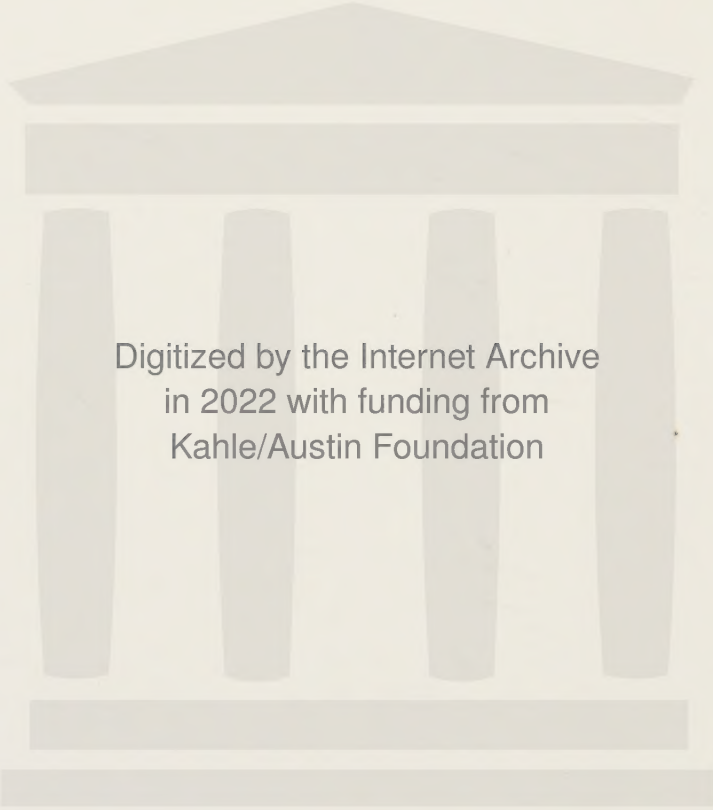


**ALDOUS HUXLEY'S
HEARST ESSAYS**

edited by

James Sexton



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ALDOUS HUXLEY'S
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ALDOUS HUXLEY'S HEARST ESSAYS

edited by

James Sexton

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"To Janice"

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Introduction

I "This...supremely uncomfortable moment of history"

Aldous Huxley's Hearst newspaper articles appeared from September, 1931 until April, 1935, a time he called a "supremely uncomfortable moment of history,"¹ or roughly from the completion of *Brave New World* until about the time he confirmed his growing commitment to pacifism by joining the Peace Pledge Union, a pacifist organization also popularly known as Dick Sheppard's Army (October, 1935).² During these four years Huxley made the shift from a predominantly cynical satirist to committed activist; in the former role, he had mocked human foibles; in the latter, he propagandized for what he considered to be the path of right action. *Eyeless in Gaza*, the novel he struggled with for much of this period, was finally completed in 1936, and the "conversion" Anthony Beavis undergoes is a projection of Huxley's own 1935 conversion.³

But between 1931 and 1939, he wrote little fiction. Instead, he wrote a weekly essay for the Hearst syndicate; an important but neglected 1931 non-fiction series of articles based on Cobbett-like forays into the English industrial heartland called "Abroad in England" (which may later have influenced George Orwell to take his own *Road to Wigan Pier*); an unpublished play called *Now More Than Ever* (1932), which explores the effect of the economic crisis on the ruling classes, just as "Abroad" chronicles its effects on the proletariat. In 1933 he temporarily shelved work on *Eyeless in Gaza* in order to go on a voyage that would later provide material for the philosophical travel

¹ "The Victory of Art over Humanity." *Nash's Pall Mall Magazine*, July, 1931, 47.

² Canon H.R.L. (Dick) Sheppard (1880-1937). Charismatic founder of the Peace Pledge Union, and model for Huxley's Rev. Purchas, the parson with the "muscular-jocular Christian" manner, who founded a pacifist society in *Eyeless in Gaza*.

³ See Sybil Bedford's biography *Aldous Huxley*, Vol. 1. *The Apparent Stability*, chapters "L'Année Horrible" and "Eyeless in Gaza: The Nobler Hypothesis" for a description of what amounts to a kind of religious conversion.

book *Beyond the Mexique Bay* (1934). In late 1935 he joined the Peace Pledge Union, and by the end of the year he was lecturing on pacifism, producing in 1936 the tract *What Are You Going To Do About It? The Case For Constructive Peace*, followed in 1937 by *An Encyclopedia of Pacifism* and a kind of non-fiction examination of the prerequisites for the realization of utopia, *Ends and Means*. For the rest of his life he worked toward constructing a better world through better social organization; as well, he embarked on a personal road to that "paradise within, happier far" by practicing methods common to what he called the perennial philosophy. His last novel, *Island* (1962) gives us his final word on both the external and internal ways to the great good place.

"Man Proposes" (115) is the title of a characteristic essay from the Hearst essays, an allusion to a favorite Huxley aphorism from Thomas à Kempis: "*Homo proponit, sed Deus disponit*," (Man proposes, but God disposes.) Huxley appreciated the irony to be derived from the discrepancy between our expectations and their eventual outcomes. The kernel of much of Huxley's thought is contained in the dictum from *Imitatio Christi*. For example, it sums up humanity's intellectual pride as well as the irony of situation central to *Brave New World*, namely that the very *arts* humanity calls upon to rescue it from the devastation of an economic collapse and war of annihilation on a global scale, are ultimately responsible for the abolition of humanity as we know it.

Writing about devastating floods in China during 1931, ("On a Cataclysm," 27), Aldous Huxley makes the point that famines, plagues, and floods are comparatively unknown now; that in our modern world, "Nature has been conquered by human art." He hastens to add, however, that man's misfortunes are not at an end; "he finds himself, now confronted by the problem of conquering the art which gave him his victory." Never one to avoid savoring irony, Huxley adds in another essay published about the same time,

the moment of his first great victory over the forces of nature has turned out, ironically enough, to be the moment of his first great defeat in a new campaign against an entirely different enemy. The conqueror of nature has been defeated by art--by the very arts which he himself called into being to conquer nature. Humanity is at present staggering under the blows received in the course of this disastrous conflict with the organised forces of its

own intelligence. Every one of our major troubles at this present supremely uncomfortable moment of history is due, not to nature, not to matter, but to mind and to those arts and sciences which mind has brought into existence.⁴

But like a homeopathic physician, he calls for more art as the remedy, not more nature. In other words, he resists the siren song of primitivism which his friend D.H. Lawrence had prescribed as a cure for our modern ills and, ever the rationalist, instead urges us to devise more and better arts to solve our problems.

One of the fascinations of this series of essays is the window Huxley constructs for us to view this age of anxiety, the years leading up to World War II. "Angry Ape" (337) not only points to Huxley's concern over the pitched battle between reason and passion in the human animal, but also raises the spectre of national bankruptcy, revolution as a desperate solution to the economic ills; and, of course, the ever-increasing likelihood of world war. These themes occur in several other essays in this collection.

Like a Renaissance humanist, Huxley often pondered the human condition, the eternal struggle between reason and passion, or what Sir Philip Sidney called "our erected wit, and our infected will." The man many see as an incurable cynic, did not at least rule out the possibility of optimism about our prospects. Systematically objective, he insists on counterbalancing our virtue with our vice in "On a Cataclysm":

Our disasters are now homemade. The fact is at once encouraging and depressing. Encouraging, because human behavior is, to some extent at least, rational. Depressing, because this same behavior is so largely the fruit of passion. Mistakes in reasoning, can be corrected by better reasoning and disasters due to such mistakes are more easily remediable than disasters due to the operation of blind non-human forces. But passion is stronger than reason, and disasters due to passion are the hardest of all to remedy. In so far as our chief enemy at present is rational art rather than blind nature, the prospect for the future is good. But in so far as rational art has been made to serve ambition, greed and hatred, it is bad. The forces of nature are less dangerous than those of man's own evil passions.

⁴ "Victory of Art," *Nash's Pall Mall Magazine*, July, 1931, 47.

It follows that the most dangerous passion of nationalism must be de-fanged. "Psychological Dividends" (153) is an early attempt to deal with the problem of nationalism as a cause of war. Huxley had been reading Dr. Fedor Vergin's *Subconscious Europe* (1932), the main thesis of which is that disarmament will be impossible until international amity and co-operation pay as strong an emotional dividend as hatred. Huxley later expanded "Psychological Dividends" into the six thousand word essay "Do We Require Orgies?" in March, 1934, including it in *Beyond the Mexique Bay*. Not altogether sarcastically, he proffers the orgies of lotteries, drugs, and sports as possible surrogates for the new positivist religion of nationalism and its concomitant hatred for the home country's official enemies, suggesting that delegates to a hypothetical World Psychological Conference should first tackle the problem of war by dealing with its psychological causes before dealing with its economic and political causes. Here Huxley explores the idea of canalizing socially acceptable substitutes for dangerous human passions. One thinks of the various uses of the word "surrogate" in *Brave New World*, the most important of which is the Violent Passion Surrogate, (VPS)--a pharmacological means of calming the many-headed beast within us all. Although he offers no other "nationalism surrogate" in *Beyond the Mexique Bay*, he points to its need in the January, 1934 essay "Religion, Science, and Man" (343) prompted by a reading of James Leuba's *God or Man*:

Professor Leuba has failed to mention the modern religion-substitutes, of which the most harmful and the nearest in form to...existing religions is nationalism. Most human beings feel a strong desire to believe in something certain and unquestionable, to evade responsibility by abandoning themselves to authority, and to feel themselves associated with other human beings in a common cause.... For many, the old doctrines are now unacceptable.... Unable, because of a smattering of scientific education, to believe in the teachings of their religions, they find no difficulty in accepting the equally incredible and more mischievous doctrines of nationalism.... Nationalism is a crusading pseudo-religion. How shall it be combated?

By 1935-36 Huxley was providing an answer: the surrogate he called "constructive peace" was to be the means of combatting

nationalism. Although the Hearst contract ran out before he fully articulated his answer, some essays provide early hints as to the nature of the remedy. "The Problems of Property" (135) suggests that "only on the lines laid down by Proudhon can the world hope to enjoy the advantages of Liberalism at the same time as the advantages of Socialism." And in "The Problem of Leisure" (101) he speaks of the need for an alternative to our "demonstrably bad social and economic system" on the order of something with "the merits of the planned Russian system without its defects of tyranny and...inefficiency."

It was not until the mid 1930s that Huxley had consolidated his political ideas sufficiently to offer anything approaching a utopian scheme: to this point his success had been as a kind of jester, a critic, not a builder. As a writer, he is aware that dystopia is innately more interesting, more dynamic than utopia. As he says in 1934, "Benevolence is tepid; hatred and its complement, vanity, are stinging hot and high-flavored."⁵ He would have agreed with Swift's theory:

The materials of Panegyrick being very few in number, have been long since exhausted: For as Health is but one Thing, and has been always the same, whereas Diseases are by thousands, besides new and daily Additions; So all the virtues that have been ever in Mankind, are to be counted upon a few Fingers, but his Follies and Vices are innumerable, and Time adds hourly to the Heap.⁶

Thus, it should not surprise us that Huxley chose to emphasize error in his Hearst Essays.

One human error he pointed to in the essay "Idolatry" (287) was humanity's enthusiastic acceptance of the new faiths, Fascism and Communism. As early as December, 1932, he saw the "inexplicable exaltation of Hitler" as a homesickness for order ("Aristocratic Tradition," 143). In his essay "Scapegoats," (195), he points to Nazi anti-semitism and notes mordantly that the scapegoat is still the most useful of the domestic animals; and long before Senator McCarthy's attacks on un-American activities, he labels as tribal barbarism the burning of "unGerman books" in "German Bonfires" (217).

⁵ "Do We Require Orgies?" *Yale Review* March 1934, 474.

⁶ Jonathan Swift, *A Tale of a Tub* ed. H. Davis (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965), 30.

Quick to denounce Nazism, he was initially more ambivalent about Russian Communism. Reflecting on a trip to the coal mining towns in and around Durham during the peak of working class unemployment, Huxley notes, "If only one could believe that the remedies proposed for the awfulness (Communism, etc.) weren't even worse than the disease..."⁷ Still, no fewer than twenty-six of the Hearst essays refer to some aspect of Russian culture: usually politics or education. Some, like "A Soviet School Book" (25) are somewhat positive. Certainly the rationalist in him was attracted by the Communist commitment to large-scale planning.⁸

Communism also fares rather well in his 1931 series of articles, "Abroad in England":

The army of unemployed is destined...to remain a standing army. Can we pay for the upkeep of this army? And can we reduce its numbers? Yes, but only by the most careful and systematic national planning. The age of happy accidents is over. Little piecemeal improvements and local tinkering are inadequate to the modern circumstances. Stability and a measure of assured and permanent prosperity can be achieved only by the nation that has an intelligent national purpose.

Russia has an intelligent national purpose. If her Five-Year Plan succeeds--and many competent foreign observers think that it will succeed--Russia will be in a position to convert the whole world to her way of thinking. So long as it demonstrably doesn't pay, communism can make but little appeal. But a time may come when communism will pay and pay better, for the majority of men and women than capitalism....Intelligent national planning is dictated by the most rudimentary considerations of self-interest. We must either plan or else go under. Moreover, it is only by planning that we can hope to make England... a place in which it will be possible for the majority of men and women to lead anything like the good life.⁹

⁷ Aldous Huxley, *Letters*, ed. Grover Smith (New York: Harper, 1969), 345.

⁸ Huxley had intended to accompany his brother Julian to Russia in 1931, but owing to difficulties he encountered finishing *Brave New World*, he decided not to go.

⁹ Aldous Huxley, "Abroad in England," *Nash's Pall Mall Magazine*, May 1931, 84.

Then, too, the unpublished play *Now More Than Ever* (1932) gives a sympathetic portrait of the Oxford Communist, Walter Clough, who on a Hyde Park soap box rails against the injustices of capitalism. Incidentally, this scene is based on an actual Sunday encounter with a communist orator, an account of which is given in "Hyde Park on Sunday" (35) in this volume.

As he commended the Russian bent for national planning, he deplored the drift of the "Old Gang" ruling Britain. This term of contempt was used by extremists of the right like Wyndham Lewis and Sir Oswald Mosley as well as by liberals and socialists like Huxley's friend Naomi Mitchison, and the editorial staff of the influential *Week-End Review*. In "Forewarned is Not Forearmed" (33), Huxley attacks Chancellor of the Exchequer Sir Philip Snowden over his lack of a general plan. Indeed, at one point Huxley sounds like a supporter of Mosley and his National Policy, though it should be noted that respected figures such as John Maynard Keynes and Harold Nicolson initially supported Mosley. Huxley speaks of two alternatives: governmental non-interference as the country slides towards economic catastrophe or else "we must abandon democracy and allow ourselves to be ruled dictatorially by men who will compel us to do and suffer what a rational foresight demands."

In a sense, this line could serve as an epigraph to *Brave New World*, the novel, next to *Eyeless in Gaza*, closest in time to the Hearst journalism. If one reads the history lesson of Chapter 3 against a backdrop of "Forewarned," then the economic satire of the novel seems much more compelling, particularly when the World Controller is named Mond, an allusion to Sir Alfred Mond, Lord Melchett, perhaps the most famous rationalizer of industry of the time, whose ICI chemical plant at Billingham (Imperial Chemical Industries) Huxley described as a kind of Baconian Solomon's House. Mond was also the man H. G. Wells described in his 1926 novel *The World of William Clissold* as the perfect leader of the Open Conspiracy, a man with all the qualifications to head the real center of power in post-parliamentary England.

Clearly, the Brave New World's Fordian dispensation is a projection of the kind of society advocated by Mosley on the right and, to a lesser degree, by Wells or the editorialists of the *Week-End Review* on the liberal side of the political spectrum, all of whom had written highly visible manifestos for a new kind of government during the time Huxley was preparing the novel. Indeed, in 1931, Huxley says:

There are two national plans at present on the English Market--Sir Oswald Mosley's and the rather more fully-worked out plan propounded by the *Week End Review*. Whether either of these plans, or indeed any large-scale plan, could be put rapidly into execution by purely constitutional means, I do not know. It seems to me...rather doubtful. The War made it sufficiently clear that rapid large-scale action and the traditional constitutional methods are not compatible.

He then goes on to say that the holders of political power, throwbacks to 19th century laissez-faire capitalism, object to the necessary large-scale national planning:

The actual desires of this minority will have to be overridden, and the desirable things imposed by force. But as this minority at present controls the governmental machine, it follows that the application of force may have to be done unconstitutionally. Which would...be regrettable; but not so regrettable,...as the prolongation of the present state of affairs, with the cheerful prospect of economic breakdown, revolution and a final communist triumph.¹⁰

If Huxley ever seriously believed that Oswald Mosley's National Policy could have been a welcome alternative to the drifting policies of MacDonald's coalition in the early 'thirties, he soon revised his thinking, noting that policies of Empire autarchy variously espoused by Alfred Mond, press baron Lord Beaverbrook, and Oswald Mosley were really militaristic plans in disguise, and he counselled against such schemes: "By transforming the British Empire from a Free Trade area into a private property protected by tariff walls, the governments concerned have made it absolutely certain that foreign hostility to the Empire shall be greatly increased."¹¹

Also, after the worst of the economic crisis was over he came to mistrust what he calls, "the great god Plan" ("Political Plans", 177) especially as in the hands of zealots and tyrants, adherence to the exigencies of centralized planning led in Russia to the liquidation of many thousands of human beings.

¹⁰ *Abroad*, 84.

¹¹ Aldous Huxley, *Ends and Means* (London: Chatto, 1937), 36.

By the mid-thirties, Huxley, along with other intellectuals prominent in the Peace Pledge Union (P.P.U.) such as Bertrand Russell, Storm Jameson, Rose Macaulay, Max Plowman and Gerald Heard, was able to offer several concrete alternatives to the dystopian errors previously discussed. His proposed program of pacifism had several other components in addition to disarmament; notably socialism, decentralisation, distribution and banking reform through the co-operative movement, reform of industrial management, educational reform, non-violent resistance as practiced by Gandhi in South Africa and India, open hostility to class exploitation and racism (and as a corollary, the promotion of international fraternity).

In sum, says Huxley, "War Resistance is not an end in itself, it is a way of life to achieve an end. The goal, in the expression of the Socialist is, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity; in that of the Christian it is, Truth, Beauty, Love, a world where all can and will desire to co-operate for the common good."¹² As can be seen in one of his first public talks and in the essay "Ceremonials" (267) he realizes the benefits of group activity in support of Constructive Pacifism and so recommends variations on local units made up of small teams that would meet regularly for common service and meditation: some would promote peace propaganda, charitable acts, education and the like.¹³

Constructive Pacifism must first of all be a personal ethic, a way of life for individuals; only on that condition will it come to be embodied...in forms of social and international organization.... It is easy to talk about a more excellent way of life, immensely difficult to live it. Five Latin words sum up the moral history of every man and woman who has ever lived: *Video meliora, proboque;/Deteriora sequor.* (I see the better and approve it: the worse is what I follow.)¹⁴

For the rest of his life Huxley attempted to propagandize against the worst and to follow the better.

¹² Aldous Huxley, *Encyclopedia of Pacifism* (London: Chatto, 1937), 119.

¹³ "Pacifism and Philosophy," A talk delivered in Friends House, London, December 3, 1935 in *The New Pacifism*, ed. G.K. Hibbert, (New York: Garland, 1972), 21-29.

¹⁴ Aldous Huxley, *What Are You Going to do About It?* (London: Chatto, 1936), 33. Anthony Beavis reflects on the significance of these words in chapter 2 of *Eyeless in Gaza*. The original is from Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 7,18.

II Background and Textual Matters

Lest it seem that Huxley dealt only with serious political issues in the series, it would be worth quoting a letter to Huxley from George Doran, his American publisher, who at the request of William Randolph Hearst, wrote Huxley in 1931 with a proposal that he write a series of weekly articles "which would provide...a very comfortable income."¹⁵ Hearst offered his stable of writers a free hand as to subject matter: Doran suggested that Huxley "transcribe to paper some of the things you have thought and said during the day.... I do not remember any conversation we have ever had when the subject of your part of the conversation would not make at least one editorial and probably two. I think particularly of our talk about Tunis, about D. H. Lawrence, and, oh, a hundred other topics that absorbed me and would equally absorb an intelligent newspaper audience.... The price per editorial would be \$100, which would aggregate in the year over 1000 pounds."¹⁶ Not surprisingly, to use the words of his friend and fellow resident of the Côte d'Azur, Edith Wharton, Huxley "succumbed at once" to the "wiles of Mr. Hearst."¹⁷ On June 4, 1931, Huxley wrote his agent, Ralph Pinker, "It seems good money for not much work, and of a kind that might be rather interesting."¹⁸ With little delay, he cabled his acceptance to Doran, and so began a series of no less than 173 contributions. Incidentally, Wharton soon descended from her perch long enough to sell a short story to Hearst's *Cosmopolitan* for "a good figure."¹⁹

Certainly Huxley took Doran at his word, for the breadth of subjects is enormous, ranging from his first published essay on drugs,

¹⁵ Unpublished letter from George Doran to Aldous Huxley, June 1, 1931, located in the Pinker Collection of the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas, Austin.

¹⁶ Doran.

¹⁷ Edith Wharton. *Letters*, ed. R.W.B. Lewis and Nancy Lewis (New York: Scribner's, 1988), 572.

¹⁸ Aldous Huxley. Letter to Pinker.

¹⁹ Wharton. *Letters*, 573.

to pieces on travel, language, nature, entomology, medicine, art, books, to the inspired whimsy of "Words, Words, Words" (119), "Woad" (105), and "A Theory of Dogs" (91). This latter piece, together with "Road Hogs" (299) clearly made a lasting impression on Mr. Hearst himself, for eight years after "Road Hogs" appeared, Hearst quoted the essay in a letter to a friend after publicly mourning the death of his own dog in a 1942 column:

Aldous Huxley says, 'Every dog thinks its master Napoleon, hence the popularity of dogs.' That is not the strict truth. Every dog adores its master, notwithstanding the master's imperfections.... So as your dog loves you, you come to love your dog. Not because it thinks you are Napoleon...but because love creates love.²⁰

In all, 173 original essays by Aldous Huxley appeared on the literary pages of such papers as *The Chicago Herald and Examiner*, *The New York American*, and *The San Francisco Examiner*. Strangely, the two major bibliographies of Huxley's works cite the appearances in the Chicago paper, even though Huxley always referred to them in the brief notes accompanying his submissions as the New York American articles.

Although the Eschelbach-Shober bibliography lists a total of 169 essays, from September 21, 1931 until April 18, 1935, three of the last six essays were merely repeats of previously published essays, thus leaving a count of 166. To this number must be added several original essays cited by Pierre Vitoux which apparently never appeared in the Chicago newspaper, but which did appear in *The New York American*.²¹ Thus 173 essays would seem to be the best tally. The New York newspaper ran its Huxley series from July 4, 1931 to December 12, 1934. None of these seven essays are cited in either the Duval or Eschelbach bibliographies, though they are noted in Bass's bibliography devoted to writings about Huxley.

However, some of Vitoux's findings must be revised after comparing the CHE essays with the typescripts Huxley sent to the *New*

²⁰ John Tebbel, *The Life and Good Times of William Randolph Hearst* (New York: Dutton), 340.

²¹ Pierre Vitoux, "Aldous Huxley at Texas: A Checklist of Manuscripts," *Library Chronicle of the University of Texas*, 9, (1978), 41-58.

York American. The seven *NYA* essays appear at the end of this volume, including one not mentioned by Vitoux or any Huxley bibliography: "Thinking With One's Hands". Other essays that Vitoux identifies under their original typescript titles as appearing only in the *New York American*, in fact turn out to have been published in the *Chicago Herald and Examiner*, but under different titles obviously chosen by the editors. Thus "Leisure" which Vitoux labels: "publication unlocated" did appear in the *CHE* under the title "The Tired Businessman." A second essay in the *NYA*, bearing Huxley's original title "A New Deal in Education", also appeared in *CHE*, but under the title "New Era", as did "Old Age in a Changing World" (*CHE* "Changing World"); and lastly, "The Unscientific Spirit" (*CHE*, "Reason Eclipsed").

In addition to the six typescripts in the Pinker Collection at Austin which Vitoux correctly identified as not appearing in *CHE*, and the seventh--"Thinking With One's Hands", I have decided to print three other typescripts: "Political Murder", "A Theory of Buses," and "Jonah and Politics". While Vitoux rightly assigns them a "publication unlocated" label, their length, probable dates and scope indicate that they too were destined for the Hearst newspapers, and may indeed even have been published in some of the other Hearst newspapers.

I have exercised my editorial privileges sparingly. Happily the newspaper editors left few obvious errors to correct; where they occur, I silently emend them. Spelling and punctuation has been kept as close to the original as is consistent with clarity. In the rare case where an exclusively British spelling appears, as in *gaol*, I have chosen the preferred North American *jail*. When comparison of the typescript with the published newspaper version revealed significant substantive changes, I restored the original deletions, as in "Nights Out".

Acknowledgments

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**Aldous Huxley's
Hearst Essays**

Bull Fights and Democracy

Bull fighting is not permitted in France. Bull fights take place none the less, often and openly, throughout Provence and Languedoc. Provided you are ready to pay the prescribed penalty--in this case a fine--there is nothing to prevent you from breaking the law as often as you like.

The amount of the fine is included by the promoters of bull fights in their calculation of overhead expenses. Tickets are dear. The public must pay for the privilege of breaking the law.

Bull fights at which the animal is not slaughtered are, I believe, permitted by French law. Provided that you don't kill him, you may puncture your bull as much as you like. For these less sanguinary shows the entrance fee is trifling.

You can buy an excellent seat for a dollar. This cheapness is due in part, no doubt, to the smallness of the overhead; there is no fine to pay, and a merely punctured bull is still a useful member of the taurine community; dead, he is good only to make tough beef and (owing to the holes in his hide) indifferent shoe leather. For mere puncturing, a bull may be hired; whereas for killing you must obviously buy and, as good fighting bulls are rare and especially bred for the military profession, buy at a high price.

This, as I say, would account to some extent for the cheapness of the tickets for those fights which are not to the death. But there are also, undoubtedly, other and purely psychological reasons. The public is more interested in a bloody than in a (relatively speaking) bloodless fight.

In the advertisements of the high class, illegal bull fights, the word *mort* is always printed in the largest letters. Death is the great attraction. Mere puncturing has a certain moderate drawing power; but not enough to induce the public to buy expensive tickets.

Where there is no death, men and women have to be attracted by the lure of low prices. The Novarros and Chaplins of the taurine world are those bulls which get swords stuck into their hearts.²² No merely

²² Ramón Novarro (1899-1968). Hollywood leading man of the silent film era. Star of *Ben-Hur* (1926).

punctured bull can hope to be a star of the first magnitude. He utterly lacks "IT."²³ That is why you can watch him being baited for a dollar.

Personally, I have no great liking for bull fights, whether to the death or otherwise. I don't much enjoy seeing animals stuck full of pins, jabbed with lances and finally, on the solemn occasions, pierced to the heart with a rapier, dithering for a moment on weakening legs (with the blood, as often as not, squirting in a great fountain from their nostrils), and at last sinking down, a heap of beef and shoe leather, on to the sand.

Nor does it give me more than a very moderate pleasure to watch the toreadors performing their ritual ballet round the stupid and infuriated or reluctant animal.

True, I enormously admire their courage. I appreciate the elegance and precision of their gestures. But I cannot help thinking, all the time I watch them, that the courage might be more worthily displayed and that one of the Russian ballets would be much more beautiful.

And if, as is after all not uncommon, one of the men gets gored and perhaps killed --well, again I don't appreciate the thrill as I ought.

The last bull fight I saw was in the Roman amphitheater at Nîmes, and even that (magnificent as, in its superb architectural setting, the spectacle unquestionably was), even that left me pretty cold.

In this, it was obvious, I differed from the great majority of the audience. The huge crowd was manifestly enjoying itself. When that great amphitheater was new, twenty-five thousand men and women had often thronged its seats to watch (from all accounts, with rapturous enjoyment) not bull--but man-baiting, fights to the death between gladiators, slaughters of criminals and slaves.

If such performance were revived today, would there still be an audience to look on and applaud? I think it quite possible that there would.

The suppression of bloody entertainments has always been the work of a minority.

Thus, it was the Christian priesthood which secured, against the wishes of the majority, the suppression of the Roman games. The recent abolition of public executions was due to the activities of a few strong minded humanitarians.

²³ A reference to the successful novel (1927) by Elinor Glyn (1864-1943), and, by extension, to the sex appeal of the "It girl," Clara Bow (1905-1965), star of the Hollywood film version.

If a plebiscite had been taken, would the popular vote have been on their side? It seems doubtful. In spite of our education, I believe that, if some enterprising manager put on a gladiatorial display, there would still be enough people to fill the old amphitheaters.

And, what is more, I believe that the enterprising manager could charge twenty dollars for the cheapest seat and not have a single ticket left on his hands. It is probably fortunate that we are more democratic in theory than in practice.

21 September 1931

Revolution

In a recent speech, Mussolini announced the possibility, for the coming Winter, of serious and widespread revolutionary movements. It is a prophecy which one does not have to be a man of genius or a reigning dictator to make. The very facts are prophetic; we have only to let them speak.

For central Europe, monetary collapse and a series of national bankruptcies are grim possibilities. For the world at large, more unemployment, more poverty, more hunger, are all but certain. There is too much wheat in the world; therefore millions must go without bread; such is the almost divinely paradoxical logic of the present economic circumstances.

Truly, individualist economy moves in a mysterious way its wonders to perform. If it is allowed to go on performing its wonders unchecked, it seems unquestionable that the revolutions prophesied by Mussolini duly will take place.

What always has astonished me is the fact, not that revolutions should occasionally break out, but that they are not breaking out all the time. The all but infinitely long-suffering patience of the lower ranks in the social hierarchy has always struck me as the most significant and (though we all take it so cheerfully for granted) the most extraordinary fact in history.

For the great majority of human beings, the conditions of life always have been and still are, even in the most highly civilized countries, intolerably bad. And yet these intolerable conditions are in fact tolerated. Instead of rising and slitting the throats of those who are (or at any rate seem to be) their oppressors, the oppressed have accepted their unpleasant lot with the resignation with which they accept bad weather--as a thing inevitable and not to be altered.

Only when hunger has driven them to desperation; or when injustice has become so monstrous that death itself is preferable to their present existence; or when, by their own incompetence or owing to disaster, the rulers have allowed the social order to fall into chaos--only on these occasions will revolution finally break out. For the rest of the

time--that is to say, for about ninety-nine years out of every hundred--the masses resign themselves to their lot.

What is the explanation of this extraordinary, this superhuman (or perhaps, subhuman) patience? It is to be found, I suppose, partly in the mentality numbing and physically debilitating effect upon the masses of the bad conditions which they accept; partly in the intrinsically poor hereditary makeup of the great majority of human beings.

Lacking the spirit and energy to rebel and the intelligence to carry rebellion to a successful conclusion in a new social order, the oppressed have accepted their secular oppression. They could do nothing else. Revolution has broken out only when conditions, from being merely intolerable, became absolutely impossible. And it has been successful only in the cases where great leaders arose to inspire the revolutionaries, to give a direction to their movement, to impose a discipline and provide a strategy.

There would have been a Russian revolution without Lenin. The complete collapse of the Tsarist regime and of the entire economic system of the country made it inevitable. But, without Lenin, would this inevitable revolution have been a successful revolution?

It is impossible to answer such a question. But the mere fact that it can be asked is in itself a testimony to the inestimable importance of leadership. Looking back over the record of history, we see that the majority of good leaders have always preferred taking over a going concern to smashing and rebuilding from the foundation.

24 September 1931

On Going Over a Battleship

Insects are repulsive enough, even when they are their natural size; magnified, they become simply blood-curdling. The microphotograph of a louse or a hornet, for example, has the fascination of something supremely horrible. Equipped with natural files and saws and brushes, a living panoply of pincers, lances, probes and hooks, the enlarged insect reveals itself as a mixture between a factory on legs and a walking torture chamber.

The other day I had the opportunity, in a Mediterranean port, of visiting a battleship.

Clambering about over the monster's sun-warmed carapace, or groping my way through the intricacies of its iron guts, I felt like a parasite attached to some gigantic insect. Magnified millions of times, the huge bug squatted there on the water, all its poisonous armory enlarged into instruments of destruction, every bristle a gun, every pore a torpedo tube. Its antennae rose mast-high; its feelers were range finders and wireless; in the bridge and the fire-control turrets I recognized the creature's nerve ganglia. Its inwards had been magnified into turbines, its scales into armor plates.

And what of its population of resident parasites? The sailors, I noticed, were mostly small men, blanched by confinement in the black world between decks, (big, bronzed Jack Tar is now extinct; his place has been taken by a semi-skilled factory worker, managing machines under extremely unhygienic conditions.) They had the unwholesome whiteness of those small, pale ticks which swarm on the underside of any good-sized beetles.

The repulsiveness of an insect seems to increase with the magnification you apply to it. Certainly, this colossal bug, floating in Toulon Harbor, this billion-times magnified venomous water-beetle, was the most insidious of its family I have ever seen.

The largest, it was for that reason the beastliest of bugs. And what made its beastliness more objectionable was the fact that it had not been born beastly, like a scorpion or a louse; it had been deliberately planned to be the largest, nastiest and most dangerous of vermin.

Men had created this enormous working model of a loathsome insect for the express purpose of destroying other men.

Writing just after the Franco-Prussian War, Flaubert records a remark made by a member of the Chinese embassy, "What, you're surprised by this sort of thing?" The philosophic Chinaman was referring to the War and the Commune. "But it's absolutely in order; it's the rule. What you find so surprising is the sort of thing that's going on all the time in China. That's how the world happens to be made. It's the contrary that is the exception."

