxim that man is the measure of all things) the Greek of whom Buddha most reminds one is Aristotle. Buddha is like Aristotle in his intensely analytical bent; and one may perhaps best clear up certain current confusions about Buddha by comparing this greatest of Eastern analysts with the master analyst of the West. The essentially Buddhistic act is the rigorous tracing of moral cause and effect. It was by an act of analysis, namely, by following the chain of evil, link by link, back to its beginning in ignorance, that Buddha attained supreme enlightenment. In tracing evil to ignorance Buddha is at one with Socrates and Plato, but in refusing therefore to identify the opposite of ignorance, knowledge, with virtue, he agrees with Aristotle. One may know the right, but fail to do it. What stands in the way, says Buddha, is the most subtle and deadly of all the sins — moral

indolence, the tendency to drift passively with temperament and desire. Man's laziness cannot, from the positive point of view, be considered merely an aspect of his ignorance: man is ignorant *and* lazy.

If moral laziness is for the Buddhist the chief vice, it follows that the opposite is the supreme virtue. A Brahmin once came to Buddha and, remarking that he was in haste, asked Buddha whether he could not summarize his doctrine in one word. Buddha replied that he could and that the one word was strenuousness (*appamāda*). His last charge to his disciples was to practice this virtue unremittingly. A man should cease to drift with the stream of impulse and take himself in hand. 'By rousing himself, by strenuousness, by restraint and control the wise man may make for himself an island that no flood can overwhelm.' *Appamāda* may also be rendered vigilance, for the Buddhist agrees with Goethe that 'error stands in the same relation to truth as sleeping to waking.' 'Strenuous among the slothful,' says Buddha, 'awake among the sleepers, the wise man advances like a racer leaving behind the hack.'

II

If Buddha is positive like Aristotle, he is not positive in the more recent sense that has been given to this word in the Occident. Diderot, for example, who represents another aspect of the great expansive movement I have already noticed in Blake, lays down the principle that 'everything is experimental in man,' and

then argues from this principle that the notion of a double nature in man — on the one hand, an element of expansive desire and, on the other, a power of control over this desire, 'the civil war in the cave' as he terms it — is 'artificial' and to be got rid of if one wishes to be vital and 'natural.' Buddha also affirms that everything is experimental in man, but in opposition to Diderot starts with the 'civil war in the cave' on the ground that nothing is more experimental: one does not have to take it on authority or tradition but merely to look within. Buddha seems to have the facts on his side: nothing is so vital and immediate as the act of self-control by which one rises above the temperamental level. To anyone who considers the matter coolly the contemporary pragmatist who professes to be all athirst for immediacy and to be satisfied with nothing short of the experimental, and is at the same time for living in a 'universe with the lid off,' must needs seem a bit farcical.

The purpose of the strenuous war on impulse and temperament that Buddha urges appears in another brief summary that he once gave of his doctrine: 'Sorrow and the release from sorrow.' Buddhism is in its essence a psychology of desire in its bearing on happiness and unhappiness. A man's wisdom or unwisdom is determined by the quality of his desires or, what amounts to the same thing, by his estimate of pleasure and pain. 'What fools say is pleasure,' Buddha declares, 'that the noble say is pain; what fools say is pain, that the noble know is pleasure. Behold a thing

difficult to understand; here the ignorant are confounded.' If one would be numbered among the noble and at the same time escape from evil, one must put away the desire for the less enduring in favor of the more enduring, and ultimately put away altogether the desire for the transient in favor of what is no longer subject to birth and decay. This aspiration to rise above the impermanent is the central aspiration of the Buddhist. For example, even the highest heavens finally pass away, and so desire for heaven is dismissed by him as 'low.'

Men have various ways, according to Buddha, of lulling themselves into a false security, of imagining they have attained the permanent when they have not. One of the chief ways is to build up speculatively a world of supposed entities and essences behind the flux. In his disposition to see in such speculations only nesting-places for metaphysical conceit Buddha approximates to what would be known in the Occident as an extreme nominalism. But because he is averse to 'animism' and absolutist metaphysic one must not therefore see in him, with Mrs. Rhys-Davids,[1] a sort of precursor of Bergson. If Buddha saw so deeply into the nature of the flux it was only in order to escape it. 'Escape from the flux' is indeed one of the definitions of Nirvāna (*bhavanirodho nibbānam*); whereas, not only Bergson, but many others who now pass for philosophers, rejoice in novelty for its own sake, would ask nothing better than to whirl forever on the wheel of

[1] In her *Buddhism* (Home University Library).

change, and have built up into a metaphysic their own intoxication with the future.

If Buddha will not hear of a soul or self in the sense of a metaphysical entity, he takes as his starting point, as we have seen, the psychological fact which the philosopher of the flux is seeking to ignore — the presence, namely, in man not merely of one but of two selves and the conflict between them ('the civil war in the cave'), the opposition as one may say between an element of change known experimentally to the individual as vital impulse (*élan vital*), and a permanent element known to him experimentally as vital control (*frein vital*). The escape from sorrow can come only as a result of the strenuous exercise of the principle of control. No man and no god can be strenuous for another. Salvation by faith appears, and in very extravagant forms, among the Mahāyānists, but all that is meant in the older doctrine by faith in Buddha is faith to 'enter the path.' 'Self is the lord of self. Who else can be the lord?' 'You yourself must make the effort. The Buddhas are only teachers.'

Buddha is evidently at the furthest remove from us. We are encouraging the individual to shift responsibility — especially upon society. Government is now expected, as someone has phrased it, to put wings on everybody. Wings, if wings there are to be, must, according to Buddha, be of one's own growing. No one has ever brought home responsibility more sternly to the individual, not merely for what he is to be, but for what he is. The law of karma, in virtue of which

Buddha thus extends responsibility backwards as well as forwards, is, he warns us, 'unthinkable'; it must be perceived and can be perceived completely only by a Buddha. Even to the non-Buddhist, however, glimpses may be vouchsafed into the dark backward of time on the attainment of supernormal memory. A man may then perceive, in some measure at least, how he has reaped the fruits of his own sowing through successive births.

Since a man must look to himself for salvation, let him cherish himself — the self that exercises control. To be thus self-regarding, says Deussen, echoing a Mahāyānist charge against the older doctrine, is to be selfish. The same charge holds in any case against Aristotle, for whom also the final motive in ethics is true self-love. That the word self is ambiguous is undeniable. The author of a recent book on Ibsen asserts that the lines 'This above all, to thine own self be true,' etc., anticipate our modern gospel of self-expression; but it should be clear from the context that Polonius is a decayed Aristotelian and not a precursor of Ibsen. What both Buddha and Aristotle understand by self is the permanent self. Anything in a man that is impermanent, says Buddha, that is here today and gone tomorrow, cannot properly be called a self; and he carries through unflinchingly his programme of putting aside the less permanent in favor of the more permanent. To be a lover of one's self in the Buddhist sense is, so far as the ego is concerned, to be selfless. Buddha does not encourage any maceration of the

flesh, but the dying to the ordinary self that he recommends goes at least as far as the most austere Christianity. The joy of not saying 'I am,' on which Buddha is so fond of dwelling, will always be a very cryptic joy to the worldling. The Occidental, indeed, is inclined to doubt whether, when Buddha has finished purifying the self of impermanence, anything remains. The Buddhist himself refuses to discuss metaphysically what is left after the 'extinction' or 'going out' (the literal meaning of Nirvāna) of the three deadly sins — lust, ill-will, and delusion. But on Nirvāna as a psychological fact, a matter not of future but of present experience, he has much to say. Nothing is more foreign to his temper than to look before and after, and pine for what is not. Professor Rhys-Davids, who has spent a lifetime in close contact with the original documents, insists on the 'exuberant optimism' of the early Buddhists. The phrase would seem to call for some explanation. The true Buddhist, like the true Christian, takes a gloomy view of the unconverted man; but, though holding that life quantitatively is bad, he is, regarding a certain quality of life, unmistakably buoyant. Herein he differs from the stoic, with whom he has been compared. Though keenly analytic, he is not a rationalist, but an enthusiast. His enthusiasm, however, is not of the emotional type with which we are familiar, but of the type that has been defined as exalted peace; for to pass from the less permanent to the more permanent is to pass from the less peaceful to the more peaceful. The problem of

happiness and the problem of peace are found at last to be inseparable. One should grant the Buddhist his Nirvāna if one is willing to grant the Christian his peace that passeth understanding. Peace, as Buddha conceives it, is an active and even an ecstatic thing, the reward, not of passiveness, but of the utmost effort. 'If one man conquer in battle a thousand times a thousand men,' he says, 'and if another conquer himself, he is the greater conqueror.' Of him who is victorious in this warfare it is written: 'His thought is quiet, quiet are his word and deed, when he has obtained freedom by true wisdom, when he has thus become a quiet man.' Buddha himself seems to speak from an immeasurable depth of calm, a calm which is without the slightest trace of languor.

III

We are at present very much taken up with schemes for promoting peace among men collectively, at the same time that we hold a philosophy of life that tends to develop in men individually the utmost degree of psychic restlessness. Give a bootblack half the universe, according to Carlyle, and he will soon be quarreling with the owner of the other half. He will if he is a very temperamental bootblack. The Buddhist therefore takes hold of the problem at this end; like Aristotle he looks upon the 'infinite' of expansive desire which is glorified by Blake and the romanticists as bad, and so seeks to set bounds to the reaching out of the ordinary or temperamental self for more and ever for

more. The true drama of war and peace, as he views it, is enacted in the breast of the little 'fathom-long' creature; whatever prevails there extends in widening circles into society. All other forms of war are reflections, near or remote, of 'the civil war in the cave.'

The practical workings of Buddhism in this matter of war and peace may be illustrated interestingly from Indian history. About 273 B.C. Asoka, grandson of that Chandragupta who defeated in the Punjab and drove back the Macedonian garrisons left by Alexander the Great, succeeded to a realm more extensive than modern British India. He had it in his power to drench the world in blood. He actually made a beginning — and then came the conversion to Buddhism. The result may be told in his own words; for a number of the edicts [1] which he caused to be engraved on rocks or pillars throughout his vast empire still remain. In one of his rock edicts he tells of his 'profound sorrow' at the hundreds of thousands who had been slain in his war on the Kalingas as well as at the misery that had been brought upon a multitude of non-combatants. 'If a hundredth or a thousandth part of these were now to suffer the same fate it would be matter of regret to his Majesty.' A mighty emperor who not only repented of his lust of dominion, but had his repentance cut into the rock for the instruction of future ages — this under existing circumstances is something to pon-

[1] Translations of the rock and pillar edicts will be found in *Asoka, the Buddhist Emperor of India*, by Vincent A. Smith (2d edition, 1909).

der on. In his own words, Asoka wished to substitute for the reverberation of the war-drum the reverberation of the law of righteousness. He labored so effectively for some thirty years to extend the faith that his rôle in Buddhism is often compared to that of Constantine in Christianity. The comparison suggested by his personal character is with Marcus Aurelius. The difference between the Buddhist and the Stoic temper appears in the last word of a sentence in the same Kalinga edict from which I have just quoted: 'His Majesty desires that all animate beings should have security, self-control, peace of mind, and *joyousness*.' The practical and positive spirit of the Sākya sage survived in India at least to the time of Asoka. 'Let small and great exert themselves,' he says. 'Let all joy be in effort.' So far as we can judge at this distance, Asoka's life was a miracle of effort in every sense of the word, but the effort that he especially prized, as he tells us, was inner effort, the effort that is shown in meditation.

To be strenuous in Buddha's sense is, as a matter of fact, to meditate. Here again one should observe the parallel to Aristotle. The end, according to Aristotle, is the chief thing of all, and the end of ends is happiness. One becomes happy only as one moves from the changeful toward the peaceful and the permanent, and this ascent can be accomplished only by effort according to the special law of man's nature, only, that is, by right meditation; so that Aristotle's final definition of happiness is a 'contemplative working.' Medieval

Christianity rightly recognized the kinship between Aristotle's 'life of vision' and its own ideal. If Jesus preferred Mary to Martha, it was not because Mary was more stagnant than Martha, but because she was more meditative and therefore more peaceful. Buddha is more exclusively preoccupied with meditation than Aristotle, and carries it further. Buddha indeed may be defined as a very unemotional person who put an analytical keenness that reminds one of Aristotle into the service of a type of religious insight that, tested by its fruits, reminds one of Christianity. For Buddhism and Christianity, which are often so disconcertingly far apart on the doctrinal side, confirm one another in practice. According to Saint Paul the 'fruits of the spirit' are 'love, joy, peace, long suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, self-control.' According to Asoka, these fruits are 'compassion, liberality, truth, purity, gentleness, and saintliness.' Asoka's list may be less perfect than that of Paul, but it surely points in the same direction.