Statistics appallingly confirm the truth of the Chinaman's words. From 1496 B.C. to 1925 A.D., a period of 3,421 years, there have been about 3,153 years of local or international war and a bare 268 years of universal peace.

The figures are given by an eminent authority, Professor V.V. Pella, and are no doubt quite correct.²⁴

What do we propose to do about them?

Flaubert's Chinaman implied that the future would be as the past had been. The sixty years that have elapsed since he made his prophecy have proved him, so far, right. Is he to go on being right?

The choice is ours; we can prove him truthful or a liar at will. Incredible as it may seem, our statesmen seem to be anxious to prove him truthful, seem actually to want the next 3,000 years--or, at any rate, the next thirty, for which alone (thank heaven) they are directly responsible--as hideous with murder as the past.

In spite of covenants, pacts, conferences, the sea is still infested with mammoth bugs, the ground is maggotty with crawling tanks, the air loud with the buzzing of those steel wasps that we have created for the sole purpose of killing the maximum number of women and children in the minimum time.

Our world is lousy with armaments and we are so utterly lost to all reason and decency that we complacently accept our verminous state.

A couple of pennyworths of common sense and insecticide would rid us forever of all our loathsome parasites. But we prefer to be verminous.

We prefer to run the risk of being killed by the party insects we ourselves have fashioned.

25 September 1931

²⁴ Vespasian V. Pella (1897-1952) was an advocate of disarmament and author of books and memoranda for the League of Nations on international law and related issues.

Imitations

The hypocrite and the man of genuine virtue--both are actors, both, play a part. But, whereas the hypocrite draws a distinction between the self that appears before the public eye and the self of private life, the genuinely virtuous man does his best to play his hero part, not only on the stage, but off it too.

Each is copying an ideal model. But the one copies it wholeheartedly and all the time, the other copies it only in public and to gain some particular end. *The Imitation of Christ*--that is the title of the greatest, the most universally and enduringly popular of all works of Christian devotion. The hypocrite's differs from the good man's imitation in being insincere and partial, instead of genuine and complete.

Imitation, however, remains the essence of the behavior of both of them.

Every teacher knows how vitally important it is to prevent children from accepting undesirable models. The child delinquent, who has accepted the film crook as his ideal and is trying to imitate him in real life, is a distressingly familiar figure in the juvenile courts.

The models accepted for imitation may be living persons, historical characters or figments of the artistic imagination. The influence of a living pattern is necessarily limited. A man cannot be in more than one place at one time, cannot establish personal contact with more than a relatively very small number of other human beings.

But, transformed into a historical character, transported from the world of too, too solid flesh into the universe of literature, the range of his influence is instantly enlarged. A man whose life has been put into a book can be in hundreds of thousands of different places simultaneously, can establish personal contact with millions of other human beings.

Indeed, I believe that the heroes and heroines of fiction have exercised at least as great an influence on conduct as those of solid historical fact. In many cases, incidentally, these heroes and heroines of history have survived for posterity as purely fictional personages. Thus, the Brutus who actually murdered Julius Caesar was a most unpleasant

ruffian. Thanks to Plutarch and later to Shakespeare he has lived on as a model of patriotism.

The imitation of the personages of Rousseau's novels was responsible, in the second half of the eighteenth century, for the most profound and far-reaching changes in the prevailing habits of thought and feeling.

Julie and Emile and the Savoyard Vicar affected the course of history at least as profoundly as the greatest of their flesh-and-blood contemporaries. For a later generation it was the imitation of Manfred and Lara that determined conduct and directed the flow of thought and feeling. Balzac's inventions were hardly less influential than Byron's; Rastignac still lives as the pattern of the ambitious young man.²⁵

The imitation of Dostoevsky's characters has ceased to be fashionable in Russia, where the word "psychological" has come to be a term of abuse. But in Germany and France it continues to be effective.

Among contemporaries the two authors whose creations have had the greatest influence (at any rate, on the more self-conscious and cultured) are Proust and his spiritual antipode, D.H. Lawrence.

For the great masses there is the cinema. Its heroes and heroines are patterns for millions. Realizing this, the Russian propagandists have set out to create, by means of the film, a new ideal of character, a new pattern of thought and feeling.

Truth may be stranger than fiction; but equipped with its new machinery, fiction seems to be on the way to becoming stranger than truth.

26 September 1931

²⁵ Rake and dandy who appears in Balzac's *Père Goriot* and *Cousin Bette*.

Ideals and the Machine Tool

"The ideals which have always shone before me and filled me with the joy of living are goodness, beauty and truth. To make a goal of comfort and happiness has never appealed to me; a system of ethics built on this basis would be sufficient only for a herd of cattle."

So writes Einstein in the little essay which he contributes to the volume of *Living Philosophies*, recently published by Simon & Schuster.²⁶ Einstein is saying something with which in the past every one would have agreed--so much so that it would almost have gone without saying.

Today the majority of men and women, including large numbers of the most earnest and high-minded people, regard the ideal of happiness as the highest that can be set before humanity. Indeed, the promotion of happiness over truth, beauty and goodness is now commonly acclaimed as an upward step, a progress on which we should congratulate ourselves.

And yet Einstein and, along with Einstein, almost all the eminent thinkers of the past consider the ideal of happiness an unworthy one and the corresponding ethic a morality for cows and oxen. The fact is surely curious and significant.

I shall not attempt in this place to judge between these two philosophies of life. I am merely, at the moment, a naturalist recording their respective peculiarities and attempting to discover how each is adapted to its respective environment in space and time.

The Marxian theory of history is certainly not true. The course of human development has not been determined exclusively by economic causes. Many of the most important events in history can only be

²⁶ Einstein's thirty-one page essay expresses his belief that scientists will determine the fate of civilization. His vision of the purpose of life as the quest for goodness, truth, and beauty as opposed to comfort and happiness, as well as his depiction of the latter credo as fit only for cattle parallels one of Huxley's structural principles in *Brave New World*: one thinks of the Savage's debate with Mond. The reference at the beginning of chapter 5 to Stoke Poges and the lowing cattle sets up a bathetic reference to Gray's *Elegy*.

explained in terms of psychology, not of economic pressures from without.

There are (and the fact is exceedingly depressing) certain definite correlations between what men think about the universe and the economic situation at the time of thinking. To deny the existence of some such correlation seems to me as unjustifiable as the Marxian's dogmatic insistence on the completeness and exclusiveness of economic determinism.

In the case we have been considering it seems sufficiently obvious that a correlation exists between the present popularity of the ideal of happiness and the rise of mass production. The pursuit of goodness, truth and beauty sets no wheels turning, employs no labor. Whereas the ideal of happiness is a most valuable stimulus to production.

For happiness can be and generally is, identified with comfort. And comfort--the greatest comfort of the greatest number--is precisely what the mass-producing industrialist is equipped to supply. What more natural than that he should affirm (in all good faith) the primacy of the ideal which keeps his factories busy? And what more natural, in the days when it was materially impossible to provide comfort for all, than that men should have exalted those ideals in the pursuit of which human beings, even in a state of considerable physical discomfort, can find a rich and rewarding happiness?

You can, if you like, call the old ideal a compensation for the economic shortcomings of the pre-industrial age; the new ideal a rationalization of modern economic needs. A correlation exists; but it is not the whole story.

Ideals are evolved outside the sphere of economics. Men spontaneously desire beauty, truth, goodness; they also spontaneously desire happiness--whether gross or refined--for themselves alone or, altruistically, for the whole world.

All that economic pressure can do is to determine at any moment which set of ideals shall be most widely held.

28 September 1931

Good Conversation

Most conversation, like most writing, is bad. Hence, no doubt, the zeal with which men and women cultivate its substitutes. Even bridge is better than the talk of people who have nothing to say. Even the noise of a jazz band is less displeasing than the noise of a bore. And as for silence and solitude--they are, of course, infinitely preferable to all these things.

A Good Conversationalist is not the same as an occasional Good Talker. Many people possess gifts of story telling, of mimicry, of malice, gifts which make them amusing companions for an evening or a week-end. Many others have done strange things, been in odd places, met queer people; the recital of their adventures can be absorbingly interesting.

But these people are only Occasional Good Talkers. Their stock-in-trade soon is exhausted. The story of Jones' sojourn among the cannibals cannot be heard with pleasure more than, say, three times. Smith's imitations are funny once. And even Robinson's collection of malevolent anecdotes about his friends is not inexhaustible.

Occasional Good Talk is of its essence ephemeral. After a little while it ceases, for any given listener, to be good and becomes insuperably tedious. Whereas to a Good Conversationalist you can go on listening indefinitely.

For, over the good talker, the Good Conversationalist possesses the incomparable advantage of being intelligent and well informed. It is this which allows him to renew himself.

The Occasional Good Talker is bankrupt when his tiny bag of tricks is empty. The intelligent and well-informed conversationalist has something of value to say about almost every subject. His bag of tricks is like the widow's cruse--inexhaustible.²⁷

That the Good Conversationalist must possess some at least of the qualities of the Occasional Good Talker is obvious.

A man can be well informed and intelligent, and yet (for lack of certain arts and graces) be a bore. The mere timbre of the voice is enormously important. Some of the most devastating bores I have ever

²⁷ See *1 Kings 17:12*.

known were very well educated men of more than the average intelligence--but men who happened to be cursed with voices like trombones. They boomed at you (alas, they still boom!). The noise produced a kind of anesthesia.

A booming Socrates would never, I am convinced, have found a single listener.

Some otherwise excellent conversationalists are spoilt by being too professional. Conversation is an art that should never be cultivated for its own sake, never be made a life's work. Talkers should always be amateurs and should only talk when the spirit moves them, and not because they have a reputation to keep up or an artistic duty to perform. I feel this very strongly, and for this reason have never been able to appreciate the much vaunted conversation of Irishmen.

It is altogether too professional for my taste. (Incidentally, I find that Irishmen are apt to be too professional, even as Irishmen. How rarely it is that one meets an amateur Dubliner! But this is by the way).

Good writers are not necessarily good talkers; I have known excellent ones who were in conversation dull or almost dumb. Still, the two talents do, as a matter of fact, quite frequently occur together. Certainly the most brilliant talker of my acquaintance is the French poet, Jean Cocteau.

D.H. Lawrence was often as exciting to listen to as he was to read. And then there is Vernon Lee, there is Bertrand Russell, there is Roger Fry, there is Desmond MacCarthy--all good writers and all superb conversationalists.²⁸

1 October 1931

²⁸ Vernon Lee, born Violet Paget (1856-1935), English essayist and expert on Italy. Roger Fry (1866-1934), Bloomsbury artist and critic; organized the first London exhibit of Post-Impressionists in 1910. Sir Desmond MacCarthy (1878-1952). Literary editor of *The New Statesman* from 1920. Huxley recommended him as a contributor to H. L. Mencken's newly-launched *American Mercury* in 1924.

Love Interest Forecast

Silk is always silk; but there is no end to the varieties of cut and fitting. Crinolines and pajamas, tennis frock and hobble skirts--all can be made of silk. There is a silken plainness and a silken elaboration; there are flounces and ribbons and there are sleek unbroken surfaces.

Morality is a kind of higher dressmaking. Out of the practically unchanging stuff of human nature an immense variety of behavior patterns can be cut. As in the world of the couturier, their shape is dictated, now by considerations of utility, now by aesthetic considerations, now by pure caprice. Some moralities are tailored to be as strictly practical, as closely adapted to some particular purpose, as a mechanic's overalls or an athlete's running shorts and singlet. But there are also luxury behavior patterns as beautiful and as little adapted to the scrambling and dirty circumstances of daily life as an evening frock by Chanel or Worth.

Varieties of behavior pattern are greater and more numerous in the sphere of love-making than in any other realm of human activity. Urge, impulse--the stuff is practically unvarying. But what a fashion display we human beings have made of love. What a museum of costume! It is a long cry from the remote and long-drawn woman worship of the troubadours to the contemporary petting party; from the Parisian partouze to the Victorian marriage. Looking through the exhibits, we are astonished by the wealth of fancy displayed in the cut and adornment of the same familiar material. Nevertheless, it is possible to distinguish in this seeming chaos of fashion two main types of amorous behavior pattern--the proletarian and the aristocratic.

The proletarian mode is, as we should expect, strictly practical and workaday. It is, for that reason, relatively stable; thirteenth century laborers cut the cloth of their eroticism in very much the same way as do laborers at the present time.

In love, as in clothes, aristocratic fashions are luxurious and fantastic. The poor cannot permit themselves the impossible, unpractical and often excruciatingly uncomfortable garments worn by the rich. While Victorian ladies were crippling themselves with tight lacing and crinolines, mere working women were dressed in what was

very nearly a rational costume. Starch and high stocks were part of the gentleman's uniform; the laborer went loose and collarless.

Similarly, it is only the rich who can afford to go in for long-drawn platonic raptures, for subtle emotional analyses in the manner of Proust, for a gay Don Juanism. The poor simply cannot permit themselves this sort of thing.

The more fantastic varieties of love require leisure and freedom from economic pressure. Aristocratic love is, in a word, a whole-time job. Those who have their living to get cannot afford it. By comparison with aristocratic love, the simple proletarian varieties seem trivial, uninteresting, shoddy in quality and skimmed in quantity.

The great lovers of history were all people of independent means. Those of literature were either endowed by their creators with money, or else were made to live, conveniently, in a world where financial considerations didn't count.

What is the present trend of the amorous mode? As I read the signs, it is toward a progressive "proletarianization" of love. The luxury fashions--from troubadourism to debauchery, from mystically erotic chastity to Don Juanism--are on the wane.

It is highly significant that the bolsheviks appear to be completely uninterested in the fancy patterns of love. According to their philosophy, men and women have something better to do than to spend their time playing variations on the erotic theme.

This philosophy is a rationalization of the facts. In the Communist state people simply have no time to behave like Petrarch, or Casanova, or Alacocque.²⁹ And that is becoming true, not only of Russia, but of the whole modern world. The leisured class is vanishing; even the rich work. In other words, even the rich behave, to some extent, like members of the proletariat. Which means that they are no longer able to treat love as a whole-time job. Which, in turn, means that the luxury fashions in love are doomed.

The world, I fear, will be the less exciting and amusing for their disappearance.

3 October 1931

²⁹ Saint Margaret Mary Alacocque (1647-90). Founder of devotion to Sacred Heart.

A Treatise on Drugs³⁰

The other day I discovered, dusty and neglected on one of the upper shelves of the local bookshop, a ponderous work by a German pharmacologist. The price was not high; I paid and carried home the unpromising-looking treasure. It was a thick book, dense with matter and, in manner, a model of all that literary style should not be.

Strictly, an unreadable book. Nevertheless, I read it from cover to cover with a passionate and growing interest. For this book was a kind of encyclopaedia of drugs. Opium and its modern derivatives, morphia and heroin, cocaine and the Mexican peyotl; the hashish of India and the Near East; the agaric of Siberia; the kawa of Polynesia; the betel of the East Indies; the now universal alcohol; the ether, the chloral, the veronal of the contemporary West--not one was omitted.

By the time I had reached the last page I knew something about the history, the geographical distribution, the mode of preparation and the physiological and psychological effects of all the delicious poisons by means of which men have constructed, in the midst of an unfriendly world, their brief and precarious paradises.

The story of drug-taking constitutes one of the most curious and also, it seems to me, one of the most significant chapters in the natural history of human beings. Everywhere and at all times, men and women have sought, and duly found, the means of taking a holiday from the reality of their generally dull and often acutely unpleasant existence. A holiday out of space, out of time, in the eternity of sleep or ecstasy. In the heaven or the limbo of visionary phantasy. "Anywhere, anywhere out of the world."

Drug-taking, it is significant, plays an important part in almost every primitive religion. The Persians and, before them, the Greeks and probably the ancient Hindus used alcohol to produce religious ecstasy; the Mexicans procured the beatific vision by eating a poisonous cactus; a toadstool filled the Shamans of Siberia with enthusiasm and endowed them with the gift of tongues. And so on.

³⁰Huxley's first published work on drugs. The book referred to is the English translation of Louis Lewin's *Phantastica* (1931).

The devotional exercises of the later mystics are all designed to produce the drug's miraculous effects by purely psychological means. How many of the current ideas of eternity, of Heaven, of supernatural states are ultimately derived from the experiences of drug-takers?

Primitive man explored the pharmaceutical avenues of escape from the world with a truly astonishing thoroughness. Our ancestors left almost no natural stimulant, or hallucinant, or stupeficient, undiscovered. Necessity is the mother of invention; primitive man, like his civilized descendant, felt so urgent a need to escape occasionally from reality, that the invention of drugs was fairly forced upon him.

All existing drugs are treacherous and harmful. The heaven into which they usher their victims soon turns into a hell of sickness and moral degradation. They kill, first the soul, then, in a few years, the body.

What is the remedy? "Prohibition," answer all contemporary governments in chorus. But the results of prohibition are not encouraging. Men and women feel such an urgent need to take occasional holidays from reality that they will do almost anything to procure the means of escape. The only justification for prohibition would be success; but it is not, and in the nature of things cannot be successful.

The way to prevent people from drinking too much alcohol, or becoming addicts to morphia or cocaine, is to give them an efficient but wholesome substitute for these delicious and (in the present imperfect world) necessary poisons.

The man who invents such a substance will be counted among the greatest benefactors of suffering humanity.

10 October 1931

A Letter From India

In the midst of her pervading glooms Mother India can show an occasional touch of the purest comedy. She showed one the other day to me--showed it in the form of a letter from an enterprising gentleman of Travancore.

"My Dear Brother Mr. Aldous Leonard Huxley, B.A.," he began fraternally, "as you are among the foremost novelists of this day, I am rather terribly stricken with great foreboding thoughts why your masterpieces have not crossed the water and gave a thrill to the Indian book lover.

"I am too glad to tender you personal obligation, if you will kindly mail to my address each a copy of your mighty novels besides other books with photo of self. With great willingness, good will and sublime friendship, I shall take entire burden of business on my shoulders and get for you copious orders from all parts of India, Burma and Ceylon.

"In order to promulgate rapid business success I shall gladly take trouble of calling on various schools, colleges, libraries and reading rooms, also other institutions and ladies and gentlemen of rank and fashion all over India, and see that you are patroned with huge orders. Circulars with your photo will be distributed gigantically. Please do the needful at an early date. Your very cordial-- P.S. Please insist on sending tomes only registered."

How delightful it is when people live up to character--when English aristocrats behave in real life as they do on the American stage, when the French bourgeois is recognizably the bourgeois of the comedies and novels.

The correspondence of reality with art, of actual fact with the traditional fictions, is wonderfully reassuring. We feel safe, we sigh with relief at the thought that we need take no further trouble to understand for ourselves, but can rely on the simple wisdom contained in proverbs, farces and smoking room stories to see us through.

By living up so superbly to the babu of fiction, my Indian correspondent gave me a most satisfying sense of stability. India, we are told, is changing; but what a comfort to know that there are still Hindus who write English in the traditional extreme-Oriental style!

And how reassuring to feel that the old extravagance of Oriental fancy and old Oriental mixture of simple-mindedness and cunning still survive, fixed and recognizable in the welter of contemporary changes! To collect a few books free of charge--this was evidently the hope of the gentleman from Travancore. He devised a cunning scheme and, having devised, was almost snared by his own wonderful contraption. For, reading the letter, one feels that he more than half believed in his own nonsense--that he actually saw himself trudging through the mud or dust, burdened with sublime friendship and the complete set of my masterpieces.

From maharajah to sweeper, from fakir to viceroy, he would persuade them all to read me. Millions of dark-skinned infants would learn to lisp the name of Huxley and, to buy my novels, the half-starved peasant would rush to beg the usurer for yet another loan on next year's harvest. I can imagine him fairly glowing with enthusiasm for the scheme--glowing even while he knew quite well that it was completely preposterous and had only been invented to extract a parcel of books from me.

And then how delightful is his assumption of my gullibility, his certainty that I should "insist on sending tomes only registered" to Travancore! I was so much touched by this simple-minded optimism that I very nearly did send the books. But, alas, the effort of tying them up and taking them to the post-office was too great; my sublime friend in Travancore still is waiting for his tomes and will continue to wait.

This sort of ingenuousness accompanies a great deal of the far-famed Oriental cunning. Westerners find it hard to believe that people can be quite so naive, and, therefore attribute to their Oriental neighbors all kinds of hidden intentions, of which they are generally innocent. A great deal of Oriental cunning is in fact as transparent as it looks.

Western ingenuity is mainly responsible for the Asiatic's reputation for craftiness--western ingenuity and also western ignorance. Conversations in an unfamiliar foreign tongue always seem much more brilliant than conversations in our own--knowledge brings disillusion.

The Oriental profits by being unknown. We think him subtle because he is alien. But his alienness consists very largely in his astonishing lack of subtlety.

22 October 1931

Pygmalion

My home, which also is my place of labor, is in the country. To town I come only occasionally and for a holiday--a holiday from which I generally am very well pleased to return. For, really, how insupportable existence in one of the great contemporary metropolises has become!

True, I like the things that can only be had in cities--the art exhibitions, the concerts, the libraries, the theaters, the political discussions, the stimulation of casual meetings with all sorts and conditions of men. I like these things; but not enough to put up for more than a very short time with the smoke, the noise, the smell, the sunlessness, the insanely scurrying crowds; the sense, whenever one walks among the traffic, of being a hunted animal.

The modern city gives much to its inhabitants; but they have to pay for all they get--heavily. Too heavily, so far as I am concerned.

In London or Paris or Berlin I feel (more and more intensely with every visit) that I am in some kind of enormous lunatic asylum! For me, the expense of spirit in a big town is too great. My home is in the country; the spiritual cost of living is lower there.

The price of city life was not always so exorbitant. When populations were smaller and less concentrated, it was possible to get all that the town could offer without paying for it unduly in discomfort and nervous strain.

The modern metropolis is merely too much of a good thing. Man's best friend when it was first created, the city has become, with increase of size, malignant and hostile. Nobody ever wanted cities to grow so dangerously huge as they are now.

They have done so on their own account and in direct opposition to the highest human interest. The logic of circumstance compelled them to develop as they have done. Man proposes; God (and sometimes, one is forced to admit, the devil) disposes.

The sculptor Pygmalion, so runs the fable, fell in love with his own handiwork and petitioned the gods that his statue might come to life. His prayer was granted; the marble lived, loved and was wedded.

And there, disappointingly, the story ends. Of the ex-statue's character, when she came to independent womanhood, the old mythologists tell us nothing; nor whether the marriage was happy or unhappy.

Galatea may have been the most charming of women, the best of wives. She may, on the other hand, have been bad tempered and unfaithful, a slut and a shrew. We do not know. Either alternative is possible; either ending to the story would be equally true to life.

The fairy tale of Pygmalion and his statue is a parable of humanity and its creations. Human history is the record of man's long, laborious sculpturing of his environment. Under his creative chisel, statue after statue has emerged from the shapeless, inhuman substance of the universe.

Nothing in a modern civilized environment is "natural"; we inhabit a thoroughly humanized world; a world as remote from the primal pre-human world as a sculptor's studio from the yet unquarried mountains of Carrara. Man is a Pygmalion living in the midst of a whole regiment of Galateas.

But Galatea in the fable became an independent individual, existing and growing up on her own account. Her history is symbolic. Man brings his inventions into the world and they proceed to develop independently of their creator--sometimes even in hostility to him.

For thought obeys inexorable laws. Abstract, or embodied in some material form, every idea is a living seed.

Once planted in its native soil--the mind of humanity--it must inevitably grow according to the laws of its own being, acorn into oak, thistledown into thistle.

No man can divine the future tree within the seed--Chinamen playing with fireworks invented the substance that has made possible the horrors of modern war. Watt and Stevenson let loose the force that made possible industrialism; and industrialism in its turn made possible the trebling of the world's population in a century and industrialism between them made inevitable the huge unwieldy cities in which life is now a kind of lunacy.

One could multiply such examples indefinitely.

Poor Pygmalion is often surprised and pained to discover that the charming Galatea of a few generations or centuries ago has grown into a ferocious and terrifying monster.

28 October 1931

A Soviet School Book

The repulsiveness of school books is of two kinds; either they are unreadably dull and stodgy, or else, if their authors are up to date and in reaction against the old pedagogy, bright, eager, winning. On the whole I prefer the stony indigestibility of the older books to the winsome slush of today. But both are horrible.

Recently, however, I came across a school book which was neither dull nor sloppy. Ilin's *The Primer of New Russia* (translated by Counts and Lodge and published by Houghton Mifflin in 1931) is actually a book that can be read for pleasure. The author's account of the five-year plan is not merely interesting; it is exciting. Under his pen it becomes a kind of adventurous fairy story.

The book is a small masterpiece of exposition and propaganda. It tells the child all the essential facts about the five-year plan (and, no doubt, all the essential fictions) and at the same time appeals to all his finest and most generous instincts. No boy could read the book without being made to feel that it is all a magnificent adventure--an adventure, moreover, in which he himself can take part. There are great deeds for him to do, great sacrifices for him to make, great battles to be fought in the name of a sacred cause.

Ilin knows how to exploit the child's profound idealism, his spontaneous love for the grandiose and the heroic. Seven hundred and twenty years ago that adventurous idealism sent thousands of children marching across Europe toward death or slavery.

Under the influence of such preachers of communism as Ilin a second Children's Crusade has been launched in soviet Russia--a crusade, not against Saracens and infidels, but against capitalist Englishmen and Christians; and launched not for the love of God, for the recovery of a mystical Jerusalem, for the saving of souls, but for a standard of living, for the founding of an industrial civilization, for the love of that new Russian idol, the machine.

All observers are agreed that the Soviets possess one incomparable source of strength--the enthusiasm of the young. This enthusiasm is essentially religious. For communism is the religion of this world; its heaven is here and, in future time, its High God in Proletarian Society.

It has its dogmatic theology--a fine old-fashioned nineteenth century materialism. It can boast its inquisitors at home, its persecuted martyrs abroad. It has its ceremonial rites in the form of mass meetings, community singing, anti-God carnivals, and the like. Whether this new faith can permanently satisfy the human mind is a question which I shall not attempt to discuss at present. The defects of communism as a religion are obvious; it has an ideal that can be fulfilled and a God who is not superhuman. In a word, the communistic man worships himself; and, frankly, as a permanent object of worship is humanity quite good enough? For the present, it is clear, the new religion is prodigiously successful. Russia is full of the spirit of revivalism.

How long is this spirit likely to endure? The history of all the religious reformations, from St. Benedict's to Calvin's, from the Franciscan to the Wesleyan, depressingly answers: Not very long. The first white heat cools off.

True, modern propaganda is much more efficient than that of other times. It may be that Stalin will be able to succeed where St. Francis and Savonarola failed. And, anyhow, the Russian reformers have this immense advantage over the reformers of other times: that the enthusiasts whom they have persuaded to deny themselves for the sacred cause have, at the moment, no alternative to self-denial. Savonarola's Florentines had an alternative; they could and (after burning their reformer) they did return to the jolly life of contemporary Renaissance Italy.

But in modern Russia you have to make sacrifices whether you want to or not. The sensible thing to do is to make a virtue of necessity and deny yourself with religious enthusiasm.

29 October 1931

On a Cataclysm

Competent observers describe the Chinese floods of 1931 as one of the most fearful disasters of modern times. But China is a long way off. For every inch of space that the newspapers devoted to an event that has already cost hundreds of thousands of lives, that has been, is and will be the cause of incalculable suffering, there were feet of information about the notoriously rich, yards and furlongs about sport.

Sympathy does not go far; the extent to which we suffer with other people in their sufferings is inversely proportional to their distance (measured in emotional terms) from ourselves. And even when the sufferer is emotionally close to us, our "with-suffering" is never comparable in intensity to that of the person with whom we are sympathizing and, blunt to start with, is very soon made yet blunter by time and repetition.

Which is, perhaps, all for the best. For if sympathy were a real "with-suffering," happiness would be simply inconceivable. The Chinese disaster receives an inch of news space; baseball a hundred yards. It is mere self-preservation; human beings refuse to be more unhappy than they need be.

Secure from the inclemencies of the weather; well fed and, so long as ships and trains continue to run their appointed courses, fearing no famine; preserved by a sewage system and a water supply from the more malignant of the old pestilences--we are apt to forget that nature can still be dangerous.

Harnessed and domesticated, the giant seems harmless. Events like the Chinese flood come as a salutary reminder that, even blinded and bound, Samson is still Samson and can pull down the proudest of our temples.

True, he pulls them down much less frequently than he did; and, at the present rate of technical progress, we may look forward to a time when all temples will be Samson-proof--when the forces of nature will have been so completely dominated that such cataclysms as the Chinese flood will never occur. In certain parts of the industrialized West this state of things has very nearly been realized already.

The plagues and famines, the fires and floods, which ravaged medieval Europe are practically unknown today. Only where conditions temporarily become medieval--as in Russia just after the war--has there been, in recent years, any large scale repetition of these great natural disasters. To all intents and purposes Western civilization is now Samson-proof. Nature has been conquered by human art.

But this, alas! does not mean that the misfortunes of humanity are at an end. Man has conquered nature; he finds himself, now confronted by the problem of conquering the art which gave him his victory. Consider, for example, the crisis through which the world is now passing. Nature has nothing to do with overproduction and technological unemployment, with political unrest and the rivalries of nations.

And even for the gold shortage and the glut in silver (with their corollaries, the fall in prices and the ruin of the Orient) she is only very remotely responsible.

Our disasters are now homemade. The fact is at once encouraging and depressing. Encouraging, because human behavior is, to some extent at least, rational. Depressing, because this same behavior is so largely the fruit of passion. Mistakes in reasoning can be corrected by better reasoning and disasters due to such mistakes are more easily remediable than disasters due to the operation of blind non-human forces. But passion is stronger than reason, and disasters due to passion are the hardest of all to remedy.

In so far as our chief enemy at present is rational art rather than blind nature, the prospect for the future is good. But in so far as rational art has been made to serve ambition, greed and hatred, it is bad.

The forces of nature are less dangerous than those of man's own evil passions.

11 November 1931

People's Palaces

To say that it was "a home away from home" was once the highest compliment that could be paid to an inn. Today it would be regarded almost as an insult. The modern hotel has ceased to be homely and has assumed the title once reserved to the residences of kings.

In France, *un palace* is now the generic name for any large and luxurious place of public entertainment. Modern tourists and diners-out move in the midst of such splendors as, in the past, surrounded only royal personages--splendors in which, if the truth be told, few royal personages can now afford to indulge.

I am not on speaking terms with any kings and queens; but I have visited a fair number of palaces, now as a tourist visiting the state apartments, and now, by backstairs privilege, penetrating to the more intimate recesses of royal privacy.³¹ From these voyages of exploration I have returned with the saddening conviction that the halls of the mighty do not compare in magnificence with the halls of the average Ritz--not even with the halls of much cheaper and more popular places of entertainment. Not even? Rather, "much less."

For in this democratic, mass-producing age of ours it seems to be a rule that the cheaper and more popular a place of entertainment the more gaudily sumptuous must be its adornment. The really smart hotel is only a little more splendid than a king's palace. Its luxury is discreet, almost domestic. To find an Arabian Nights delirium of splendor one must go to the places which cater to the great (and therefore impecunious) public.

In the huge, glittering cafés, in the marbled and gilded theaters of the modern city the poor can enjoy for a brief moment the illusion of being rich and regal.

Indeed, it is more than an illusion that they enjoy. For the time being their surroundings are genuinely palatial, and (with the

³¹ Ironically, not long after this essay appeared, the Huxleys were invited to dine with the King and Queen of the Belgians (in the Spring of 1932). Huxley wrote in July 1932 to his father, "The palace, like all palaces, was a bit mouldy in its splendour: actually moths flew out of the sofa when one sat down!" *Huxley, Letters*, 360, Harper, 1969.

significant exception of privacy) they do really enjoy all the rich man's privileges. Kings always are kings, and can therefore afford to savor their royalty in small doses.

But in their communal palaces the poor are kings only for an hour: the dose must be massive if, in so short a space of time, they are to realize their kingship. Hence the more than regal splendor of popular places of entertainment; hence, in comparison with the rich man's hostelry, their gaudiness, their theatrical extravagance.

The function now performed by the picture palace and the popular restaurant was, in another age, performed by the church. The church was a place where, besides obtaining spiritual consolation, the poor could also find more mundane satisfaction.

Amid the magnificences of ecclesiastical pomp they could feel themselves rich--could enjoy vicariously the gold of the sacred vessels, the silk and velvet of the vestments, the marble of monuments, the gems that glittered on ring and crozier and reliquary. Of all the builders of churches, it is the Jesuits who seem most clearly to have understood the poor man's longing for vicarious royalty and riches.

The churches which they planted all over Europe and far beyond its borders--in Mexico, at Goa, in South America--have a thoroughly palatial splendor; their magnificence is kingly rather than distinctively ecclesiastical. The Jesuits were successful because, among many other reasons, they brought the gaudy splendors of the seventeenth century absolute monarchies within the reach of all.

Today the world is almost completely secularized. The consciences of those who find it difficult to take responsibility for themselves are directed, not by Jesuits, but by psychoanalysis. (Is it a change for the better?)

We send our children to high schools, not to Jesuit colleges. And if we want to feel rich and regal we exchange the small shabbiness of our homes, not for the nearest Jesuit church, but for a picture theater, or some loud and gaudy café, or the lounge of a hotel.

These places of popular entertainment (and not the church or the king's palace) provide the modern man with his criterion of grandeur and luxury. To call a hotel a palace is now an insulting anachronism. It would be more in accord with facts and popular judgment if palaces were named after hotels.

I can imagine future kings of England moving from Buckingham Plaza to Windsor Carlton, future dictators of Spain spending their

summers at the Astorial, future Presidents of the United States receiving their visitors at the White Hotel.³²

Such honorific titles would dignify their residences in the popular imagination--would gild with borrowed magnificence the actual squalor of their miserable little palaces.

17 November 1931

³² In this context, one thinks of the Aurora Bora Palace hotel in *Brave New World*.