IV

I have been dwelling so much on Buddha's idea of strenuousness or spiritual exertion because we shall thus best be put on our guard against the Western tendency to convert this extraordinarily alert and masculine figure into a heavy-eyed, pessimistic dreamer. Mr. Chesterton, for example, invites us to consider the contrast between the sheer inertia of the Buddhist saint and the devouring vitality of the Christian saint

as the two types are represented in art. 'The Buddhist,' he says, 'is looking with a peculiar intentness inwards. The Christian is staring with a frantic intentness outwards.' There are no doubt saints and saints. A few years ago the London papers published a dispatch from India to the following effect: 'A new saint has appeared in the Swāt Valley. The police are after him.' But a saint, whether Buddhist or Christian, who knows his business as a saint is rightly meditative and in direct proportion to the depth of his meditation is the depth of his peace. According to an authority that Mr. Chesterton is bound to respect, the kingdom of heaven is within us. It would be interesting to hear Mr. Chesterton explain how the saint is going to find that which is within by 'staring with a frantic intentness outwards.' Not being able, like many others, to distinguish between religion and romanticism, Mr. Chesterton has succeeded in maligning at the same time both Buddhism and Christianity.

If we keep in mind the Buddhistic or Aristotelian idea of meditation, we shall also be put on our guard against Doctor Coomaraswamy's perversion of his subject of which I spoke at the outset, and which is also in its way a romantic perversion. He does not discriminate sufficiently between meditation and pseudo-meditation, between genuine philosophy and religion and the primitivistic parody of philosophy and religion. 'The mysterious path leads inwards,' says Novalis — but fails to add that there is in the inner life itself an all-important parting of the ways. On the

one hand is the ascending path of insight and discrimination. Those who take it may be termed the spiritual athletes. On the other hand is the descending path towards the subrational followed by those who court the confused reverie that comes from the breaking down of barriers and the blurring of distinctions and who are ready to forego purpose in favor of 'spontaneity'; and these may be termed the cosmic loafers. Contrast the 'vision' of a Dante, with its clear-cut scale of moral values from the peak of heaven to the pit of hell, with the 'vision' of a Walt Whitman (in his *Song of Myself*) in which not merely men and women, good, bad, and indifferent, but 'elder, mullein, and pokeweed,' are all viewed on the same level in virtue of what the pantheist is pleased to call love. Whitman's line, 'Objects gross and the unseen soul are one,' which Doctor Coomaraswamy quotes with approval, is almost inconceivably remote in spirit from early Buddhism or any philosophy of the inner check. Pantheistic reverie, with its relaxation of control and its running together of the planes of being, has developed in the last century or so in the Occident into a vast system of sham spirituality.

Diffusive reverie of this kind may be very poetical and artistic and has no doubt a place on the recreative side of life; but as a substitute for firm masculine purpose, for *work*, according to either the human or the natural law, it is simply debilitating. Nothing is more alien in any case to the true spirit of Buddha. Doctor Coomaraswamy, admitting as much, concludes that

Buddha was only a psychologist and not a 'mystic' like Jesus — and Nietzsche; for we learn elsewhere in his volume that Nietzsche was only 'the latest of the mystics.' These weird collocations of names, which abound in a whole theosophical literature that has been appearing of late years, seem to appeal to a certain type of half-educated person who wishes to enjoy a sense of vast spirituality with a minimum expenditure of intellect and moral effort.

Something may, as a matter of fact, be said for Doctor Coomaraswamy's idea that a general mobilization of the sages is now needed as an offset to other forms of mobilizing that have been in progress in the Occident; but here, if anywhere, severe scrutiny should be exercised over the quality of the recruits. Otherwise, we shall presently see, as in Doctor Coomaraswamy's book, the tremendously strenuous Buddha lined up with the cosmic loafer, Walt Whitman, and Nietzsche enrolled with Jesus among the 'mystics.' It is well that India, after her ancient wont, should 'let the legions thunder past and plunge in thought again,' but her broodings are not likely to be of much avail if divorced from the keen discrimination that is so conspicuous in her greatest teacher. Hindus may still exist who are in the true line of descent from the spiritual athletes of their race, but in that case they are giving no sign of themselves to the outer world. Those who are giving sign of themselves reveal an affinity with a type very familiar to the Occident — the aesthete who assumes an apocalyptic pose.

We cannot afford to turn the values of the inner life over to the aesthete, nor in general to the primitivist — and the East has had its primitivists from the early Chinese Taoists down to Tagore — who preaches a 'wise passiveness.' To be energetic according to the natural law and passive according to the human law, to combine, that is, material purpose with spiritual drifting — and there is more than a suggestion of just that combination in our contemporary life — may prove a lame solution of the only problem that finally matters — the problem of happiness. But, though we need to act on ourselves as well as on the outer world, to be wisely strenuous in short, it does not follow that we should, as some [1] are now trying to persuade us, become Buddhists. Buddha and his early followers were, with all their cool analysis, pure supernaturalists; they aimed to scale the ultimate heights of being, to attune their ears to 'sweet airs breathed from far past Indra's sky.' That puts rather a wide gap between them and us who have been tending toward the naturalistic level. If we wish to rise above this level, we have our own inspired teachers in the West. One may learn from these teachers as well as from Buddha the relation that exists between concentration, meditation, and peace, on the one hand, and, on the other, between expansiveness and war — whether with one's self ('the civil war in the cave') or with others.

[1] Paul Dahlke, *Buddhism and Science*, 1913. A. David, *Le Modernisme Bouddhiste*, 1911, etc.

But though Buddhism cannot take the place of our Western wisdom, it may be used to supplement and support it, especially by those who are too positive to receive this wisdom on a purely traditional basis. The danger is that one may become positive and critical enough to throw off outer restraint, but not positive and critical enough to achieve inner restraint. A Buddha and an Aristotle, on the other hand, not only raise the critical problem, they carry it through. In the man who is only half positive and critical the element of desire tends to run wild. His wants are not merely numerous, but often incompatible. He wants, for example, to be purely expansive — this, he holds, is to be vital and dynamic and even 'creative' — and at the same time he wants peace and brotherhood. But history teaches, if it teaches anything, that what must prevail in a purely expansive world is the law of cunning and the law of force. To seek to combine peace and brotherhood with expansive living — this indeed is the supreme chimera of the Occident at the present time. It is in contrast with the sophistries and subterfuges, whether of the intellect or emotions, by which the expansionist of a certain type glosses over the incompatibility of his desires that Buddhism shows to advantage. Buddha deals with the law of control, the special law of human nature, in a spirit as positive and dispassionate as that in which a Newton deals with the law of gravitation. If a man wishes peace and brotherhood, he must pay the price — he must rise above the naturalistic level; and this he can do only by

overcoming his moral indolence, only by applying the inner check to temperamental impulse. 'All salutary conditions (*dhammā*),' says Buddha, 'have their root in strenuousness.'

THE PROBLEM OF STYLE IN A DEMOCRACY[1]

STYLE, in the sense in which I am planning to use the word, is, like most other things that are worth while, the result of a difficult mediation. It goes without saying that a man's style should have about it something highly individual; but it is at least equally important that it should have about it something structural, and this structural quality can arise only from the subordination of the uniqueness that each one of us receives as a free gift of nature to some larger whole. Mr. Carl Sandburg is plainly using the word style in a very one-sided fashion when he writes:

> Go on talking.
> Only don't take my style away.
> It's my face.
> Maybe no good, but anyway, my face.

As Mr. Brownell has shown in his book on *The Genius of Style*, this is not what Buffon meant when he said that the style is the man. As a matter of fact Buffon not only delivered his Discourse on Style before the Academy, but he was himself very much in the academic tradition. He did not associate style primarily with the urge to self-expression, but rather, in his own phrase, with the 'order and movement that one puts

[1] Address before The American Academy of Arts and Letters, November 10, 1932. *Academy Publication* No. 79.

into one's thoughts.' Style in this sense has been defined by Mr. Brownell as that 'factor of a work of art which preserves in every part some sense of the form of the whole.' Buffon is so ready indeed to sacrifice the local and the particular to the total effect that he would have us describe things only 'by the most general terms,' a doctrine that is pseudo-classic rather than genuinely classic, and that led at all events to the romantic protest in the name of local color.

In general in the period that has elapsed since the eighteenth century there has been a tendency to favor the picturesque variety and profusion of nature and to regard as arbitrary and artificial the imposition of any pattern upon this profusion; we incline in particular to regard any attempt thus to restrict and limit the native luxuriance of language as mere impoverishment. The French Academy, on the contrary, has assumed traditionally toward language an attitude that is at the utmost remove from our cult of naturalness and spontaneity. It is in no small measure as a result of the efforts of the Academy, especially in the seventeenth century, that French is probably more than any other language, ancient or modern, a work of conscious art. The Academy was in the intention of its founders only one organ of a society that had got together (worked out a convention, that is, in the literal sense) as to what is truly human and distinguished; that had, in short, achieved style in a very different meaning of the word from that given to it by Mr. Sandburg. The standard of good usage set up by

the Academy in its Dictionary reflected the views of a comparatively small social group at Paris, many of the members of which were affiliated with the court. The men of letters, including the Academicians, met the aristocrats in the drawing-rooms and discussed with them problems of style, especially perhaps in their relation to choice of vocabulary. These discussions frequently determined the decisions of the Academy. It is not surprising that those who belonged to this inner circle came to feel that they had power of life and death over words. 'If the word *féliciter* is not yet French,' writes one of the ladies of the drawing-rooms, 'it will be next year, and M. de Vaugelas has promised me not to be opposed to it when we solicit its reception.'

It has been said of the early Academicians that they weighed words as a miser might weigh gold on his balances. In general no question of literary technique was too minute to escape their attention. Thus the Academy, we are told, devoted several weeks to a microscopic scrutiny of an ode of Malherbe's, and even then without getting beyond the first stanzas. It undoubtedly laid itself open to the charge of pushing its cult of purity of style to the point of purism. Fénelon complains that in their reaction from certain dubious verbal coinages of Ronsard and the Pléiade, Malherbe and his successors in the Academy inclined to the opposite extreme at the risk of 'impoverishing, desiccating, and unduly restricting our language.' Yet the Academy in spite of its tendency to be meticulous,

to grant too much to art and not enough to nature, can be seen in the retrospect to have been one of the agencies that not only prepared the way for the great classic age of Louis XIV, but gave to the French language the stylistic superiority that it has retained in some measure even to the present day. 'Ah! do not say,' writes Renan, 'that they achieved nothing, those obscure wits of the seventeenth century, whose lives were spent in passing judgment upon words and weighing syllables. They achieved a masterpiece — the French language. They rendered an inappreciable service to the human spirit by creating the Dictionary, by preserving us from that undefined liberty which is fatal to languages. . . . A man has really attained to his full maturity of mind only when he has come to see that the Dictionary of the Academy contains all that is needed for the expression of every thought, however delicate or novel or refined it may be.'

Renan displays for the Dictionary of the Academy a respect that was becoming even in his own day somewhat exceptional. A conflict between old and new had grown up, in language as elsewhere, that Sainte-Beuve sums up in two words: court and democracy. 'The present moment,' he continues, 'is in certain respects the exact opposite of that of Vaugelas' (who was, you may remember, one of the chief arbiters of speech in the early French Academy); 'then everything tended to purity and polish; today everything seems to be moving in the opposite direction; . . . then all doubtful words were asking to get out of the language; today all

plebeian, practical, technical, and even adventurous words are clamorously forcing their way into the language.' The Frenchman of the Old Régime was no doubt at times too narrow and exclusive in his selectiveness. Another and far graver error is to seek, like the equalitarian democrat, to get rid of the selective and aristocratic principle altogether. The cult of the common man that the equalitarian democrat encourages, is hard to distinguish from the cult of commonness. This type of democracy seemed to Scherer to threaten nothing less than 'the corruption of that magnificent language that three centuries of great writers had brought to an incomparable degree of perfection.' This deterioration in purity of speech, this 'crisis in French' (*crise du français*), as it was later to be called, Scherer already ascribes to the 'invasion of Americanism.' From that day to this Europeans have been wont to associate everything that has made for loss of distinction, for the breakdown of cultural standards, with the baleful influence of America. We hear, to quote the titles of recent books, of *America the Menace*, and even of *America the Cancer*. Señor Ortega y Gasset is surely right in refusing to make America solely responsible for the emergence of what he terms the mass man. Europe has been breaking with its own past, he says in substance, on lines that would have meant the emergence of this man, America or no America. *El hombre medio*, or mass man, as Señor Ortega y Gasset defines him, is ready to profit by the immense machinery of power and material

comfort built up with the aid of physical science. This machinery he mistakenly supposes to be as much a part of the inevitable order of things as the succession of the seasons. At the same time he is lazily self-indulgent, refusing to discipline himself to the standards that are necessary for the attainment of style and of distinction in general. His psychology in short is that of the spoiled child.