Forewarned is Not Forearmed

Last February, in the House of Commons, I listened to Mr. Snowden making what was described at the time as a "historic speech."³³ Where the historicalness came in I was never able to discover. All that the Chancellor said on that occasion had been said before, again and again.

No reader of any serious newspaper could have been unaware of the fact which he then solemnly announced: that the finances of Great Britain were in a thoroughly bad way. The country was heading for some kind of crash; facts and figures in hand, a hundred anxious economists had been telling us that for months, almost for years. Mr. Snowden was the hundred and first.

His pronouncement was made, I repeat, last February. The papers unanimously proclaimed it as "historic"--and everything went on exactly as before. England pursued unflinchingly her course towards the abyss.

And, duly, seven months later, the crash that everyone had foreseen occurred; at the moment of writing, the pound is worth a little over fifteen shillings. The prophets were perfectly right; nothing had been done to make them wrong.

America went through a precisely similar experience at the time of the great break in the stock market. Every sane economist had foreseen the break months before it came. The authorities were urged to take action. They did nothing, and the break took place, punctually.

The collapse of the pound, the break in the American stock market--these are but two out of many, similar cases. All point to one lesson; that it is fairly easy for a government to have foresight, but that it is exceedingly difficult, especially in a democracy, to act on that foresight, so as to falsify the prophecies of impending disaster.

Let us take a concrete example. Suppose the English government had done what simple common sense dictated--acted, that is to say, on the foresight of its economists and, at the very first danger signal, started a

³³ Viscount Philip Snowden (1864-1937), Labour Party chancellor of the exchequer in first two Ramsay MacDonald governments, 1924; 1929-31. In the same post in the MacDonald coalition National Government, was instrumental in bringing Britain off the gold standard. Huxley, like many of the younger intellectuals, referred to him as one of "the Old Gang."

campaign of economy and industrial reorganization. What would have happened?

There would have been a general howl of indignation. Being economized on is an unpleasant process. The sufferers would have protested that there was no need for sacrifice. There was no visible crisis; why make people uncomfortable for nothing? To which the government could only have replied by referring to a future contingency.

But the mass of mankind lives from week to week and takes no interest in future contingencies. If the government had started economizing in good time, it would instantly have been turned out of office. Cassandra, it will be remembered, was never a popular figure, and under democracy all governments must be popular. They lose their popularity, they lose their power.

It is only after a catastrophe that men will agree to their rulers taking the action which ought to in reason have preceded and, by preceding, forestalled the crisis. It is only in the midst of disaster that they will accept the imposition of necessary sacrifices--sacrifices far greater, in the majority of cases, than those which would have been imposed, if the advice of the prophets had been taken when it was first offered.

People shrink from doing or suffering unpleasant things in cold blood, at the call of mere reason. They need to be excited and panic-driven into heroism.

What are the alternatives before us? We may either persist in our present course, which is disastrous, or we must abandon democracy and allow ourselves to be ruled dictatorially by men who will compel us to do and suffer what a rational foresight demands.

Or, if we preserve the democratic forms, we must invent some psychological technique for inducing the electorate to act before the crash rather than after; we must provide voters with bad emotional reasons for behaving with rational foresight.

Or, finally, we may employ both these last methods together--compel and at the same time use propaganda to make the compulsion appear acceptable.

This is the present Russian method. Refined and improved, it has a good chance of becoming universal.

18 November 1931

Hyde Park on Sunday³⁴

Hyde Park on a Sunday afternoon--the essential England is still there, crowding in its thousands round the stump orators, making jokes, asking derisive questions, getting into absurd and heatedly illogical arguments, and then (for a humorous indifference, a highly civilized and at the same time slightly stupid tolerance, lies at the very heart of the essential England) shrugging shoulders and moving away to listen to the next speaker. At bottom, no caring.

It was that which so exasperated the Communist orator to whom I listened last Sunday under the Autumnal trees. The old civilized tolerance, the humorous and almost deliberately unintelligent indifference maddened him. He was a powerful speaker, by far the cleverest and most accomplished in the Park that afternoon.

The crowd listened, liked what he said, murmured approval of his assaults upon capitalists and the leaders of the official Labor party. But indifference was stronger, in many of his listeners, than interest. The passing of a brass band or a group of banners (the Civil Servants were publicly protesting against their wage cuts) was enough to draw away the attention of these uncaring ones; minds and, often, feet went wandering after every distraction. On these unstable listeners the orator turned with all a preacher's indignation.

Laodiceans have never been popular with the apostles of new religions. "What's wrong with you workers," he said, "is that you won't keep your minds on anything for more than five minutes at a time; that's why you're being exploited as you are now."

His voice was bitter with an angry contempt; he despised his hearers for their slow-witted indifference; he hated them even for their virtues of humor and tolerance--the humor and tolerance that are the marks of an old, ripe, perhaps overripe civilization. I found myself sympathizing with him. Delightful as it generally is, that jocular uncaringness of the English is

³⁴ This essay adumbrates Act 2, Scene 1 of Huxley's unpublished play *Now More Than Ever*, (1932) wherein the protagonists listen to a Communist orator and a group of Salvation Army hymn singers.

sometimes maddeningly out of place. Tolerance and a sense of humor are no substitute for ideas and the strong belief which leads men to act on ideas.

The Communist climbed off his perch. We moved away across the grass. The sun shone dimly through a golden gauze of mist. At a hundred yards the trees were already ghostly with extreme distance. In the shadows the haze was blue like smoke. It was beautiful and unspeakably melancholy.

Luckily, the conservative orator, within whose orbit we next found ourselves, was an uproarious joke. The interrupters were having excellent sport. Near us, in the crowd, a little Welshman was having an argument with an extraordinary being who might have stepped straight out of Dickens, so strangely shaped was his long body, so astonishingly purple his alcoholic nose. Purple-nose was an admirable dialectician; but the Welshman, whose intelligence was about on the level of a bulldog's, was also possessed of the bulldog's tenacity. He held on. Unmoved by logic, by facts, by statistics, he continued to repeat the same preposterous statement, again and again. Nothing could move him. He was magnificent—he was appalling.

Meanwhile, from a tub on our left, could be heard the voice of a Catholic Truth Society's lecturer coming in snatches through the noise of nearer argument." The so-called Reformation divided Christendom against itself. The so-called Reformation, my friends..."

"What I say," shouted the Welshman for the fiftieth time, "is that if Joey Chamberlain had brought in tariffs forty years ago, we shouldn't be where we are now."

"The so-called Reformation..."

Meanwhile, on the right, a group of Salvation Army lasses had started a hymn "Eternity, Eternity! Where will you spend Eternity?" they wailed melodiously—but wailed almost to a vacuum.

Not more than a dozen people out of all the thousands who thronged the Park that afternoon seemed to want to know where they were going to spend eternity. What interested them was where and how they were going to spend time. And for an answer to that question they applied to the political speakers.

For good or for evil, eternity cuts very little ice today. There was no English revolution to match the French. Why? Because, among other reasons, Wesley had preached so successfully that, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the English poor consoled themselves for their sufferings in time with thoughts of a rosy eternity.

A Sunday afternoon in Hyde Park makes it very plain that those consolations have now lost their force.

Middle Age

It was a disturbing experience. From the crowd in a London station a man stepped up to me and shook me warmly by the hand. I stared at him blankly, wondering where I had seen this rather bloated, middle-aged gentleman before. Those pouchy eyes, that thickened nose and replicated chin, those wide expanses of waistcoat--whose were they? I found myself wholly unable to answer.

My inability must have been written large across my face, for "Don't you remember me?" the stranger went on. " My name's X." X? The syllables evoked an immediate response. Jimmy X had been at Oxford with me. I hadn't seen him for years; but I remembered him perfectly well--a tall, slender, languidly handsome young man. Evidently, I said to myself, this was Jimmy's father. I had met Sir John X once or twice casually. It astonished me that he should remember my face, for I had completely forgotten his. Meanwhile, I had grinned politely, mumbled something vague and insincere, followed the mumble with an apology and hurried away to catch my train.

Five minutes later I suddenly realized that the bloated gentleman was not Jimmy X' father (Jimmy's father would be getting on for 70, and the bloated one was merely middle-aged). It was Jimmy X himself. I sat appalled.

Yes, appalled. For it wasn't a case of "I knew you when you were only so big." I had known Jimmy when we were both grown men--and I had failed to recognize him. His middle-aged disguise had been perfect, impenetrable.

It was a banal event--banal, but for that very reason profoundly significant. This bloated gentleman, who had once been the rather ethereal Jimmy X, had come with a most disturbing reminder that all the great commonplaces are only too painfully true--that time flies, beauty is transient, life short.

Sitting in the corner of my third-class compartment, I ruminated this newly realized and bitter fact of middle age. Jimmy X had brought it home to me with the dramatic symbol of his nose, his double chin, his bulging waistcoat. But, of course, I had been vaguely aware of it before.

For example, I had realized (and this is, perhaps, the most significant distinction between youth and early middle age) that a subtle but profound change had taken place in my relations with other human beings. Time digs a deep gulf between first youth and the rest of life.

Today I am on terms of a reciprocally tolerant intimacy with older men and women in whose company ten or twelve years ago I felt nothing but an acute discomfort. They remain older than I am, but because I am older than I was this difference in years is now unimportant. We inhabit the same region of life--the wide plateau of middle age.

Twelve years ago I was below the rim of this plateau; I had as much difficulty in communicating with them as the young people who are now below the rim of the plateau have in communicating with me.

Camaraderie with those who are older than oneself is purchased--dearly, alas--by a corresponding estrangement, as the years advance, from those who are younger.

Time digs a gulf, experience raises a barrier. I had been aware of them; had tried to ignore them; had even imagined sometimes that I had circumvented them. Now, with the image of Jimmy X' bloated face before my inward eye, I know that gulf and barrier are impassable.

Between youth and middle age there is no complete communication. The only consolation for middle age lies in the reflection that in a few years what is now youth will have come up onto the plateau. But there will always be more youth below the rim!

14 December 1931

In Whose Name?

There was a time when, in the words of the English Prayer Book, men and women were regularly and effectively "gathered together In Thy Name." That particular name has, to a very considerable extent, lost its magnetic force: it draws together only a relatively small fraction of the individuals who compose our still nominally Christian societies, and draws these few with a diminished power, so that the assembled atoms do not cohere so closely as they did in the past.

In the name of whom or of what do men and women gather together now? The answer is that many of the best of them are never gathered together in any name. For, as my brother has written in a recently published essay on Scientific Humanism, "the number of sensitive and individual minds that find themselves unable to join whole-heartedly in any corporate organization is increasing; they find themselves overindividualized, incapable of experiencing many of the values that come from losing self."³⁵

Why should this be? It is because "the organizations in which the individual can lose himself and taste self-sacrifice and corporate abandonment are for the most part blatantly irrational, like political parties, or committed to out-of-date or one-sided ideas, like most of the churches; or, like public schools, they encourage crude and juvenile loyalties, or, as in the teamwork of sport, they satisfy only a limited part of human nature."

In his paragraph the author takes up what I may call the medical position. Man's nature is such, (so runs the implied argument), that, to keep psychologically fit, he must practice self-sacrifice and corporate activity--just as he must take muscular exercise if he is to keep physically fit. We are asked to gather together and make sacrifices in the name of politics, religion, sport and so forth.

But, by the better minds, these entities are not felt to be worth sacrificing self for; and those who are actually persuaded to make sacrifices, find that they have been able to immolate only a part of

³⁵ Julian Huxley, "Scientific Humanism," *Contemporary Review* 140 (July 1931): 34-43.

themselves, not the whole. In a word, these corporate organizations and their ideals are clinically inadequate; we need a better set of spiritual exercises and better reasons for performing them. This is the medical criticism; but there is also a sociological criticism.

Thus, the name in which the greatest numbers are now most effectively gathered together is that of Nationalism. This god still lives and is able to induce men to sacrifice themselves by millions upon his altars.

One of the most urgent tasks before us is "to develop organizations which shall satisfy the need for corporate activity and loyalty...the urge to self-sacrifice as well as intellectual aspirations." It is easy to formulate the need, but how difficult to devise a practical scheme for its satisfaction!

The Bolsheviks, it is true, seem to have achieved a certain success in this direction; but whether they will go on being successful for long seems to me rather dubious. Man is more complex than the formulators of soviet ideology care to admit. Much more than patriotism, tractors and the class war are "not enough."

What is needed is some easily comprehensible mythology of humanity that will strike the imagination as forcibly as the old mythology of personal gods used to do and as the modern mythology of nationalism still does.

A mythology--and with it an organization, by means of which and within whose frame-work the individual can satisfy his innate desire for self-sacrifice and corporate activity--satisfy it, not at the expense of humanity, as he does when his corporate activity is nationalistic or fanatically religious, but for humanity's benefit and greater glory.

Such a mythology and such an organization do not as yet exist; the time is ripe for the Messiah of humanism who will create them.

19 December 1931

A Generation-War?³⁶

"Age," wrote a young man in the days of Queen Elizabeth,
"Age is deformed, youth unkind.

We scorn their bodies, they our mind."³⁷

Times have changed. Nowadays "we" the young, scorn not only their bodies, but also (and especially) their minds. And we scorn them so effectively that, in two politically "advanced" states, Italy and Russia, age is a definite bar to the holding of political power. The appeal of Fascism and Communism is to youth and to youth only.

The reasons for this state of things are simple. To one who lives in an unchanging, or very slowly changing, environment old age is actually, if unaccompanied by decrepitude, an asset. Long experience of past circumstances equips an old man to deal effectively with present circumstances which are essentially similar. He has only to do what he has successfully done before. But when present circumstances are essentially different from circumstances in the past, what then? Then, obviously, the old man's experience is of no advantage to him.

The progress of technology has radically changed the circumstances of human existence. These things are not at all what they were forty, thirty, even twenty years ago. Applied science has made their experience of its present applicability. But many of our fathers are alive and, outside of Russia and Italy, still in the exercise of power. We are to a great extent governed by men who learned almost all they know about the world (for youth is the time of learning) at a period when the world was quite unlike what it is now. Can we be surprised at the preference for youth displayed by contemporary revolutionaries?

But revolutionaries grow old with the rest of us. The youths who marched on Rome and helped to make the October revolution are now in their thirties--in their forties, even. In those far-off heroic days, how lyrically they sang the praises of youth! With what ferocious mockery they derided the graybeards and the complacently middle aged! Most of them, I suspect, are beginning to regret their strong words.

³⁶ This essay appeared in slightly different form in Huxley's *Texts and Pretexts* (1932).

³⁷ Thomas Bastard, *Chrestoleros* (1598; rpt. New York: Burt Franklin, 1967), 168.

Circumstances and the theorists of revolution are evidently conspiring to create within the bosom of organized society a new kind of civil warfare--the war, not of classes, but of generations, not between rich and poor, but between old and young. I call it new, because to us, in civilized countries, it happens to be startlingly unfamiliar.

Among primitive peoples a crack over the head with a club was, and still is, the equivalent of an old age pension. Even kings had to submit to the universal law. The Zulus, for example, yielded the most absolute obedience to their chief so long as he remained young and vigorous. At the first symptoms of old age he was done to death by the very men who, a short time before, had regarded him almost as a god. "Give me hair dye," was the agonized request made by the greatest of the Zulu kings to a white traveler who visited him, "Hair dye!" He was going gray. Not long afterward his warriors broke into his chamber and speared him to death.

29 December 1931

Poppy Juice

The League of Nations is a courageous institution; it has undertaken to investigate and ultimately to control the traffic in drugs. A report of its most recent deliberations on the subject is now before me--and a most depressing document it is: depressing in its description of the world in which we live, and depressing in its revelation of the official philanthropic mind.

What are the facts? The police are everywhere active; but the illicit traffic still goes on. No amount of vigilance can check the smuggling of substances so highly concentrated, and therefore so portable and concealable as morphia and cocaine.

The logic of these facts imposes upon the official mind an inevitable conclusion. All that has been done up to date is only "a first step toward the limitation of the production of the raw material." The sources of supply must be closed down.

Opium constitutes a quarter of the total exports of Persia. What compensations are to be offered to the Persian agriculturist in return for a self-imposed limitation of production? And by whom? And if the Persian trade were stopped, what then? The poppy will flourish almost anywhere.

Experiments carried out in the nineteenth century proved that it is possible to grow bumper crops of opium in the neighborhood of Edinburgh. Why, then, did Persia remain the world's opium granary? The reasons are purely economic, not ethical. (The moral horror of drugs is a very modern invention. As recently as forty years ago a "drug fiend" could still be the hero of a popular novel. Sherlock Holmes, for example, became a cocaine addict.)

The reasons, I repeat, were economic. Labor costs more in Edinburgh than in Teheran, and the harvesting of opium requires a great deal of labor.

The Scotch were unable to compete with the Persians. But suppose that the Persians were now prevented from cultivating poppies. The price of opium would rise, just as the price of alcohol rose in the United States after prohibition. Bootlegging would at once and automatically become profitable.

Poppies will grow all over the temperate zone; there are millions of poor farmers only too anxious to earn a bit of money. And the League talks about cutting off the source of supply!

Even with cocaine, derived as it is from a plant of far more limited growth than the poppy, the difficulty of limiting production would be very great. Moreover, it is highly probable that the drug will soon be made synthetically. At a stroke the whole world will become a potential source of supply. But where money is to be made, potential sources invariably become actual sources.

Prohibition, as the American observer attached to the League should have known, is not effective. And yet this same observer seriously proposed total prohibition as the only solution to the problem. The official philanthropic mind is a most mysterious object.

An illness can be radically cured only by removing its cause. The cause of drunkenness and drug taking is to be found in the general dissatisfaction with reality. More or less frequently and more or less intensely, men and women dislike the world in which they live and the personality with which nature and upbringing have endowed them.

Alcohol and drugs offer means of escape from the prison of the world and the personality. Better and securer conditions of life, better health, better upbringing, resulting in a more harmoniously balanced character, would do much to make reality seem generally tolerable and even delightful. But it may be doubted whether, even in Utopia, reality would be universally satisfying all the time. Even in Utopia people would pine for an occasional escape, if only from the radiant monotony of happiness.

The League of Nations advocates prohibition, which is like advocating the surgical excision of the pustules as a cure for smallpox. The only rational way of dealing with the drug and drink problem is, first, to make reality so decent that human beings will not be perpetually desiring to escape from it, and, second, to provide them, whenever they should feel the imperious need of taking a holiday, with a physiologically harmless method of escape.

The money which is spent in trying, quite vainly, to enforce prohibition ought to be spent on bio-chemical researches for the purpose of discovering the ideal substitute for alcohol, cocaine and opium.

A century or so too late the official philanthropic mind may perhaps come to realize this; but for the present it seems to be committed to the absurd and mischievous policy of prohibition.

7 January 1932

National Humor

A week or two ago Peter Arno's *Parade* was published, rather belatedly, in England.³⁸ I heard of the fact with pleasure and some excitement; for Peter Arno is obviously that rare and precious being, a genuine comic artist.

Plenty of people have been able to draw illustrations and write funny captions underneath. But, in all the history of art, how few have known the secret of matching the funny caption with a picture intrinsically as comic! By an intrinsically comic picture I mean one in which the very forms have something about them which provokes laughter--where the mere lines are amusing and the masses a joke, where the light and shade are in relations which are felt to be extravagant or satirical, where the composition is somehow Rabelaisian or witty in itself.

The illustrators whose little pictures are comic only by the reflected funniness of the captions do not even try to be comic artists. But there are others who do at least attempt the intrinsically comic. These are the makers of grotesques and distortions--a numerous tribe, of whom the overwhelming majority only succeed in being vulgar and ill-mannered.

Only very, very rarely does the perfect comic picture appear. In England, for example, we have not had a comic artist of the very first rank since Rowlandson.

The last great French comic artist was Daumier. (And, incidentally, Daumier also was a great tragic artist, and, on a great but lower plane, Rowlandson was. The idea that comedy is a low form of art which can be successfully practiced by people of inferior talents is a complete illusion.)

Peter Arno, I repeat, is one of the rare comic artists of anything like the first rank now working in any country. The English publication of his *Parade* was therefore something of an event. An admirable event, it seemed to me. But there were others who thought differently.

³⁸ Pseudonym of Curtis Arnoux Peters (1904-1968), satirical cartoonist associated with *The New Yorker*. By 1931 he had brought out four books of cartoons.

When I went to the nearest bookshop to buy a copy, I met a rebuff. "We don't stock, *Parade*." "Why?" "Because," politely, "we don't."

Inquiries revealed the fact that the largest bookselling and newsstand company in the country had banned the book. The pious gentlemen at the head of the organization had found the American humorist shocking and had decided to employ against him the particularly odious weapon of irresponsible private censorship. Luckily, however, these persons do not yet control the entire bookselling trade in England.

There are still a few independent booksellers who will sell "Peter Arno." To the credit of my countrymen be it spoken, the sale is, all things considered, quite brisk.

The banning of "Peter Arno" enraged, but did not, I confess, greatly surprise me. English humor has become almost unbelievably mild and insipid. By comparison with the average modern English jest, asses' milk and water are dangerously strong.

To palates and stomachs accustomed to this baby food, Peter Arno's humor--and for that matter all good contemporary American humor--must seem intolerably high flavored, tough and indigestible. It happens to be meat for adults, not slops for infants and invalids.

The infantilization of the English middle classes was a process accomplished between 1750 and 1850. Compare Fielding with Dickens. Fielding is a grown-up man writing for grown-ups. Dickens, who (strangely enough) admired Fielding above any other novelist, was himself a partially infantilized man writing for what Baudelaire called *la jeune fille, assassin de l'art*--the art-murdering young girl.

During the last twenty or thirty years infantilism has waned, even in England; a certain amount of literature and art has been produced by adults for adults. But up to the present no adult comic artist has been permitted to defile the English periodical press with grown-up humor.

Incorrigibly the optimist, I live in hope. Perhaps, Peter Arno's drawings will create a demand for something more interesting than baby food.

12 January 1932

Fat Stock and Mrs. Besant

Bigger and better--I took it for granted that everything, nowadays, was that. Imagine, therefore, my horror at discovering that the prize winner at a recent English Fat Stock Show weighed only just over half a ton! Miserable dwarf!

A century ago "the splendid Bradwell ox," of happy and illustrious memory, turned the scale at nearly 5,000 pounds, measured eleven feet from snout to rump and stood seventeen hands high at the shoulder. In brief, his weight and dimensions were just about those of a fair-sized Packard or Rolls Royce.

Our contemporary laureate of the cattle show is not even as big as a Ford. A Baby Austin--that is his equivalent.

Splendid Bradwell oxen do not diminish into half-ton midgets by mere accident. The deflation must have been deliberate. What was the reason for this decline and fall of fatness?

The reason, ultimately, was birth control. If Fat Stock are smaller than they were, the fact is due to the labors of Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant, and the members of the Malthusian League.³⁹ For it is thanks to these apostles of birth control that families are smaller than they were a hundred or even fifty years ago. But smaller families require smaller joints of beef. And smaller joints can only be cut from smaller animals.

In the days when the heroic paterfamilias and his even more heroic spouse sat down to Sunday dinner with their quiver-full of a dozen or fifteen young ones, the Splendid Bradwell ox was all that a beef-provider should be. Now, with father and mother and little Tommy to cope with one of his mountainous sirloins, he is an anachronism.

The half-ton ox has been bred to meet the requirements of the two-and-one-child family. The Packard has become the baby Austin, and if the controlling of births goes much farther, it will have to be reduced to a motor cycle.

³⁹ Charles Bradlaugh (1833-1891), freethinker and champion of birth-control. His name is one of the 10,000 permissible in the Brave New World. Annie Besant (1847-1933), a close associate of Bradlaugh's from 1874-85. A Fabian Socialist and champion of birth control as well as Indian independence.

A few years more and the breeders will be turning out prize bulls no bigger than Shetland ponies. By which time, of course, the family will be completely abolished as a functioning social entity. The very idea of eating *en famille* will have been forgotten. Communal kitchens will cater for households, not of a dozen, as in the good old days of philoprogenitiveness, but of hundreds and even thousands.

Small joints will be useless and the stock-breeder will be called upon to produce a creature compared with which the Bradwell ox will seem the most measly of little quadrupeds. The Packard will have to be exchanged for a six-ton truck.

This tale of the prize oxen points a moral, which is this: Nothing exists in isolation; you cannot make changes in one thing without either making automatically, or having deliberately to make, changes in other things--often the most seemingly remote and irrelevant things. Thus, there seems to be no obvious connection between contraception and the average size of cattle. But in fact there is.

Again and again history has shown that things even farther apart than the splendid Bradwell ox from Mrs. Annie Besant are yet capable of exercising, one upon the other, the profoundest influence. And this is a thing we must always bear in mind, whenever we initiate any process of change or reform: Side by side with the intended results of the process there will be a rich crop of unintended results. And those results may turn out to be much more important than those foreseen, and deliberately willed.

Science has given us an unprecedented power to change our natural and social surroundings--which means an unprecedented power to produce unforeseen and unintended effects. Whatever else the immediate future may be, it will certainly not be dull.

18 January 1932

Touch Wood!

"Well, thank goodness," I said, "I've got through this Winter so far, without a single day in bed. Touch wood!" And I hastily stretch out a searching hand. But my friend's apartment was so uncompromisingly twentieth-century that I could find no wood to touch. The chairs were metallic, the tables of glass and steel, the floor was made of some stony composition, the window casements of bronze and iron.

Finally I had to get up, walk across the room and pat the door; by some anachronistic oversight that was still wooden. "You may be safe here from fire," I said, as I sat down again; "but you're at the mercy of Nemesis and all the demons of bad luck. You ought, if only for your guests, to set up a few wooden misfortune-conductors."

Over a last cigar we exchanged reminiscence and argument.

"In India," I said, "I once got into terrible trouble for complimenting a man on his child's health and beauty. It was a fiendish thing to do, for I was provoking the jealous gods to make it sickly and ugly. One may think a child beautiful, but never say so. Providence can't stand words."

My friend nodded. "Yes, words--they're the danger. One should never utter one's satisfaction or one's wishes. It's safest actually to say the opposite of what one means. I realized that when I was a child. How well I remember going out before breakfast one morning to look at the sky!

"We were going to have a picnic; it was essential that the day should be fine. But there were clouds. Oh, if only they'd go away! But what I actually said--I can still hear myself saying it, very loud, so that the gods should make no mistake--what I actually said was: 'I like rain.' The theory was that Fate would hear and (being, in spite of its malignity, infinitely stupid) would send fine weather to spite me.

"Even at 6 years old we know enough about life to be afraid of tempting Providence. Superstitions of the touch-wood kind are based on the bitterest experience."

We went on to discuss those strange taboos which even the most civilized people accept from the traditionally superstitious, or actually, in many cases, manufacture expressly for themselves. We talked of

ladders, of marriages in May, of broken looking glasses and the like; and then of those much queerer, because wholly private categorical imperatives--such as the compulsion to touch trees or lampposts, to walk so that the feet never step on the cracks between the paving stones, to count stairs and paces with a view to avoiding certain hated numbers. And so on.

We have all plagued ourselves with such taboos in childhood and many of us continue, even as adults, to complicate our lives with them.

My friend had a glib Freudian explanation for these compulsions. Being myself a man of sober fancy, I refused to follow him through all his mazes of symbolism and allegory, but propounded another, less extravagant hypothesis. It was this: we adopt or manufacture these tiresome superstitions for the good reason that they make existence more amusing. The minds of most of us are singularly blank and our lives monotonous.

Superstitions give us something to do and think about. Moreover, there is a satisfaction in overcoming or circumventing obstacles and though, heaven knows, our road is littered with a sufficiency of natural obstructions, we feel impelled to sprinkle a few artificial ones to make the going still more difficult.

And then how pleasant it is to play a game with complicated rules. The life of the superstitious is a kind of perpetual mah-jong or acrostic; difficult, but for that reason very delightful. They enjoy all the arduous fun of the poet writing sonnets or the sculptor hacking his statue from the rock.

Even the terrors which they make themselves feel are tonic and stimulating. Anything for a not too quiet life! The desire for excitement is fundamental in human nature--much more fundamental for example, than the Freudians' much advertised sex.

Superstition finds, in this hankering for excitement, a simple and sufficient explanation.

30 January 1932

Paper

Figures have a strong epigrammatic eloquence, more moving, sometimes, than the highest flights of the orator. Here, for example, is a simple arithmetical statement, which, when I read it in a recent issue of *Nature*, impressed me profoundly and has continued to haunt my mind ever since, like a line of unforgettable poetry.

In 1820 the consumption of paper in England was at the rate of about one ounce per inhabitant per annum. Today it is in the neighborhood of seventy pounds. In a single day each one of us uses three times as much paper as the average Englishman of 1820 used in a year.

Of this eleven-hundred-fold increase what proportion is due to an increase in the quantity of reading matter? I do not know, but should guess, conservatively, about half. That is to say, that of each individual's annual seventy pounds of paper, thirty-five will be consumed in the form of money, wrappings, packings, stationery and the like, thirty-five in the form of periodicals and books.

Assuming that the whole of 1820's ounce was covered with print (which it wasn't), we conclude that every contemporary individual consumes about five hundred times as much reading matter as was consumed by his or her counterpart a century ago. (In reality the figure may be rather higher or rather lower; but this makes no difference to my contention, which is that the increase in the individual's consumption of reading matter has been enormous.)

Consumption of reading matter is not, of course, synonymous with reading. Few people read the whole of the newspapers and magazines which they buy. A certain incalculable, but surely considerable, proportion of current reading matter is consumed without being read. Nevertheless it remains true that the average individual now reads dozens or scores or even hundreds of times as much as he read a century ago. (Large numbers of people did not, because could not, read at all in 1820.) Quantitatively, at any rate, we are far the greatest readers of history.

So much for the arithmetic of the matter; what of its significance and value? We have done our little sums; it is time to ask what these sums mean and how we should feel about them.

Personally, I confess, I feel a little depressed. For it seems to me that this enormous increase in reading has not been accompanied by anything like a corresponding increase in the good things which are supposed to be produced by reading.

We consume five hundred times as much reading matter as our great-grandfathers did; but not even the most optimistic believer in progress would dare to suggest that we are five hundred times as rich in wisdom and culture. There are even gloomy cynics who hold that there has been an actual decrease in these spiritual commodities--that the sole result of universal education has been to make a peculiarly shoddy kind of sensational and sentimental trash accessible to people who, before, were nourished on the traditional art and wisdom of folk lore and the Bible.

I myself think that the gains have exceeded the losses. Out of each individual's thirty-five pounds of print-blackened paper, thirty-four may be covered with more or less pestilent nonsense. But I believe that the remaining pound of sense is enough, not merely to undo the harmful effects of the nonsense in favor of enlightenment. It is the slightness of this balance which depresses me.

But doubtless I am a fool to be depressed; doubtless a truly wise man would be amazed and profoundly thankful that there should be any credit balance at all.

5 February 1932

Re-enter Murderer

The man was a peasant from the mountains of Calabria. In his hot youth he had committed a murder--such accidents will happen in the best-regulated Calabrian families--had been caught, tried and sentenced to a long term of penal servitude.

Several of the largest Italian convict prisons are on islands, and our murderer spent the next twenty-five or thirty years of his life marooned behind bars, on a rock in the middle of the Mediterranean. The time came at last for his release.

One morning a grave and dignified man in the early fifties stepped ashore at Naples. He was met on the landing stage by a friend of mine, an Italian man of letters, who had taken an interest in his case, and from whom I afterwards heard his story.

The ex-convict was bound for his native village in the mountains; but as his train did not leave till the evening, my friend offered, meanwhile, to show him the sights of Naples. They set off together.

It was half a lifetime since the murderer had seen anything but waves and rocks and the prison workshops--half a lifetime during which a number of very surprising things had happened. My friend talked to him about the electric motor, the internal combustion-engine, the phonograph, the telephone, the wireless telegraph.

The streets were full of cars and automobiles, and, by good luck, an airplane (still in those pre-war days a very rare bird), flew over, roaring. "What do you think of that?" my friend asked triumphantly. But, to his astonishment, the ex-convict thought very little of it, indeed; he was not impressed, nor even greatly surprised, by these new "marvels of science."

Very useful machines, he admitted, and the telephone, no doubt, was a great convenience, and it was certainly amusing to hear *O Sole Mio* sung by a clockwork toy. But as for any of these things being really interesting or important--no, he couldn't agree with my friend about that.

The only feature of this newly discovered modern world which impressed him--and impressed him very unfavorably--was the behavior

of the people. The manners of the men struck him as brusque and uncourtly.

And as for the women--how bold they were, how unabashed! And what a scandal it was (the murderer was a man of the strictest moral principles) that ladies should be seen in the streets unaccompanied!

The anecdote is pleasant and instructive. For, of course, the murderer was right: to human beings the supremely significant thing is always human behavior, and inventions are humanly interesting only in so far as they modify that behavior.

Such things as motor cars and wireless have to some extent modified human behavior, but not at its deepest, most significant, instinctive levels. Machines have not much altered the patterns, for example, of love-making, growing old, dying. The proof of the relative insignificance (humanly speaking) of our mechanical inventions is to be found in the fact that they have not, except in the most incidental and irrelevant manner, made their way into literature.

The Futurists before the war and, since, some few Russian and American writers have made some very self-conscious attempts to use machinery and industrial technique as the subject matter of their art. But without success. Their work has been fundamentally boring.

Humanity at large agrees with our murderer in finding internal combustion engines merely convenient not really important.

Where our murderer went wrong was in failing to realize that internal-combustion engines and the like may have a profound indirect effect on human thought and action. For example, industrialism has altered the economic status of whole classes of the community and, along with their economic status, their whole "philosophy of life" and manner of behavior.

Our returned murderer was pained by the boldness of the women. But why were they bold? Because, among other reasons, they were beginning to achieve economic independence. And why had they done this? Because the invention of internal-combustion engines and the like had created new wealth, and because the manufacture of these things demanded more female labor.