We are coming here to an aspect of the problem of style distinctly different from the one I have been discussing for the most part thus far. Style calls not only for fine craftsmanship — the verbal purity, for example, on which the early French Academy put such emphasis: it also bears a relation to one's total outlook on life. There is evidently a balance to be maintained between technique or outer form and inner form or substance. The failure to maintain any such balance is at bottom what Plato attacked in the sophists. One is sometimes tempted to look on certain contemporary professors of English who instruct ingenuous youth in the art of expressing itself before it has anything to express as in the direct line of descent from a Gorgias or a Protagoras. An undue preoccupation with the rhetorical niceties of speech seems to have been a weakness not merely of the sophists but of the Greeks in general. 'The spirit of rhetoric,' says Jowett, 'was soon to spread over all Hellas; and Plato with prophetic insight may have seen from afar, the great literary waste or dead level or interminable marsh into which Greek literature was soon to disappear.' Cer-

tain exceptions need to be made to this statement. I should make an exception above all for the treatise of Longinus *On the Sublime*; or perhaps I should say the treatise of the so-called Longinus on the so-called Sublime. For, according to modern scholars, it is not by the historical Longinus, who lived in the third century A.D., but by a Great Unknown of the first century of our era. It is again scarcely on the Sublime in the sense that word has come to have since the eighteenth century. It actually deals with the sources of elevation or distinction in writing; it is in short a treatise on style, probably the best in any language. It was so regarded by Boileau, himself a living embodiment of the conception of style that had been worked out with the co-operation of the Academy; as translated by Boileau (1674) it exercised a salutary influence on French literature during its great creative period. The treatise maintains an admirable balance between the two main elements in style. It deals in minute detail with craftsmanship; at the same time it insists that literary excellence must arise primarily from loftiness of spirit. Longinus mentions as especially incompatible with this loftiness the love of money and the love of pleasure, vices that seem to have been rampant in his day as they certainly are in ours. I incline indeed to the belief that we are living in the most un-Longinian of epochs. What would seem to be lacking in an almost unparalleled degree, not merely in contemporary literature but in contemporary life, is the note of nobility. According to a recent English writer, many

of the damned in Dante's Hell have a higher sense of human dignity than the race of mortals now above ground. Here again Europeans have been indulging unduly their penchant for making a scapegoat of America. Matthew Arnold already charged Americans with a special disregard of the admonition of the apostle to seek 'whatsoever things are elevated.' Without attempting a full discussion of so difficult a topic, I am willing to express the conviction that the present contagion of commonness is not to be ascribed exclusively to this country. It results rather from a vast movement, primarily English in origin, that has been sweeping over the whole of the western world and even invading the East, a movement that in one of its main aspects has been sentimental and in the other utilitarian. The sentimentalist is prone to make of a diffusive, unselective sympathy a substitute for all the other virtues. Even in this matter of elevation he seems to be looking down rather than up. Gray, for example, dreams of the 'mute, inglorious' Miltons who are probably sleeping in country churchyards, because 'chill Penury repressed their noble rage.' A large section of the class to which Gray refers has since risen well above the level of penury, but there has been no appreciable increase in the number of Miltons. It is difficult, to be sure, to draw the line between the sentimental denial of selection and the legitimate desire to give to selection a broader basis. If Gray is sentimental in his *Elegy*, Burke is not sentimental when he says that he does not wish 'to confine power,

authority and distinction to blood and names and titles.... There is no qualification... but virtue and wisdom, actual or presumptive. Wherever they are actually found, they have, in whatever state, condition, profession, or trade, the passport of Heaven to human place and honor.'

For the natural aristocracy, as Burke terms it, that might result from the broadening of the basis of selection a mere aristocracy of birth is at best a clumsy substitute. It may be doubted, however, whether we have been achieving in a satisfactory degree this difficult mediation between the aristocratic and democratic principles, whether we are doing as much, for example, to maintain standards of style and good taste as was accomplished by the older aristocracy. Our intellectuals have been devoting much energy of late years to denouncing 'Puritanism' and the 'genteel tradition.' They might have been better employed in considering how far the triumph of the utilitarian-sentimental view of life over the humanistic and religious traditions of the Occident has been in the general interest of civilization. The utilitarians and sentimentalists have prevailed especially in the field of education, above all in this country. Let us reflect on what this means in the case of the most renowned of living American philosophers, Professor John Dewey, whose influence is all-pervasive in our education and extends even to China and Bolshevist Russia. Professor Dewey does not hesitate to identify experience with scientific experiment. It follows that im-

mense areas of what the past had taken to be genuine experience, either religious or humanistic, experience that has been transmitted to us in consecrated masterpieces, must, inasmuch as it is not subject to test in a laboratory, be dismissed as mere moonshine.

A utilitarian philosophy like that of Professor Dewey will be found to lead as a rule to the enthronement of the specialist. The specialist who burrows ever more deeply into a sub-segment of some field of knowledge without even relating his investigations to the totality of this field, is likely to fall far short of style as Buffon conceived it. The writer or artist who inbreeds his temperamental urges in the name of self-expression is also a specialist in his fashion. The merit of the French Academy from the start was to oppose the idea of proportionateness to everything that seemed to it unduly partial and one-sided. Its point of view was in short that of the *honnête homme*. I am aware of all that may be alleged against this older type of humanist: In his fear of specialized knowledge he often fell into superficiality, his good form verged at times upon formalism, he was prone to confound the decorous with the merely genteel. One should not, however, reject the underlying conception along with its perversions. The idea that one should strive to glimpse the total symmetry of life and with reference to this symmetry to maintain some degree of poise and centrality is in itself a precious one. 'What should be regretted,' says Renan in his essay on the French Academy, 'is the *honnête homme* in the sense at-

tached to this phrase by the seventeenth century, I mean the man free from the narrow views of every profession, having neither the manners nor the intellectual bias of any class.'

You will notice that Renan's commendation of the *honnête homme* has a reminiscent flavor. The French Academy is, however, doing something even today to maintain the standards that make for style against the encroachments of an equalitarian democracy. Is it possible for an academy to perform a similar function in America? No member of this Academy is, I fancy, oversanguine as to what it may accomplish under American conditions. There is the initial difficulty of establishing an effective contact with the public in a country so vast and so decentralized. Voltaire, we are told, once replied to a delegation from a provincial academy which informed him that their academy was the eldest daughter of the French Academy: 'Yes, gentlemen, eldest daughter, virtuous daughter who has never got herself talked about.' An academy as a matter of fact needs to get itself talked about, though not of course by a resort to the more trivial arts of publicity. The French Academy attracted attention to itself from the outset by handing down a judgment on Corneille's *Cid*. Sainte-Beuve regretted that the Academy had not handed down other similar judgments, especially in the case of works that were being widely discussed and that divided public opinion. The Academy has just published the grammar that was part of its original design after a delay of three cen-

turies; so that it may yet put forth some modern equivalent of its *Sentiments sur le Cid*. To make an American application: In his address before the Swedish Academy in 1930, Mr. Sinclair Lewis expressed with the utmost candor his views about the American Academy. It might conceivably return the compliment and express *its* views about the writings of Mr. Sinclair Lewis, not in a spirit of satire, I scarcely need say, but on the contrary, with the utmost impartiality of which it is capable; or the Academy might go farther and issue from time to time, perhaps in collaboration with the National Institute, a survey of the contemporary American achievement in art and literature. A survey of this kind would no doubt be seriously mistaken in some of its critical estimates; in any case it would be received in certain quarters with ridicule. If the history of the French Academy proves anything, it is that the last thing an academy need fear is ridicule. The French Academy has been copiously ridiculed almost from the year of its foundation. If it ceased to be ridiculed, it would be a sign, one is tempted to say, that the French no longer took it seriously. One should add that many of those who have been most epigrammatic at the expense of the Academy have themselves become later model academicians.

This Academy should therefore without fear of ridicule take any measures that seem likely to extend its influence. It has been suggested that a practice of the French Academy which it might imitate is that of 'crowning' books of marked merit. Various other

devices have been developed, not merely by the French Academy but by the other four academies of the Institute, for aiding the public to assess the value of current achievement in their respective fields. Some of these devices might perhaps be adapted to American conditions. Any measures of this kind that the Academy may take in the future will after all only be in line with measures it has already taken. Like these past measures they will have as their end the encouragement of work, whether artistic or literary, that satisfies in some degree the twofold Longinian test, that combines, in other words, elevation of general conception with technical excellence. In this way the Academy may hope to contribute its mite to the solution of the problem of style in a democracy.

HUMANIST AND SPECIALIST[1]

MONTAIGNE narrates how he once met two travelers on the road to Bordeaux. One of the travelers, on being asked who the gentleman with him was, replied: 'He is not a gentleman but a grammarian, and I am a logician.' Montaigne, who often seems in his essays to be interested only in bestowing his humors upon us, to be the most airy and irresponsible of individualists, probably did more than any other man of his time to discredit pedantry and prepare the way for the humanistic discipline that was to prevail in France during the neo-classic period. The outstanding trait of the neo-classical humanist is his dislike of specialization, of everything that is suggestive of overemphasis and therefore of a loss of sense of proportion. This cult of a fine proportionateness was adopted by the polite society of the time and developed into the ideal of the *honnête homme* or gentleman who, according to La Rochefoucauld, 'does not pride himself on anything.' Montaigne had already said: 'The finest lives, to my thinking, are those that conform to the common model without anything astonishing or extravagant.' So far from being a specialist, the gentleman in this tradition is not even to use words that savor of some particular craft or profession. He is not to strive

[1] Address at the dedication of the Marston Hall of Languages, Brown University, October, 1926. *Brown University Papers*, III.

eagerly to be anything, not even to be a gentleman. The Chevalier de Méré, who did much to establish the new ideal, was nevertheless reproached for having displayed an 'apostolic zeal for good breeding.'

Among the enemies of this type of humanism must be numbered certain austere Christians. Pascal, for example, after having been initiated into the new politeness by Méré and others, finally rejected it because it did not seem to him to lift one sufficiently above worldliness. One could be a humanistic gentleman without having undergone conversion, the profound transformation of the inner man that Christianity requires. To a Christian like Pascal, who had received the illumination of grace, the *honnête homme* seemed cold and egoistic. Pascal was in his own way an enthusiast. The *honnête homme*, for his part, was not willing that his poise should be disturbed by any form of enthusiasm.

The real menace to the humanistic conception, however, was destined to come, not from religion, but from the advance of naturalism. Francis Bacon is already less interested in the man who aims at personal poise and all-roundness, than in the man who by some discovery or bit of positive information seems likely to promote what we should call nowadays the progress of humanity. The Baconian ideal of progress through the co-operation of specialists was promoted by the founding of the Royal Society in 1662. The members of the new society were commonly known as virtuosi. The virtuosi collected everything from med-

als to butterflies and stuffed crocodiles, and were endlessly ridiculed by the wits and humanists of the time for what seemed a random curiosity pursued at the expense of their sense of proportion. Pope, as you may remember, represents the virtuosi as paying homage to the goddess of dullness:

> Then thick as locusts black'ning all the ground,
> A tribe, with weeds and shells fantastic crown'd,
> Each with some wondrous gift approached the power,
> A nest, a toad, a fungus, or a flower.

A man consents to be a virtuoso, Pope insinuates, or as we should say, takes refuge in a specialty, only when he is incapable of any liberal use of the intelligence.

> The mind in metaphysics at a loss,
> May wander in a wilderness of moss:
> The head that turns at super-lunar things,
> Poised with a tail, may steer on Wilkins' wings.

Pope here glances forward, you will note, to our modern specialists in aviation.

La Bruyère in France paints an equivalent picture of 'the lover of insects; he makes new purchases of them daily; above all he is the first man in Europe for butterflies; he has butterflies of every size and color. What an unseasonable moment you choose to call on him! You find him plunged in bitter grief, in vexation and gloom, from which his whole family has to suffer. The reason is that he has had an irreparable loss. Approach, look at what he is showing you on his

finger, something which is lifeless and has just expired. It is a caterpillar, and what a caterpillar!' We can perhaps best measure the distance we have come since La Bruyère by the praise recently bestowed on the French naturalist, Fabre — that of being the 'Homer of insects.'

The virtuosi whom Pope and La Bruyère ridicule were in their own way enthusiasts, though their enthusiasm was of a very different type from that of Pascal and the Port-Royalists. Rousseau relates of his friend M. Mussard that he had come upon some fossil shells in digging the foundations of his house at Passy. He got so excited over his discovery and grew so interested in shells that he finally saw only shell marl in the whole universe. In Rousseau's phrase, he became a conchyliomaniac; as we should say, he was 'crazy' about shells. Rousseau did not deplore, as the *honnête homme* would have done, the resulting loss of sense of proportion. On the contrary, the new zest and relish that had come into M. Mussard's life seemed to him more than a compensation for any such loss. In general, men were coming to feel, about this time, that one should be free to develop one's own genius or native bent without having to discipline it, as the humanist desired, to some central model or law of decorum. At the same time, the humanistic point of view was being discredited by many of the very persons who professed to represent it. The polite forms and rules of etiquette that had been elaborated in the name of decorum seemed to be a mere meaningless obstacle to

the warm immediacy of feeling. Rousseau was able to maintain with some plausibility that decorum of the drawing-room type was only a mask for egoism. One could be an *honnête homme* or well-bred man, he complained, 'only by dint of being a rascal.' Feminine decorum seemed to have even less relation to real virtue. As far back as Brantôme in the sixteenth century, the term *honnête* as applied to woman reminds one at times of the comic song: 'Disposition shady, but a perfect lady.' Chesterfield himself, the chief English specimen of the neo-classic humanist and gentleman in his last phase, defined decorum ironically as the art of 'combining the solid enjoyments of vice with the useful appearances of virtue' — an art that was perhaps carried to its final perfection by Talleyrand, who was described by Napoleon as a 'silk stocking filled with mud.'

The chief concern of a gentleman of the type of Chesterfield is to avoid vulgarity. One becomes vulgar by anything that is too spontaneous and that therefore tends to disturb one's poise and dignity — for example, by either tears or laughter. The eighteenth-century partisans of the new spontaneity, by way of protest against this heartless restriction of the natural man, wept copiously on the slightest occasion. If Chesterfield were among us today, what he would probably find most offensive in us would not be our proneness to weep — we are far from the facile lachrymosity of the eighteenth century — but our thoughtless and uncontrolled laughter. 'In my mind,' he says,

'there is nothing so illiberal or so ill-bred as audible laughter.... I am sure that since I have had the full use of my reason, nobody has ever heard me laugh.'

In general, what strikes one is the extraordinarily large rôle that we have given to the element of feeling as compared with the place granted to this element by the traditional humanist. Our modern theory seems to be that one should be an enthusiastic specialist and at the same time escape from narrowness by sympathizing with others, each one of whom is likewise to be free to pursue enthusiastically his specialty. One form of expansive emotion, in short, is to be corrected by another. The *honnête homme*, or man of good breeding, on the other hand, was exclusive and select and did not as a rule cultivate a diffusive sympathy. To be sure, neo-classic humanists are not at one on this point. They vary from Montaigne, who says that 'natural pity has much power' over him, to La Rochefoucauld, who holds 'that one must limit oneself strictly to the showing of compassion and avoid most carefully the feeling of it.... It ought to be left to the common people who, never acting according to reason, need the spur of passion to make them do things.'

Nowadays, if we were asked to define the gentleman, perhaps the first thing we should mention is that the gentleman should be kindly and sympathetic and filled with the spirit of service. But one may be all these things, the traditional humanist would retort, and at the same time be quite lacking in distinction; and observation would seem to be on the side of the hu-

manist. It is only too possible to be perfectly good-natured and perfectly trivial. As a matter of fact, we have no desire to be distinguished in the traditional sense; we do not care to be inwardly poised and proportionate like the humanist at his best, nor even to be, like a Chesterfield, outwardly elegant and polished as a result of conformity to an accepted model. The distinguished person for us is rather the person who is exceptional and unique and superlative, who has pushed further than anyone else in some particular direction, and who, as a rule, has been too absorbed in attaining eminence in his specialty to consider this specialty in its relation to the total harmony of life. The specialist of this type is hardly likely to display the quietness and lowness of tone, the freedom from overemphasis, the unwillingness to 'pride himself on anything' of the traditional gentleman. On the contrary, he is usually willing that his superiority should be advertised and has even been known to display an itch for the limelight. The whole tendency is closely allied to our present passion for breaking records and doing stunts. For example, a young woman has her photograph inserted in the newspapers in the very act of winning a clam-eating contest. Harvard has been honored of late by the presence of a student who specializes in the eating of eggs; he has discouraged competition by dispatching forty-eight eggs in forty-one minutes. Almost everyone, if he searches assiduously enough, can discover some respect in which he is unique or at least exceptional. One man recently

based his claim to notoriety on the fact that he had worn the same collar button since 1870. Distinction, as thus conceived, so far from being at the opposite pole from vulgarity, is nearly related to it.

What I have been saying is even more markedly true of this country than of Europe. It is not easy to imagine the equivalent in London or Paris of the welcome recently extended in New York to the young woman who swam the English Channel, nor again the equivalent of what we have just been reading in the papers — namely, that, as a result of a baseball victory, the whole of St. Louis has 'gone crazy.' There is in England in particular no small survival of the traditional standards of the gentleman. That is one reason why the attitude of the English student is so different from that of the American student in the matter of athletics. We all know how hard it is for our students to see sport proportionately, to keep within due bounds their eagerness to win. The great humanist of the Far East, Confucius, says that the 'true gentleman is never contentious. If a spirit of rivalry is anywhere unavoidable, it is at a shooting-match. Yet even here he courteously salutes his opponents before taking up his position, and again when, having lost, he retires to drink the forfeit-cup. So that even when competing he remains a true gentleman.' It is to be feared that our students do not always in their athletic competitions measure up to the Confucian standard. They are prone to pursue them in a spirit that befits the specialist and the professional rather than the man who puts

sport in its proper place with reference to a correct scale of values. Their excuse, so far as they have one, is that they are yielding to an almost irresistible pressure from the outside public. Posters have just appeared in Cambridge proclaiming that 'Red Grange is the super-idol of America's millions.'

The corrective of this one-sided emphasis on sport as well as of other forms of one-sidedness should be found, if anywhere, in a study of the humanities. The humanities, however, need to be interpreted by humanists. The Greek and Latin classics have suffered severely as a result of being taught by men who have not sufficiently assimilated their spirit, who have often been narrow specialists in a field where narrow specialization is particularly inappropriate. The modern classics have frequently suffered in similar fashion. Moreover, the humanist in the modern field is confronted with a difficulty that does not confront in the same degree his classical colleague: he has to deal not merely with individual writers but with whole literary periods that are, in their underlying conception of life, at the opposite pole from humanism. Jules Lemaître has painted from this point of view an amusing picture of the literary groups that flourished in France toward the end of the last century. The members of these groups have, he says, forgotten the counsel of Boileau that they should make sure that they are men before setting out to be men of letters. Their cult of originality, joined to their contempt for normal human experience, means practically that each man feels free

to specialize in what is most recondite in his own emotions. 'Formerly,' says Lemaître, 'a writer was most frequently a gentleman (*honnête homme*) who wrote books, and who the rest of the time lived like other men, all the more so in that he needed, if he were to succeed, to mingle with the polite society of his time and to be distinguished from it as little as possible. Nowadays, on the contrary, young men of letters form really a new variety of the human species.... At the age of twenty, sometimes earlier, the malady lays hold upon them and grips them firmly.... Then they found groups with three members, two members or even one member. They exaggerate painfully literary forms already extreme; they are more naturalistic than Zola, more impressionistic than the Goncourts, more mystically horrible than Baudelaire. They invent symbolism, instrumentism, decadentism, and the kabbalah. They torture themselves to say unheard-of things.... La Bruyère said in speaking of certain financiers: "Such people are neither kinsfolk, nor friends, nor citizens, nor Christians, nor possibly men; they have money." I am inclined to say (of youth of this kind): they are neither Christians, nor citizens, nor friends, nor kinsfolk, nor perhaps men — they are men of letters, each one of a distinct literary religion, that he alone believes in and that he alone understands — assuming that he understands it.'

Furthermore, the man who would deal with modern literatures in the humanistic spirit has to face another difficulty: whole periods of these literatures suffer from

an inbreeding not merely of personal but of national emotion. A recent French writer maintains roundly indeed that it is impossible for modern literatures to rival Greek and Latin as humanities for the reason that it is impossible to deal with them in a detached and disinterested way. In practice, they tend to become instruments of propaganda rather than of humanistic culture. We must admit the danger without granting that it is unavoidable. The authors of many modern books, some of them accounted masterpieces, have plainly set out to be Frenchmen or Germans, let us say, before making sure that they are men. This is what one may term the problem of the 'hundred per center.' One cannot afford to specialize even in being an American. The failure to find some true principle of integration that will serve as a counterpoise to the inbreeding of national sentiment threatens the very survival of Western civilization. The internationalist of the type now common is ineffective, because he is opposing a less potent to a more potent form of emotion; whereas the principle of integration that we need, the principle that may conceivably raise men above every form of specialization and draw them to a common center, will finally, I believe, be found not to be rooted in emotion at all, or indeed in any form of expansion. In the very nature of things it must be a principle of concentration and selection. A man might possess comprehensively and sympathetically the whole of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and yet not be a humanist, because, in the absence of a true scale of values, he

could not deal with this immense mass of material proportionately. A number of our contemporary philosophers are as a matter of fact aware of the menace of the specialized narrowness that has been encouraged by our present notion of progress. They do not seem to me, however, to have been successful in their quest for the integrating factor that is to prevail against the evils of specialism. For example, Professor A. N. Whitehead discusses the whole question in the concluding chapter of his recent volume *Science and the Modern World*. Men may escape from their specialties, he seems to believe, and come together aesthetically — above all, perhaps, by the Wordsworthian method of contemplating the light of setting suns and brooding on the supposed identity of essence between this light and the mind of man. Professor John Dewey, again, has discussed the topic in a recent article. 'It is daily becoming more evident,' he declares, 'that unless some integration can be attained, the always increasing isolations and oppositions consequent upon the growth of specialization in all fields, will in the end disrupt our civilization.' His solution of a problem of this gravity is, like that of Professor Whitehead, aesthetic and emotional, though with a slightly different emphasis. The desired integration may come, he assures us, from looking at paintings. The paintings reproduced in the *Journal* of the Barnes Foundation, in which Professor Dewey's article appeared, are by Matisse and other extreme modernists, and are themselves the product of violent specializa-

tion in certain emotions. To seek to give men a center in art that is not itself disciplined to any human center is plainly to work in a vicious circle. Quite apart from Matisse and the modernists, however, one cannot grant that the centrifugal tendencies in human nature will find a sufficient offset in the contemplation of paintings any more than in the contemplation of the wonder and variety of nature.

I evidently cannot hope to offer in a talk of this kind any complete solution of a problem that is baffling contemporary philosophy. The most I am going to attempt is to make a few suggestions as to the best ways of developing a more humanistic attitude in the study of modern languages. My first suggestion — one that I have been making for many years past — is that ancients and moderns should co-operate rather than continue their traditional quarrel. It is well for us to reflect that the present preponderance of modern languages over Greek and Latin is due to their utilitarian and sentimental appeal rather than to their cultural superiority. According to the President's report, there were in residence in Harvard University in 1924–25 twelve graduate students in Ancient Languages as compared with two hundred and sixteen graduate students in Modern Languages. Such a disparity should be a matter of grave concern not merely to the teacher of Greek and Latin but to every teacher of English or French or German who retains a humanistic outlook. The head of the department of Romance Languages in one of our large Eastern universities was

recently heard to complain that it was almost impossible to secure teachers in his subjects who had a broad cultural background, who were well read in the traditional sense. This cultural background, that is so often lacking nowadays, should be largely classical. I have never been able to discover any sound reason why the candidates for the doctorate in the modern field should not be allowed to substitute, if they so desired, courses in the classics, let us say in Greek drama or Greek philosophy, for much of their medieval linguistics. In general, the evil of the present situation is due in no small measure to the premature specialization encouraged by the current requirements for the doctorate. As a result of this specialization, many men suffer a contraction of mental horizon from which, in my observation, they never recover. The usual argument that something like the existing discipline is needed to safeguard us against the mere dilettante and belletristic trifler, is not altogether convincing. It would be possible to devise a degree which would put more emphasis on humane assimilation and less on so-called original investigation than the doctorate, as it is now administered, and which would at the same time be far more searching. As a matter of fact, the French have a degree of this kind in the *agrégation*. The *agrégation* is in my judgment less favorable to mediocrity than our own Ph.D.

The graduate student is not only too much isolated in his specialty, he also suffers frequently from a material isolation. The remedy for this latter isolation

has been pointed out by President Lowell. 'It would,' he says, 'be a great mutual benefit to the men working for the doctorate if they could be brought together into closer fellowship by living in a dormitory or hall set apart for their use, with its own dining and common rooms. The broadening of interests and the stimulation of thought by the intellectual atmosphere of such a place could hardly fail to be of the highest value to all of them.' In fact anything that makes for greater concentration and co-ordination on the part of either graduates or undergraduates or their teachers is, under existing circumstances, highly desirable. From this point of view Brown University is to be heartily congratulated on having come into possession of a building which, like the Edgar Lewis Marston Hall, is to be devoted entirely to modern languages. The need of some similar building is being sorely felt in other institutions, including my own institution, Harvard. In closing, I desire to express the hope that what will be promoted primarily by the building we are dedicating today will be, not specialization — though it goes without saying that there must be no sacrifice of scholarly thoroughness — but the study of the humanities.

PRESIDENT ELIOT AND AMERICAN EDUCATION [1]

I

IT WOULD be reassuring if one could establish a connection between President Eliot's educational theory and his character and personality. His character and personality would seem, however, to derive from the Puritan tradition at its best, whereas his theory at the essential point marks an extreme recoil from Puritanism. This essential point is his attitude toward the problem of evil. The genuine Puritan had a lively and even exaggerated sense of the 'Old Adam'; President Eliot, for his part, scarcely allows at all for a law of the members. The current mode is to disparage Puritanism because of its undue repressiveness and at the same time to overlook how much it repressed that actually needs repression. One may maintain, indeed, that it would not have been easy for President Eliot to take so idyllic a view of human nature if Puritanism had done its work less effectively. There is in general a danger that one may take to be a spontaneous emanation of the natural man what is in reality the result of generations of religious or humanistic discipline. The illusion of a President Eliot is that of a man who,

[1] *The Forum*, January, 1929.

himself born to great riches, deems it 'natural' that everyone should have cash in the bank.

This illusion is, to be sure, one that he shared with many others. It is markedly present in no less a thinker than Emerson. Emerson, however, transcended his time in important particulars, whereas President Eliot did little more than reflect the time in its main tendency. For forty years he pushed American education in the direction in which it was already leaning. His whole career, indeed, illustrates the advantages of going with one's age quite apart from the question whither it is going.