Humanly speaking, the marvels of mechanical science may not be directly significant. It is only at two or three removes that they are important to man.

10 February 1932

The Use of Uselessness

Some kinds of knowledge are invested with a peculiar prestige; others, on the contrary, cut no ice at all. It is highly creditable to be well up, for example, in literature, history, philosophy. But to know a lot about, say, oil refining, or bakelite mouldings, or refrigeration systems is not considered particularly meritorious.

No amount of immediately useful technical knowledge entitles a man to be called "a scholar." This honorific appellation is reserved for the repositories of a remoter and superfluous learning.

The prejudice in favor of uselessness and against utility dates from the time when the only occupations worthy of a gentleman were love, war, government, field sports and reading. The mechanic arts were relegated to members of the lower classes.

Our ideas about gentility have changed, but not our estimation of the different kinds of knowledge. The force of inertia has produced a considerable time-lag; the cause has largely disappeared, but the effects persist.

So far as I personally am concerned, this is most fortunate. For my own knowledge, such as it is, is almost exclusively a knowledge of what is, for any practical purpose, useless. Of all technical knowledge I am quite innocent. How completely innocent, I only realized to the full some few days since, when my encyclopaedic and all-curious friend, Gerald Heard, took me to see an exhibition of modern scientific appliances.⁴⁰

Here were rooms full of every kind of delicate and elaborate instruments. There was a glitter of glass and polished steel, the iridescent shimmer of fused quartz, the buttery shine of brass. On the flanks of strange alembics and enormous lamps the bulging high lights shone with the focussed brightness of eyes.

⁴⁰ Gerald Heard (1889-1971), author, popularizer of science, editor of *The Realist*, a journal of scientific humanism. A close friend of Huxley's from 1929, Heard encouraged him to join the pacifist movement. Evelyn Waugh refers to him as "the cleverest man in the world." *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh*, ed. Michael Davie (London: Wiedenfield, 1976), 321. Heard accompanied the Huxley family when they sailed to America in 1937.

I made my way among the exhibits, conscientiously reading the explanatory literature attached to each; I listened to brief lectures from the young men in charge of the stands. In vain. The explanatory literature was full of technical terms I did not understand; the young men spoke with an airy casualness of processes and inventions I had never heard of.

It was humiliating. To my great relief, however, I found that my incomparably more learned companion was almost as much in the dark as I was. We consoled one another by reflecting that the technical young men would probably be quite as ignorant of Minoan archaeology and the literary remains of Empedocles as we were of the tempering of metals and the manufacture of synthetic resin.

There were the further consolations that, as specialists in useless knowledge, we enjoyed a social prestige which the young technicians wholly lacked; and that by writing about our uselessness we could make more money than useful knowledge was ever likely to bring them.

How long this state of things is likely to continue I do not know. In Russia, I believe, the purely literary culture which, in a bourgeois society, was and still is the only true and respectable culture, has lost its prestige.

Soviet society offers its prizes to those whose learning is of the practical kind.

In time, no doubt, a similar state of things will come to prevail in the rest of the world.

We were just congratulating one another on this most satisfactory state of things when a booming clerical voice suddenly began: "Dearly beloved brethren, the Scripture moveth us... Startled, we looked around; but the voice was bodiless--was only a ghost emerging from a loud speaker. The afternoon service at St. Paul's was being used to demonstrate a new instrument for measuring the intensity of sounds. On an endlessly unrolling scroll an inked needle was busily writing out the shapes of the ecclesiastical noise.

Fascinated, we stood for a long time, looking and listening--feeling that we had stumbled on a strange symbol of our whole uncertain and chaotic age. Here were the ancient words of the liturgy, wafted across the ether and mechanically writing themselves out in a long mathematical formula. Here was the direct descendant of an immortal magic in process of being transmitted, recorded and measured by science. Yes, it was a symbol.

Patently the young man in charge of the machine began to explain its workings.

20 February 1932

Flight from Force

One of the most entertaining items in the Christmas publishing list was Mr. Alan Bott's *Our Fathers, or Manners and Customs of the Ancient Victorians*. Between the covers of this book Mr. Bott has brought together a truly astonishing collection of pictorial documents illustrative of English and American life between the years 1870 and 1900.

Yes, astonishing; that is the only word. The Victorians, as portrayed by their artists, seem queerer and more fantastic than the Sumerians and the Etruscans. Their world is quite incredibly remote from ours.

The incident by which I was most amazed and amused was one which occurred only forty-five years ago, in 1887. Under the woodcut of a whiskered gentleman engaged in operating a machine gun, we read the following caption: "The American inventor, Mr. H. Maxim, has produced a new machine gun... The explorer, Mr. H.M. Stanley, visited Dulwich to examine the gun and, after firing 333 shots in half a minute, said: 'It is a fine weapon, and will be invaluable for subduing the heathen.'"

Invaluable for subduing the heathen! It is almost too good to be true. Is it possible that any one can have spoken the words seriously? Incredible as it may seem, it is possible; the words were uttered. The fact that they could be uttered, in all sincerity, accounts for such curious phenomena as the British empire.

Colonies were founded by men who believed that they had a divine right to "subdue the heathen," who thought that in firing 333 shots in half a minute at a party of blackamoors they were doing a highly God-pleasing and meritorious act.

We still have machine guns. And, alas, we still use them. But we use them without much gusto, without feeling, as we let fly into the heathen hordes, that thrill of moral satisfaction which must have made gunnery so pleasurable for the contemporaries and predecessors of Stanley.

Of all the changes which have taken place in the last few generations none is more remarkable than the change in our feelings

force--the holders of power exploiting their power to the full. That the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church is not strictly true. Only inefficient persecution profits the persecuted cause.

If persecution is ruthless enough, it is bound to succeed. Witness the complete extirpation of heresy in Spain. And yet, in spite of the lessons of history, power holders have tended more and more during recent times, to shrink from persecuting efficiently.

The governing class of a hundred years ago no longer governs. Why? Not because there has been, in the great majority of countries, any violent uprising from below; but because, quite voluntarily, the rulers have handed over their power, slice after slice of it, to the dispossessed.

The political history of the nineteenth century is the history of the progressive abdication of the one-time ruling class. The present century has witnessed the inception of a kindred process--the abdication of the ruling races. This is very well illustrated in India.

The English military power in India is quite great enough to crush any resistance that could possibly be put up by the inhabitants. And yet, instead of using this power ruthlessly, as it would have been used a century ago, the English suffer themselves to be talked into abdication after abdication (true, at the moment of writing, there are signs of a reaction toward "firm government," but it is unlikely to go very far; and if there should be cases of violent repression, these are certain to call forth a storm of protest, not only abroad, but also in England itself.)

This flight from force, this growing reluctance to use power to the full, is but one of the manifestations of that great humanitarian tendency which is so marked a feature of modern life. How far this movement is likely to go, or whether the rest of the world will imitate Russia and Italy and go into reaction against it, one cannot guess.

My own view is that the present setbacks of the liberal-humanitarian tendency are only local and temporary; that the reluctance to use force will grow and that the results formerly achieved by force will more and more be accomplished by means of scientific propaganda.

But prophecy is not my business here, I am concerned with history. Whatever its final significance, the queer fact remains that it would be psychologically impossible to talk today about "subduing the heathen." Between ourselves and Stanley a great gulf is fixed.

29 February 1932

This Thing Called Love⁴¹

If it were not for literature, how many people would ever fall in love?

Precious few, I should guess. Most young people fall in love because they have read books about other young people falling in love, because they have seen plays and listened to songs on the same theme, because, in a word, they have learned that falling in love is the right thing to do. To the question: What is love? John Keats answered that it was a "thing of soft misnomers, so divine that silly youth doth think to make itself divine by loving."⁴² He, too, perceived the literary side to all love making.

Then Cleopatra lives at number seven.
And Antony resides in Brunswick Square.
Fools! If some passions high have warmed the world,
If Queens and Soldiers have played deep for hearts,
It is no reason why such agonies
Should be more common than the growth of weeds.

But what about sex, it may be objected? What about the natural urges and desires? Those are not literary products.

Agreed; they are not. But literature largely decides what channel these primitive urges shall take.

In his very interesting and important book, *The Social Life of Monkeys and Apes*, Zuckermann has shown that even the higher animals must learn the kind of sexual behavior which is normal in their community. Isolate a new born rat; then, when it is mature, introduce it to another rat of the opposite sex; it will know exactly what to do, will behave as all other rats behave.

Not so the more intelligent ape. Instinct does not tell it how to behave; it has to learn the traditional deportment of its tribe.

⁴¹ This essay appeared in *Texts and Pretexts* (1932).

⁴² The references are to Keats's "Modern Love".

Now, if the very simple sexuality of an ape is an affair of education, how much more so must be the complicated love-making of men and women! Literature is their principal teacher. Consciously or unconsciously, even the most passionate lovers have studied in that school.

The difference between the great lovers and the "Antonies of Brunswick Square" is not a difference between the untaught and the taught; it is a difference between those who have responded whole-heartedly to their erotic education and those whose responses are inadequate and forced. The latter, Keats insists, are by far the more common--are, in fact, the only lovers of modern times.

Fools! make me whole again that weighty pearl
The Queen of Egypt melted, and I'll say
That ye may love in spite of beaver hats.

In other words, ordinary people cannot love at all.

This is a bit too sweeping. No observer has any means for directly gauging the quality of other people's emotion. He can only infer it from their actions and words. The actions of ordinary inconspicuous people are hard to observe and still harder to interpret. We must rely on their words. These, it must be admitted, are generally of pretty poor quality. But this does not necessarily mean that the emotions they express are correspondingly shoddy.

A talent for literary expression is rare--rarer, surely, than a talent for love. It is probable that many young consumptives have loved with agonizing intensity. What is quite certain, however, is that very, very few have written love letters like Keats' to Fanny Brawne.

Keats is surely wrong in asserting that ordinary modern people--people in beaver hats--cannot love in the grand style. Some of them can, in spite of the hats. What they can't do is to write good love letters. Only someone with a gift for writing can do that.

Where Keats is right is in insisting that all of us, whether we happen to be capable of the grand passion or not, are influenced in our love making by the literature we have read, the plays and films we have seen, the songs we have sung.

Which constitutes yet another reason for providing our children with good literature rather than vulgar trash.

12 March 1932

An Exhibition

I have spent the greater part of the last few days wandering through the halls of Burlington House, where the great exhibition of French art, recently opened in London, has its temporary home.

It is a most impressive show--not, perhaps, so uniformly grand and lovely as the Italian exhibition of two years ago, lacking, no doubt, those astounding peaks of dramatic intensity into which the earliest Dutch and Spanish exhibitions occasionally soared--but still, in its own way, extraordinarily fine.

Moreover, the present exhibition has a special and peculiar interest which all its predecessors were without. For the French school is the only one of which it can honestly be said that its recent productions are fully the equal of its achievements in the past. What, for example, is nineteenth century Italian painting compared with medieval and Renaissance Italian painting? What is modern Dutch art by the side of Dutch art in the seventeenth century? The answer is, nothing. Beside the old Dutch and Italian masters, their descendants seem nonexistent. We do not notice that they are there.

It was different, however, in France. The nineteenth century showed no falling off in the quality of French painting. Ingres and Delacroix, Manet and Dégas, Corot and Cézanne--these men are at least the equals of Fouque, Clouet, Poussin, Watteau, Chardin, Fragonard. And in one respect they are actually superior--at any rate, so far as we are concerned. For, being nearer to us in time, they are nearer to us in spirit. Their thoughts, their feelings, their ethical and artistic problems are more like ours than the thoughts, feelings, problems of the great artists who flourished before their day.

It is inevitable. Human beings are of their own time, not of any one else's time. As a pure artist, Raphael may be superior to Degas; but Degas has, for us, one great advantage over Raphael--he is talking about things which concern us much more closely than the subject matter of Raphael's painting--talking about them, what is more, in terms which are essentially our terms, in an idiom which has the modernity of contemporary slang, coupled with the elegance and beauty of the finest poetry.

Why should France have been the only country to produce a really great school of modern painting? This was a question which, walking through the rooms of Burlington House, I often asked myself--but asked in vain; I could never think of any answer that was even remotely adequate. My only consolation lay in the reflection that nobody else has ever thought of an adequate answer to this or to the many kindred questions which it is possible to ask.

Plenty of historians have tried to explain why the mental activity of the various nations should have taken, now this channel, now that, now, apparently, no channel at all.

But these explanations have never been convincing.

Why Italy should have been for three centuries supreme in painting, then for a century supreme in music, and after that supreme in none of the arts; why neither England nor Germany should ever have produced a great school of painting; why English music should have gone into eclipse at the end of the seventeenth century and Germany's should have begun, at about the same time, to rise toward heights never attained before or since; why the Dutch should quite suddenly have begun to paint miraculously well at the beginning of the sixteen hundreds and why, long before the end of the century, they should be painting with a fixed and uniform badness--these problems are still profoundly mysterious, still completely unsolved.

No explanation in terms of political greatness or economic prosperity is adequate to account for the facts. Certain correlations between mental activity and economic success do seem to exist. But they are vague and partial. No Marxian theory of history really works. Man's spirit is only in part conditioned by the physical environment; for the rest it is governed by its own laws.

The wind of the spirit bloweth where it listeth. Which is simply another way of saying that we do not yet know what those laws are. Perhaps we shall never know.

17 March 1932

Ideas Are Infectious

Measles, when first it was introduced into Polynesia, did the most appalling thing to it; their white blood corpuscles did not know how to deal with this new enemy. Only after some time, and when half the population had been wiped out, did the survivors develop the appropriate resistance to the plague.

Strange thoughts are often as deadly as strange diseases. Notions which, for those accustomed to them, are not merely harmless, but actually beneficial, can do enormous damage to people who have never heard of them before. For minds build up a kind of resistance to ideas, just as bodies build up a resistance to infections.

Thus, all civilized people develop a slight unconscious cynicism toward the fundamental ideals of their civilization. They believe in them; but their belief is always tempered by a knowledge of the difficulties which stand in the way of applying these ideals to actual life.

Wise with the accumulated wisdom of the race, they know that there must be compromises. Never again can they be infected with a wild and indiscriminate enthusiasm for the fundamental tenets of their creed.

But suppose, now, that this creed is exported; suppose that men who have hitherto lived by the light of other ideals are suddenly brought into contact with it; and suppose the exporters carry the prestige which belongs to representatives of a more efficient civilization--what then?

The ideals of the exporters are likely to be accepted, and accepted with the uncritical enthusiasm of those who have had no time to develop a protective cynicism toward them. In its new environment, the spiritual equivalent of measles will suddenly become as dangerous as cholera.

The transformation of hitherto harmless ideas into dangerous spiritual plagues is going on at the present time all over the Eastern world. Representatives of western civilization have exported our notions to the farthest corners of Asia. With what alarming results present happenings in India and China amply testify.

Consider, for example, the ideal of democracy. We ourselves have developed a certain protective cynicism toward it. Not so the Asiatics. For them, democracy is as new as measles was to the Maoris--as new and almost as fatal. They have caught our ideals--caught them badly. In their delirium they are busily smashing the framework of their own civilizations and thus rapidly reducing themselves to a state of social and moral chaos.

How long will it take them to build up a new order? I am not a prophet, and all I can say is that honesty does not justify a very encouraging answer.

Among the western peoples, the application of democratic ideals to the practical problems of government was a very slow process. There is no reason to suppose that it will be less slow among the Asiatics. Nations, like individuals, profit very little by the experience of others; they can only learn by making all the mistakes for themselves.

At the present moment, I repeat, the Asiatics are in the acute phase of the disease with which we have infected them. We must expect them, during this phase, to commit every kind of folly; temporary insanity is a regular symptom of such maladies.

It will be long years before they work up the westerner's cynical resistance to the ideal. But not until such a resistance has been developed can we hope for peace and order in Asia. Which only shows how dangerous an export trade can be. Ships carry, along with their ordinary cargo, a freight of invisibles. The gin and the rifles are bad enough; but the filter-passing bacteria and the ideas--these are much worse.

29 March 1932

Are We Growing Stupider?

In a recent issue of the scientific journal, *Nature*, appears a paper in which the author, Dr. Shepherd Dawson, describes a series of investigations into the relationship between birth rate and intelligence, carried out in Glasgow.

I have no space to enter into details. Suffice it to say that these investigations were carried out with the most accurate methods available, and that the number of families investigated was sufficiently large to be regarded as a characteristic sample of the population. The conclusion at which the investigators arrived was that "the dullest children came from the largest families."

What does this mean? It means that, "If it be assumed, as is commonly done, that, on the whole, the intelligence of children is like that of their parents, then the dull parents have, on the whole, slightly more children than the brighter parents...The birth-rate is highest among the dullest members of the community, and, in spite of their higher fatalities, they appear to be leaving a higher number of survivors."

These conclusions, based on tolerably sound statistical evidence, must be considered in the light of the more general conclusions reached by R. A. Fisher in the second part of his very important book, *The Genetical Theory of Natural Selection*.

Fisher shows that, in a society like ours, there is necessarily an incompatibility between social success and biological success. (Biological success may be defined as superior capacity for survival and reproduction. Biologically successful stocks "progressively replace their competitors as the living inhabitants of the earth.") The reason for this state of things is that social success is now practically synonymous with economic success, and a large family is definitely a handicap to economic success. There is, therefore, a tendency for the socially successful to be either people of naturally low fertility, or else people who have artificially restricted the size of their families.

"To social man," writes Fisher, "success in human endeavor is inseparable from the maintenance or attainment of social status. Whenever, then, the socially lower occupations are the more fertile, we

must face the paradox that the biologically successful members of our society are to be found principally among its social failures, and equally that those classes of persons who are prosperous and socially successful are, on the whole, the biological failures, doomed more or less speedily, according in their social distinction, to be eradicated from the human stock."

Social success cannot be achieved without intelligence. It therefore follows that, in a society like ours, intelligence (at any rate, of the kind required for social success) has a tendency to be eradicated.

This is an alarming state of affairs. The only remedy, so far as one can see, is a change in our social organization. For example, in the professional classes a system of liberal family allowances (in the form of tax rebates and increases of salary for each child) would largely counteract the present tendency to purchase social success by biological failure.

Without some such modification of existing social practice, our race, it seems is doomed to become progressively more and more stupid--and to do so, as Fisher has shown mathematically, with positively vertiginous rapidity.

It has been suggested that one of the reasons for the fall of the Roman Empire was the deterioration of the Latin stock, due to the correlation, in a plutocratic society, of social success and biological failure.

The invading barbarians were organized on aristocratic and military lines. In their societies, a large family was a social advantage, not a handicap. Their invasions introduced new strains of intelligence into the exhausted Latin stock. There are no barbarians now; they are all, superficially, civilized. We have given them our standards of social success; which means that they are eliminating intelligence as rapidly as we are. When we have exhausted our own supply, there will be no outside reservoir, as there was in Roman times, to replenish our emptiness.

Moral: Let us take steps to prevent our supply from running short.

30 March 1932

Comfort

I was taken, not long ago, to call on an old lady who owns, in the neighborhood of Florence, a magnificent villa that once belonged--was it to the Medici themselves? I forget; but anyhow to some ancient and noble family of the city. It is an astonishing house, with a fragment of a medieval castle at the center, and a series of wings, courtyards, banqueting halls and what not, built on every generation or so from the fifteenth to the end of the seventeenth century.

Its present owner has but one passion--to restore its ancient glories. And when I was there, my word! they had been restored, they were still being restored--with a vengeance. The castle hall at the center of the house had been made to look more medieval than anything can possibly have looked during the middle ages; it had become a Norman Bel Geddes setting for the sleep-walking scene in *Macbeth*.

Bogus fifteenth century frescoes adorned the dining room, and our hostess' boudoir was lined with panelling taken from the sacristy of a church. The walls of the bedrooms had been painted, not with whitewash or distemper (that would have been much too modern), but with a brownish concoction made mostly of eggs and designed to reproduce to a nicety the grimy patina of age. Painting with this artificial dirt, I discovered, cost several francs per square foot.

As for the furniture of the villa--it was in each room, entirely of the epoch; medieval in the sleepwalking scene, Renaissance in the rooms added during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and baroque in the "new wing" which dated from 1680.

The place was a museum--grandiose, and more terrifically uncomfortable than any house I have ever been in.

Sitting uneasily on a chair that was like an instrument of torture, I wondered, as we took tea in the boudoir-sacristy, why our fathers had put up for so long with such intolerable conditions of existence. For, I reflected, there is nothing in the modern sofa or armchair beyond the skill of even a medieval craftsman to reproduce.

Our ancestors knew all about spiral springs and padded upholstery; it would have been just as easy for them to make their chairs so that the backs formed an obtuse angle with the seats as to make them with

perpendicular backs. No, evidently (and here I shifted my position yet once more in the vain hope of finding some slightly softer spot in the oak of my carved and gilded throne), they didn't want to be comfortable; evidently they had their higher reasons for suffering as they did.

I set myself to unravel the mystery; and in due course it seemed to me that I had found the solution. Comfort, as we know it, is only possible in a democratic age. Lounging and sprawling (and it is the essence of comfort to be able to lounge and sprawl) are disrespectful processes. In circumstances where a respectful attitude is still correct they are forbidden, even now. Soldiers are not allowed to sprawl in the presence of their officers, nor may subjects lounge in the presence of kings. Butlers who make themselves thoroughly comfortable while their employers are about risk instant dismissal.

In the feudal and post-feudal past, society as a whole was organized in very much the same way as that special society within society--the army--is organized today. Kings and deputy kings abounded and, with the exception of the Pope, every human being stood in relation to at least one other human being as the modern butler stands to his employer.

Hence, I reflected, surreptitiously rubbing the seat of my trousers, hence these horrible chairs. They were invented in order that subordinates might not sprawl disrespectfully in the presence of their superiors and that superiors might keep up their dignity by sitting majestically, bolt upright, in the presence of their inferiors.

Comfort, as we know it, dates from after the French Revolution. The aching of my limbs bore witness to the fact that my chair had been made before the age of political liberty.

4 April 1932

Peace in Our Time

Burnt children refrain from putting their fingers in flames, they have learned by experience. Humanity in the mass is evidently less intelligent than an individual child; though burned, often and badly, it still goes on playing with the wildfire of war.

Fate's education of humanity is a strenuous process.

The blows and kicks of circumstance are not enough; the pupil's steady refusal to learn forces Destiny to use a sledge hammer and the hatchet. In all the important affairs of social life no suggestion much milder than a surgical operation is effective. Only in circumstances where they find themselves emotionally indifferent will the majority of men dispense with the persuasions of surgery and consent to act upon the advice of reason.

The depressing fact about disarmament conferences is that they never concern themselves with the causes of war--only with the means to wage it. The causes of war are nationalism and the economic competition fostered by nationalism. With these, disarmament conferences are not asked to deal and could not deal, even if they were asked. Some people have argued that they are therefore entirely futile. But this is not quite true. They may not be able to do as much as we should like them to do, but they can do something. It does not follow that, because the causes of war exist, war must necessarily break out.

The causes of a general conflict were present for at least fifty years before 1914. But it was only when the means for waging war had been accumulated in enormous quantities that war finally broke out.

Men who do not carry arms are just as likely to quarrel about money or women as men who do. But they are far less likely to do one another any damage. The possession of a revolver is a standing temptation to shoot. Nations are like individuals. A disarmament conference, if successful, can deliver them from the temptation of shooting by depriving them of their weapons. Without in any way diminishing the deep and chronic causes of war, it can yet make war less likely.

Which is surely something to be thankful for. Pending the growth of a new spirit in international relations, disarmament is the most

hopeful interim policy. The logic of events will ultimately prove nationalism to be unworkable. The modern industrial and financial systems can function properly only on a planetary scale. Sooner or later big business will be compelled to impose internationalism--whether by force or propaganda, or a mixture of both, remains to be seen.

Meanwhile, there is disarmament. We may cherish a moderate and sober hope that something may be achieved in this direction and that the achievement may do some good. How much good, it is hard to prophesy.

Maj. Gen. J.F.C. Fuller, the author of an interesting book on the subject *The Dragon's Teeth*, is not too sanguine in his expectations. His thesis is that indiscriminate and sentimental disarmament is worse than no disarmament at all. "Had the nations been rationally interested in the maintenance of peace, and conversely in the restriction of war, by shortening its length...they would have banned the older arms (those now used by soldiers for the purpose of killing other soldiers) and endowed the new, especially the aeroplane and the submarine, with legal authority to attack the makers of war (the civilians) and not the instruments (the soldiers) directed by the will of these makers."

This is very unlike the language of the ordinary pacifist, who invariably demands the banning of all arms that can be used against civilians. But in spite of the seeming bloodthirstiness of his suggestion, I believe that Gen. Fuller is right, and that the official promotion of women and children to places in the front line may be better pacifism than any scheme for their protection. If civilians knew that there were no armies to suffer vicariously for them, but that war, once declared, would be waged exclusively on themselves, then, I believe, there would really be some prospect of their using their reason and learning, even without the aid of a surgical operation, to keep the peace.

5 April 1932

The New Duty

New inventions satisfy old wants, but they also create new duties.

Who would have imagined, sixty years ago, that it would one day be the duty of even the most prosperous and most distinguished gentlemen to answer the bell, like a servant? And yet this has actually happened. At the sound of a certain bell we spring up and, regardless of what we may be doing--eating or dozing, having a bath or embracing the object of our affection--rush to obey its strident and insistent summons.

The telephone is doubtless a convenience; but it has imposed upon us all a duty which, in the past, was reserved (at any rate in the houses of the bourgeoisie) to parlor maids and butlers.

To me the extraordinary thing is that men and women should accept these new and quite easily, quite justifiably avoidable duties as willingly as they do. "Stern daughter of the voice of God," was Wordsworth's name for ethical duty. When she speaks out it is the categorical imperative; we must obey or suffer the torments of remorse.

But there is also a stern daughter of the voice of men--and even a stern daughter of the voice of machines. To both we yield as ready an obedience as to the daughter of the voice of God. Indeed, I think we submit ourselves more promptly and completely.

Arbitrary and transient conventions are more religiously observed than the dictates of morality. We do "what is done" more willingly than what we ought to do. The reason, I suppose, is that doing what we ought to do is so difficult and painful. Whereas doing what is done seldom demands a great renunciation or a very strenuous effort, while failure to obey a social convention entails a punishment at the hands of public opinion almost as severe as (sometimes even severer than) that which is the consequence of a failure to obey the moral law.

Anyhow, whatever the cause, the fact remains that we obey the conventions of society, however foolish, and accept the duties, however tiresome, which the progress of invention has imposed upon us.

How few people, for example, have the courage to allow a telephone bell to ring itself to silence! Even though they hate to be

disturbed, even though they may have no desire to hear the voice of any of their acquaintances, they hurry to the receiver the moment the bell starts to ring.

And yet it would be easy to sit and let the machine ring itself out. But they can't do it. It is as though they heard in that insufferable buzzing the still, small voice of conscience.

So certain it is that people will answer when the bell sounds its categorical imperative that burglars make a habit, before setting out on their expeditions, of telephoning to the apartment they intend to break into. If there is no reply, it means that there is nobody at home. Whereas, were man a strong-minded and rational animal, it would mean, in at least 50 per cent of cases, that there was somebody at home--but somebody who wasn't going to let himself be disturbed.

But, alas, a long experience with telephones has taught me that man is not a strong-minded and rational animal. When the bell rings, he simply must answer.

This is why I have given up the telephone. I like being left in peace, but I lack the courage to let the bell ring. So I evade the difficulty. Instead of putting up a fight against the stern daughter of the voice of the machine, I merely make it impossible for her to come near me.

The time, I suppose, is not very far off when telephones will be made compulsory, like the morning mail. Letters, heaven knows, are bad enough. The categorical imperative to read what people choose to write to one is already an intolerable burden.

But if it should ever become impossible to escape the telephone, if a too benevolent government were to supply it, as it supplies postmen and light and water, then, really, a man will not be able to call his soul his own.

11 April 1932

Too Many Books

"Of making many books there is no end." And yet in the Preacher's day, two thousand and some years ago, humanity was only at the very beginning of its book making. If Koheleth could return to the earth what would he say of the cataracts and avalanches of books which incessantly pour down upon us today?⁴³ He would say of them, no doubt, what he said of everything else: "Vanity of vanities."

And the remark would be as true of books as it was and is of everything else in the world--as true and as profoundly irrelevant.

As one who contributes in a small way to swell the volume of the literary torrent, I feel a certain rather guilty concern about the almost frenzied book making of modern times. For surely there can be no doubt about the matter; there are too many books. Not too many, of course, to say all that might be said about this queer and astonishing universe; the world being infinite, it would require an infinity of books to do that.

When I say that there are too many books, I mean that there are too many for any given individual. In order to qualify as a well-informed, up-to-date citizen of the contemporary world, a man must have read so many books that it is almost impossible that he should have read any of them well.

We are in danger of sacrificing quality of reading to quantity, in danger of reading too much and too quickly to be in a position to pass judgment on what we read.

"An accurate taste in poetry, as in all other arts, is an acquired talent, which can only be produced by severe thought and a long continued intercourse with the best models of composition." Such was Wordsworth's opinion. If he is right--and for my own part I am quite sure that he is--the outlook for contemporary culture is not very reassuring. For habits of indiscriminate and excessive reading, such as are at present almost universal among the educated, are seldom compatible with severe thought or long intercourse with the best models.

⁴³ Koheleth. The author of *Ecclesiastes*. (Heb. *qohelet*, member of an assembly).

Wordsworth's contemporaries were, in one way, better off than ourselves. The accumulations of knowledge were much smaller then. There is a great deal to be said for ignorance. The twentieth-century world is burdened by an enormous load of scientific, historical, literary and psychological knowledge, already far too large to be taken in by any single man, and expanding day by day with delirious rapidity.

The existence of this huge corpus of modern knowledge is the cause of inquiring minds being led into endless distractions. Horizons being near and narrower in Wordsworth's day, it was much easier to concentrate; easier to learn to judge well, to discriminate between the valuable and the worthless.

A modern reader is called upon to discriminate between a vastly greater number of works of art, literature and science belonging to a vastly greater number of different kinds, styles, periods, nationalities and branches of knowledge than was his educated ancestor. To judge well was at all times difficult; at all times it called for severe thought and long continued intercourse with the best models.

The multiplication of the numbers and classes of books upon which we must now pass judgment makes discrimination much more difficult for us than for our fathers. We ought to think more severely and live longer with the best models.

But in actual fact this same multiplication of books causes us to spend less time with the best models and to think less severely. That which makes discrimination more difficult renders the means of acquiring discrimination almost impossible.

If we had time to think of anything but the economic crisis we should realize that we are in the throes also of an intellectual and aesthetic crisis. How are we (or our children) going to reconcile a well-informed, modern up-to-dateness with taste, discrimination and a sense of spiritual values?

This is a question which I, for one, find very hard to answer. Culture is in danger of being buried under the avalanche of books. The mind is freer and more active than ever in the past; but by a strange paradox the freedom suffocates, the activity is paralyzing.

22 April 1932

Japanese Advertisement

The street was rather squalid, but the little Japanese restaurant looked reassuringly clean. I entered.

The food, as it happened, was bad, almost to inedibility. Still, I was glad I had come. The rice might be overcooked, the scraps of meat of a dubious quality and tough; but by way of compensation I had what no ordinary restaurant could give me--a pile of Japanese picture papers to look at.

I pored over them, fascinated. They were cheap little magazines evidently intended for popular family consumption. The illustrations proved that they contained all the usual ingredients, from romantic fiction to the comic strip, and from the children's corner to a housewifely section of the how-to-make-a-smart-knitted-jumper-out-of-ham-bones variety. Paper, printing and reproduction were uniformly shoddy.

There is something peculiarly fascinating in studying the homeliness and sillinesses of common life when translated into unfamiliar terms--in seeing, for example, the heroines of sloppy stories dressed in kimonos and wooden clogs, and the guests at the good housekeeper's little dinner party squatting on the floor.

Moreover, the illustrations had a further, purely artistic interest; for they showed how profound, and how purely destructive, have been the effects of Western artistic conventions upon the traditional styles of the East. Japanese popular art was once astonishingly good; it is now no less astonishingly bad.

Torn between two traditions, the modern Japanese draughtsman is utterly at a loss. He tries to make the best of both worlds and fails disastrously. The drawings in these papers were so depressingly bad that I had decided, in spite of their oddity, to look at no more, when suddenly as I turned a final page my eye was caught by an advertisement of a most surprising nature.

In the center of the page, surrounded by the columns of incomprehensible hieroglyphics, was the picture of a small box, whose contents, according to a manufacturer's label in very legible English, consisted of certain birth-control appliances. Above were two

drawings, representing the interiors of two Japanese homes. Home Number One pullulated with howling children; the mother was weeping; the father seemed on the point of suicide; the dishes on the table were almost empty; the windows were broken; everything, in a word, testified to unhappiness and poverty.

Family Number Two had evidently invested in one of the little boxes, for there were only three children; the table was loaded with food; the mother smiled; the father (a most exquisite touch) was dressed, not in a native costume like his unfortunate counterpart in the other picture, but in the nattiest white flannel trousers and tennis shirt. The final symbol of luxurious superfluity was a bird cage containing several canaries.

There is no Western country, so far as I know, where you can find such an advertisement in such a paper. That it should be possible to find it in Japan seems more remarkable when one reflects that it was, if I remember rightly, hardly ten years ago that the Japanese authorities refused Mrs. Sanger permission to conduct a campaign for birth control in that country.⁴⁴ True, they ended by yielding to her tireless efforts, and a Japanese birth-control society was finally founded.

But from permitting the foundation of a birth-control society to permitting the publication in widely read magazines of full-page advertisements of contraceptive appliances is a very long stride.

That Japan should, in the course of the last few years, have taken such a stride is a most significant fact. Those absurd pictures of the two Japanese families gave me a deeper insight into the real causes of the trouble in Manchuria and at Shanghai than any number of well-informed articles by Our Diplomatic Correspondent. Japan's trouble is that, for the moment at any rate, there are too many Japanese. There are two ways of dealing with the difficulty. One is by foreign conquest, leading to emigration and the creation of an export market.