If, however, one is finally to be accounted a great and wise leader, it is not enough thus to be the faithful servant of the wisdom of an age; one must also be true to the wisdom of the ages. The question whether President Eliot deserves this latter praise should, if it is to be discussed in a way worthy of him, be lifted above the petty and the personal into the region of ideas: this means practically to consider the value of the naturalistic philosophy that he and other leaders of the nineteenth century espoused so heartily.

This philosophy culminates in a doctrine of progress that would seem to be in serious conflict with the wisdom of the ages; for it is plain that there can be no such wisdom without the assumption in some form of a core of normal human experience that is set above the shifting tides of circumstance. The progress proclaimed by the naturalists, on the contrary, is to be achieved not by transcending the phenomenal flux

but by a surrender to it. As Tennyson exclaimed in his most Victorian moment:

> Forward, forward let us range!
> Let the great world spin forever down the ringing grooves of change.

The belief in progress in its most naïve form is still held by multitudes, especially in America. It may be doubted, however, whether in the future anyone of a distinction comparable to that of President Eliot will be able to hold it with the same bland confidence. It has been receiving the most formidable of refutations — that of the facts. The contrast between the whole conception of a 'far-off divine event' and incidents like the Great War is too flagrant.

II

The humanitarian idealism based on the faith in progress will be found on analysis to be either utilitarian or sentimental. Practically, in education as elsewhere, a utilitarian and sentimental movement has been displacing traditions that are either religious or humanistic. President Eliot deserves to rank as our chief humanitarian idealist in the educational field, not because of any novelty in his views, but because of the consistency and unwavering conviction with which he applied them. As a matter of fact, his views are anticipated on the utilitarian side by a writer like Locke in his *Thoughts on Education*, and on both the utilitarian and the sentimental side by Rousseau,

whose *Émile* has become, if not in its specific recommendations, at least in its general spirit, the Bible of the modern educator.

Superficially at least, humanitarianism is even more triumphant today than it was during the lifetime of President Eliot. Humanitarians are at present shaping our educational policy from the elementary grades to the university. One should, however, note in passing a curious circumstance: the most thoroughgoing humanitarians — for example, our professors of pedagogy and sociology — are held in almost universal suspicion in academic circles, and are not infrequently looked upon by their colleagues as downright charlatans.

What would seem especially desirable in dealing with the whole situation is a critical clarification — in other words, an attempt to penetrate beneath its surface to first principles. For example, President Eliot's attack in the name of the elective system on the traditional college curriculum will be found, when thus probed to the bottom, to involve a clash between a familiar type of naturalistic philosophy and the wisdom of the ages; for nothing is more certain than that this wisdom has been neither utilitarian nor sentimental, but either religious or humanistic. In exhibiting the nature of this clash it would seem well to avoid, as far as possible, dogmatic affirmation and to proceed positively, and in the sound sense of the word, psychologically. What a survey of the past actually reveals is that considerable

groups of men have at various times and in various places got together on certain fundamentals — have, in short, worked out conventions. These conventions have constituted the spiritual climate, as it were, of whole historical periods. Most men in these periods no more thought of questioning the convention under which they lived than they did the very air they breathed.

III

Those who assert that there is no permanent core of human experience set above mere historical processes would have a stronger case if it could be shown that the main conventions that have prevailed in the past are hopelessly at odds with one another. These conventions are, to be sure, all very much implicated in the local and the relative. Yet if one considers them from the point of view of the fruits at which they aimed in life and conduct, one cannot help being struck by certain important agreements. One may illustrate almost at random from the two chief religious conventions that have obtained respectively in the East and the West — the Buddhist and the Christian.

About the middle of the third century before Christ, Asoka, the Buddhist ruler of India, had carved on rocks and pillars at various points throughout his vast empire recommendations to practice certain virtues. These virtues will be found to be nearly or quite identical with those enumerated by Saint Paul as the

fruits of religion: 'Love, joy, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, self-control.' Chinese, again, who know the Confucian books — the main source of the humanism of the Far East — are struck at once by the substantial accord between these books and the *Ethics* of Aristotle, perhaps the most authoritative single document in the humanistic tradition of the Occident.

Moreover, one may discover an important agreement not only between different forms of humanism but between humanism and religion — the assumption, namely, that man needs to be disciplined in his natural self to some standard; that he needs, in short, in the almost literal sense of the term to undergo conversion. Though conversion always involves a facing about or turning away from the natural man, it may be conceived very differently. The Augustinian Christian, for example, conceives of it somewhat melodramatically as brought about by a sudden irruption of divine grace. For the Aristotelian, on the other hand, is it to be accomplished rather by the gradual formation from childhood of right habits. In all its forms, however, conversion implies an opposition in the heart of the individual between the expansive desires and a principle of control.

The exercise of this principle of control requires the putting forth of a special quality of effort or will. What I have termed 'the wisdom of the ages' is, in short, primarily concerned with the problems of the inner life, and in its attitude toward these problems it

is dualistic. The activity that it promotes is on the religious level summed up in the word meditation. Genuine meditation involves a subordination of the natural man to a higher will — humility, in short, a word that in the present naturalistic era has almost lost its true meaning. The subordination to the higher will may, as in the more austere forms of Christianity, amount to a renunciation of the desires of the natural man. The humanist, on the other hand, is satisfied with imposing on these desires a law of measure or decorum. His programme may be summed up in the word mediation.

Religion and humanism not only come together in the idea of conversion but one must add that, if the humanist is not to run the risk of sinking to the naturalistic level, his mediation needs to have a certain background in meditation. One is forced finally to agree, if only on psychological grounds, with Burke that 'humility is the low but deep foundation of all true virtue.' It does not follow that one must accept the thesis developed by Mr. T. S. Eliot, that humanism is something precarious and parasitical and that, for Occidental man in particular, it is doomed to speedy collapse unless it has the support of dogmatic and revealed religion. The most important manifestation of humanism that the world has yet seen — that in ancient Greece — did not have any such support.

One cannot admit, however, that humanism must necessarily derive from Greece any more than one can

admit that Christianity has had a monopoly of religion. In these days of universal and facile communication and of an ever-increasing closeness of material contact, it is important to do justice to the achievements — religious and humanistic — of the Far East. The tendency of M. Henri Massis, for example, in his *Defense of the West*, to discover no effective source of humanistic or religious wisdom outside of the Roman Catholic Church is due in part to sectarian narrowness, in part to sheer ignorance of the facts. The reasons why the Occidental should normally associate his humanism and religion with the traditions that go back to Rome and Greece and Judea, though extremely cogent, are a matter of expediency rather than of first principles. In direct proportion as one develops the critical temper, one is forced to base one's convictions, not primarily on any tradition, but on the immediate data of consciousness.

IV

Let us inquire, as far as possible in this critical fashion, why the religious and humanistic teachers of the past have been so concerned with the exercise of the principle of control and in general with the problems of the inner life. Perhaps one may best reply to this query by bringing together three sentences of Aristotle, a thinker who will be found to be more completely experimental than many moderns who profess to found their whole philosophy on experiment. The three sentences are as follows: 'The end is the

chief thing of all'; 'The end of ends is happiness'; 'Happiness is a kind of working.'

Aristotle has himself admonished us to give heed to the sayings of the wise men of old only in so far as they are found to coincide with the facts. If, therefore, we attach weight to Aristotle, it should not be primarily because of his traditional authority, but because Aristotle turns out to be only another name for inspired good sense.

It would seem, indeed, that if a man deals honestly with himself, he must grant that no concern can be nearer to him than that of his own happiness. Aristotle's treatment of happiness is especially relevant to our present topic because of the close connection he establishes between it and his scheme of education. An education, he says, deserves to be accounted liberal only in so far as it culminates in the idea of leisure. This idea requires that all partial aims and special disciplines should be subordinated to the specifically human form of effort or 'energy' — the source of true felicity — that is put forth in mediation and finally in the contemplative life or life of vision.

With this background in mind one should be able to grasp the nature of the conflict between the wisdom of the ages and the humanitarian 'idealism' of President Eliot. Like the religious and humanistic teachers of the past, President Eliot was very much and rightly preoccupied with the problem of happiness. Like these teachers, again, he held that to be happy one needs to be active and energetic. But in his notion of

the kind of activity that tends to happiness he plainly diverged from these teachers widely. According to a French authority, 'happiness is not an easy matter: it is difficult to find it in ourselves and impossible to find it elsewhere.' President Eliot must be numbered among those who hoped to find it 'elsewhere.' In the address given on the occasion of his ninetieth birthday, he advised his hearers to avoid introspection, to 'look out and not in' (one gathers from the context that he identified introspection with the morbid brooding of the introvert). The counsel he proceeds to give seems superficially the same as that carved on stone many centuries ago by the Buddhist Asoka: 'Let all joy be in effort.' 'Let small and great exert themselves.'

The effort that President Eliot recommends, however, is outer effort — effort of the utilitarian type. The primary concern of Asoka, on the other hand, was with inner effort — the kind that is put forth in meditation. President Eliot has of course, here as elsewhere, the merit of being highly representative. The main effort of the Occident was in his day, and still remains in ours, utilitarian. If anyone thinks that utilitarian effort is going to lead to the fruits that Asoka and Saint Paul associate with religion, he would seem to have, even more than the English country curate to whom this trait has been attributed, 'a large and easy swallow.'

We are here, at all events, at the parting of the ways. If one is convinced of the essential rightness of President Eliot's idea of effort, one may continue to

believe that we are now moving in America toward some glorious consummation of the kind postulated by the nineteenth-century doctrine of progress. Otherwise one may rather incline to believe that we are ripening for Nemesis; for Nemesis is the penalty visited upon spiritual blindness. Blindness to the need of a form of effort radically different from that of the utilitarian would seem to be rather serious.

V

The crucial assumption of President Eliot appears to be that the material efficiency promoted by utilitarian effort will be used altruistically. For the traditional attempt to train for culture and character he sought to substitute, in his own phrase, 'training for service and power.' Power is in itself desirable provided it be employed to some adequate end. The whole issue is whether service in the humanitarian sense can supply this end. Most Americans are convinced that it not only can but does. Service has been made the basis of the gospel of Rotary and may therefore be termed our Rotarian convention.

However thoroughly we may be persuaded of the admirableness of this convention, it is well for us to keep in mind that it has been accepted only to a very limited extent by the rest of the world. In general, foreigners incline to see in our idealism, so far as it is of the humanitarian type, either hypocrisy or self-deception — usually the former. The opinion is almost universal abroad that, in our relations with other

countries in particular, we are altruistic in our feelings about ourselves and imperialistic in our practice. An increasing minority of Americans are also beginning to question the 'religion of service,' to maintain that it is only a varnish for commercialism, and that the varnish is wearing thin.

The word service, it should be noted, has changed its meaning in the transition from Christianity to humanitarianism. In general, the representatives of the utilitarian-sentimental movement have tended, by a tampering with general terms, to dissimulate from others and perhaps from themselves the wideness of the gap between the new dispensation and the old. I choose almost at random as an example of the tendency the following advertisement of one of our life insurance companies: 'Buddha, who was born a prince, gave up his name, succession, and his heritage to attain security. But we do not have to give up the world; we have only to see a life insurance agent who can sell us security for the future, the most direct step to serenity of mind.' The issue raised by this advertisement touches Christianity at least as closely as it does Buddhism. The 'serenity' and 'security' at which both religions aim are scarcely of the kind that we may purchase from the agent of a life insurance company. The net result of this transfer of the language of religion to an entirely different order has been, from the point of view of the wisdom of the ages, to encourage an extraordinarily complacent materialism.

The alteration in the meaning of the word service

in particular — the substitution of the service of man for the traditional service of God — has been important in its influence on education, because it has meant practically a more or less complete elimination of the idea of conversion. The Christian had based this idea on the dogma of original sin. The form given to this dogma by Puritans like Jonathan Edwards is no doubt highly objectionable. Unfortunately, President Eliot and the humanitarians have, in their rejection of the dogma, laid themselves open to the suspicion of pouring out the baby with the bath. Not merely Puritanism but every doctrine that asserts the dual nature of man must be felt, in its relation to man's natural self, as more or less repressive.

For this repression President Eliot wished to substitute full and free expression. The elective system, which he sponsored, tends to identify the ideal needs of the individual with the mere unfolding of his temperament and idiosyncrasy. Every youth, it is assumed, has some innate gift — a gift which is treated with almost religious seriousness, and is therefore to suffer no contradiction. The effort that he puts forth along the lines of his temperamental bias will make for his own happiness and finally be pressed into the service of humanity. Aristotle evidently had in mind a different type of effort based on a different conception of happiness when he declared: 'We ought also to take into consideration our own natural bias, which varies in each man's case, and will be ascertained from the pleasure and pain arising in us. Fur-

thermore, we should force ourselves off in the contrary direction, because we shall find ourselves in the mean after we have removed ourselves far from the wrong side, exactly as men do in straightening out a crooked stick.'

What proof is there, after all, that so purely temperamental a person as President Eliot's theory tends to produce will be altruistic? The humanitarian is finally forced to fall back on some theory of man's natural goodness of the kind that is commonly associated with Rousseau, but which was anticipated in England by the Third Earl of Shaftesbury. According to Shaftesbury, the unconverted man is not egoistic, as religion has traditionally maintained. On the contrary, he has an instinctive affection for his fellows — a will to service, as one may say.