The other and, unfortunately, slower way is by birth control. In spite of scruples, most of us, I suppose, would consider the second the better way. Sin for sin, we prefer lechery to murder. But there are, it seems, many virtuous persons who prefer murder to lechery. At any rate, they preach a publicity which must almost inevitably end in murder.

2 May 1932

⁴⁴ Margaret Sanger (1883-1966), American birth control pioneer.

Hocus Pocus

As I opened my paper this morning my eye was caught by a familiar conjunction of letters--my own name. I ran my eye down the column and found myself reading an account of a religious service held by the latest of London's fashionable mahatmas. It had evidently been a most curious affair. Images of Apollo and the Madonna, of Krishna and St. Francis, of Buddha and the Great Mother, stood in niches round the walls of the place of worship.

The service consisted of an indiscriminately eclectic mixture of mediaeval Latin hymns, extracts from Lao-Tze and the English Prayer Book, vague upliftings by Tagore.⁴⁵ Then came a discourse by the presiding messiah, who "spoke," according to the reporter, "of his clairvoyant experiences, broke off to say that he thought Aldous Huxley's book, *Brave New World*, was one of the most pernicious he had ever read, and ended up by saying (this passage in the article was for some reason, printed in capital letters): IF YOU WANT TO MEDITATE, YOU MUST BREATHE DEEPLY, NOT FROM THE STOMACH, BUT FROM THE WAIST."

Let me begin by thanking the reverend dervish for his kindly reference to myself. Such a testimonial from such a source is indeed high praise. But though it was the personal reference which first called my attention to the article, it is not of personal matters that I wish to write here. An individual dervish's opinion of my works is not of great interest or importance, but dervishism in general is a social phenomenon of major significance.

This clairvoyant gentleman, with his miscellaneous idols and his polyglot liturgies, his meditative breathings from the stomach--I beg his pardon, from the waist--is a symbolic specimen. He and his like are as characteristic of this twentieth century as Ford or Einstein, as Deterding or Pavlov.⁴⁶ For ours is an age of hocus pocus no less than an age of industrialism and science.

We have among us many admirable astronomers, but of astrologers an even greater plenty. The devotees of numerology outnumber those of

⁴⁵ Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), Indian poet and mystic, winner of Nobel Prize for literature in 1913.

⁴⁶ Sir Henri Deterding (1866-1939), Dutch-born executive of Shell Oil Group. As first managing director of Royal Dutch/Shell group of petroleum companies, he gave it worldwide interests. Clara Deterding is a character in *Brave New World*.

mathematics. And for every trained physiologist there are at least half a dozen people who can tell you all about astral bodies.

Magicians and heresiarchs, it is evident, supply a human need. Otherwise they would not exist. Their motto, like that of the modern advertiser, is service. And, like the advertiser, they find that service pays. Many of our sorcerers and witches, our high priests and priestesses, are able to retire with handsome fortunes.

The characteristic fact about modern superstition is that it is more magical than religious. That is to say, it is preoccupied with this world rather than with the next, with the physical rather than the metaphysical. Readers of Edith Wharton's novel, *Twilight Sleep*, will remember the rich New York lady who is its principal character.⁴⁷ Mrs. Manford was the disciple of an Indian mahatma.

That this dusky gentleman's doctrines were sublimely spiritual went without saying; what his middle-aged devotee could never forget, however, was the fact that he had taught her how to reduce her hips. With her customary acuteness, Edith Wharton has laid her finger on the essential fact about modern superstitions. They give results here and now; and if they don't give results, they fail. People turn to the supernatural for some particular and immediate benefit--such as slenderer hips, freedom from worry, short cuts to success, improved digestions, money. They want, not truth, but power.

Hence the contemporary success of magic, and hence the essentially magical nature of all the new religions. The higher religions are of the same nature as philosophy; magic and the lower magical religions are of the same nature as applied science. If our age believes so easily in magicians, it is not in despite but because of science. We are accustomed to the engineer and his immediate results.

Magicians profess to be the engineers of personal destiny. Very significant in this context is the fact that superstition has borrowed the terminology of science. The magical world is full of waves, vibrations, poles of force, magnetism and the like. The devil has always been renowned for his ability to quote scripture.

3 May 1932

⁴⁷ Huxley told Edith Wharton (1862-1937) that *Twilight Sleep* (1927) had already "put the case" for the satire on Fordian culture, for which acknowledgement, Wharton wrote, "I was much set up by his recognition of the fact." *The Letters of Edith Wharton*, ed. R. W. B. Lewis and Nancy Lewis, (New York: Scribner's, 1988), 547.

Art and Propaganda

When Mahomet wanted to prove the divine inspiration of the Koran he pointed to its style and, addressing his opponents, challenged them--to produce ten chapters--even a single chapter--like those of the sacred book. Nothing so well written, he argued, could be merely human.

The prophet's self-satisfaction was excessive. As a matter of fact, the Koran is not a very good book--it is, at best, a book with good things in it. But Mahomet's insistence on good style is none the less extremely significant; he had laid his finger on a fact of cardinal importance. For no philosophical or religious teacher can hope to exercise a wide and enduring influence unless he is an artist himself, as Mahomet was, or else has disciples who are artists.

To enunciate valuable doctrines is not enough; to have a great personal influence on those who surround one is not enough. Unless the doctrines and the quality of the impressive personality are somewhat put on record their influence will be limited and brief; and the more skillfully they are recorded and the better the recording artist the more considerable is their influence likely to be.

If Mahomet had not written or rather (since there is no evidence that he could read or write) dictated the Koran, the Muslim faith would never have spread as it did. Or take the case of Christianity. Christianity owes its survival partly to the evangelists who, albeit indifferent men of letters, were yet artists enough to render something at least of the quality of the personality of Jesus, with something of the substance of his teaching; and partly (perhaps mainly) to St. Paul, who was a writer of outstanding ability.

Another example: Xenophon wrote about Socrates, but if he had been the only man to write about him the Athenian sage would be a most insignificant figure in the history of thought. Xenophon was a very dull writer. He was not, however, the only man to write about Socrates. There was also Plato, and Plato was one of the most consummate literary artists who ever lived. His dialogues have made seventy generations of cultivated men acutely "Socrates conscious," as the advertising agents would say.

That we are not Pythagoras conscious or Zeno-the-Eleatic conscious is merely due to the accident that these great men did not happen to have an artist among their disciples.

One could continue this list almost indefinitely. None of the saints or sages has been able to dispense with art. For art is, among other things, the technique of effective communication; and those whose thoughts and acts have not been communicated, whether by themselves or by some contemporary or subsequent artist, remain, for us, dim and far away.

Literature is not, of course, the only art by means of which they and their achievements and ideas are "put over." Most people's knowledge, for example, of St. Anthony is derived from pictorial representations of his heroic battlings with temptation. And even with St. Jerome, who was a most prolific and competent writer, most of us are more familiar in paintings than in the written word.

What good artists can do for even a bad scientific hypothesis is well illustrated by the recent history of Lamarckism, which was given a new lease on life, first by Samuel Butler and then by Mr. Bernard Shaw. Lamarckism is the doctrine that acquired characteristics are inherited, and that new characteristics are acquired because individuals want to acquire them.

"Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?" Any one whatever, is the Lamarckian answer; and the added cubit will be inherited by subsequent generations. Butler expounded this odd doctrine with great literary ability; and so, more recently and with even greater ability, has Mr. Shaw.

Result: Lamarckism, though almost certainly incorrect, is still a living and popular theory.

As a professional man of letters, I am pleased to think that artists (and especially literary artists) should be so important. I am pleased; but I am also alarmed. For it really is rather alarming that men with a gift for artistic expression should wield such enormous power over reputations, ideas, even facts. And what is even more alarming is that the world's political and economic rulers should have realized that artists wield this power, and should systematically employ them (as was done in the late war) to make propaganda.

We are only at the beginning of intellectual and emotional mass production. What will the end be like?

I scarcely dare to think.

20 May 1932

Man, Proud Man

Just exactly what is the Eternal Masculine?

In a recently published collection of essays, entitled *Man, Proud Man*, eight talented women have contributed eight separate answers to this question.

Eagerly, in the hope of at last seeing myself as others see me, I read the book; but though it amused and instructed me, though it sometimes made me feel, as a male, exceedingly uncomfortable, *Man, Proud Man*, left me at the end with a certain sense of disappointment.

True, I had seen my sex as others see it; but these others had seen it in such a variety of ways that I was really not very much the wiser. Thus, according to E.M. Delafield, "Men are not imaginative. They do not want to be imaginative." To which Storm Jameson answers: "Men are more imaginative and more sensitively alive to circumstances than women. They are the creatures of air and fire. (A female Ariel would be a conception profoundly false to human nature.)"⁴⁸

How shall we reconcile these contradictions? G.B. Shaw suggests the only possible method, "They say men are the romantic sex. But equally, from the other side of the choir, might rise the chant: 'Woman are more considerate.' 'Men like a settled home.' 'Women are the romantic sex.' 'Men are not so sentimental.' 'Women are not so sentimental.' And so on, *ad infinitum*. We must conclude that both Miss Delafield and Miss Jameson are right. But if they are both right, where does the Eternal Masculine come in?

To classify People into only two groups, Men and Women, is hopelessly crude. Physiologically, a species, *Homo Sapiens* is psychologically, at least, an order, almost a zoological class. Between my mind and the mind of John Sebastian Bach there is, I should say, at least as much difference as there is between the body of a sea lion and the body of a giraffe. Bats do not differ from whales more widely than William Blake from Sir Isaac Newton, or Mrs. Eddy from Pascal.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Pseudonym of Edmée Elizabeth Monica Dashwood (1890-1943), author of several novels including *Diary of a Provincial Lady* (1931). (Margaret) Storm Jameson (1891-1986), prolific novelist, author of trilogy *The Triumph of Time* (1932).

⁴⁹ Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910), American founder of Christian Science faith.

There are, of course, profound resemblances as well as profound differences. Professor Einstein is sufficiently like a Patagonian savage, even in mind, to be regarded as a member of the same psychological family; both are People.

Mice enormously outnumber gorillas; and in the same way certain psychological genera of People are quantitatively much more important than others. As gorillas are to mice, so men of outstanding ability are to the swarming multitudes of the stupid. So also, very fortunately, are the incorrigibly evil to the innumerable well meaning but rather weak beings who constitute the largest order of mankind.

Specimens of both men and women are to be found, I should say in every one of the orders, genera and species of People. To affirm, in a sweeping generalization, that Man has less imagination than Woman (or, in equally sweeping terms, that he has more) is surely an absurdity. If we want to be accurate, we must say that many men have less imagination than some women; and, conversely, that many women have less imagination than some men. And so through all the catalogue of mental "faculties."

True, the male and female individuals of the various genera and species tend to exhibit certain characteristic differences. An unimaginative and stupid man is never stupid and unimaginative in quite the same way as a woman of the same kind. In other words, the Eternal Masculine does differ from the Eternal Feminine, and no classifier of human beings can afford to neglect these differences, whatever they may be. Still less, however, can he afford to ignore the even greater differences between man and man, woman and woman.

The Eternal Intelligent and the Eternal Stupid, the Eternal Good and the Eternal Worthless--such entities are at least as real and important as the Eternal Masculine and the Eternal Feminine.

6 June 1932

False Prophets

The human mind is so made that it cannot be content with the here and now, the particular and the present. It feels impelled to generalize and to prophesy. (Every generalization implies a prophecy.) Hence philosophy and science; and hence those loose and sweeping statements that we are all in the habit of making about every conceivable subject, even those of which we know nothing--perhaps I should have said, particularly those of which we know nothing.

Now, most subjects do not permit themselves to be scientifically and completely known; they are too complicated. Regarding many of the matters which interest us the most the learned are not really much better off than the uneducated. The most eminent men have gravely enunciated what have since proved to be absurdities.

For some years past I have made a practice of jotting down all the strikingly false prophecies, all the unusually fallacious generalizations I come across in books. The collection makes very curious and, I think, instructive reading. Here are a few specimens, chosen at random.

"Is not Germany's incapacity in the sphere of action the consequence of those incomparable gifts for intellectual speculation with which nature has endowed her?" This question was asked by Ernest Renan, the great French historian, in the late fifties of the last century--ten or twelve years, that is to say, before the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war. Germany's "incapacity in the sphere of action" was demonstrated in a somewhat startling way at Sedan and before the walls of Paris.

My next example is English. "There never was a time when nations were more militarist," wrote Mr. G.K. Chesterton shortly before 1914. "There never was a time when men were less brave. All ages and all epics have sung of arms and the man; but, we have effected simultaneously the deterioration of the man and the fantastic perfection of the arms. Militarism demonstrated the decadence of Rome, and it demonstrates the decadence of Prussia."

A few years later Prussia was holding her own against most of the rest of Europe; and, in the trenches, several million men were with

unequaled courage bearing and doing things which no Homeric or mediaeval hero had ever been called upon to bear and do.

I have space for only one more example, and shall cite, for the sake of their oddity, these reflections, also by Mr. Chesterton, on dancing:

"And, in proportion as Mr. McCabe's scientific civilization advances--that is, in proportion as religious civilization (or real civilization) decays--the more and more 'well trained' become the people who dance, and the more and more numerous become the people who don't. Mr. McCabe may recognize an example of what I mean in the gradual discrediting in society of the ancient European waltz or dance with partners, and of the substitution of that horrible and degrading Oriental interlude which is known as skirt dancing."⁵⁰

A few years later "discredited dance with partners" was being danced in a style which deeply shocked the representatives of Mr. Chesterton's religious civilization in literally millions of cafés and houses, every evening of the week and in every part of the world, including the Oriental place of origin of the "degrading interlude known as skirt dancing."

Volumes could be filled with similar unsound generalizations and false prophecies uttered by learned and intelligent men.

What is the moral? That we should cease to generalize? No, for then we could never KNOW anything at all. Generalizations are necessary if the mind is to comprehend the world about it. Rather, the moral is that we should make generalizations, but never take them too seriously--regard them as working hypotheses, which further research may, and indeed almost certainly will, upset.

Generalizations are necessary; but what is quite unnecessary is to believe in them to the point of becoming angry when some one questions their validity.

7 June 1932

⁵⁰ Joseph McCabe (1867-1955), author and lecturer. A former priest, later turned champion of science.

Crowds

Imagine that the most exciting football match of the season is booked to be played tomorrow. And now imagine that, in a fit of somewhat improbable generosity, Mr. Rockefeller has bought up all the seats in the stadium and presented you with the lot. Would you, knowing that you were to witness the game in solitary splendor, take the trouble to go and see it?

The chances are that you would throw the hundred thousand dollar ticket into the wastepaper basket. It would be worth less to you than the cheapest and most uncomfortable seat in a crowded stadium.

The real reason why people collect in a crowd is to be found in the crowd itself. They want to feel themselves one of many, because the sense of belonging, of being a part of some greater whole, gives them a profound satisfaction. True, they say they have come together to see a football match or a race, to listen to some famous orator or singer, to take part in some great civic or religious ceremony. But sport, art, politics, religion--these are hardly more than excuses.

At bottom it is a matter of crowd for crowd's sake. People are gathered together in the name of football or President Hoover or the Pope--but always for the sake of one another.

It was on a Derby day at Epsom that I first came to realize this fact with a vivid and personal realization. The weather was blazingly hot and the best part of half a million people must have come out from London to see the race. Epsom Downs was black and crawling with humanity. Like all other race courses, the Epsom course is an oval and encloses a large central area of open grass. Looking down from my high-placed seat I could see the whole of this central area and it was packed solid with I do not venture to guess how many thousands of people. Those on the fringes of the crowd looked at the course--owing to their position they could not help it.

But the rest paid no attention whatever to the races they were supposed to have come to see, but sat on the grass entirely absorbed in the eating of sandwiches and the drinking of bottled beer, in singing, in playing concertinas, in embracing members of the opposite sex.

The running of even the big race hardly disturbed the noisy tranquillity of their huge picnic. They were having a good time and no ridiculous horses should be allowed to distract them. No doubt a fair proportion of these picnickers had a little money on the race, but for the overwhelming majority of them I am sure the real excitement of the day was not the gamble, but the exciting sense of being in sticky and stifling proximity to hundreds of thousands of their fellow beings.

Even when crowds pay attention to the person or event in whose name they have been gathered together, even when they are most wildly excited by what is happening before their eyes, it is obvious that a great deal of their excitement is generated by the act of crowding and then focused on to the event. The football match, the speech, the religious function or whatever the event may be reflects back the excitement which the crowd projects on to it.

An event witnessed by a few people does not produce the same emotional effect as it produces on a multitude of spectators. Plays, which at a rehearsal seem dreary and nonsensical, come glowingly to life and wit before a packed auditorium. Similarly at Lourdes miraculous cures are said to take place much more often when there are large numbers of pilgrims present than when there are only a few.

I count myself unfortunate in being not easily moved by crowd excitement. Moreover, whenever I do begin to feel the thrill a certain ingrained asceticism restrains me from abandoning myself to it.

Intoxication is delightful, but I have a puritan's prejudice in favor of even the chilliest and most depressing sobriety.

10 June 1932

Atoms Versus Men

Physical science has recently made what promises to be a most important advance. A technique has been devised for disintegrating atoms and for transmuting atoms of one element into atoms of another. The process, which was worked out by a team of distinguished physicists at Cambridge, is still in its infancy; only a few of the ninety-two different kinds of atom have as yet been disintegrated or been transmuted.

We are still a long way from the realization of the dream of the medieval alchemists--the conversion of lead into gold; nor is the modern dream of the scientific romance-writers--the harnessing of the enormous supplies of energy lodged within the atom--any nearer fulfillment. True, energy is released when atoms are disintegrated--but so few atoms ever do get knocked to bits by the existing methods (one in a thousand millions, it is said) that the energy set free is too small, for practical purposes, to matter. And the transmutation takes place too slowly, on too small a scale, to be commercially useful.

But it does not follow that, because the discovery is, at present only of theoretical interest, it can never be applied to practical life. In science, the hardest step to take is always the first. Thought develops according to the laws of its own logical being. Plant a seed of thought in some fertile mind and it will start to germinate, to send out shoots--growing, every often, into something as unlike the notion from which it took its origin as an oak tree is unlike an acorn.

Thought's growth takes place with the inhuman inevitability of a natural process--and the fact that it all happens within men's minds makes it seem not less but more inhuman. For the laws of thought's being are not the same as the laws of men's being. Man does not live by logic alone; he lives also by instinct; by wishes which become the fathers of thoughts and are rationalized as beliefs; by aspirations and ideals; by a sentiment of value.

Thought develops in independence of these things, by which man lives--often in hostility to them. Yes, in hostility; for the growth of scientific thought may inflict upon the very men, in whose minds the development took place, an acute discomfort. It may incommode them

in a variety of ways. Thus, a new scientific hypothesis about the nature of things will undermine consoling beliefs and take the driving force out of cherished aspirations.

Or again, the growing thought, embodied in new machinery and new social organizations, may create for men a new physical environment in which (for men's instincts and bodies are profoundly conservative) they do not feel at home.

The recent developments of scientific thought have caused us both these kinds of discomfort. Thus, industrialism and machinery force us to live in environments which we find very unpleasant; and at the same time science destroys beliefs which our fathers found consolatory and satisfying.

The prospect of being able to transmute elements and harness atomic energy is at once exciting and alarming. For this particular development of scientific thought is likely to cause mankind unprecedented inconvenience. Every development of thought that is susceptible of being exploited industrially creates temporary unemployment and causes loss of capital by reducing old plant to obsolescence.

If the Cambridge discovery should ever come to be commercialized, these disturbing events will take place on an enormous scale. Society will be reduced for the time being to a state of industrial and financial chaos.

But if society has any sense, it will not allow itself to be reduced to chaos, but take over the rights in the discovery and see to it that they are exploited in such a way as to cause the minimum of derangement. Social stability is more important than an advance in technology and ought not to be sacrificed to it.

Up to the present, however, it has been sacrificed. Much of the present instability of industrial societies is due to the headlong and unregulated exploitation of new scientific devices. My own belief is that, long before large-scale alchemy and the atomic motor are commercial propositions, we shall see governments arrogating to themselves the right to exploit every new scientific discovery. Scientific thought is a good servant, but a bad master.

In the name of humanity and for the sake of social order, it will have to be controlled.

18 June 1932

Monks among Test Tubes

Dahlen is one of the garden suburbs of Berlin. It was Spring when I was there last. The lilacs were in full bloom, and all the chestnut trees; the eye was soothed and delighted, there was a delicate perfume on the air. To one oppressed by the monumental or the merely dreary ugliness of central Berlin, Dahlen in the Spring seems a kind of garden of Eden.

Dotted here and there in this suburban paradise are some dozen or so of austere and substantial buildings. What are they? Schools, perhaps? But where are the children? Hospitals? But there is no sign of nurse or patient or visitor. Monasteries? But their gardens lie open to the public gaze, unwalled; and, anyhow, this is Berlin--Protestant, Jewish, unbelieving Berlin.

Though wrong, this last guess is, nevertheless, the best. For these buildings are the Kaiser Wilhelm Institutes for Scientific Research, and such research stations are in effect the monasteries of the contemporary world.

Their inmates, like those of the mediaeval cloisters, are set apart from the world; they have made a renunciation of the lower for the sake of the higher, of material for spiritual goods. Ascetically, in poverty, they labor for the greater glory of the Truth.

We speak of our age as an age of enlightenment, forgetting that, even at the very best of times, enlightenment is always partial and inadequate. So far as the vast majority of men and women is concerned, every age of history is a Dark Age--the lights are always few and far between.

In what are technically known as the Dark Ages they burned in the monasteries; somewhat brighter and in greater number they burn today in such places as Dahlen. In the gross, hot, turbulent darkness of common living, these scientific monks test the precarious flame of pure thought, of disinterested mental activity.

How laboriously, with what indefatigable zeal! In one of the monasteries of Dahlen I watched a group of biological nuns engaged in weighing, measuring and photographing caterpillars. Around them, in glass-fronted cages, there crawled, in its thousands, a potential plague

of Egypt. They were working on the still profoundly obscure problem of the origin of species.

My guide took me to another room, where I saw one of the high priests of the institution bending, in the attitude of a mediaeval illuminator of missals, over his binocular microscope. On the slide was a frog's egg. With a glass needle, so thin that its point was all but invisible to the naked eye, he was excising and grafting. The resultant tadpole would have two heads.

In an adjoining cell one of the abbots was studying, stop watch in hand, the behavior of bees and hermit crabs.

The minutiae of scientific doctrine are almost as odd as those of theology.

I left the monastery feeling that the monks have, on the whole, a very enviable lot. They work for ends about whose value they feel no doubt; they have little to do with other human beings and are not involved in their generally disgusting affairs. What could be more satisfactory?

Other people may apply the monks' discoveries to practical life and use them, for example, to save labor (and create unemployment); to decrease the death rate (and cause dangerous overpopulation; and supply humanity with amusement machines for the propagation of silliness and vulgarity) and weapons (for the better committing of wholesale murder).

All this has nothing to do with the monks of science. Their business is with the truth about the nature of things.

If people beyond the convent walls choose to put the truth to stupid or destructive uses, then so much the worse for the world. It is none of the monks' business.

25 June 1932

A Theory of Dogs

If I were in charge of my country's finances the first tax I should impose would be a tax on dogs. It would be a thoroughly equitable tax; the cost of dog licenses would be graded according to the dog-lover's income. The poor would pay comparatively little--enough, however, to discourage them from keeping superfluous quadrupeds. The rich, under my scheme, would find the upkeep of a dog as costly as that of a Rolls-Royce or a middle-aged face.

Really passionate dog fanciers would pay, however stiff the price. The rest would do without--and the world would be a much less noisy, less smelly, less messy and less verminous place than, thanks to dogs, it is at present.

Dog fanciers belong to two classes. There are those whose need for dogs is economic, and those (more numerous) whose need is psychological. Of the first class it is not necessary that I should speak. That a countryman plagued by rats or rabbits or vagabonds should want to keep a dog is natural, and requires no comment. What does require comment is the fact that men and women living in cities, miles away from the nearest rabbit, should burden themselves with the upkeep of a tiresome carnivore with a loud voice, dirty habits and a persistently disagreeable smell.

Such people belong to the class of those whose need for dogs is psychological.

Walt Whitman has set forth in an admirable poem some of the more creditable reasons for keeping dogs:

"I think I could turn and live with animals, they
are so placid and self contained,

I stand and look at them sometimes half the day
long.

They do not sweat and whine about their condition.

They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for
their sins,

They do not make me sick discussing their duty
to God.

Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with

the mania of owning things,
 Not one kneels to another, or to his kind that
 lived thousands of years ago,
 Not one is respectable or industrious over the
 whole earth..."

These, I repeat, are the creditable reasons for living in close association with animals. But, much more cogent than any that Whitman has adduced, there is another reason why people turn to dogs. Men and women leave the world for the kennel as, of old, they left it for the cloister. In many ways the kennel is the more satisfactory retreat.

In the kennel even the feeblest and dullest of human beings can feel himself the master, the genius, positively the god. What a delightful, what a truly intoxicating change from a world of unsympathetic men--a world where the weak are either ignored or, if noticed, noticed only to be exploited; where the stupid are either held of no account or else actively derided.

Disappointed humans discover, among the fleas and the dog messes, a kind of paradise of wish fulfillment. The kennel is a fairy story world where day dreams actually come true--where the dreamer is really the monarch of all he surveys, where his word is law and nobody dares (or even is able) to contradict him, where he is as intelligent as Sir Isaac Newton and as glorious as Alexander the Great.

Dogs do for their master what alcohol does for the drinker--they make him feel larger than life; superhuman. It is a benefit for which dog owners have every reason to feel grateful. And grateful they are--almost hysterically so, sometimes almost insanely.

A little of their gratitude might very properly be canalized by the tax collector.

2 July 1932

Time⁵¹

Time, as we know it, is a very recent invention. The modern time sense is hardly older than the United States. It is a by-product of industrialism--a sort of psychological analogue of synthetic perfumes and the coal-tar dyes.

Time is our tyrant. We are chronically aware of the moving minute hand, even of the moving second hand. We have to be. There are trains to be caught, clocks to be punched, tasks to be done in specified periods, records to be broken by fractions of a second, machines that set the pace and have to be kept up with. Our consciousness of the smallest units of time is now acute.

To us, for example, the moment 8:17 a.m. means something--something very important, if it happens to be the starting time of our daily train. To our ancestors, such an odd eccentric instant was without significance--did not even exist. In inventing the locomotive, Watt and Stevenson were part inventors of time.

Another time-emphasizing entity is the factory and its dependent, the office. Factories exist for the purpose of getting certain quantities of goods made in a certain time. The old artisan worked as it suited him; with the result that consumers generally had to wait for the goods they had ordered from him.

The factory is a device for making workmen hurry. Harnessed to a machine, disciplined and supervised, the artisan is now compelled to work, not at the pace that suits him, but at the pace that suits the industry. The machine revolves so often each minute; so many movements have to be made, so many pieces produced each hour.

Result: the factory worker (and the same is true, *mutatis mutandis*, of the office worker) is compelled to know time in its smallest instants.

In the hand-work age there was no such compulsion to be aware of minutes and seconds.

Our awareness of time has reached such a pitch of intensity that we suffer acutely whenever our travels take us into some corner of the world where people are not interested in minutes and seconds. The

⁵¹ This essay appeared as "Time and the Machine" in *The Olive Tree* (1936).

unpunctuality of the Orient, for example, is appalling to those who come freshly from a land of fixed meal times and regular train services.

For a modern American or Englishman, waiting is a psychological torture. An Indian accepts the blank hours with resignation, even with satisfaction. He has not lost the fine art of doing nothing.

Our notion of time as a collection of minutes, each of which must be filled with some business or amusement is wholly alien to the Oriental. For him, as for all unindustrialized people, time moves at a slow and easy pace; he does not care about each minute, because he has not been made conscious of each minute.

This brings us to a seeming paradox. Acutely aware of the smallest constituent particles of time--of time, as measured by clockwork and train arrivals and the revolutions of machines--industrialized man has to a great extent lost the old awareness of time in its larger divisions.

The time of which we have knowledge is artificial, machine-made time. Of natural, cosmic time, as it is measured out by sun and moon, we are for the most part almost wholly unconscious.

Pre-industrial people know time in its daily, monthly and seasonal rhythms. They are aware of sunrise, noon and sunset; of the full moon and the new; of equinox and solstice; of Spring and Summer, Autumn and Winter. All the old religions, including Catholic Christianity, have insisted on this daily and seasonal rhythm. Pre-industrial man was never allowed to forget the majestic movement of cosmic time.

Industrialism and urbanism have changed all this. One can live and work in a town without being aware of the daily march of the sun across the sky; without ever even seeing the moon and stars (the sky signs make them invisible).

Even changes of season affect the townsman very little. He is the inhabitant of an artificial universe that is, to a great extent, walled off from the world of nature. Outside the walls, time is cosmic and moves with the motion of sun and stars. Within it is an affair of revolving wheels and is measured in seconds and minutes--at its longest, in eight-hour days and six-day weeks.

We have a new consciousness; but it has been purchased at the expense of the old.

9 July 1932

Hocus Pocus

Bad times, it is said, are always good times for superstition. People who are out of luck naturally cast about for means to get in again; people who have seen all their industry and good-will go for nothing begin to crave desperately for miracles; people who have been frightened by calamity feel the need for supernatural protection. Magic and the lower magical forms of religion offer precisely the goods such people require.

To what extent has the present crisis led to a revival of hocus pocus? The question admits of no precise answer. On this subject, as on so many others of equal interest, it is impossible to find the significant statistics which would alone permit of such an answer. Lacking them, one must be content to guess; unscientifically, to record personal observations and private convictions.

What the exact correlation between slumps and superstition may be one cannot say.

All that one can be quite certain of is that there is a lot of superstition about at the present time. Magic and magical religion are not doing badly in spite of the slump; perhaps, indeed, they are doing more than ordinarily well because of it.

In a French newspaper some few days ago I read an advertisement that seemed to confirm the later hypothesis. "Golden opportunity!" (So ran this naively cynical announcement.) "Offered at bargain price, an old-established business for manufacture and sale of religious articles at Lourdes. Showrooms favorably located near miraculous grotto. Large turnover. Four million pilgrims per year." And then, in capital letters, "*A Lourdes pas de crise!*" No slump at Lourdes.

In Protestant England people are not given an opportunity to work off their craving for miracles by going on pilgrimages. But they find substitutes. In the course of a recent journey through the industrial Midlands I was struck by the number of spiritualist chapels newly built or in process of building.

I should guess (though I have no figures to justify me) that spiritualism is probably doing better now than at any time since the War.

The flourishing state of other branches of magic is demonstrated by the number of books published in all countries on astrology, chiromancy, numerology, yoga, etc., etc.

In England, France, Germany and, doubtless, elsewhere you will find in many periodicals rows of advertisements of fortune tellers, Indian fakirs, professors of will power and the like. Even some of the sciences have come to be regarded as magically efficacious.

Thus psychoanalysts and, in general, all psychiatrists are men of science--more or less; but many of their patients go to them as they would go to sorcerers, in the hope of being shown some short cut to well being.

A deplorable feature of contemporary life is the fact that many intelligent and highly cultivated people have taken to a kind of high-class pseudo-philosophical hocus pocus.

What must one think, for example, of such a remark as this printed in Mrs. Luhan's recently published book on D.H. Lawrence: "When it (the water of a certain spring) was analyzed in Denver it was said to be 'highly charged with radium.' That is what we need more of on this earth, Jeffers, Radium. My instinct tells me so."⁵²

What does the instinct of the people who have contracted cancer from working with radium tell *them*? One wonders.

This notion that there are magical short cuts to knowledge by way of instinct, intuition and the like is lamentably common today. In a time of general discouragement this is natural enough.

It is so much less trouble to have instincts about radium than to learn about it by patient study or experiment.

All superstitions flatter human weaknesses. Hence their everlasting success.

16 July 1932

⁵² Mabel Dodge Luhan (1879-1962), author of *Lorenzo in Taos* (London: Secker, 1933).

New World Drama

In an article recently published in that excellent French review, *Le Mois*, the Soviet writer, Eugène Zamiatine, discusses the future of the theatre.⁵³ At the moment the Russians are probably the people best qualified to be prophets.

For Russia, in Zamiatine's words, "is making a determined effort to jump over a barrier at least fifty years high, in order to land directly in the future; all those who are interested in this future should take a look at Russia."

Of the contemporary (and, therefore, prophetic) theatre in Russia Zamiatine has some very interesting things to say. To begin with, "the drama of love, which still holds the stage in Europe, has completely disappeared from Russian programmes." In the second place, "the question of marriage has been solved in the Russian laboratory in such a way that it provides no further excuse for dramatic collision and cannot therefore be utilized by the theatre." Satire comedy has gone the same way as the drama of love--and for obvious reasons: satire is criticism, and dictators do not believe in criticism by any one but themselves.

The ballet and the opera flourish, as under the Tsarist regime; but (and this is interesting) it is always the same ballet and the same opera. "The attempts to create ballets and operas inspired by new themes have all failed. Even the most enthusiastic believer in the Five-Year Plan cannot refrain from laughter when the tenor breaks into passionate song about fertilizers and the soprano warbles her admiration for a

⁵³French periodical of of the 1930's to which Huxley's friend Pierre Drieu La Rochelle contributed. Eugène Zamiatine (1884-1937). More conventionally spelt Zamyatin, author of the dystopian novel *We* (1925), which Orwell said strongly influenced *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. When Drieu asked Huxley in 1932 whether he had read *We*, he replied in the negative. However, as early as March, 1928 Huxley had mined R. Fülöp-Miller's *The Mind and Face of Bolshevism* as a likely source of satire on Bolshevik culture; he also knew and wrote about the fiction of P. Romanov, another source for *Brave New World*. Zamyatin seemed satisfied with Drieu's explanation that Huxley had not read *We*, replying, [It] proves that these ideas are in the strong air we breathe." Quoted by Alex M. Shane, *The Life and Works of Evgenij Zamjatin*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1968), 140n.

tractor." It is to the old operas by Tschaikevsky, Rimsky-Korsakov and Moussorgsky that the public flocks.

Concerning the future of farce and vaudeville, Zamiatine feels no doubt, "The only human absolute is human stupidity." Knockabout has, therefore, an immortal destiny.

Of tragedy he speaks less optimistically. For though it seems the most desirable form of drama for the theatre of tomorrow, he sees as yet no sign of a new tragedy in Russia and has to content himself with expressing a hope that the world of the Five-Year Plan will not have to wait too long for the coming of its Shakespeare.

My own feeling is that it may have to wait a very long time indeed. For even if a man with the necessary genius should make his appearance, what is he going to write about? Not about love, for love has been reduced to a matter of common sense and sexual functions--you eat when you have an appetite, and that is all.

Not about marriage, for marriage can be dissolved at will and so leads to no conflict--that is to say, to no drama. Not about the relations between parents and children, for the family has ceased to exist; the State takes good care that its young subjects' reflexes shall not be conditioned except by its own functionaries, and so undertakes the office of universal foster mother. Not about the relations between the individual soul and its God, for both God and the individual soul have been abolished; there is only the State and the citizen. And, finally, not, as Zamiatine suggests, about the revolt of the individual against the State; for the State cannot permit irresponsible dramatists to make propoganda against its authority.

So far as one can see, the future Shakespeare's themes will be the following:

Themes of farce and knockabout. Themes of pure fantasy and romance (people will always crave for fairy-tale worlds of escape). Highly moral, tragic themes showing the sad fate which overtakes the individual if he fails to do his duty toward the State.

Whether the future Shakespeare will find that these themes give his genius sufficient scope seems to me somewhat doubtful. It is difficult to be a dramatist if there is no drama.

When he comes, the new Shakespeare will probably decide to take up biochemistry or physiology.

23 July 1932

Art of Living

The conventions of an art and the ideal at which it aims change from age to age and from place to place. Gothic sculpture, for example, is very unlike Greek sculpture: the methods and aims of Byzantine painting bear no resemblance to those of Dutch painting at the time of Rembrandt.

Living is no less an art than painting or sculpture. Its raw material is human nature and its aim is produce a certain kind of man or woman, modelled on the ideal of humanity accepted at the moment.

This ideal has varied from age to age and from country to country. Thus, the Ideal Man of the later classical epoch was the Stoic; that of the Middle Ages, the active or the contemplative Christian Saint. The Renaissance was marked by the emergence of an entirely new Ideal Man--the Free Individual, boundlessly enquiring, daring, adventurous, self-confident.

The seventeenth century saw the rise, under the influence of Catholic and Protestant puritanism, of the ideal of the Christian Stoic.

In the eighteenth century the Ideal Man was the Rationalist. In the nineteenth, we have a recrudescence of puritanism (sometimes associated with Christianity and sometimes, oddly enough, with agnosticism.)

The Victorian Ideal Man is an austere and infinitely respectable liberal of the Manchester school.

What are the conventions and the aims of our twentieth-century art of living? And what manner of being is the Ideal Man, on whom we try to model ourselves and our children? These are questions which it is impossible to answer.

For the men of the twentieth century do not seem to have made up their minds what they want to be, or how they want to become it. In other words, they have no art of living.

The reasons for this state of things are not difficult to find. An art of living develops naturally only where there is a considerable measure of psychological stability.

Now psychological stability is precisely the thing we do not possess. Industrialism, applied science and increase of population have

caused the conditions of life to change with a startling suddenness; and the changes are still going on.

In our uncertainty, we seem to be trying, at the present time, to realize two contradictory ideals--that of the Collective Man, on the Russian model, and that of the Free Individual, as invented at the time of the Renaissance.

Thus, we talk a great deal in our schools about the necessity of allowing every child to achieve complete self-expression; but at the same time we subject children to a tremendous pressure of suggestion which flattens them all out to one pattern and makes it impossible for them to express anything but the most banal of currently accepted ideas and feelings.

Our uncertainty with regard to the conventions of living is as complete as that with regard to the ideals.

We want to live freely, without compulsion--even, such is our horror of "repressions," compulsion from within; but at the same time we think that everyone ought to be like everyone else and, even while we talk about individual liberty, we make an intensive propaganda in favour of conformity and so enslave ourselves and our children.

The result is that the original confusion is merely worse confounded.

The chaos of the twentieth-century spirit is reflected in the chaos of twentieth-century economic and political life. The cure for chaos is art, composition, style.

Conferences on disarmament and reparations and debts are all very well; but they deal only with the symptoms of the disease, not with its fundamental causes. What we need is a conference to discuss the art of living in twentieth-century conditions--a conference that will delimitate the frontiers, not of a pair of squabbling countries, but of the whole world's ideal.

The first condition of individual sanity. The sharing of an ideal is the first condition of international peace.

30 July 1932

The Problem of Leisure

Stupidity and cupidity--these are the forces which at present, control the world. Can they be conquered in time to prevent a serious breakdown in our civilization? The question is still an open one.

Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that public spirit and intelligence get the better of stupidity and cupidity, and that our present demonstrably bad social and economic system is changed for one which (let us piously hope) will possess the merits of the planned Russian system without its defects of tyranny and Oriental inefficiency. Let us suppose that the nations of the world come to some rational agreement to co-ordinate the resources of modern technology and to use them in such a way that the planet's wealth shall be equitably and regularly distributed among all its inhabitants.

What then? Will all man's problems be solved? Far from it. The most urgent of man's present problems will be solved; but, by their very solution other problems will be created. Of these one of the most difficult will surely be the problem of leisure.

Modern technology permits of the production, by an ever-diminishing fraction of the population, of sufficient commodities to supply all human requirements. Used scientifically and for public rather than for private benefit, machines can create wealth and leisure for all. What is man going to do with this leisure?

Bernard Shaw, in his *Back to Methuselah*, postulates a future world whose inhabitants spend their indefinitely prolonged spare time in solving problems in higher mathematics and speculating about the nature of the universe. This, of course, is the wildest fantasy.

Only prolonged selective breeding from a very rare strain of *homo sapiens* could produce a population of mathematical philosophers; and, though eugenics may come to be practised, no eugenist would be such a fool as to breed only one type of man, particularly a type which would probably be incapable of dealing with the ordinary affairs of everyday existence.

We may, I think, safely ignore the Shavian prophecy. Only an infinitesimally small minority of the leisured men and women of the future will spend their time in abstract thought. The same applies to

artistic creation; apart from all questions of probability, it is not even desirable that every man and woman should be an artist. Leisure will, in general, be filled with occupations altogether less "inhumanly" intellectual. But what occupations?

Savages can spend a great deal of time simply sitting still; and it is possible that the white races of the West may in time be educated into being less restless than they are at present. This restlessness is encouraged by manufacturers for their own profit.

People who are constantly "doing things" are constantly buying material objects, transportation and admission to places of "amusement." Hence the countless advertisements which encourage people to spend their leisure restlessly. A tide of propaganda setting in the opposite direction could probably do much to mitigate our present tendency to be restless.

But men cannot sit still all the time; there must also be active distractions.

Taken out of the hands of private profit makers and run on scientific lines, the amusement industry could probably be made to yield considerably higher returns in pleasure and distraction than it does today. But even improved amusements and a renewed capacity to sit still will not suffice. There must be something in the nature of work to fill the blanks of leisure.

Our future rulers will probably find it necessary to prohibit the application of machinery to certain branches of production; they will artificially preserve certain oases of skilled craftsmanship for the sole purpose of giving the over-leisured masses something useful and interesting to do. Under a system working solely for the public benefit, this would be quite feasible. There might be economic loss resulting from the creation of these "craftsmanship reservations," but the psychological gains would enormously offset this loss.

Today nobody can afford to think of any but purely economic values; when these are incompatible with human values it is the human values which go to the wall. But, like the Sabbath, economics were made for man. The trouble with the present system is that it treats man as though he were made for economics.

6 August 1932

The Reality of Progress

That there is such a thing as progress, objectively considered, is obvious. Man's control over his environment has increased during the course of history and is still increasing. The stock of knowledge is vastly greater than it was and so is the number of those who are given the opportunity, through education, of participating in that stock. The art of medicine now provides alleviations for what were, in the past, irremediable sufferings. Human life is, on the average, longer, healthier, safer and more convenient than it was.

All these assertions could be substantiated by armies of irrefutable facts and figures; and though it would be possible, also, to produce certain facts and figures carrying a contrary significance--the fact, for example, that mental deficiency is on the increase, the calculations which show that the eugenic qualities of the race are bound, if the present tendencies continue to deteriorate--we are, I think, quite justified in affirming that progress, objectively considered, is a reality.

But what about progress considered subjectively? Do the majority of human beings feel happier today than they felt in the past? Has progress in the material arts, in medicine, in science, in education been accompanied by a corresponding amelioration in the lot of the individual as measured by his own feeling of satisfaction at being alive?

These questions are very hard to answer. The experimental method of approaching the problem will not serve. For progress, as measured objectively, is an affair of years, and so can never be experienced by the same individual; even though the changes in question may all take place within one lifetime, the man who experiences them is not the same person at every age. Moreover, happiness mainly depends on temperament, age, state of health, emotional circumstances.

At twenty and when one is in health and in love it is easy to be happy in spite of unpropitious circumstances. At sixty-five it is easy, in spite of all the modern conveniences, to be unhappy.

Another point: Habit soon causes us to forget the old and to take the new state of affairs for granted. People who have come up in the world do not spend their time gratefully comparing their present with

their past condition. In most cases they spend it complaining about the discomforts of their present state and straining every nerve to exchange it for another, in which they imagine they will be happier. Thanks to habit, each step on the upward ascent is a new starting point.

Humanity at large has come up in the world. But, unlike the newly enriched individual, it cannot remember, even if it would, the time when it was poor.

The present generation *cannot* know what it felt like to live in a mediaeval village. For humanity, its present state is always the "natural" state. What it suffers on its present level may be less, objectively considered, than what it suffered on a lower level.

But, relatively to present circumstances, the sufferings seem just as unpleasant.

Objectively, our ancestors had more to put up with than we do. Subjectively, however, it is quite likely that they did not suffer more acutely. They did not know better, and so had no standards by which to measure the intensity of their ills. We know no worse and so our ills, compared with our goods, seem just as frightful as the intrinsically worse ills of our forefathers.

However far objective progress may go, it is extremely unlikely that man will ever be content.

There is probably no such thing as subjective progress in happiness.

13 August 1932

Woad

In my youngest schooldays what was called "history" consisted mainly of anecdotes and scraps of useless but picturesque information. We learned about Alfred and the cakes, Robert Bruce and the spider--a whole series of pretty fairy stories having almost nothing to do with the real significant facts of history.

Was the learning of them just a waste of time? Not entirely. To a child the real significance of history can never be made apparent. For a child cannot help taking his universe for granted.

It needs a mature mind first to realize that there might be, and has been a world other than the one that actually exists, and then to profit by this disquieting realization. The waste of time would be to teach a young child real history.

The anecdotes have at least a certain value as specimens of literature and moral lessons.

But all this is by the way. For my subject is not the teaching of history to small children; it is one of the facts that was taught me, as history, when I was a small child. "The Ancient Britons" (how well I remember reading this remarkable fact) "painted themselves blue with woad."

Nobody, of course, ever took the trouble to tell me what woad was; and it was not till I came to man's estate that I learned, to my amazement, that woad was a not uncommon English weed of the same family as the wall flower; that it had been cultivated through all the centuries of our history for the sake of its dark blue stain; that it was, on a small scale, still being cultivated; and that the uniforms of English policemen and sailors were being dyed with native blue from the same plant as that whose juices the ancient Britons had used to paint patterns on their hairy skin.

This year, for the first time in twenty or thirty centuries, no woad is being cultivated in England. The last Lincolnshire woad farmer has retired from business. There is every probability that it will never be cultivated again. The reason is simple enough.

Woad is an expensive crop, and the dye which it produces cannot compete with synthetic indigo. It could hardly compete even with vegetable indigo.

The importation of this from Bengal during the eighteenth century dealt a serious blow to the woad farmers. Synthetic indigo has finished them off. Woad is now a weed again; and, very soon, so will be the indigo-bearing plants of the tropics. Agriculture cannot stand up against industrial chemistry.

There will be one day a curious history to write--the history of the plants and animals that man has domesticated and then discarded. The process of discarding is only just beginning, as synthetic products are taking the place of animal and vegetable products.

It cannot fail to continue. Just as the invention of the shotgun caused the abandonment of the hawk as an instrument of hunting, so the automobile and the aeroplane are bound, in due course, to cause the abandonment of the horse, the camel and the ass as instruments of transport.

Similarly, artificial silk, wool and perfumes may lead to man's abandonment of silkworms, sheep, flowers and musk deer. And, of course, if food should ever be successfully synthesized there will be wholesale return of domesticated plants and animals to the wild state.

It is not impossible, of course, that man may abandon one set of tame plants and animals only to domesticate another but for a different purpose. Thus, when coal and oil are exhausted, man may turn for an inexhaustible, because renewable, supply of fuel alcohol to some fast-growing, probably tropical plant.

Similarly the requirements of organ therapy may cause him to keep a supply of animals of a kind which at present he does not think of domesticating.

Who knows? Perhaps one day the turn of woad may come again. I like to think so.

20 August 1932

Compulsory Suicide

The Chinese managed to preserve their monopoly in silk for the best part of three thousand years. First domesticated, according to ancient tradition, about 2500 B.C., the silkworm was not introduced into Japan till A.D. 300, and was smuggled into Europe only in A.D. 550. Their corner in worms must have been, for the Chinese, a source of incalculable wealth.

In the early nineteenth century England possessed what was virtually a monopoly of the newly-invented power-driven machinery. For a generation this monopoly remained almost unbroken, and for two more generations it persisted as a partial monopoly, shared with but few competitors. Today there is no shadow of a monopoly left.

The whole of Europe and North America, parts of Australia, Asia and Africa have been, and are still being, more or less intensively industrialized.

Why was it that the English did not take a leaf out of the Far Eastern book? Why, having hit on their new principle of mass production, did they not guard the immensely profitable secret with the same zealous care as was shown by the Chinese in respect to their worms?

The answer is that they simply could not have preserved their monopoly, even if they had wanted to; the financial system under which they worked--under which the whole industrial world still works--did not allow it.

Our financial system is such that every successful industrial country is constantly *compelled* to finance new rivals--is compelled to transform one-time consumers into competing producers--is *compelled* to close against itself the external markets of which it has so urgent a need--is compelled, in a word, to commit what is, in the existing circumstances, economic suicide.

President Hoover has explained the reasons for this strange state of things in a few clear sentences. "We have an equipment and a skill in production that yields us a surplus of commodities for export beyond any compensation we can usefully take by way of imported commodities." ('We' of course, are not only the American people, but

every successful industrial nation.) "There is only one remedy, and that is by the systematic permanent investment of our surplus in productive works abroad. We thus reduce the return we must receive to a return of interests and profits."

In other words, every industrial country produces more than it is able, under the existing financial system, to consume; its producing power is greater than its purchasing power. It has a surplus which it exports. But it is unable to take imports in full exchange for its exports; for, lacking purchasing power to buy its own surplus, it equally lacks purchasing power to buy the equivalent of that surplus from abroad.

Therefore, it must use the product of its export sales in "systematic permanent investment abroad." And that is why all the more successful industrial countries are "creditor nations."

So far, so good. But at this point President Hoover's clear-sightedness seems to fail him. For he calls this process of investing the national surplus abroad a "remedy"--when in fact it is, quite obviously, an aggravation of the disease from which our whole industrial civilization is now suffering.

For what exactly does "investment in productive works abroad" mean? It means simply this: lending money to agriculturists in order that they may blossom into industrialists--financing the consumers of your industrial products so that they may become producers on their own account.

Thus we see that every successful industrial state is compelled, as things now are, to spend its surplus money in restricting the existing outlets for its exports and financing rivals to compete with itself in such diminishing markets as remain.

President Hoover's "remedy" turns out to be simply compulsory suicide all round. Certainly, a drastic remedy!

But under the existing system of ownership and distribution of wealth, it would seem to be the only remedy.

27 August 1932

Faith

Of the effects of faith in some other world than this, faith alone is qualified to speak. The only observable results are those which it produces in this world. To the moralist and the sociologist faith is interesting. However remote or fantastic its object may be, it leads to modifications of behavior on the plane of ordinary existence.

Faith, even if it be faith in the most wildly improbable myth, the most distant of hereafters, stimulates men to take action in the present--action which, but for the faith, they would never have thought of taking. Thus the faith in Allah, his Prophet and the Moslem paradise sent the conquering Arabs to the limits of the then known world.

The Catholic faith was the lever which moved medieval Europe from its place and precipitated huge armies of Nordic crusaders on to the coasts of Syria and North Africa. Similarly, the no less fervent, but more sordid faith in the existence of Eldorado nerved the Spanish conquistadores to undergo the most appalling hardships, to run the wildest risks.

Faith of one sort or another is indispensable for the accomplishment of any kind of sustained, continuous action. Without what Santayana calls the "animal faith," which assures us (though we have no rational proof of it) that the order of nature is a regular order and that our senses tell us something significant about the external universe, we could not exist even on the physiological plane of being.

And if we would live and act on higher levels of human purpose we must have faith of a higher kind to hold us to the task.

The fundamental reason for many of our present woes is the decay among great masses of the population of all faith. Not merely of religious faith. Even the non-religious faiths are in decline. People have lost or are in process of losing those secular faiths that impelled their fathers to political and economic action--the faith in democracy and individualism and personal liberty, the faith in *laissez-faire* capitalism and unlimited competition. And, outside of Russia and Italy, they have not found new faiths to take the place of the old.

The result is uncertainty, hesitation, bewilderment. Action is paralyzed by a general scepticism that expresses itself in dumb

indifference or a noisy cynicism. (The sudden rise in America of an entirely new kind of knowingly cynical journalism is a most significant and a most alarming phenomenon. People with a faith feel impelled to do something about the horrors and scandals of social life; to be content to do nothing but make a joke about them is a sign that faith in the possibility of some higher form of living has disappeared. Cynicism is acceptance.)

It is as though people liked living without a faith. They like it so little that, when somebody comes along and offers them something to believe in, they rush to accept it, however intrinsically absurd it may be.

Witness the fabulous success of the Nazis in Germany. Their published programme is mainly nonsensical. But it has been preached with conviction. Millions of faith-hungry Germans have embraced the cause with religious fervor. The Nazi faith provides them with a *raison d'être*, a justification for action.

The trouble is that it may provide a justification for the most dangerous action. (These words are written on the eve of the German elections). For a short time, at any rate, a bad and senseless faith can exert just as much influence as a good and reasonable one.

In the end the masses come to their senses and reject the false prophet. But, in the meantime, enormous harm may have been done.

3 September 1932

Swastika and Arrows

A feature of the recent German elections was the enormous and most effective use made by the two principal parties of pictorial symbols.

For some years now the Nazis have sported the swastika. The attractiveness of this symbol is proved by the fact that it has been used at all periods of history by peoples as far apart as the Chinese and the Etruscans, the Indians and the Celts. (Not to mention Mr. Rudyard Kipling, who adopted the swastika as his mark long before Hitler was even thought of.)

The charm of the Nazis' swastika was powerful and, to break it, their chief opponents, the Social Democrats, devised a counter charm in the shape of three arrows placed parallel to one another and with their heads all pointing one way. On every wall and hoarding in Germany the political struggle was visibly epitomized in a battle between the swastika and the arrows.

I cannot describe all the phases of this battle of the emblems; only a few of its more salient features can be recorded here. The Nazis began by scoring a considerable success. The first Socialist arrows were drawn rather far apart; there was therefore room, as some ingenious Nazi discovered, to transform them, by a few strokes of the brush, into three half-closed umbrellas. A military emblem was thus converted into a ludicrous symbol of bourgeois caution.

The Social Democrats replied by drawing their arrows so close together that there was no space for the hostile artist to add the disfiguring appendages. At the same time they counter attacked by drawing their arrows right across the enemy's emblem, so that the swastika looked as though it had been riddled by democratic archery.

The Nazis' answer was ingenious. Armies of propagandists were sent out with pots of paint and, wherever they found a swastika pierced with arrows, they drew, at an angle to the arrows and almost touching them, three straight lines. The effect of this was to make it seem as though the arrows had been broken in two by the swastika. The Social Democrats retorted by putting barbed heads on these broken arrow shafts; after which the total effect was that of the swastika being

inexorably pursued from several directions at once by whole flights of democratic arrows. Polling day put a stop to any further developments.

To the eye of reason there is something singularly childish in this war of the emblems. But then, alas! reason has very little to do with election.

Two or three generations of democratically controlled politics have made this so painfully apparent that some countries, like Italy and Russia, have openly abandoned even the forms of democracy, while in all other Western communities (even in those where democratic forms are most strictly adhered to) the growing strength of bureaucracy has meant the creation of a more or less secret oligarchy of permanent officials assisted by experts.

These expert oligarchies are finding themselves seriously incommoded even by the forms of democracy. For these forms mean, in practice, the introduction of an irrational element into government. Dictatorship is one remedy--a dangerous one. The other consists in the scientific use, by the real rulers of each country, of propaganda making persuasive appeal to the feelings and prejudices of the electors.

Compared with commercial advertising, political propaganda is still very crude.

The Nazi and Social Democrat efforts marked a distinct advance on most previous essays. People who vote under the influence of such propaganda are not, of course, voting rationally. But this does not matter. What matters is that the people who make the propaganda should be rational.

The art of democratic government is the art of rationally exploiting mass unreason--of providing electors with bad but exciting pretexts for voting for an unexciting but rational cause.

10 September 1932

Letter Writing

Do people still write letters? Or have such annihilators of distance as the train, the motor car and the telephone prematurely checked the development of the potential Horace Walpoles and Mrs. Carlyles of this hurried age? The question is one which only our children and grandchildren will be able to answer. Such good letters as are being written now will be published only when their authors are dead. We do not know whether they are being actually written or not. We can only hazard a guess.

My own belief is that the output of interesting letters has not been seriously affected by the new techniques of communication. True, the telephone must have caused a great decline in those short notes of invitation and arrangement--little masterpieces, very often, of elegance and wit--which abound in the published correspondence of the great letter writers of the past.

Further, rapid transport has certainly reduced the number of occasions for writing letters. A century ago people who lived fifty miles apart were separated by a great gulf which they could only occasionally find the means and leisure to cross. Today, thanks to the automobile, they can meet at every week end. Nevertheless, in spite of the inroads by modern technology on the domain of the letter, I believe that a great deal of interesting correspondence still goes on. For the good letter writer is a person with a special gift--a vocation for letter writing. He will exercise his talent whatever the obstacles put in his way by mere machines like the telephone or the motor car. Conversely, those who feel no inner urge to express themselves in letters will remain bad correspondents, however cogent the reasons for letter writing.

I myself belong to the latter class and, though living in a happy telephoneless isolation, write far fewer and shorter letters than many of my friends, who are constantly ringing one another up or exchanging visits. It is all a question of individual temperament and gifts.

Thus, many authors have also been admirable and indefatigable correspondents. Dickens, for example, wrote constantly to his friends; Keats and Byron are among the best letter writers in the language; D.H.

Lawrence, whose correspondence I have just been editing, wrote many hundreds of magnificent letters. Over against these names one could cite others belonging to authors whose letters were few or of poor quality, or both. Carlyle, Matthew Arnold (whose correspondence, however, was sadly mangled in the editing), Shelley, Balzac. Like poets, letter writers are born, not made.

So much for temperament and talent. But we must also remember that there are special circumstances in which letter writing is preferable to a telephone conversation or a personal interview. Thus a certain shyness makes it difficult for most of us to express in words, face to face, strong feelings which we are quite ready to commit to paper. Hence love letters. Lovers who have every opportunity of speaking to one another continue, nevertheless, to write love letters; for, in these, they dare to say things which they would feel too shy to utter aloud.

Moreover, the physical presence of the beloved can actually be, in a certain measure, a handicap to love. The flesh-and-blood human being eclipses, as it were, the shining ideal fabricated by the imagination--the fancy picture of the beloved which lovers so assiduously decorate with all the brightest colors at their disposal, and which is the real object of passion.

Sitting alone at his writing desk, the lover can contemplate this idealized image of the beloved without being distracted by the irrelevant imperfections of her physical reality.

There are profound psychological reasons for the love letter, and it is safe to prophesy that no multiplication of telephones or motor cars will ever affect the output of this particular kind of correspondence.

17 September 1932

Man Proposes⁵⁴

Living within the narrow circle of our own particular interests, we are apt to forget how indissolubly we are all united to the world as a whole and that every one of our acts, however apparently trivial, has its effect upon the order of the universe.

For example, I decide to eat roast beef for lunch tomorrow and not, as I had first intended, an omelette. What is the result? That the coal supply of the planet will be exhausted some definite fraction of a second earlier than it would have been, if I had eaten something which took only a few minutes to cook instead of several hours.

There is nothing we do but modifies in one way or another the equilibrium of human and natural forces. For the most part, these modifications are so small that we are able, for present practical purposes, to ignore them. But many small modifications may, in the long run, produce changes that will profoundly affect the whole relationship between man and his environment. Thus, my decision to use coal or gas for three hours instead of ten minutes makes very little appreciable difference to the world at large; but if every human being were to make the same decision every day, the effect on planetary fuel resources would be considerable.

Often the most striking results of our actions are those which we did not foresee. What we do deliberately in order to achieve some specific and may bring about, not only the result intended, but also other results, of which we never dreamed. In the words of the old saying, man proposes, but God disposes.

St. Paul's Cathedral in London has been, for some years past, in a precarious state. At great expense the structure has now been made safe; but there are reasons to believe that the church is slowly subsiding and that, before long, the repairs will have to begin again.

What is the cause of this subsidence? Improbable as it may appear, the cause is the decision of the Metropolitan Water Board to levy a water rate that is proportional, not to the amount of water used, but to the taxable value of the premises in which it is consumed.

⁵⁴Thomas à Kempis (1380-1471) in Chapter 1, section 19 of *Imitatio Christi* wrote, "*Homo proponit, sed Deus disponit*," (Man proposes, but God disposes). Huxley was particularly fond of the aphorism.

St. Paul's is surrounded by valuable office buildings. The consumption of water in such buildings is relatively small. But the water rate, which is proportionate to their taxable value, is high.

It is therefore cheaper not to have the city supply laid on, but to sink an artesian well in the basement of each building and to pump the water to the higher floors. So many artesian wells have now been bored that the water table of the City of London has appreciably sunk.

Drained of their water, the upper layers of the soil naturally tend to subside--and, along with them, subsides St. Paul's. Which shows how a piece of legislation, benevolently intended to make the rich pay for an essential public service in proportion to their incomes, has in fact resulted in the rich not paying for it at all and, as if that were not enough, causing what may turn out to be irreparable damage to one of the noblest of English monuments. Man proposes, but...

A growing body of public opinion is now in favor of the deliberate planning of our social life in all its aspects. It is an ideal which must, it seems to me, appeal to every reasonable man. Viewing the chaos to which a planless individualism has reduced us, we are compelled to be believers in planning.

But our desire for a plan must not blind us to the fact that no plan which we, with our present knowledge, can devise is likely to be perfect. Only a superhuman intelligence can foresee all the results of a course of action. We must be prepared, if we make and execute a plan, to see all manner of desirable St. Paul's cathedrals sliding to destruction.

The only remedy, if remedy there is, will be to prop up the buildings and modify the plan.

24 September 1932

Jack-of-One-Trade

The train was rolling smoothly along through central France. With the incorrigible optimism of those who imagine that they will find time, while traveling, to read all the books they have no time to read at home, I had embarked on a monumental history of French political thought.

I had read a score or so of pages and looked a great while at the landscape, when there was a loud bang--and, with much grinding of the brakes, the train came joltingly to a standstill.

Around, spread a green desert. We waited. There was nothing to look at; so I returned to my political thought. We went on waiting. People came and went along the track outside the window; and soon a rumor spread along the train. Something had gone wrong with the locomotive; a connecting rod had broken.

We continued to wait. I burrowed yet deeper into political thought. When an hour and a half later, another locomotive came to our rescue, I was already--a record for holiday reading--at page 138.

That I never got any further was due partly to the fact that the train was on the move again, and there were things to see out of the window; partly to my having read on that particular page a remark by that curious precursor of modern socialism, Saint-Simon--a remark which had set my mind working so busily that I felt disinclined to go on reading.

"Imagine," Saint-Simon had written, "that France should suddenly lose her 50 most distinguished physicists, sculptors, musicians, literary men, engineers, architects, doctors, bankers; her 250 chief business men; her 500 leading agriculturists and others, making in all her chief 3,000 men in the world of science, art and industry. Their disappearance would make of France a body without a soul.

"Imagine, on the other hand that, while keeping all her men of genius, France should lose on one day the king's brother, his sons and their wives, all ministers of state, all generals, all cardinals, bishops, high officials, judges and her 10,000 chief landowners; we should be very sorry, because we have kind hearts, but our grief would be purely sentimental; no real damage to the state would ensue."

These words were written more than a century ago, at a time when technical specialization was almost in its infancy. Robbed of her men of talent and special training, the France of 1820 would be "a body without a soul."

What would be the result of such a selective massacre today, when the jack-of-all-trades is extinct and we are all jacks of only one trade? Instant and utter chaos would be the result. Take this train, I said to myself: suppose that, at the moment when the connecting rod broke, all the engine drivers in France had been struck down by thunderbolts.

What should I and the other passengers be doing about it? The answer is that, being all quite incapable of driving a locomotive, we should get out and walk. The art of locomotive driving takes some time to learn; but at least it can be acquired by men of quite ordinary abilities.

There are many other skills, just as necessary to society, and requiring not only a longer training, but also a special congenital talent. If all the persons possessing this training and this talent were simultaneously massacred, our world would come catastrophically to an end.

Between modern civilization and a chaos of primitive barbarism stand the lives of not more than a hundred thousand specially gifted and specially trained men.

A thousand million people depend for their very existence on the continued activity of a hundredth of one per cent of their number.

The thought is extremely alarming.

1 October 1932

Words, Words, Words

From the mathematical physicist to the rat-catcher, from the plumber to the theologian, the members of every profession have their technical terms, their special words and phrases.

The professional language of the newer and purely scientific professions is apt to be dry and repellent in its polysyllabic foreignness.

Nobody but a practising chemist would want to read an article whose title is "Layer-chain Structures of Thallium Di-Alkyl Halides." But when a professional sailor writes of mizzen-top-bowlines and cross-jack-braces, of the peak halliards and the spanker boom, we feel impelled to read further.

We may be wholly ignorant of the difference between a flying-jib-martingale and a bull-rope; but in spite of our ignorance we are attracted by these mysterious objects; whereas Thallium Di-Alkyl Halides repel us.

The reason for this is to be found in the nature of the language employed by the two specialists.

The scientific specialist uses words artificially fabricated from Greek roots and having no relation to the living language of real men. The sailor's technical terms have grown up with the language and seem to palpitate with its strong and ancient life.

We have no notion of what a flying-jib-martingale may be; but the words sound good and genuine. We feel that they belong to us and are in harmony with the deepest life of our mind.

The technicalities of even the least romantic professions often have a quality of magical life that endears them to us. Thus, I recently came across a list of the technical terms of English butchery--words connoting different cuts of meat, different parts of the carcass. Like spells and incantations, they affected the imagination with their odd, poetical force.

Here are a few of them: Gonister, griskin and ponies; slift and back tortoise; flaps and knaps; skink and wink; chucks and plucks; heartspoon and haslets; ronds and ranns.

Some of these words are really magnificent. One rolls them round the tongue, savoring their rich Shakespearean flavor. I was so

enchanted by them that I sat down and there and then wrote, in imitation of Alexander Pope, ten lines of an *Essay on Meat*:

See the gay butcher who with magic steel
Transbeefs the ox and turns the calf to veal;
Unspheres the heartspoon, cleaves the fatted chucks,
Carves tabs and ponies, gonister and plucks;
Divides the griskin from the slift and flaps,
Spits the back tortoise, triturates the knaps;
Lays wink by skink and with unfeeling blade
Divorces hankin from her clinging splade;
While ronds, rann, haslets sing in chorus sweet:
"The proper diet of mankind is meat."

"What do you read, my lord?" asks Polonius. "Words, words, words."

If they rumble with a sufficiently pleasing sonority, it hardly matters what they mean.

8 October 1932

Art in the Slump

The slump has caused a huge amount of distress among intellectual workers of almost every category, but among none of them, I imagine, so much as among the painters, who have suddenly found themselves with no market whatever for their products.

Writers sell only the printed reproduction of their works of art and as these can be multiplied indefinitely the cost of each individual copy is low. Even in a time of crisis there are many people who can afford to buy one.

The painter, on the other hand, makes but a single copy of each one of his works. He is therefore compelled to charge a high price for what he produces. But a high price is exactly what nobody is now prepared to pay. The painter has no customers--or if a few still do make their appearance they are interested only in the smaller, slighter, and therefore cheaper works. Water colors and etchings still command a certain sale; but few are the painters who can dispose of their more elaborate oil paintings. Of the many thousands of artists of every nationality congregated in Paris how many, I wonder, are actually earning a living by their painting? Distressingly few, I am afraid.

True, a good many of them probably do not deserve (if artistic merit alone be considered) to sell their pictures; and if in fact they did have a market in the past that was due less to their own talent, or even to any appealing vulgarity in their style, than to the fact that there was a considerable body of dealers and private collectors who speculated in the pictures of unknown artists as others would speculate in rubber shares or gold mines.