The theory has undergone surprisingly little modification from Shaftesbury's day to this. For example, Professor John Dewey, who has probably had more influence than any other living American on education, not merely in this country but in the new China, writes that 'the child is born with a *natural* desire to give out, to do, to *serve*' (my italics). Let anyone who has growing children observe them closely and decide for himself whether they exude spontaneously this eagerness for service. Let him then supplement this observation by a survey of the working of the theory on the larger scale for several generations past. He may conclude that the amount of instinctive goodness released by the decline of religious and humanistic

control has been somewhat exaggerated. He may fail to find evidence that a human nature that is neither meditative nor again mediatory, that has in short dispensed with humility and decorum, is likely to prove idyllic.

VI

The unduly idyllic hopes of the humanitarian throw light on the quality of his imagination — an important point to determine in anyone's outlook on life. President Eliot was much preoccupied with the whole question. 'The training of the imagination,' he says rightly, 'is far the most important part of education.' It can be shown not only that the quality of his own imagination was idyllic rather than ethical, but that this fact accounts for his attitude toward the problem of evil of which I spoke at the outset. He asks us to discriminate between two forms of imagination — the constructive and the receptive. He further subdivides the constructive imagination according as its constructiveness is operative in literature or in physical science. He proceeds to contrast the imaginative construction of a Dante or a Zola, where everything is gloom and disharmony, with the imaginative construction of the man of science, as displayed, for instance, in a modern power plant, where everything is accurate, orderly, and beneficent. President Eliot evidently regarded those writers who are concerned with the element of evil in man as morose theorists rather than as hard-headed observers of the facts.

One may also note in passing that he seems unaware of the incommensurable gap separating Dante's treatment of evil from Zola's.

As examples of the receptive imagination, he paints a picture of a young woman poring unprofitably over the scenes in which Thackeray portrays the 'malign motives and unclean soul of Becky Sharp,' and then opposes to this picture that of another young woman who spends her time observing 'two robins who have established their home and family in a notch of a maple near her window' and learning from their ways with their young lessons of unselfishness and affection. One scarcely need insist on the idyllic and sentimental view of both nature and human nature that is implied in such a contrast.

President Eliot's whole treatment of the imagination — for example, his assertion that Darwin and Pasteur have by their imaginative activity done as much to satisfy the 'spiritual needs' of man as Dante, Goethe, or Shakespeare — is already 'dated.' As the nineteenth century, with its own special atmosphere, recedes still further into the background, the 'idealism' that he and other men of his time sought to erect on naturalistic foundations is likely to appear positively fantastic. What becomes of the beneficence of the control over the forces of nature that has been secured with the aid of the scientific imagination, should it turn out that in the unconverted man — the man whose impulses are free to overflow — the will to power overflows even more freely than the will to

service? The Great War has enlightened us on this point.

Once grant that the humanitarian hypothesis has broken down at the center, and the alternative would seem to be to revive in some form the dualistic conception, to reaffirm once more that the individual needs in the interest of his own happiness to submit to some sound discipline of his outgoing desires, to put aside, in the phrase of Buddha, the ignoble for the noble craving. 'The universal thirst for the enjoyments of life,' says President Eliot, 'grows hotter and hotter and is not assuaged.' In that case, one might suppose, it is urgent that this thirst be moderated with reference to some correct scale of values. On the contrary, President Eliot makes his observation part of a plea for the putting of political economy on a level with the traditional humanities.

Political economy, for its part, will be found in all its forms — orthodox and unorthodox — to have accepted the humanitarian substitutes for the principle of control. As a result of this substitution, it is still under the suspicion of being the 'dismal science.' The political economist looks askance at any limitation of desires on the part of the individual, envisaged primarily as a consumer, lest such a limitation should lead to a slowing-down of production. Production is apparently to expand indefinitely — a programme that has been summed up in the formula: 'Pigs for more pigs for more pigs.' One is reminded of this programme by the articles Henry Ford recently con-

tributed to the *Forum*. One may be sure that he would not have set forth his philosophy of industry so confidently — one is tempted to add so naïvely — were it not for the presence in the background of really dignified figures like President Eliot who are at one with him on certain underlying postulates.

VII

The discrediting of the principle of control in favor of a sheer expansiveness is in general dubious. In the educational field it is not only dubious, but, so far as it leads to a primary emphasis on innate gifts and their supposed right to expand freely, it is also Utopian. Anyone whose business it has been to advise college undergraduates will testify that, as a rule, they are not conscious of having any such gifts. They are determined most frequently in the choice of their life work by chance or necessity, and then become interested in this work in the very process of performing it. To be sure, an occasional student has, or seems to have, some inborn aptitude. It goes without saying that the humanist does not seek to thwart such aptitudes. He does, however, insist that its possessor needs supplementary training if he is not to become a lopsided specialist.

On his initial assumption that most students have instinctive bents that they are eager to follow, President Eliot bases the further assumption that effort does not need to be stimulated, as it was in the older education, by competition. His assertion that 'lazy

students are more likely to get roused from their lethargy under an elective system than under a required' is not confirmed by realistic observation. If the average student today is more interested in football than in things of the mind, one reason may be that football, unlike the college as it has become under the new education, has a definite goal and is frankly competitive with reference to it.

It is estimated that about three-quarters of a million students are now enrolled in our institutions of higher learning, more than in all other countries combined. At the same time the very idea of liberal education is in danger of perishing in America in the midst of a great bewilderment. It would not be fair to make President Eliot alone reponsible for this confusion. His exaltation of the variable over the constant elements in human nature, has, however, been a contributing factor. 'Every youth of eighteen is,' he says, 'an infinitely complex organization the duplicate of which neither does nor ever will exist.' This dangerous half-truth, when made the foundation of a system of education, is simply incompatible with the survival of religious and humanistic standards.

We seem to be witnessing today the consequences of a weakening of standards. According to M. André Siegfried, we are making a ruthless sacrifice of the higher cultural values to mass production and material efficiency. According to Mr. Charles Merz, in his good-natured satire, *The Great American Band Wagon*, the spectacle offered by contemporary America is that

of a multitude of essentially trivial people rushing restlessly from one inconsequential fad to another. Such pictures are no doubt one-sided, but that there is in America a drift toward standardized mediocrity is indubitable. It is also indubitable that our education as a whole is not supplying the proper corrective.

How many of our college graduates, for example, are capable of leisure in the Aristotelian sense? It is notorious that the psychology of these graduates in their moments of release from merely vocational activity is indistinguishable from that of the tired business man; nay more, the psychology of college and university teachers themselves, including teachers of the traditional humanities, is, when they are not working as specialists, likely to be that of the tired business man. In the absence of humane purpose, what has triumphed is the purpose of the utilitarian. A multitude of specialties, all viewed as very much on the same level, has taken the place not only of the selection of studies in the old curriculum but of the selective principle itself. Education has become increasingly miscellaneous and encyclopaedic.

The momentous nature of the change from the old to the new has been dissimulated under the blanket degree. This dissimulation has amounted at times to virtual dishonesty. A man wishes to enjoy the prestige of the traditional A.B. while dodging the discipline that this degree has traditionally represented. He wishes, for example, to elect a course on 'The killing, trussing, and marketing of fowl' (I quote from the catalogue of

one of our state institutions) and at the same time to pass as liberally educated.

Comparatively few Americans are likely to share the doubts I have been expressing about the humanitarian revolution in the theory and practice of education. The idea of service proclaimed by President Eliot and put at the basis of our Rotarian convention has not as yet been seriously shaken. Nevertheless there are signs that the utilitarian-sentimental movement has passed its crest even in America. An increasing number of persons are feeling disquiet at the sapping of the sense of moral responsibility by the sentimentalists. Others still more numerous are beginning to see that the utilitarian idea of effort is one-sided and that, as a result of this one-sidedness, modern life is in danger of degenerating into a wild rush one knows not whither. The complaint is in fact growing fairly common that 'things are in the saddle,' that we are being mechanized both outwardly in our acts and inwardly in our minds — that we are, in short, in a way to become 'robots.' Even a Sherwood Anderson has enough wit to perceive that all is not well with the present standardized America.

Unfortunately, laments about the evils of standardization are not, unless supported by a sound constructive programme, of much avail. If all that is needed is to scoff at the Rotarian convention and the 'religion of service,' writers like Mr. Mencken and Mr. Sinclair Lewis would seem to meet every requirement. These writers can be shown, however, to be a

part of the very malady they are assailing. This malady may be defined as a refusal to recognize any norm or human law that acts restrictively on the free expansion of temperament.

Anyone who has made a study of the modern movement from the eighteenth century down will finally become convinced of the futility of a merely temperamental insurrection against convention. Whether the temperamentalist be of the soft or sentimental variety, or, like Mr. Mencken and his followers, of the hard or Nietzschean brand, is comparatively immaterial. The objection to the Rotarian convention is not that it is a convention — that is rather its strength — but that a dubious element has been built into its foundations: namely, an idea of service that does not seem a sufficient counterpoise to the 'lusts' of the natural man. In the language of religion, the Rotarian hopes to achieve salvation without conversion.

The effective opposition to the Rotarian is likely to come, not from Bohemians, each flying off on his own temperamental tangent, but from persons who are getting together on an entirely different basis, who see that the pathway of escape from standardization is not through ideals as currently conceived, but through standards, and that to get standards one will need to insist on the specifically human elements in man that have been eliminated by the naturalists. How complete this elimination has been may be seen in practically all forms of recent psychology. The behaviorists in particular, with Mr. J. B. Watson at

their head, are in this matter sinking to depths previously unplumbed.

VIII

The person who refuses to accept pseudo-science or any other substitute for standards still has to decide whether he is to secure his standards in a critical or a purely traditional way. The Roman Catholic, for example, gets his standards in this latter way. If anyone desires to proceed more critically, he will then be confronted with what is known in Platonic language as the problem of the One and the Many. He will, in other words, have to choose between a surrender to the naturalistic flux and the assertion of a something in man that transcends it.

Periods of more or less complete emancipation from the past, which therefore have to get their standards, if at all, in terms of the One and the Many, have always proved crucial. There is evidence that we have already reached this crucial stage in our own development, and that we are taking the wrong turning. Pragmatism — the philosophy with which America has come to be associated in the eyes of the world — is from either a religious or humanistic point of view, raw and uncivilized. The difficulty with the pragmatist is not his preference for what works, but his one-sided notion of working — his failure to take account of the form of working that is, according to Aristotle, necessary if one is to achieve happiness. The reason why this one-sidedness should prevail in America more than else-

where is obvious. The utilitarian form of effort has been especially needful in our conquest of a continent. Having developed in fullest measure the virtues of the pioneer, we are now in danger of becoming the victims of them.

We should, however, be careful not to exaggerate the gap in this respect between America and other countries. Other countries are now lamenting the evils of 'Americanism' and at the same time getting themselves Americanized as fast as they conveniently can. It may be that if there is to be any effective reaction from Americanism it will have to come from America itself. We cannot allege as an excuse for the utilitarian excess, as various other countries can with some plausibility, the pressure of economic necessity. So far as economic conditions are concerned, we are free to develop the idea of leisure, as something distinct from either idleness or recreation, to show ourselves the 'people of action' in a sense quite different from that given to the phrase by the utilitarians. The idea of leisure is in itself so important that if we did develop it adequately we might be in a position to assume the cultural leadership of the world. It is depressing that we are showing so little grasp of the situation, that our higher education in particular, so far from aiming to produce the man of leisure, is being more and more completely dominated by the 'ideals' of the humanitarian.

I have said that if one is to achieve standards in opposition to these ideals — at least in a modern and critical fashion — one will have to face finally the

philosophical problem of the One and the Many. It should be added, however, that quite apart from the solution of this difficult problem, common sense will go far in uncovering the defects of the new education and in devising a remedy. There is probably even now a minority of shrewd observers who are ready to get together on a basis different from that of the reigning educational convention, to give adequate support to at least a few institutions of learning that are in their underlying spirit humanistic rather than humanitarian. It is just at this point that it may be possible to resist successfully the stupid drift toward standardization.

The question should be of special interest to the smaller colleges. With these colleges sound educational practice may be found to coincide with self-interest. The new education requires an enormously elaborate and expensive apparatus. This elaborateness is encouraged by the prime emphasis of the utilitarian on the progress of humanity through the co-operation of a multitude of specialists, as well as by the prime emphasis of the sentimentalist on innate gifts and their right to gratification. The small college that accepts the department-store conception of education, is at once put at a hopeless disadvantage. The humanistic college, on the other hand, even though its needs can no longer be fitly symbolized by Mark Hopkins at the end of the traditional log, may hope to flourish with a much more modest equipment.

IX

Most of the heads of our institutions of learning, great and small, have been content for a generation and more to follow in the wake of President Eliot. The present need seems to be for educational leaders whose first aim is quality — quality in the teaching body, quality in the students, above all, quality in the subjects taught. The college must substitute selection for encyclopaedic inclusiveness if it is to have a definite goal and concomitantly to witness a wholesome revival of the spirit of emulation. It is not to be supposed, however, that the reasons why certain subjects deserve to be preferred to others in a scheme of liberal training are arbitrary in the sense that the rules of football are more or less arbitrary. These reasons are on the contrary deeply rooted in the facts of history and human nature.