These speculators bought for a rise; and rumor has it that certain critics were not above acting as share pushers for their friends among the artistic bulls. They would boost the latest genius, and the speculator who had made a corner in his work was able to realize at a handsome profit to himself and also, it is whispered, to the critic.

But those happy days are now over. The dull or second-rate or unpopular good artist has today no hope of being borne up on the wings of speculation. Nobody buys him now even for bad reasons, much less for good reasons.

In the past secondary artists had one great resource: they could become the reproducers of other people's art. Up to sixty years ago there existed in every country a very considerable industry of engraving.

Patient craftsmen were working on wood, on copper, on steel reproducing for the printshop, for books and newspapers and magazines the paintings and drawings of better artists than themselves. On their own plane some of these engravings were themselves remarkable works of art. The modern connoisseur owes much to these patient re-creators of other men's excellencies.

Photography and process reproduction have put an end to these re-creators and even to the processes they employed. Is there anyone now living who can make, for example, a steel engraving? I doubt it. It is a pity. The old reproductions were often lovely in themselves and--almost more important--they provided artists of secondary abilities with an excellent outlet for such skill and talent as they possessed.

Today they have no such outlet and are therefore driven to try to create original works of their own. Alas! with no success. Their reproductions might have been excellent, but their productions are without interest. And when the slump comes they are utterly without resource.

15 October 1932

Trains and the Boy

There is in all of us, however radical our consciously held opinions may be, a crusted conservative who resents all changes and regards every breach with the traditions of his youth as a kind of disloyalty to something sacred.

The old tory in the background of my mind has recently been made extremely happy by the discovery that, in spite of all the temptations to stray into new paths, my son's tastes are the same as mine were at his age.

Trains were my childhood's passions; and, in spite of the motor car and the airplane, in spite of Zeppelins and speed boats, trains are also his passion. Indoors he plays with model trains; out of doors he spends hours standing on a bridge that spans the neighboring railroad, watching the movements of the signals, counting the cars on the passing freight trains, recording in a little notebook the numbers of the locomotives and the exact times when the expresses pass.

The train is for him what the tractor is (or at least what the Soviet authorities want it to become) for the Russian peasant--a divine object, worthy of the most passionate veneration.

There are many children, I believe, who still keep up the train worship of their fathers. The new mechanical gods go past them with a roaring of motors, a glitter of shining metal; but their loyalty to the smoky, old divinity remains unshaken. The fact, after all, is not surprising. The train is intrinsically grander and more romantic than any of its successors.

There is, to begin with, its size. The locomotive is a monster like Behemoth or Leviathan--doubly a monster if one is a child and only three feet high instead of six. Its belly is full of fire and it breathes smoke like a dragon. It pants with the rhythmic breathing of a living creature. (Children are animists; they like to believe that everything is alive.

The behavior of the panting locomotive is much more lively than that of a car or a plane).

Then there is the noise--terrifyingly loud as the train rushes past you, or as it whirls you through the hellish stink and darkness of

tunnels. Terrifying, I repeat; but so long as they know they are fundamentally safe, children enjoy being terrified. The enormous roaring of the train gives them thrills of fear that they find deliciously agreeable.

Another point in favor of trains: They run on rails and to a fixed schedule. To the child rails are intrinsically beautiful and mysterious. He sees them meeting in the distance and, at the same time, he knows that they go on forever; it is a magical paradox. And what profound satisfaction he derives from the thought that the monster is confined by its rails and must run obediently where it is told to run!

A similar satisfaction awaits him when he discovers that trains run to time--that the same express will always pass every day at 6:23, the same freight train at 7:16. He realizes in a flash the beauty and the majesty of the inevitable, the changeless. Modern men are more acutely aware of time than their ancestors ever were, and believe in a fixed order of nature. For many children, the discovery of time and fixity is due to the unflinching passage of their favorite express.

What, I have often wondered, did little boys worship before trains were invented? The stage coach, I suppose, with its clattering horses. But what a poor substitute for the iron Behemoth of later days!

As poor, the conservative within me insists, as the car and the plane of later days. No; for supplying real emotional satisfactions, nothing, it seems to me, can beat the train.

Train worship will remain the chief religion of childhood for many a long year to come.

22 October 1932

Dangers of Diversity

When Julius Caesar arrived in Britain in 55 B.C. the island was inhabited by savage tribes. Human sacrifice was freely practised--the victims being sometimes burnt in large batches, sometimes cut open by the medicine men, who foretold the future from the shape and position of their viscera.

When Sir Harry Rawson entered Benin at the head of his punitive expedition in 1897, the inhabitants of that West African town were about on the same level of savagery as Caesar's Britons.⁵⁵ Their social organization was also tribal, and they too worshipped gods who demanded human sacrifices. (Unlike the Druids, their medicine men did not burn or disembowel their victims; they crucified them. The art of crucifixion was the one thing that they had borrowed from Christianity.)

The Romans who overran Britain were moved by the same mixed motives of avarice and missionary zeal as inspired the later Britons who overran Africa, India, Malaya and the rest. The painted savages of B.C. 55 had become the highly civilized imperialists of 1897. At what date, we may wonder, will the savages of 1897 become in their turn civilized imperialists, fired with a lust for power and a disinterested eagerness to bear the Black Man's burden?

The fact that the world is not homogeneous--that it contains peoples at every stage of civilization--is in one sense a great blessing. If we all had the same language, the same culture, the same political institutions, the same amusements, the same clothes, human life as a whole would suffer an irreparable impoverishment.

But there is a reverse to the medal.

The diversity of the world has its undesirable as well as its desirable aspects. Thus, the fact that one people is at a much more primitive (or a much more advanced) state of development than another constitutes a standing temptation to the well organized imperialists to conquer and exploit. Hence those Romans in savage Briton and hence those Tartars in too highly civilized China.

⁵⁵ Sir Harry Holdsworth Rawson (1843-1910). Commanded the British naval force which took Benin City in reprisal for a massacre of British political officials.

History shows that societies tend to develop in the same sort of way. Tribalism gives place to national unification and then to imperialism. In due course the empire is either violently overturned or else the imperialist enthusiasm cools off, and the society no longer desires to enlarge itself at the expense of its neighbors.

Among the Western peoples nationalism and imperialism are still rampant and menacing. But there are nevertheless indications that the most violent phase of the nationalist-imperialist disease is past. There is a genuine aspiration--hitherto mainly platonic and theoretical--toward unification.

In spite of the armaments and the imperialism, a certain tendency toward co-operation and mutual tolerance does exist among the peoples of the West. We are justified in hoping that, at some not too distant date, our descendants will agree to manage their international affairs peaceably, according to law, just as they now manage their private affairs.

But though this happy consummation may be realized in the West, is there any reason to believe that it will be simultaneously realized elsewhere? Alas, there is not. Everything indicates that India, China and the newly conscious peoples of Africa are entering upon that phase of intense nationalism which the European peoples entered at various times between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries.

As we move away from nationalism and toward federation the new nations of Asia and Africa will probably be working up that militant imperialism which sent the Romans to Britain and the later Britons to Benin.

As we begin to think internationally and disarm, they will be bursting with jingoism and spoiling for a fight.

The advantages of diversity have to be paid for, and it looks as though the price may be high.

29 October 1932

Sense of Humor

"You have no sense of humor." Of all the reproaches that can be addressed to him, this is the one that the modern man resents the most. He would almost rather be accused of lacking a sense of honor than of lacking a sense of humor; would much prefer to be called godless, graceless, purposeless, faithless, than to be called humorless. The sense of humor is now one of the cardinal virtues; to the modern mind, it covers multitudes of sins.

This worship of humor is a very recent phenomenon. So far from being reckoned among the virtues, the proclivity to laughter was, in the past, considered a weakness. "The bad," wrote a seventeenth-century poet (and his opinion is representative), "swim in their mirth (Christ wept, ne'er laughed): the best are sad."

This is a very long way from the modern estimation of humor. Of Christ, Mr. G.K. Chesterton can write that "there was something which He covered constantly by abrupt silence or impetuous isolation. There was some one thing that was too great for God to show us when He walked upon our earth: and I have sometimes fancied it was His mirth."

Even God has been given a sense of humor nowadays. Our fathers would have regarded this as the height of blasphemy.

What is the reason for our exaltation of the sense of humor? I had often speculated, but never arrived at any satisfactory explanation. What, therefore, was my satisfaction at finding the very thing I had been looking for in Mr. Anthony Ludovici's recently published volume, *The Secret of Laughter*.

In spite of its small size, this admirable little book contains more sense about the obscure problem of laughter than all the other treatises on the subject I have ever read.

Many philosophers have discussed laughter: but almost none has provided an explanatory theory that was not manifestly inadequate. The best, so far as it goes, is Hobbes's theory. But it does not go quite far enough, and is further open to misinterpretation.

What Mr. Ludovici has done is to generalize and clarify Hobbes's theory. In its present form, the theory is this: all laughter is an

expression of "superior adaptation." (We are superiorly adapted to circumstances when we feel that we are masters of the situation, or that we are free from cramping impediments.)

Thus we laugh, at a malicious epigram, because it makes us feel superior to the person, or the class of beings, to which it refers. We laugh at nonsense, because nonsense is a delightful liberation from the trammels of fact and logic. We laugh at an improper story, because it delivers us from customary inhibitions. A girl who is conscious of being pretty and well-dressed will laugh at the slightest provocation, because she feels "superiorly adapted" to her situation at the moment.

Finally--and this is very significant--people who find themselves in a ludicrous position will often laugh, not because they really feel themselves superiorly adapted, but because they want to bluff their fellows into believing that they feel so, in spite of their inferior situation.

Thus, we over-compensate the consciousness of inferior adaptation by indulging in laughter, which is the normal expression of superior adaptation.

According to Mr. Ludovici (and I think he is fundamentally right), our present passion for humor is a symptom of our inferior adaptation. We are always laughing, because we feel a chronic need to compensate our sense of inferiority. The causes of this sense of inferiority are to be found in the complications and worries, the mingled restlessness and dreariness inseparable from life in the modern urbanized and industrialized world.

Highly significant in this context is the fact that the slump should have coincided in America with the rocket-like rise to popularity of a new type of cynical humor. The worse things become, the louder sounds the laugh. The new humor represents a great popular effort to over-compensate a painful consciousness of being "inferiorly adapted."

5 November 1932

Best of Both Worlds

I have just been reading what must be, I am afraid, the last of D.H. Lawrence's posthumous works--the delicate and beautiful *Etruscan Places*. Not being a reviewer, I shall say nothing of the book as a whole, but devote myself to the discussion of a single point in Lawrence's argument. It is a very important point. For upon our attitude towards it depends our whole philosophy of life, our entire scale of values.

But first a few words by way of introduction. The Etruscans were the people who preceded the Romans in the mastery of central Italy. From the eighth century B.C. till the fifth or fourth, their culture was the highest in the Western Mediterranean. Then the Romans destroyed them.

Their language still remains unread, and our only information about the Etruscans (outside the accounts given by their Roman enemies) is to be found in the contents of their tombs. If we would know the Etruscan character and way of life, we must study the paintings, sculptures, pottery and jewelry which were buried with the Etruscan dead.

Lawrence's book is not a work of scholarship--he hated the very idea of exact scholarship: it is a book of interpretation. What he did was to put himself in touch with Etruscan art and *feel* his way into the life that lay behind it. Being a man of extraordinary sensitiveness he was able to obtain in this way a kind of knowledge which, in its essentials, is (I am convinced) mainly valid.

Lawrence loved the Etruscans--loved them for their whole-hearted acceptance of life, for their refusal to try to force themselves into being more than human. Their religion was a worship of the living forces of the earth; and in common with all the men of the most ancient civilizations, their religious symbols were the old phallic symbols of the fertility cult.

"Perhaps," writes Lawrence, "in the insistence on these symbols, in the Etruscan world, we can see the reason for the utter destruction and annihilation of the Etruscan consciousness. The new world wanted to rid itself of these fatal dominant symbols of the old world, the old

physical world. The Etruscan consciousness was rooted quite blithely in these symbols. So the whole consciousness, the whole Etruscan pulse and rhythm, must be wiped out.

"Now we see again why the Romans called the Etruscans vicious. Even in their palmy days the Romans were not exactly saints. But they thought they ought to be. They hated the phallus and the ark, because they wanted empire and dominion and, above all, riches: social gain.

"Now this is profoundly true; but not the entire truth. Conquest and money-making are not the only activities incompatible with dancing to the double flute. The activities of the mind are no less incompatible with the unqualified acceptance of physical life. What we now regard as the highest human achievements are possible only on condition that the physical life be, to a considerable extent, rejected and the soul screwed up, as it were, by repression and yearning aspiration, to a more than natural pitch."

In his love for life as such, physical life as it is given by nature, Lawrence was ready to sacrifice, not only conquest and money-making (and we should all like to get rid of those), but even man's highest moral and intellectual achievements--achievements which he did not think very much of:

"There seems to have been in the Etruscan instinct a real desire to preserve the natural humor of life. And that is a task surely more worthy, and even much more difficult in the long run, than conquering the world or sacrificing the self or saving the immortal soul."

Do we agree with Lawrence and the Etruscans, or don't we? The modern philosophy of life is an attempt at compromise. We deplore repression, but at the same time we admire the high achievements (not to mention the conquering and the money making) which only appear as the result of repression. Can one make the best of both worlds--the old and the new? I used to think so, but now have come to doubt it. Sooner or later we shall be forced to make our definite choice.

12 November 1932

Medicine Men

Fifty years ago the population of the British Isles was thirty-five millions, and the number of medical practitioners about twenty-three thousand. That is to say, there was one doctor to every fifteen hundred and twenty of the population.

Twenty years later, in 1901, the population had risen to forty-two millions and the number of medical men to thirty-seven thousand. There was therefore one doctor to every eleven hundred and thirty-five people. In 1926 the population was forty-eight millions, but the number of doctors had risen to nearly fifty-three thousand. There was one doctor to every nine hundred and five people.

What does this great proportional increase in the number of doctors signify? What are its causes and what have been the results? Have our more numerous doctors made us, as a race, more healthy than our fathers were? Or do we, on the contrary, need more doctors because we are less healthy? Or is it simply that we have become more health-conscious; that we trust doctors more than our fathers did and make more use of them and that, by making more use of them, we cause them to multiply?

Let us begin with an established fact. The death rate (and particularly the infantile death rate) has been substantially reduced during the last half century, and the average expectation of life lengthened by a number of years. This can be attributed in part to such national and municipal activities as sewerage, water supply, control of dangerous trades and the like--activities inspired, in their turn, by pure medical research.

Directly or indirectly, the world is in debt to the doctors for millions of lives that would, if they had not existed, have been cut short in infancy; for millions of years of an old age that, but for them, would never have been reached.

Unhappily, the millions of sickly children whose lives have been preserved and the millions of old people whose lives have been prolonged by medical science do not constitute on the whole a healthy class of the population.

The great proportional increase in the number of doctors may be partly explained by the great proportional increase in the number of elderly people and of delicate children nursed into manhood and womanhood. Add to this the fact that these intrinsically unhealthy people are mostly compelled by the circumstances of modern urbanized existence to live a thoroughly deleterious life, and you have one of the main reasons for accelerated multiplication of doctors.

There can be no doubt, I think, that doctors are trusted more and consulted at slighter provocation than they were in the past. This is due partly to the fact that, with the scientific methods at their disposal, modern doctors are able to do more for their patients than was possible in the past; and partly to the unremitting health propaganda drummed into the public mind at school, in newspapers, over the radio, in the advertisements of insurance companies and drug manufacturers. The public has been taught to buy more medical attendance in exactly the same way as it has been taught to buy more chewing gum and toothpaste.

It has been the more willing to buy inasmuch as the doctor supplies not only a physiological but also a profound psychological need.

"Since 1924," we read in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, "the number of baptisms (in the Church of England) has declined at the rate of about ten thousand a year...Confirmations have declined at about the same rate."

What the parson has lost the doctor has gained. With the decline of religious faith people have had to find lay confessors and lay directors of conscience. Doctors in general and psychologists in particular fitted the part to perfection. The typical medicine man of the twentieth century is, oddly enough, the medical practitioner.

19 November 1932

Winds of Doctrine

For a good part of each year I live on the coast of the Mediterranean, between Marseilles and Toulon. It is a country of winds, as well as of sunshine. For a hundred and eighty days out of every three hundred and sixty-five, cold air currents come rushing down from the highlands of central France to fill the void caused by the rising of the heated atmosphere of the plains of Provence. These air currents constitute the famous--the often infamous--Mistral.

In the Winter the Mistral blows very often for weeks at a stretch--a fierce North-Wester makes you feel, when you come out into it from a sheltered place, as though you had been suddenly stripped of all your clothes and were standing stark naked in its icy blast.

In Summer the Mistral dies down. But the result is not, as you might expect, a calm. For the moment the cold air from the Cevennes stops blowing, great blasts of stifling hot air from the deserts of North Africa come rushing across the sea from the southeast.

It is the Sirocco, that enervating "South Wind," which gives the title to Norman Douglas's classic novel.⁵⁶ The Sirocco is so unpleasant that, after a few days of it, one pines once more for the Mistral. The Mistral may be sharp and unkind; but its very sharpness is a tonic, its unkindness rouses one to activity and an enhanced sense of life.

The Sirocco is a phenomenon of Summer. But there is also a Winter southeaster, belonging to an entirely different family of winds. This comes howling across the sea, laden not with African heat, but with moisture which precipitates itself on the French coast in brief but violent bursts of rain--a rain which, driven by the sixty-mile-an-hour gale, penetrates any but the most solidly built walls as though they were blotting paper and forces its way through shutters and closed windows in a manner which seems positively miraculous to those unfamiliar with the Mediterranean climate.

Such, then, are the winds of Provence. I have come to dislike them, I confess, with a peculiar intensity. For there is something, I find, unspeakably exasperating about this huge, persistent expenditure of an

⁵⁶ *South Wind* (1917) by Norman Douglas (1868-1952). Hedonistic novel set on a Capri-like island.

entirely pointless energy. If you were to ask me what was the stupidest thing in the world, I should answer unhesitatingly: The Mistral. The enormous mindlessness of its month-long rushing and howling fills me with a mixture of fury and dismay.

The Mistral is the stupidest thing in the world: but, in its stupidity, it is but the first among equals. All the forces of nature are equally mindless--but, happily, with a mindlessness which does not get on human nerves quite so easily as the noisy and blustering mindlessness of the wind. The vast incomprehensible otherness of the universe arouses in us a feeling of astonishment and awe. But there are also moments when it arouses in us, just as naturally and legitimately, a sense of exasperated impatience.

Those billions and billions of cubic miles empty of everything remotely resembling a thought, those uncountable millions of horsepower of energy streaming and streaming into the void without the semblance of an aim or a purpose, are doubtless magnificent--but oh, how depressingly unintelligent!

The wind that vexes my strip of Mediterranean coast is only the most conspicuously stupid entity in a great world of unfathomable mindlessness and absolute inhumanity.

26 November 1932

The Problems of Property

What is economic justice? Is private property morally and socially justifiable? Or should all property be held in common? And, if so, what is the best machinery for amassing and distributing the common fund?

These questions have always been latent, as it were in, in men's minds. Even in times of social stability they get themselves asked--vaguely; indeed, and in a whisper; but still they are asked. When the social equilibrium is disturbed, these whispered questions suddenly start to reverberate with a menacing insistence through the world.

Ours is a time of unstable equilibrium, and the problem of property has therefore become urgent. The age-old questions are being repeated with a new and violent insistence. How will they be answered? How ought they to be answered? It is very hard to say. The problem of property is a thorny problem. Theoretically, the most just system is obviously some form of communism. But when the theory is put into practice, new difficulties arise and make us wonder whether, after all, we were on the right track.

Not much need be said about that objection to the socialization of wealth raised by every defender of the present system--that, without the incentive of private gain, men will not do good work. This is certainly not true of all men; many artists and men of science have worked unremittingly without the smallest prospect of gain. As for those for whom, at the present time, this is true (and they are all the people who have to do jobs they feel no inner compulsion to perform) as for these, I imagine that it might be possible to supply them with motives for action other than the lust for gain. In any case, it is only prolonged, large-scale experiment that can decide.

The Russians are making this experiment. A couple of generations from now it will be possible to appraise the measure of their success.

To my mind, the most serious problem raised by the socialization of property is that of personal liberty.

In a society where it is impossible to hold private property, no individual is free from state interference; he is at the mercy of the central authority and must obey its orders, even when he thinks them

wrong. If he refuses, the central authority is in a position to starve him into obedience.

In a society where the holding of private property is possible, at least some individuals are to some extent free. (In a country like France, where property is widely distributed, a considerable proportion of the population enjoys this measure of freedom.)

The worst bourgeois tyranny has its limits. Tyranny in a Communist society need have no limits whatever. Theoretically, tyranny should never arise in such a society; the Socialist state exists, by definition, for the public good. But in practice that august abstraction, the state, is simply a collection of individuals occupying positions of power; and we all know how easy it is for even the best-intentioned of men to abuse their power.

Moreover, human beings belong to a great variety of mental species.

What suits one species does not suit another. Justice demands that members of a numerically weak species should not be oppressed by the numerically strong. But where there is no private property to serve as a refuge from the majority, this must happen very easily. It was for this reason that the great French Socialist Proudhon advocated the retention under any scheme of socialism of a limited right to private property.⁵⁷

The principle, I believe, is sound; only on the lines laid down by Proudhon can the world hope to enjoy the advantages of Liberalism at the same time as the advantages of Socialism.

3 December 1932

⁵⁷Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865). French libertarian thinker. Coined phrase "Property is theft" in 1840.

The Export of Words⁵⁸

Over and above its supplies of tangible merchandise, every country is continually importing and exporting invisible goods in the shape of ideas, habits of life, ways of feeling and, finally, words.

By studying the words which it imports or exports, an intelligent observer can discover what are the ideas, what the habits and modes of feeling, that are entering or leaving any given country. Every exotic object, whether material or mental, a thing or an idea, naturally tends, when it enters a new country, to bring its name along with it.

Thus, Europe had no native name for "chocolate," for the good reason that chocolate was unknown in Europe until the discovery of Mexico. With the thing was introduced its Aztec name--"chocolate."

A list of the English words exported in recent times throws a very curious and significant light on the nature of the influence exercised by England and America in the contemporary world. Of the words that Europe has borrowed from us, the overwhelming majority fall into one or other of a few distinct categories.

First of all, there are the words referring to sport--a long list headed by the word "sport" itself, which is now naturalized in practically every language of Europe. "Tennis," "golf," "football," "record," "match," "performance," "camping," "boy-scout"--these are today as good French and, in the main, as good Spanish, German, Italian and Czech, as they are good English.

The length of this list proves that the most considerable export of the modern Anglo-Saxons has been their conception of amusement.

Habits of cleanliness and a love of sanitation constitute another important item in our invisible exports. "Tub" is now the French for bath, and those two mystic letters by means of which our fathers proclaimed their invention of the hydraulic sewerage system are now inscribed on certain doors in every hotel in Europe and Asia.

As significant, though somewhat less creditable to the Anglo-Saxon genius, has been the exportation of words referring to the consumption of alcohol. "Bar" is now as universal as "sport," while

⁵⁸ The first part of this essay should be compared with Mr. Chelifer's thoughts on word exports in *Those Barren Leaves* (1925).

"cocktail," "whisky," "gin," have been naturalized in almost every language from Latvian to Portuguese.

Millions of men and women who have never even heard of Shakespeare, or Newton, or Abraham Lincoln, are yet familiar with the name of the place where Anglo-Saxons get drunk and the names of most of the liquors they get drunk on. The fact is curious and, for me at any rate, faintly depressing.

The greatest importers of English words have been the Hindus. All the unfamiliar things, ideas and habits introduced by the conquerors are referred to by Indians in the conquerors' language, because there is no convenient native equivalent.

Exactly the same thing happened in England after the Norman Conquest, when the Saxons borrowed from their more highly organized invaders a host of words describing institutions and social organizations which they either did not possess at all or possessed only in a more rudimentary form. As the Saxons anglicized their Norman borrowings, so the Indians have indianized the words imported from England.

I quote a few of these indianized words to illustrate the kind of thoughts and habits imported by the Hindus and the amusing way in which the English syllables have been transformed. Thus, "injiniar" is the Hindi for "engineer" and "obarsiar" for "overseer." "Kālij" is "college" and "officer" becomes "aphsar." "Basslin" is that useful substance "vaseline," and (since the Hindus find it as hard to pronounce an *n* as a *v*) "lamlet" does duty for "lemonade" and "lambar" for "number."

10 December 1932

What Is the State?

Science and philosophy would be impossible without abstractions. In order to think at all, men must be able to stand back from the things they wish to think about. Generalizations and abstractions provide a vantage point from which they can look down upon the turmoil of particular realities and observe the laws which govern what seemed, when they were standing in the midst of it, a hopeless confusion of individual phenomena.

Languages are labor-saving devices--thought machines evolved through hundreds of generations in order to meet the needs of humanity in its effort to think clearly about this very odd, incomprehensible world. But all conveniences are sometimes inconveniences in disguise. (How we curse the vacuum cleaner when its machinery goes wrong! And what hours of labor we devote to that most characteristic of modern labor-saving conveniences, the automobile!) Language is no exception to this rule; and it often happens that the very generalizations and abstractions, without which we could not think at all, are the cause of our thinking badly.

It is in the realm of political thought that the dangers of abstractions are most noticeable. Let us consider, by way of example, that word which occurs in every political writing or conversation--"the state." "The state" is a convenient algebraical symbol. This symbol stands for the whole elaborate system by means of which certain affairs of large human communities are controlled; it stands for the system, I repeat, and also (since a system is not alive and cannot function by itself) for all the thousands of individuals who work the system.

At any given moment, that august and (to many minds) that positively divine abstraction, "the state," is just Mr. Smith and Mr. Brown. Mr. Jones and Mr. Robinson, invested with very considerable powers over the behavior and property of you and me and all our neighbors, and exercising these powers in accordance (more or less) with certain rules (some sensible, some extremely stupid) laid down either by themselves or else by other Smiths and Browns in the past.

Viewed thus realistically, "the state" does not seem particularly godlike; and we begin to wonder how it was ever thought to be divine. The secret is to be found in the word.

To describe the phenomena in their particular reality would be, for practical purposes, impossible. We say "the state," because it would take us too long to say "Smith, Brown, Jones, etc., exercising such and such powers, according to rules a, b, c...etc."

One abstraction stands for thousands of particular things and people. How convenient! But also how dangerous! For we use the abstraction so often and so easily that we end by believing that there exists a transcendental reality to correspond to the word. We come to think of "the state" as a vast, super-personal being possessed of more than human attributes.

The word makes us assume the existence of the thing; and once the existence of the thing is assumed, it becomes possible for a capable logician to prove anything he likes. "The state" becomes God; the individual loses all his rights; and we arrive at the appalling religion of "the state" which underlies the philosophies of Fascism and Communism.

What is the remedy? The remedy is to bear in mind that words are only words, and to stick as closely as is compatible with clear thinking to the realities for which the words stand. Whenever we see or hear the words "the state" let us resolutely think of Smith and Brown and Jones, with all their frailties of mind and body, doing their best (or not doing their best) to work a generally rather bad system with impartiality; but perpetually being carried away by their prejudices, perpetually being tempted to abuse their privileged position, perpetually clamoring for yet more power.

If we do this firmly and consistently, we shall, I think, run no danger of drifting into that worship of a convenient word, which leads, in practice, to a denial of some of the highest human values.

17 December 1932

The Cult of the Infantile

In all the great civilizations of the past the primacy of adult interests and adult values was axiomatic. Socrates and Lucretius, Dante and Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Voltaire--all the representative men of the creative epochs of history were grown-up and produced grown-up works. But with the nineteenth century a change began to appear among the adults, both in the world of fact and in that of artistic fiction. The morbid cult of infantility had begun.

An early symptom is to be found in Wordsworth's remark that "the child is father of the man"--a statement designed to enhance the value of childhood at the expense of maturity. For all earlier writers, the man was always and unquestionably the father of the child--in other words, adult interests and values were higher than the values and interests of childhood.

With Charles Dickens the symptoms become more serious. Dickens enjoys the dubious distinction of having invented an entirely novel kind of hero. For him, the highest type of human being is not the heroic adult, but the middle-aged baby. The Cheeryble brothers and Pickwick--these are the typical Dickensian saints. Regarded objectively and apart from the halo of delightful ludicrousness with which Dickens surrounded them, these bald old napkin-wetters are the most repulsive monstrosities.

At about the same time as Pickwick, was born that dreadful figment of nineteenth-century imagination described by Baudelaire as "*la jeune fille assassin de l'art*" - the art-murdering young girl. For two generations and more, this creature dominated Anglo-Saxon culture. She decreed that all literature should be characterized, in the words of Lowell, by "a maidenly reserve"; that no man should ever write anything which he would not wish his twelve-year-old daughter to read.

Even today this assassin of the arts and of all adult values is still a power. Did she not recently inspire an eminent American Senator to say that he would rather give a child opium than the works of D.H. Lawrence? and that "the virtue of one little sixteen-year-old girl was worth more than all the books that ever came into the United States"?

The mythology of infantilism has been enriched during the twentieth century by a new and striking creation--the figure of *Peter Pan*. With Barrie, infantilism became conscious and blood-curdlingly arch and coquettish. The alarming thing is that *Peter Pan* undoubtedly satisfied a popular need. People wanted to wallow in infantility. Indeed, so great has become the popular admiration for the values of babyhood that the Catholic Church--hitherto a thoroughly adult institution--has found it necessary to canonize that paragon of modern infantility, St. Theresa of Lisieux.⁵⁹

One has but to compare the modern St. Theresa with her great Spanish namesake of the sixteenth century (one of the grandest figures in all the history of womanhood) to realize that something very strange and even appalling has happened in recent times to the collective mind of the West.

In America especially, the exaltation of childish values has reached such a pitch that adult life is largely sacrificed to child life. In the family circle it is the children who call the tune; the elders must obediently follow. Each generation is expected to sacrifice its adulthood on the altar of the next generation. How silly this is, the simplest arithmetic will serve to show. We are children for twenty years; we are mature for forty or fifty. The exaltation of infantile values prevents people from living properly during at least two-thirds of their natural lives.

Childhood unquestionably has its rights; but so also has maturity. These adult rights are at least as worthy of respect as those of the child.

24 December 1932

⁵⁹(1873-1897), known as "the Little Flower" or St. Theresè of the Child Jesus. She described her credo as the way of spiritual childhood.

Aristocratic Tradition

One would have felt quite safe, a few years ago, in affirming that the days of hereditary aristocracy were over. Today, in what is in many respects the most "modern" country in the world, political power is in the hands of a hereditary, land-owning aristocracy. Germany has a "Government of Barons." In spite of Nazis and Communists and Social Democrats, the descendants of the feudal lords are in control of the German Republic. Whether their power is only for the moment, or is destined to last, one cannot tell. The fact remains that, at present, they seem to be firmly in the saddle.

A class that, a few years ago, seemed ruined and discredited has risen again, almost suddenly, to a position of supreme power. The fact is very remarkable. We are driven to enquire into the inner reason for so seemingly unlikely an event. This inner reason must be sought in two places--among the ruled and among the rulers; in the psychology of the mass of the German people and in the psychology of those Prussian aristocrats who constitute the "Government of Barons."

History makes it abundantly clear that men and women cannot abide anarchy. An occasional orgy of lawlessness--that is welcome; it is a form of collective holiday. But this holiday, if prolonged, soon turns into a nightmare. Sunk in the chaos of their anarchic freedom, people feel a passionate homesickness for restraints, for discipline, for the dull routine of workaday life. They are actually grateful to the tyrants who deliver them from lawlessness.

After the disorders of the French Revolution, Napoleon's autocracy was accepted with thankfulness. The same thing happened with his nephew after the troubles of 1848; Napoleon III was regarded as a Savior of Society.

Post-War Italy was torn by faction fights; Mussolini and his Fascists put an end to the disorder and earned the gratitude of the great mass of the Italian people. Similarly, the Bolsheviks first canalized and then put an end to the disorders which followed the breakdown of Tsarist organization under the strain of war; their dictatorship was accepted by the majority of Russians with feelings of glad relief.

Disorder in Germany is not acute; but a mild disorder which lasts a long time is almost equivalent to a short attack of total anarchy. The homesickness for order--order at all costs--is very strong in contemporary Germany. Hence the pathetic search for political messiahs--a search which led to the otherwise inexplicable exaltation of Hitler. The time was ripe for some determined Savior of Society to seize control; the psychology of the mass was favorable to dictatorship.

So far so good; some sort of dictatorship was to be expected. But why a dictatorship of the landed aristocracy rather than a dictatorship of the proletariat, personified by the Communists or of the small bourgeoisie, represented by Hitler? For the explanation of this we must examine the psychology of the rulers. The Prussian barons have managed to seize power. Why? At bottom, because they believe in their own right to have power--believe in it more strongly than their rivals. For this they must thank the aristocratic tradition.

The hereditary aristocrat may be defined as a person who has a divine right to rule. He does not earn this right; he is born to it. "There's no damned merit about it," as Palmerston said of the Order of the Garter. In this lies the aristocrat's strength. He is convinced that he must rule, because he was born to rule.

Combined with practical experience of administration (and the Prussian junkers were the rulers of Germany before the war), such a belief is the source of endless strength. It enables those who hold it to undertake immense tasks with a serene confidence. To those brought up in it, the aristocratic tradition gives an inner power which belongs, outside the pale of aristocracy, only to great men conscious of their genius, or, alternatively, to lunatics.

This being so, we can no longer feel surprised that, of all the candidates for the German dictatorship, it should be the hereditary aristocrats who have seized the position.

31 December 1932

Names and Things

Primitive minds tend to think mainly in terms of the particular; highly developed minds have learnt the art of thinking in terms of the general and the abstract. Hence the complication of primitive languages and the relative simplicity of an old and highly developed speech like our own. Thus, the Bedouins of Arabia have upwards of forty different words for "camel"--one word for male and another for female camel, one for three-year-old camel and another for six-year-old, one for fast camel and another for slow camel, and so on.