At the bottom of the whole educational debate, as I have been trying to show, is the opposition between a religious-humanistic and a utilitarian-sentimental philosophy. This opposition, involving as it does first principles, is not subject to compromise or mediation. Those who attempt such mediation are not humanists but Laodiceans. Many persons who deem themselves moderate are in fact only muddled. Hence the need I have already pointed out of critical clarification. The discriminations I have been attempting will not be in vain if even a few are led thereby to abandon the Laodicean attitude and to take sides on issues that

involve finally the future of American civilization. It will be found to be no small matter whether our higher education is to have enshrined at its center the idea of leisure in Aristotle's sense, or the idea of service in the sense given to the word by President Eliot and the humanitarians.

WHAT I BELIEVE: ROUSSEAU AND RELIGION [1]

I

ROUSSEAU is commonly accounted the most influential writer of the past two hundred years. Lord Acton, indeed, is reported to have said, with a touch of exaggeration, that 'Rousseau produced more effect with his pen than Aristotle or Cicero or Saint Augustine or Saint Thomas Aquinas or any other man who ever lived.' At all events this saying needs to be interpreted in the light of the saying of Madame de Staël that 'Rousseau invented nothing but set everything on fire.' His leading ideas were abundantly anticipated, especially in England. These ideas made their chief appeal to a middle class which, in the eighteenth century, was gaining rapidly in power and prestige, and has been dominant ever since.

The Rousseauistic outlook on life has also persisted, with many surface modifications, to be sure, but without any serious questioning on the part of most men of its underlying assumptions. To debate Rousseau is really to debate the main issues of our contemporary life in literature, politics, education, and, above all, religion. It is not surprising, therefore, that his reputation and writings have from the outset to the present day been a sort of international battleground. One

[1] *The Forum*, February, 1930.

cannot afford to be merely partisan in this strife, to be blind to Rousseau's numerous merits — for example, to all he did to quicken man's sense of the beauties of nature, especially wild nature. Neither should one forget that there is involved in all the strife a central issue toward which one must finally assume a clear-cut attitude.

Regarding this central issue — the source of the fundamental clash between Rousseauist and anti-Rousseauist — there has been and continues to be much confusion. A chief source of this confusion has been the fact that in Rousseau as in other great writers, and more than in most, there are elements that run counter to the main tendency. Rousseau has, for example, his rationalistic side. On the basis of this fact one professor of French [1] has just set out to prove that, instead of being the arch-sentimentalist he has usually been taken to be, 'the real Rousseau is at bottom a rationalist in his ethics, politics, and theology.'

Again, there are utterances in Rousseau quite in line with traditional morality. Another American scholar has therefore set out to show that it is a mistake to make Rousseau responsible for a revolution in ethics. Still another of our scholars has managed to convince himself on similar lines that Rousseau is not primarily a primitivist in his *Discourse on Inequality*.

Most remarkable of all is a book that has just appeared,[2] the author of which covers with contumely

[1] Albert Schinz, *La Pensée de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*.

[2] *The Meaning of Rousseau*, by Ernest Hunter Wright.

practically all his predecessors in this field on the ground that they have been blinded by partisanship, and promises to give us at last the true meaning of Rousseau. Yet this writer does not even cite the passage that, as Rousseau himself correctly tells us, gives the key to his major writings. It is to this passage that every interpreter of Rousseau who is not academic in the bad sense will give prominence: for the thesis it sums up has actually wrought mightily upon the world. It has thus wrought because it has behind it an imaginative and emotional drive not found behind other passages of Rousseau that might in themselves have served to correct it.

The passage to which I refer is one that occurs in Rousseau's account of the sudden vision that came to him by the roadside on a hot summer day in 1749 in the course of a walk from Paris to Vincennes. This vision has an importance for the main modern movement comparable to that of Saint Paul's vision on the road to Damascus for the future development of Christianity. Among the multitude of 'truths' that flashed upon Rousseau in the sort of trance into which he was rapt at this moment, the truth of overshadowing importance was, in his own words, that 'man is naturally good and that it is by our institutions alone that men become wicked.'

The consequences that have flowed from this new 'myth' of man's natural goodness have been almost incalculable. Its first effect was to discredit the theological view of human nature, with its insistence

that man has fallen, not from Nature as Rousseau asserts, but from God, and that the chief virtue it behooves man to cultivate in this fallen state is humility. According to the Christian, the true opposition between good and evil is in the heart of the individual: the law of the spirit can scarcely prevail, he holds, over the law of the members without a greater or lesser degree of succor in the form of divine grace. The new dualism which Rousseau sets up — that between man naturally good and his institutions — has tended not only to substitute sociology for theology, but to discredit the older dualism in any form whatsoever.

Practically, the warfare of the Rousseauistic crusader has been even less against institutions than against those who control and administer them — kings and priests in the earlier stages of the movement, capitalists in our own day. 'We are approaching,' Rousseau declared, 'the era of crises, and the age of revolutions.' He not only made the prophecy but did more than any other one man to insure its fulfillment. There are conservative and even timid elements in his writings; but as a result of the superior imaginative appeal of the new dualism based on the myth of man's natural goodness, the rôle he has actually played has been that of arch-radical. In one of the best-balanced estimates that have appeared, the French critic Gustave Lanson, after doing justice to the various minor trends in Rousseau's work, sums up accurately its major influence: 'It exasperates and inspires revolt and fires enthusiasms and irritates hatreds; it is the

mother of violence, the source of all that is uncompromising; it launches the simple souls who give themselves up to its strange virtue upon the desperate quest of the absolute, an absolute to be realized now by anarchy and now by social despotism.'

I have said that there has been in connection with this Rousseauistic influence a steady yielding of the theological to the sociological or, as it may also be termed, the humanitarian view of life. One should add that there enters into the total philosophy of humanitarianism an ingredient that antedates Rousseau and that may be defined as utilitarian. Utilitarianism already had its prophet in Francis Bacon. Very diverse elements enter into the writings of Bacon as into those of Rousseau, but, like those of Rousseau, they have a central drive: they always have encouraged and, one may safely say, always will encourage the substitution of a kingdom of man for the traditional Kingdom of God — the exaltation of material over spiritual 'comfort,' the glorification of man's increasing control over the forces of nature under the name of progress.

Rousseauist and Baconian, though often superficially at odds with one another, have co-operated in undermining, not merely religious tradition, but another tradition which in the Occident goes back finally, not to Judea, but to ancient Greece. This older tradition may be defined as humanistic. The goal of the humanist is poised and proportionate living. This he hopes to accomplish by observing the law of

measure. Anyone who has bridged successfully the gap between this general precept and some specific emergency has to that extent achieved the fitting and the decorous. Decorum is supreme for the humanist even as humility takes precedence over all other virtues in the eyes of the Christian. Traditionally the idea of decorum has been associated, often with a considerable admixture of mere formalism, with the idea of the gentleman. Humanism and religion in their various forms have at times conflicted, but have more often been in alliance with one another. As Burke says in a well-known passage: 'Nothing is more certain than that our manners, our civilization, and all the good things that are connected with manners and with civilization, have, in this European world of ours, depended for ages upon two principles; and were indeed the result of both combined; I mean the spirit of a gentleman and the spirit of religion.'

II

All the points of view I have been distinguishing — Baconian, Rousseauist, Christian, humanistic — often mingle confusedly. From all the confusion, however, there finally emerges a clear-cut issue — namely, whether humanitarianism, or, if one prefers, the utilitarian-sentimental movement, has supplied any effective equivalent for Burke's two principles. As for the 'spirit of a gentleman,' its decline is so obvious as scarcely to admit of argument. It has even been maintained that in America, the country in which the

collapse of traditional standards has been most complete, the gentleman is at a positive disadvantage in the world of practical affairs; he is likely to get on more quickly if he assumes the 'mucker pose.'[1] According to William James, usually taken to be the representative American philosopher, the very idea of the gentleman has about it something slightly satanic. 'The prince of darkness,' says James, 'may be a gentleman, as we are told he is, but, whatever the God of earth and heaven is, he can surely be no gentleman.'

As to the spirit of religion, though its decline has in my opinion been at least as great as that of the spirit of a gentleman, it is far from being so obvious. In any case, everything in our modern substitutes for religion — whether Baconian or Rousseauistic — will be found to converge upon the idea of service. The crucial question is whether one is safe in assuming that the immense machinery of power that has resulted from activity of the utilitarian type can be made, on anything like present lines, to serve disinterested ends; whether it will not rather minister to the egoistic aims either of national groups or of individuals.

One's answer to this question will depend on one's view of the Rousseauistic theory of brotherhood. It is at this point, if anywhere, that the whole movement is pseudo-religious. I can give only in barest outline the reasons for my own conviction that it *is* pseudo-

[1] See 'The Mucker Pose' by James Truslow Adams, *Harper's*, November, 1928.

religious. It can be shown that the nature from which man has fallen, according to Rousseau, does not correspond to anything real, but is a projection of the idyllic imagination. To assert that man in a state of nature, or some similar state thus projected, is good, is to discredit the traditional controls in the actual world. Humility, conversion, decorum — all go by the board in favor of free temperamental overflow. Does man thus emancipated exude spontaneously an affection for his fellows that will be an effective counterpoise to the sheer expansion of his egoistic impulses? If so, one may safely side with all the altruists from the Third Earl of Shaftesbury to John Dewey. One may then assume that there has been no vital omission in the passage from the service of God to the service of man, from salvation by divine grace to salvation by the grace of nature.

Unfortunately, the facts have persistently refused to conform to humanitarian theory. There has been an ever-growing body of evidence from the eighteenth century to the Great War that in the natural man, as he exists in the real world and not in some romantic dreamland, the will to power is, on the whole, more than a match for the will to service. To be sure, many remain unconvinced by this evidence. Stubborn facts, it has been rightly remarked, are as nothing compared with a stubborn theory. Altruistic theory is likely to prove peculiarly stubborn, because, probably more than any other theory ever conceived, it is flattering: it holds out the hope of the highest spiritual benefits —

for example, peace and fraternal union — without any corresponding spiritual effort.

If we conclude that humanitarian service cannot take the place of the spirit of religion and that of a gentleman — Burke's 'two principles' — what then? One should at least be able to understand the point of view of those who simply reject the modern movement and revert to a more or less purely traditionalist attitude. Dogmatic and revealed Christianity, they hold, has in it a supernatural element for which altruism is no equivalent. Religion of this type, they argue, alone availed to save the ancient world from a decadent naturalism; it alone can cope with a similar situation that confronts the world today.

But does it follow, because one's choice between the religious-humanistic and the utilitarian-sentimental view of life should, as I have said, be clear-cut, one is therefore forced to choose between being a pure traditionalist or a mere modernist? At bottom the issue involved is that of individualism. The Roman Catholic, the typical traditionalist, has in matters religious simply repudiated individualism. In this domain at least, he submits to an authority that is 'anterior, superior, and exterior' to the individual. The opposite case is that of the man who has emancipated himself from outer authority in the name of the critical spirit (which will be found to be identical with the modern spirit), but has made use of his emancipation, not to work out standards, but to fall into sheer spiritual anarchy. Anyone, on the other hand, who

worked out standards critically would be a sound individualist and at the same time a thoroughgoing modern. He would run the risk, to be sure, of antagonizing both traditionalists and modernists; of suffering, in short, the fate of Mr. Pickwick when he intervened between the two angry combatants. This hostility, at least so far as the traditionalist is concerned, would seem to be ill-advised. The true modern, as I am seeking to define him, is prepared to go no small distance with him in the defense of tradition.

At all events, anyone who seeks to deal in modern fashion — in other words, critically — with the religious problem, will be brought back at once to Rousseau. He will have to make his clear-cut choice, not between dogmatic and revealed religion, on the one hand, and mere modernism, on the other, but between a dualism that affirms a struggle between good and evil in the heart of the individual and a dualism which, like that of Rousseau, transfers the struggle to society.

Let us ask ourselves what it is the modern man has tended to lose with the decline of the older dualism. According to Mr. Walter Lippmann, the belief the modern man has lost is 'that there is an immortal essence presiding like a king over his appetites.' This immortal essence of which Mr. Lippmann speaks is, judged experimentally and by its fruits, a higher will. But why leave the affirmation of such a will to the pure traditionalist? Why not affirm it first of all as a psychological fact, one of the immediate data of consciousness, a perception so primordial that, compared

with it, the denial of man's moral freedom by the determinist is only a metaphysical dream? The way would thus be open for a swift flanking movement on the behaviorists and other naturalistic psychologists, who are to be accounted at present among the chief enemies of human nature.

This transcendent quality of will — which is the source of humility and is, at the same time, immediate and intuitive — has often been associated traditionally with the operation of God's will in the form of grace. For this higher immediacy, Rousseau — at least the Rousseau who has influenced the world — tended to substitute the lower immediacy of feeling, thus setting up a sort of sub-rational parody of grace. In order to make this substitution plausible, he — and, in his wake, the sentimentalists — have resorted to the usual arts of the sophist, chief among which are a juggling with half-truths and a tampering with general terms. For example, in their use of words like 'virtue' and 'conscience,' they have eliminated more or less completely, in favor of vital impulse (*élan vital*), the equally vital principle of control (*frein vital*) — in short, the dualistic element that both religion and humanism require.

The half-truth that has been used to compromise religion in particular is that, though religion is in itself something quite distinct from emotion, it is in its ordinary manifestations very much mixed up with emotion. I give an example of this error in its latest and fashionable form. In a very learned and, in some

respects, able book,[1] the Reverend N. P. Williams seeks to show that Saint Augustine's experience of grace or, what amounts to the same thing, his love of God, was only a 'sublimation' of his 'lust.' Saint Augustine was a very passionate man and his passionateness no doubt entered into his love of God. But if it could be shown that the love of God was in Saint Augustine or any other of the major saints merely emotion, sublimated or unsublimated, religion would be only the 'illusion' that Freud himself has declared it to be. The psychoanalytical divine, who is, I am told, a fairly frequent type in England, is about the worst *mélange des genres* that has appeared even in the present age of confusion.

Another example of prevailing misapprehensions in this field, and that not merely from the point of view of dogma but of keen psychological observation, is the standard treatment of Rousseau's religion by P. M. Masson, a work which has been almost universally acclaimed by scholars and which has, as a matter of fact, distinguished merits as a historical investigation. M. Masson admits that this religion is 'without redemption or repentance or sense of sin,' and then proceeds to speak of Rousseau's 'profound Christianity'!

Religion has suffered not only from the Rousseauist but also from the pseudo-scientist. If the Rousseauist gives to emotion a primacy that does not belong to it, the pseudo-scientist claims for physical science a

[1] *The Ideas of the Fall and of Original Sin* (Bampton Lectures for 1924). See p. 331.

hegemony to which it is not entitled. A science that has thus aspired out of its due place runs the risk of becoming not only a 'wild Pallas from the brain' but, in connection with its use in war, 'procuress to the Lords of Hell.' Mr. Walter Lippmann seeks to persuade us in his *Preface to Morals* that if one becomes 'disinterested' after the fashion of the scientific investigator, one will have the equivalent not only of 'humanism' but of 'high religion.' Certain scientific investigators are busy in their laboratories at this very moment devising poison gases of formidable potency. What proof is there that, so far as the scientific type of 'disinterestedness' is concerned, these gases will not be pressed into the service of the will to power? In seeking to base ethics on monistic postulates, Mr. Lippmann has simply revived the error of Spinoza, who himself revived the error of the Stoics. This error becomes not less but more dangerous when associated with the methods of science. The question involved is at all events that of the will and finally of dualism. One cannot insist too often that 'the immortal essence presiding like a king over man's appetites' is transcendent — in other words, set above 'nature,' not only in Rousseau's sense, but also in the sense that is given to the term by the man of science.

This higher will is felt in its relation to the impressions and impulses and expansive desires of the natural man as a will to refrain. In the great traditional religions, notably in Christianity and Buddhism, the will to refrain has been pushed to the point of re-

nunciation. The modern movement, on the other hand, has been marked since the eighteenth century and in some respects since the Renaissance by a growing discredit of the will to refrain. The very word 'renunciation' has been rarely pronounced by those who have entered into the movement. The chief exception that occurs to one is Goethe (echoed at times by Carlyle). Anyone who thinks of the series of Goethe's love affairs prolonged into the seventies is scarcely likely to maintain that his *Entsagung* was of a very austere character even for the man of the world, not to speak of the saint.

III

One must admit that genuine renunciation was none too common even in the ages of faith. As for the typical modern, he is not only at an infinite remove from anything resembling renunciation, but is increasingly unable to accept the will to refrain or anything else on a basis of mere tradition and authority. Yet the failure to exercise the will to refrain in some form or degree means spiritual anarchy. A combination such as we are getting more and more at present of spiritual anarchy with an ever-increasing material efficiency — power without wisdom, as one is tempted to put it — is not likely to work either for the happiness of the individual or for the welfare of society. That the drift toward spiritual anarchy has been largely a result of the decline of dogmatic and revealed religion is scarcely open to question. It does not fol-

low that the only hope of recovering spiritual discipline is in a return to this type of religion. Both naturalists and supernaturalists have been too prone to underestimate the value of the third possible attitude toward life, which I have defined as the humanistic.

The humanist exercises the will to refrain, but the end that he has in view is not the renunciation of the expansive desires but the subduing of them to the law of measure. The humanistic virtues — moderation, common sense, and common decency — though much more accessible than those of the saint, still go against the grain of the natural man — terribly against the grain, one is forced to conclude from a cool survey of the facts of history. Such, indeed, is the difficulty of getting men to practice even humanistic control that one is led, not necessarily to revive the dogma of original sin, but to suspect that the humanitarians, both Baconian and Rousseauistic, are hopelessly superficial in their treatment of the problem of evil. The social dualism they have set up tends in its ultimate development to substitute the class war for what Diderot termed in his denunciation of the older dualism the 'civil war in the cave.'

One reason that Rousseau gave for his abandonment of his five children was that he had been robbed by the rich of the wherewithal to feed them. The ease with which multitudes have been persuaded to follow Rousseau in this evasion of moral responsibility puts one on the track of a human trait that one may actually observe in oneself and others, and that gives

some positive justification to the theological emphasis on the old Adam. This trait may be defined as spiritual indolence, a disinclination to oppose to one's expansive desires any will to refrain, and a naïve willingness to shift the blame on something or somebody else for the unpleasant consequences.

It is evident that in the eyes of anyone who believes in the existence in man of a higher will, with reference to which he may be a responsible moral agent, the characteristic modern malady is not plain and unvarnished materialism but sham spirituality. The remedy would seem to be in a reaffirmation in some form of the true dualism rather than in the merely cynical and 'hard-boiled' attitude so prevalent nowadays among those who have become convinced of the final inanity of the humanitarian type of idealism. Joubert wrote over a century ago: 'To all tender, ardent, and elevated natures, I say: Only Rousseau can detach you from religion, and only true religion can cure you of Rousseau.' I have already made plain that in my judgment one may not only oppose Rousseau on humanistic as well as religious grounds, but that, while making abundant use of the wisdom of the past, one may come at humanism itself in a more positive and critical fashion than has been customary heretofore.

IV

I can scarcely hope, within the limits of an article, to make entirely clear what I mean by a positive and

critical humanism. This, to judge by certain current misunderstandings of my position, is a feat I have been unable to accomplish in a series of volumes. I may, however, touch briefly on a few of the main issues. A consideration of Rousseau and his influence will be found to converge on two main problems — the problem of the will, of which I have already spoken, and, of lesser though still major importance, the problem of the intellect. That Rousseau is at the headwaters of an anti-intellectualist trend extending down to James and Bergson and beyond is generally recognized. This trend is prefigured in his saying that 'the man who thinks is a depraved animal.' At bottom the protest of this type of anti-intellectualist is against the mechanizing of the world by a scientific or pseudo-scientific rationalism. He seeks to escape from mechanism by the pathway of romantic spontaneity. This means practically that he is ready to surrender to the naturalistic flux in the hope of thus becoming 'creative.' Unfortunately this surrender involves a sacrifice of the standards and the conscious control that are needed to give to creation genuine human significance.

It is above all in dealing with the problems of the intellect and the will that I have sought to be positive and critical. As against the Rousseauistic emotionalist, it seems to me imperative to re-establish the true dualism — that between vital impulse and vital control — and to this end to affirm the higher will first of all as a psychological fact. The individual needs,

however, to go beyond this fact if he is to decide how far he is to exercise control in any particular instance with a primary view to his own happiness: in short, he needs standards. To secure standards, at least critically, he cannot afford, like the Rousseauist, to disparage the intellect. One needs to turn its keen power of analysis to an entirely different order of experience from that envisaged by physical science.

To have standards means practically to have some principle of unity with which to measure mere manifoldness and change. There is a power in man, often termed imagination, that reaches out and seizes likenesses and analogies and so tends to establish unity. The unity thus apprehended needs, however, to be tested from the point of view of its reality by the analytical intellect — the power that discriminates — working not abstractly but on the actual data of experience. The fraternal union that the Rousseauist would establish among men on the basis of expansive emotion is found, when tested in this way, to involve an imaginative flight from the reality of both the human and the natural order, and so to exist only in dreamland. An inspection of all the facts of human experience, past and present, would seem to show that what unity a man may achieve either within himself or with his fellow men must be based primarily, not upon feeling, but upon an exercise of the higher will.

One's conception of the constant and unifying factor in life will appear in one's use of general terms.

It is plain that the humanist and the Rousseauist clash radically in their definitions. As a result of his elimination of the dualistic element, the Rousseauist has, as I have remarked, set up a 'virtue' that, in the eyes of the humanist, is not true virtue; and so likewise for such terms as 'justice' and 'liberty,' and above all (at least in its application to man) 'nature.' If there is to be a reintegration of the dualistic element into these words, there would seem to be needed an art of inductive defining somewhat similar to that which Socrates brought to bear upon the sophists. It is precisely at this point that the keen discrimination of which I have spoken would have its fullest play. At all events one may say that the standards that result from the co-operation of the imagination and the analytical intellect, and that are reflected in one's definitions, are finally pressed by the humanist into the service of the higher will with a view to imposing a right direction upon the impulses and expansive desires of the natural man.

The humanist is rather distrustful of sudden conversions and pistol-shot transformations of human nature. Hence his supreme emphasis on education. If the humanistic goal is to be attained, if the adult is to like and dislike the things he should — according to Plato, the ultimate aim of ethical endeavor — he must be trained in the appropriate habits almost from infancy. Occasional humanists may appear under present conditions, but if there is to be anything resembling a humanistic movement, the first stage

would, as I have said, be that of Socratic definition; the second stage would be the coming together of a group of persons on the basis of this definition — the working out, in short, in the literal sense of that unjustly discredited word, of a convention; the third stage would almost inevitably be the attempt to make this convention effective through education.

V

The mention of education brings the whole discussion home to America. Our educators are more completely and more naïvely Rousseauistic than those of almost any other country. For example, there is an important survival of the religious-humanistic conception of education in France and Germany and, above all, England; whereas the assumption is all but universal among those who control our educational policies from the elementary grades to the university that anything that sets bounds to the free unfolding of the temperamental proclivities of the young, to their right to self-expression, as one may say, is outworn prejudice. Discipline, so far as it exists, is not of the humanistic or the religious type, but of the kind that one gets in training for a vocation or a specialty. The standards of a genuinely liberal education, as they have been understood, more or less from the time of Aristotle, are being progressively undermined by the utilitarians and the sentimentalists. If the Baconian-Rousseauistic formula is as unsound in certain of its postulates as I myself believe, we are in danger of

witnessing in this country one of the great cultural tragedies of the ages.

Moreover Rousseauism not only dominates our education but has been eating into the very vitals of the Protestant religion. Practically, this means that Protestantism is ceasing to be a religion of the inner life and is becoming more and more a religion of 'uplift.' The result of the attempt to deal with evil socially rather than at its source in the individual, to substitute an outer for an inner control of appetite, has been a monstrous legalism, of which the Eighteenth Amendment is only the most notable example. Those Protestants who have allied themselves with an organization like the Anti-Saloon League have been violating one of the most necessary of Christian precepts — that which warns against confounding the things of God with the things of Caesar.

The multiplication of laws, attended by a growing lawlessness — the present situation in this country — is, as every student of history knows, a very sinister symptom. It may mean that our democratic experiment is, like similar experiments in the past, to end in a decadent imperialism. Nothing is farther from my thought than to suggest that we are on a fatal descending curve. I do not believe in any such fatality, and am in general skeptical of every possible philosophy of history — of the Spenglerian variety most of all. The all-important factor that the Spenglers are wont to overlook or deny in favor of collective tendencies is the moral choices of individuals. For example,

the majority in the United States seems just now to be careless of the higher cultural values, to desire nothing better than a continuation of the present type of material prosperity based on the miracles of mass production. Individuals, however, are already standing aside from the majority and assuming a critical attitude toward its 'ideals.'

Whether this remnant will become sufficiently large to make itself felt in an important way, remains of course a question. At all events, there is an increasing number of persons in this country who can at least see the point of view of the rest of the world. This point of view may be defined as a curious blend of admiration for our efficiency and of disdain for our materialism. The foreigner is, however, far too prone to make America the universal scapegoat for the present domination of man by the machine.

Though the utilitarian-sentimental movement may have triumphed more completely in America than elsewhere, it has been extending its conquests over the whole of the Occident and is now invading the Orient. The issues it raises are, in short, international. That the peripheral merits of this movement are almost innumerable I should be the first to admit: indeed, almost everything in it seems plausible until one penetrates to its very center, and then one discovers an omission that unless corrected vitiates all the rest — the omission, namely, as I have been trying to show, of any reference to a higher will or power of control.

Without making any pretense to a prophetic rôle, I am yet willing to express the conviction that unless there is a recovery of the true dualism or, what amounts to the same thing, a reaffirmation of the truths of the inner life in some form — traditional or critical, religious or humanistic — civilization in any sense that has been attached to that term hitherto is threatened at its base. I speak of the interests of civilization, though my own prime objection to Rousseauism is that it is found finally not to make for the happiness of the individual.

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