We use only one word, "camel," and where distinctions have to be made, tack on to it suitable adjectives.

Abstractions and generalizations are immensely convenient. Without them, indeed, there could be neither coherent philosophy, nor effective science. If man has acquired power over nature, it is thanks to abstractions and generalizations. But, like most other labor-saving devices, these verbal conveniences have their disadvantages. Men are taken in by their own cleverness and, having invented verbal symbols to stand for whole classes of objects, proceed to attribute to these symbols a reality of the same kind as belongs to separate individuals.

The danger of this proceeding was first acutely realized in the Middle Ages, and a tremendous controversy sprang up between two philosophical parties calling themselves Nominalists and Realists, respectively. The Nominalists insisted that abstractions and generalizations are only names, and that there is no substantial reality outside individual existences. The Realists, on the contrary, attributed a substantial reality to these symbols. There was such a thing, they insisted, as Camel with a large C--an Idea of Perfect Camelishness having a reality equal to or even superior to that of the mere individual animals belonging to the species.

Modern thought is preponderantly Nominalistic; and it is characteristic that what we call Realism is the flat contradiction of the medieval doctrine that went under the same name. But in spite of this, Realism, in its old medieval sense, still persists. It persists because men are muddle-headed creatures, who imagine that, because they have

invented a name, there must be some real objective thing to correspond to it.

For example, nothing could be less Nominalistic than the average political speech or article. The authors of these productions are perpetually using generalizations and abstractions, as though these verbal symbols stood for actual things. They will talk about "the needs of Industry," or "the policy of France," or "Public Opinion," or "High Finance" in terms which make it quite clear that they expect their readers to believe that these algebraical symbols connote real objects. And for the most part, unhappily, their readers do believe that there are such beings as "Industry," "France," "Public Opinion," and the like.

But of course this is not true. "Industry" does not exist. What exists is a certain number of particular industrialists, working in a particular environment and employing so many thousands of particular men and women.

And what, precisely, is "France"? We think of the young woman on the coins and the postage stamps. But there is no such person. The "France" that has "policies" is just a collection of particular parliamentarians and permanent officials living in Paris. As for "Public Opinion"--this is mainly the opinion of the people who own newspapers, expressed by the pens of journalists who are paid to broadcast it and who, in order to give weight to their words, affirm it to be the opinion of the majority of their neighbors.

And such is the suggestibility of the human mind, that in due course an originally private opinion will become the opinion of large numbers of men and women. A similar process of analysis can be applied to almost any of the pretentious generalizations of politics--can and, I think, should be applied.

Nominalism is the greatest enemy of nonsense.

7 January 1933

Collection

The passion for collecting is one to which I have never been much subject. True, as a boy I used to collect butterflies, and now I collect books. But my books are only for reading, and for the mere reader there is no difference between a first and a fiftieth edition. As for the butterflies, they were just an excuse for wandering about the country with a green gauze net.

To the genuine collector, this kind of collecting for use or amusement seems too frivolous to be dignified with the name of collecting. He is shocked by the suggestion that collecting is made for man, not man for collecting. The true collector collects-for-collecting sake, without regard to his own or anyone else's convenience. He is often the martyr of his hobby, which becomes at the same time a sufficient reason for martyring other people.

There are men who, in order to buy yet another piece of Chinese crockery or medieval enamel, are ready not only to undergo considerable hardships themselves, but also (which generally requires more courage) to inflict similar hardships on their wives and children. Or take the case of the collectors of birds' eggs. These people have no hesitation in condemning the rarer species of birds in their neighborhood to complete extinction. In a small and densely populated country like England, they are able to do irreparable damage in a surprisingly short time.

Thanks to egg collectors, many species of birds once common in England are now either very rare or completely extinct. Bird-lovers are distressed; not so the collectors. On the contrary, the virtual extinction of a species is welcomed by them in so far as it makes the possession of an egg belonging to a bird of this species particularly creditable. The egg of a genuine English honey buzzard is the equivalent in the zoological world of a First Folio Shakespeare.

I read recently of a man who had collected five hundred complete clutches of the eggs of the red-backed shrike. Thanks to his efforts and to those of his fellow collectors, this bird is now extremely rare in England. What a triumph, therefore, to possess five hundred clutches of its eggs! And what a haunting fear lest some other egg-maniac should

suddenly turn up with five hundred and one clutches! To the true collector it will be quite natural to desire the complete extinction of the species. If there are no more red-backed shrikes at all, then nobody can beat your record.

To the non-collector, this state of mind will seem insane or even criminal. But then any religious fanaticism always seems insane and criminal to unbelievers. Most of us nowadays are incapable of understanding the mentality of the people who used to burn Jews and Protestants. But to our ancestors, who accepted the axioms of the persecutors, to burn heretics seemed perfectly logical. Similarly, if you accept the axioms of collectorship, it seems quite logical that you should starve your family for the sake of a first edition, or exterminate a whole species of birds in order to be the possessor of a unique collection of eggs.

My readers will notice that, whenever I have given a gender to the collector, I have made him masculine. And, in fact, the great majority of collectors are men. It is the dreamy and mystical sex that abandons itself to collecting. Most women are too practical and realistic to succumb to such queer fanaticisms.

To the collector who proudly shows his cabinets full of birds' eggs the average woman will say: "Charming! But, tell me, what's the use of two thousand specimens of shrike's eggs?"

Horror on the part of the collector!

What's the use? The question is unanswerable; there *is* no use. But precisely there lies the whole point of collecting. Eggs for eggs' sake. He tries to explain. Unavailingly; the average woman finds it all as incomprehensible as we find the roasting of heretics.

Between collector and non-collector is fixed a great gulf.

24 January 1933

Forgetting and Remembering

I never took any serious interest in them. This fact does not surprise me: it seems indeed quite normal and reasonable that I should have forgotten things that did not make any deep impression on me, and that I had no real desire to remember. But when, by reading through old letters, I discover that my internal lunatic has consigned to oblivion what were evidently at the time they occurred the most excruciating despairs and the most rapturous delights--whole chains of events and feelings that were of the highest importance to me--then, I confess, I begin to feel a bit queer.

And I begin to feel still queerer when, passing my memories of the time under review, I discover vivid recollections of such entirely pointless incidents as taking a typewriter to be repaired or seeing a log of wood washed up by a rough sea.

Some day, it may be, psychologists will discover why and how we forget and remember as we do. But for the present we must be content with the myth of a lunatic sitting in judgment. Some consolation for the lunatic may be found in the reflection that we are able to profit by experiences which we have consciously forgotten. Thus, I know how to swim and to bicycle; but I cannot remember any details of my swimming and bicycling lessons. The same is doubtless true of the lessons in living administered by past experiences which have vanished into oblivion. It is possible to forget the name and even the very existence of someone we once disturbingly hated or adored; but the fact that we once went through that hatred or that adoration may help us in some way to behave more sensibly and appropriately when similar emotional circumstances arise in the future.

The lunatic affects only our consciousness; the subliminal self, the nerves, the body have an obscure memory of their own which he is apparently unable to modify.

A strange irresponsible lunatic inhabits the innermost recesses of even the sanest minds. Seated there, at the very center of our being, this lunatic passes judgment on all our experiences, deciding (on principles that are quite irrational and even, it would seem, maliciously anti-rational) which of the things that have happened to us shall be

remembered and which forgotten. With completely imbecile impartiality, he condemns to oblivion now the dull and unpleasant incidents of our past lives, now the most interesting, delightful and dramatic. He selects for a perennial place in the archives of memory now the most significant and now the most trivial experiences, now the most agreeable and now those that are so painful or shameful that we would give anything to be able to forget them.

People who write diaries and keep files of old letters are in a position to test the lunacies of their presiding madman. Let them first write down what, in fact, they remember of their life during any given period; and, having done this, let them compare the collection of remembered incidents with the contemporary record of their existence contained in letters and journals. They will be astonished, exasperated and saddened. Astonished by the paucity of what their memory has chosen to retain; exasperated by the senselessness of the choice; and profoundly saddened by the thought of so much life perished out of their consciousness, so many experiences irretrievably lost.

That we should forget the things that were boring, trivial or disagreeable seems natural enough. For example, when I was twenty-two I knew enough about Germanic philology and the Anglo-Saxon language to be able to take a university degree in these subjects with first-class honors. Today I cannot read a line of Anglo-Saxon and have forgotten the very rudiments of Germanic philology.

21 January 1933

Hamlet in Russia

I have just heard from a friend a curious description of the modernized *Hamlet*, which is now being produced in Moscow. Among the Communist improvements on the work of the poor bourgeois from Stratford are the following: the transformation of the mad scenes into scenes of drunkenness (Ophelia does not go out of her mind, she merely takes to booze); the Marxification of the churchyard scenes, in which Hamlet is made to discourse over Yorick's skull in the most approved anti-God style; and finally, the radical alteration of Hamlet's own character. Shakespeare's hesitant prince becomes a palace revolutionary imbued with sound Marxian doctrine.

There are Shakespeareolaters who will be shocked by this treatment of *Hamlet*. But this is foolish. No book gains by being styled sacred, and the attempt to turn Shakespeare's plays into a kind of bible of literary perfection is only harmful. Some of the people who saw the new *Hamlet* were distressed as though by a sacrilege.

My own reaction is one of curiosity. What interests me in the affair is above all this: that, in attempting to modernize *Hamlet*, the Russians have in fact "antiquated" it. Shakespeare's tragedy is really far more relevant and up-to-date than the Russian play. Hamlet's psychological problem is essentially the central problem of our own and the coming age. The Prince of Denmark wanted to act, but found himself incapable of action, because he could not believe whole-heartedly in the rightness of what he proposed to do. His problem is essentially the same as that which confronts thoughtful people at the present time.

Thanks to the partial application of scientific methods, our world has become almost unmanageably complex. But unless we can manage the complexity, we are done for. The only hope of managing it lies in approaching all problems scientifically. Many classes of human activity are still outside the sphere. We must learn, when dealing with them, to adopt the scientific outlook.

Now the essential characteristic of the scientific outlook consists in suspense of judgment--in not believing things for which there is insufficient evidence. But in the sphere of politics, economics and human relations in general the evidence is almost always insufficient. It

is seldom possible to believe with justifiable certainty that any particular hypothesis about these matters is correct. In this sphere, only the unscientifically minded person can be absolutely sure that he is right.

Lenin and his lieutenants possessed this certainty and therefore felt no scruples about "liquidating" any institution or person they did not happen to like. A scientifically minded person is incapable of such faith on insufficient evidence. The most he can believe is that he is probably a bit more in the right than his opponents.

Now, it is psychologically very difficult to act on a merely probable belief. The scientifically minded man is one who, by definition, lacks blind faith; and lacking it, he must also lack the courage to "liquidate" those who disagree with him. To use force (and there are so many vested interests in the way of any sweeping reform that force must always be used) on behalf of a doctrine about which you do not feel certain, is almost an impossibility.

The conclusion is paradoxical. The world urgently needs rulers with a scientific outlook. But rulers with a scientific outlook would be almost incapable of acting with that prompt ruthlessness which, as history shows, is essential to the carrying out of considerable reforms. The Russian Hamlet is a person in a state of prescientific certainty. Shakespeare's prince is an essentially modern figure; and his tragedy promises to be the tragedy of the scientific mind faced with the necessity of saving the world.

28 January 1933

Psychological Dividends

Theories are valuable even when they are false or, at any rate, only partially true. They are valuable because they lead the theorist to look for facts that will corroborate them, because they make him observe aspects of reality which, but for the theory, he would have overlooked. Science has progressed toward truth through a series of falsehoods and half truths. The process is as follows:

A theory is invented to fit the known facts; more facts are collected in order to corroborate the theory; but what happens generally is that the new facts do not corroborate, but, disprove; a new theory has to be invented to fit the newly observed phenomena; this new theory leads those who hold it to look for fresh factual corroborations; and so the process goes on--indefinitely; for there is no reason to suppose that man can ever discover the absolute truth about anything.

Theories of history and, in general, of human behavior at large are like other scientific theories--valuable even when only partially true. Thus, the Marxian interpretation of history in terms exclusively of economics is without question inadequate; it does not fit all the facts. Nevertheless, it has exercised a great and, on the whole, a beneficent influence on the study of history, both past and present. Modern scholarship and modern politics are what in fact they are because of Marx's economic interpretation of history.

The Marxian hypothesis has done admirable work in drawing attention to facts that, in the past, were unduly neglected. But there is a grave danger that, by taking it too seriously and regarding it as wholly true, we may blind ourselves to the existence of large classes of indubitable facts. It is highly significant in this context that, in revolutionary Russia the word "psychological" has been used as an epithet of disparagement, almost of abuse. And yet, after all and in spite of Marx, psychology exists and its manifestations occur in ways that are often entirely unpredictable by the economist historian.

The Marxian theory of history has done admirable service; but it needs to be supplemented and corrected by some interpretation in terms of psychology. The psycho-analysts have recently supplied the

need--supplied it, it must be confessed, in a series of often rather fantastic and extravagant theories.

I have just read what seems to me the most level-headed of the psycho-analytical interpretations of current history yet published--*Subconscious Europe*, by Dr. F. Vergin.⁶⁰ This is an interesting book and one which, I think, contains many important truths that the contemporary statesman, obsessed as he is by economic and political considerations, never recognizes. No statesman for example, has ever paused to consider that "men's hatred pays them a higher psychological dividend than can be obtained from international amity, sympathy and co-operation."

And yet this remark of Dr. Vergin's is in the main terribly true, as any candid examination of our own personal experience abundantly testifies.

Most of us get more fun, here and now, out of the hatred and disparagement of foreigners than out of friendliness and tolerance and the effort to understand the alien's point of view. In the long run, of course, hatred doesn't pay. But most of us, alas, find it very hard to take long views; we like to draw our psychological dividends of pleasure here and now.

No amount of disarmament conferences will prevent most people from getting large dividends out of hatred for foreigners; and so long as this state of things continues--and it can be changed only by going to the deep subconscious root of the matter in the individual psyche--so long as hate pays a larger dividend than love, just so long will material disarmament prove unavailing to put an end to war.

4 February 1933

⁶⁰Fedor Vergin. Huxley refers again to Vergin in *Beyond the Mexique Bay* (1934).

Living through History

In my paper this morning I read an article by an eminent English historian and economist in which he gave it as his opinion that we were living through a period comparable to that which witnessed the disintegration of the Roman Empire. The remark is startling--not because there is any reason to suppose that it is untrue (on the contrary, the more closely one studies contemporary events the more certain one becomes that an old order is passing, is painfully giving place to a new order), but because, knowing it to be true, we are yet, as individuals, so little moved by the fact. What startles us, above all, is our own indifference.

It was, I think, Dr. Johnson who said that the state of the country never put any man off his dinner. He was, as usual, quite right. Men suffer as individuals only from what affects them as individuals. So long as the "state of the country" does not affect for the worse their own private state they can remain, in spite of a theoretical and abstract distress, perfectly cheerful and content. The state of the country will put them off their dinner only when it has become so bad that there is no longer any dinner for them to be put off from. Given a punctual succession of dinners they will not feel greatly agitated, even though public affairs may be in what they know to be a horrible state.

Millions of people lived through the early years of the war in a state of placid contentment. They knew, theoretically, that the most murderous war in history was being fought out at no great distance from where they were; but as they themselves were not too painfully affected by it their knowledge remained entirely abstract. Practical realization came only with the food shortage--the curtailment of dinners.

When we read in the history books of great events we imagine that all those who lived through them realized the full horror, grandeur and significance of what was going on. But this is an illusion. We may be quite sure, for example, that the French Revolution left the great mass of Frenchmen and French women remarkably placid. With the Russian Revolution the case was different. Many more people were affected as individuals by the Russian than by the French Revolution--first,

because the Bolsheviks interfered with economic affairs far more than did their French predecessors; and, second, because (partly owing to this interference, partly to the disorganization caused by the war) there was a general breakdown that resulted in food shortage and finally famine.

That it is possible, however, to live without much personal discomfort through a revolutionary outbreak I know by my own experience in Italy during the period which preceded the seizure of power by the Fascists. I was in Florence during a spell of street fighting. The occasion was historic; but it never put me off my dinner or prevented the dinner from punctually arriving. If I had got in the way of a bullet I should have felt somewhat differently about the matter. As it was, I lived through history with undisturbed calm.

To many the gravity of the present crisis has been brought home by loss of employment and economic ruin. But there are still many millions of people whose knowledge of the disaster is wholly theoretical. The state of the world is appalling; but they are not put off their dinners, for the good reason that their dinners are still served.

18 February 1933

On Being Unwisely Good

Good people, if they are good unwisely, can do as much harm as deliberately bad people. Often, indeed, much more, for it is hard for the deliberately bad to "get away with it" for any length of time. Their malevolence is soon detected and they are mistrusted and avoided. With the unwisely good, on the contrary, everything is above board, everything will stand inspection. Their singleness of purpose and the excellence of their intentions inspire an unlimited confidence.

People follow them, because they are so obviously honest in their idealism; but honesty, alas, can be coupled with stupidity. When it is so coupled people enthusiastically follow the goodness, but are led by the stupidity "down a steep place into the sea."

The most harmful of the unwisely good are those reformers whose virtuous passion it is to prevent other people from indulging in their favorite vices. It is unnecessary at this time to expatiate on the mischief caused by the zeal of well-meaning prohibitionists in the United States. Suffice it to say that the unwise goodness of these people has cost their country far more than would the deliberate, selfish wickedness of a whole committee of Neros and Borgias.

One of the minor triumphs of unwise goodness was achieved in the Pacific island of Nauru (a place of some significance because of its phosphate deposits). The Nauruans were in the habit of drinking large quantities of toddy made from fermented palm juice.

As they greatly enjoyed the toddy and got very drunk on it, good people among their white rulers were shocked. Toddy was accordingly prohibited, with the result that the infantile death rate of the island rose from seven to fifty per cent in six months. What the unwisely good had prohibited was the natives' only source of vitamin B.

A wisely good reformer is one who will not prohibit a harmful activity until he has first provided people with a substitute for it. His substitute must be socially less harmful, but psychologically and physiologically no less satisfying than the original activity. The fact that a harmful activity is widely indulged in proves that it fulfills a common human need. Wisely good reformers try to find means by

which people can satisfy this need without doing harm to themselves or their fellows.

This principle has at last been accepted as the basis of all good colonial policy. The out-and-out prohibition of activities which white men regard as harmful has produced such deplorable results as the depopulation of Polynesia, where the natives are just letting themselves die out because life, under the rule of unwise white reformers, no longer seems to them worth living. The colonial administrator is now encouraged to provide substitutes for the harmful activities of the native population.

Thus many of the headhunters of Borneo have now been converted to sport. Football provides them with the excitement which their monotonous existence renders so desirable, while the religious significance of the human head has been transferred in part to the heads of dangerous wild animals, in part to the old, mummified heads in the possession of the various tribes, which are now loaned out, on important ceremonial occasions, on payment of a small fee.

Our own unwise reformers might learn a lesson from Borneo. Instead of trying (quite unsuccessfully) to prohibit the use of alcohol and dope, why can't they first admit the obvious fact that, in existing circumstances, men require occasional holidays from reality, and then set out to find some holiday-giving drug less harmful than those now in use?

Instead of prohibiting roulette (with the sole result that men are forced to gamble in stocks and shares, to the ruin of whole industries), why don't they try to discover which is the least harmful way of indulging the almost universal tendency to have a fling?

The real answer to such questions is this: Reformers don't want to reform wisely, because it is so much more fun to be unwise. Zeal, moral indignation and bullying give a much greater "kick" than do reasonableness, scientific detachment and sympathy. If we reform reformers, we interfere with their fun. Our only excuse is that the fun of the unwisely good is so extraordinarily harmful.

25 February 1933

Science of Politics?

Industry is efficient. Why? Because the methods of science have been applied to industrial production. Politics, economics and ethics are, if anything, more important for us than industrial production. They are important, and yet we do not treat them scientifically. Our social organization is therefore deplorably inefficient.

Moral: We must apply scientific method to the solution of the problems of human living. If we don't, inefficiency will lead to chaos and destruction.

The baldest summary, such is the theme of countless books, articles, lectures and even sermons, composed during the last few years in every civilized country in the world. Starvation in the midst of plenty has forced these ideas upon the popular mind. The lop-sided and partial application of scientific method is now regarded by all thinking men and women--and, no doubt, rightly regarded--as responsible for almost all our present disasters.

Now, it is obviously very desirable that the problems of politics, economics and ethics should be treated as scientifically as those of industrial production. But the desirability of this consummation must not blind us to the fact that it is exceedingly hard to bring about. The progress of science has been made possible by systematic experiment. But what is experiment? An experiment is the deliberate creation of peculiar circumstances designed to test the validity of the experimenter's hypotheses about the nature and causes of some given phenomenon.

For example, the physiologist observes the ductless glands, is led to formulate a hypothesis about their functions, and proceeds to test this hypothesis by experiment. He cuts out adrenals, administers measured doses of thyroid and pituitary, and records the results. These results may confirm his original hypothesis, or they may prove it to have been entirely wrong.

This brief account of the nature of an experiment makes it sufficiently clear why it should be so hard to apply scientific methods to the problems of human living. In the realm of, say, physiology or chemistry, the failure of an experiment matters only to the

experimenter. The waste of a few grams of some chemical element, or even the death of a dozen or two of guinea pigs, is not, by any reasonable standard of values, very important.

But where the subject of the experiment is man, a failure which involves wastage and death is important; for here the experimentee matters as much as the experimenter.

The only large-scale experiments in history have been undertaken by men who had no intention of experimenting--men who were inspired, not by the scientific doubt which leads to the systematic testing of hypotheses, but by a fanatical certainty of their own rightness. Let us consider the latest and, for us, the most significant example of a social experiment--that which is now being carried out in Russia. The men who undertook the transformation of Russia were not testing out a hypothesis which might or might not be sound; on the contrary, they were acting on an unshakable faith in the correctness of their own ideas.

Bolshevism is an experiment only in the eyes of non-Bolshevists, who can look on at what is happening from outside, feeling thankful, as they do, that the responsibility for incidental wastage and possibly of ultimate failure (whether complete or partial) has been shouldered by someone else.

Experiment on human societies has a further disadvantage: owing to the length of individual lives and the as yet unforeseeable reactions of each generation to its immediate predecessor, the time required to test any political or economic hypothesis experimentally is very great. At least a century will have to pass before anyone can decide how far experiment has confirmed the soundness of Lenin's or Mussolini's theories. But time presses; the crisis demands that we should make immediate reforms.

As in the past, these reforms will be mainly acts of faith, not acts of science. True, our data are more adequate than those on which our fathers worked; so perhaps our faith will contain a larger tincture of science than theirs. But do not let us flatter ourselves with the belief that our handling of social problems can be wholly scientific. Owing to the difficulty of experimenting, faith must always in matters of politics, predominate over science.

4 March 1933

The Bantus and Dr. Freud

"Human nature does not change." "Human nature is constantly changing." Both statements are equally true. The psychological elements of man's being are probably as stable as the physiological elements with which they are associated. But the ways in which man chooses, or is compelled to use, these psychological elements are very variable.

We resemble our neolithic ancestors in being moved by the same instinctive urges. We feel the same emotions as they did, and our innate abilities are probably no better than theirs. The great differences between them and us are due to the fact that, owing to changed circumstances, we can arrange these identical psychological elements in a very different pattern.

Generalizing from facts that are true of a particular class of modern civilized people, the psycho-analysts have proclaimed the universal primacy of sex--or, alternatively, of will to power. Primitive society, as Dr. Audrey Richards has shown in her recent book, *Hunger and Work in a Savage Tribe*, is pivoted on food-getting. It is only in the more prosperous sections of civilized urban communities that hunger loses its pre-eminence. Freud, who gives the palm to sex, worked in Vienna; Adler, who stands up for the will to power, in Berlin.

Dr. Richards' Bantus have not enjoyed the advantages of bourgeois life in a modern capital, and so their first thought is always for their bellies. Love, as a wholetime job, has only been practiced by the more prosperous members of civilized societies. You cannot go in for romance or sensuality on an empty stomach.

That the psycho-analysts should be wrong about savages is not particularly important. The significant fact is that they are probably right about civilized people. Men and women under high biological pressure arrange the pattern of their life in one way; under low pressure, in another way. With every increase in the efficiency of social organizations, more individuals will come to live under low biological pressure.

11 March 1933

Enemies of Religion

For a long time now it has been taken for granted that the greatest enemy of religion and the prime cause of the decline in its influence is science. There are good reasons, I think, for doubting whether this is more than partially true. Science has certainly done a great deal to discredit superstition; but not quite so much as has been supposed. Anyone who has observed the habits of human beings at all closely knows very well that mere knowledge of a fact, mere intellectual assent to a theory, has little power to check or divert a strong current of emotion. People were not religious because they regarded the first chapter of *Genesis* as a scientific account of creation, or because they believed that representatives of every animal species were preserved in the Ark. And conversely, they have not ceased to be religious because men of science have cast doubts on the historicity of Adam and Noah.

Men are religious because they find in religion a satisfaction for certain deep, non-rational needs. And they cease to be religious either because they no longer feel the needs or else because they find their emotional satisfactions in some non-religious activity.

In the past organized religion provided satisfactions for many of men's purely esthetic and imaginative needs. Primary education and the rotary press have now made literature in some form or another accessible to all. Talkies, radio and phonograph have done the same for drama and music; process reproduction, for the visual arts. Religion has lost its one-time monopoly as a purveyor of imaginative pleasures, excitements and distractions. Men who require esthetic satisfaction no longer go to church to get them.

Artistic and political religion substitutes now satisfy emotional needs which used to be satisfied in church. At the same time certain forces have been at work--forces which have tended to diminish the intensity, or even eliminate altogether, some of these needs. The greatest enemy of traditional organized religion is probably not science, but efficient social organization. For efficient social organization tends to make the life of the individual secure; and when their life is secure--when they have no reason to feel apprehensive about the future--men feel no urgent need for protection and help from

supernatural beings. Fear of what tomorrow may bring has always been a major incentive to religious practices.

18 March 1933

Fraternity

The motto of the French republic is the motto of all democracy--Liberty, Equality, Fraternity. The words express a noble ideal, an ideal for which men have been and perhaps, in spite of the current vogue of dictatorship, still are prepared to die.

But, because an ideal is noble, it does not follow that it is realizable. Most people would agree that it is highly desirable that men should be simultaneously free, equal and brotherly. But can this desirable consummation be realized in practice?

The answer to this question depends on the meaning we choose to attach to our terms.

Political liberty means freedom from arbitrary imprisonment and the right to vote for one's legislators. But "liberty" may also bear the significance which Buddha, for example, and Spinoza gave it. It may connote freedom from passion and prejudice, deliverance from misdirected appetites and wrong ideas.

Again, the aspirations towards "equality" may simply be a desire for impartiality in the administration of justice. But it may also connote the desire for some absolute impartiality on the part of nature, for constitutional and native equality.

And finally, "fraternity" may stand, as it actually does in most democratic countries at the present time, for bad manners all round; but it may also signify universal love, the tolerance of all by each.

Now, if the words bear their second or profounder meaning, then the ideal which they imply is seen to be unrealizable. To begin with, men are constitutionally unequal and no amount of Behaviorist theory will ever abolish the facts of heredity.

In the second place, "liberty," in the Buddhistic or Spinozistic sense of the word, is so hard to achieve that only a few people, exceptionally fortunate in their hereditary makeups, are capable of it.

Hardly less difficult than the art of being free is the art of loving all one's neighbors.

The more intelligent, cultured and, in general, highly conscious members of our society--those who have advanced furthest toward

freedom--are, as a rule, the people who find it most difficult to feel fraternally toward their fellow men.

People on a lower level of consciousness feel towards one another the almost physical fraternity of gregarious animals. But heightening of consciousness and individuality tends to weaken this natural fraternity, and the individual feels a kind of physical repugnance towards his fellows coupled with an intense impatience with their intellectual and moral shortcomings.

25 March 1933

Influenza

Having the influenza is a wholly disgusting process. But, at any rate, for certain people it has its compensating advantages; it allows them to achieve the otherwise impossible feat of temporarily being somebody else.

At ordinary times we are condemned to be unescapably ourselves. No matter how bored we may become with our own tiresomely limited personality it still remains ours--or, if you prefer to put it the other way round, we remain its. We conform to its preordained pattern and are enclosed by it as by a shell.

Influenza momentarily dissolves the shell and breaks up the pattern. A rise of three or four degrees in the temperature of our blood radically alters the way in which our minds work. Fever makes us cease to be our familiar selves and become somebody else.

I passed the uncomfortable hours of a recent attack of influenza in carefully observing and analyzing the mental processes of the "somebody else" that I had temporarily become. In the process I learned a good deal about other human beings, for the person I am when my temperature is high resembles very closely, in many respects, the everyday unfevered self of a large class of normal human beings. Things which at ordinary times, if understood only from the outside were made clear to me, in influenza, by living experience.

Thus, at ordinary times, I do almost all my thinking in terms of abstract ideas, having no visual images attached to them.

But as soon as my temperature rises four degrees my mental processes undergo a change. I begin to think in terms of images. Ideas present themselves to me in terms of pictures, vividly seen by the inward eye of the imagination. They are moving pictures, with a life of their own, almost entirely independent of my conscious will.

Lying in bed, I watched this interior film with an amused astonishment that turned, after a time, into weariness and irritation. I would have given anything to escape from those imaginary movies and get back to my invisible abstractions. I longed to be able to think without seeing.

Nevertheless, I am glad to have seen those pictures; for they enabled me to understand by personal experience the mental processes of the majority of my fellow beings. Yes, the majority. Psychological researches have shown that more people think in terms of images than in terms of verbal abstractions.

1 April 1933

Propaganda

Our ignorance of psychology is less than it was; but it is still so great that we are forced to carry on many of our major activities almost entirely in the dark.

The politician, for example, is perpetually clamoring for reforms, for new legislation, for alterations in the structure of society; but he seldom has more than the vaguest idea how these changes will affect individual human beings and the community as a whole.

Thus, the people who imposed prohibition on the United States imagined that they knew what their action would do for the country and its inhabitants. The history of the last fourteen years is there to prove that, alas, they were mistaken. They legislated without a sufficient knowledge of human psychology; the results were most distressing.

Democratic institutions have endowed the arts of propaganda with an enormous social importance. Where people elect their rulers the men who can control the mind of the electorate are certain of political power. Propaganda has, therefore, become one of the major instruments of government.

In every country we see the spectacle of ambitious individuals and the organizers of great political parties doing their best to exploit the organs of propaganda to their own private or corporate advantage. But, unfortunately, there is a flaw in their cunning: People know too little psychology to be certain of the effects of propaganda.

Advertisers, it is true, can form a fair idea of what they are doing. They can prophesy with a tolerable degree of accuracy that so much money spent in such and such a way will sell so many automobiles or bottles of patent medicine, or whatever the advertised object may be. So far as I can see the sellers don't know what sort of effect their propaganda will have.

The moral of this is plain: Professional propagandists do not yet know enough psychology. Their arts of persuasion do not persuade. I suspect, indeed, that in certain circumstances none of the arts at present known to propagandists could persuade.

At any given moment the majority of men and women feel dissatisfied. Seeking some one on whom to lay the blame for their sufferings, they tend naturally to make scapegoats of their rulers. Therefore, whenever an opportunity is offered, they will vote against their present set of rulers and in favor of another set. No amount of propaganda will prevent this.

Nevertheless, propagandists still go on propagandizing and the people who employ the propagandists still imagine that they exercise a great and decisive influence over the mind of the electorate. In reality they are just a set of inadequate psychologists busily working in the dark.

8 April 1933

Aliens at Home

Foreignness does not start across the sea, or on the other side of frontiers. It is present at home. For every human being, a considerable proportion even of his own people is foreign. He has compatriots whose way of life and modes of thought are as alien from his own as those of the most geographically distant people. Conversely, he can find in the most distant countries individuals with whom he can feel much more at home than with many of those who live under the same laws and speak the same language as he does.

Foreignness among geographical neighbors is due to a variety of causes. There is, to begin with, the foreignness caused by differences in natural endowment. Thus, to the nonmathematical or nonmusical person, mathematicians or composers are natural aliens. Their major interests are as incomprehensible to him as the head-hunting of the wild men of Borneo; and what they themselves regard as their *raison d'être* is, in his eyes, no reason at all.

Differences in natural endowment can, of course, be greatly increased by differences in upbringing. Moreover, differences of training can create foreignness even between those whose hereditary makeup is very similar. Between men of intrinsically equal ability, of whom one has gone through fifteen years of intensive academic training, and the other that minimum of elementary education on which the state insists, a gulf may be fixed at least as wide as that which separates, say, an Englishman from an Italian. Wider, indeed. For an academically trained Englishman will be much more at home with an academically trained Italian than with an English artisan who left school at 14 and has been working with his hands ever since.

Finally, of course, there is that root of all evil and some good--money. Differences in economic position are responsible (quite apart from the different kinds and amounts of education available respectively to rich and poor) for the profound differences in outlook.

Those of us who have lived in tolerable economic security are foreigners among our poorer compatriots. Whether we like it or not, we belong to a different nationality. The fact is depressing, but undeniable--a matter of common experience.

15 April 1933

Poverty and Contentment

In an extremely interesting book, called *Down and Out in Paris and London*, Mr. George Orwell has recently described from personal knowledge some of the most characteristic traits of the members of that other nation constituted by the extremely poor.

Specially interesting to me (for I have for long concerned myself with the subject of men's consciousness of time) are Mr. Orwell's remarks on the time-sense of the destitute. Unlike those of us who belong to the nation of the relatively secure, these economic foreigners in our midst seem to be untroubled by consciousness of the future. Destitution does away with next year, next month, next week, even tomorrow. The span of practically significant time is reduced to the current day. Instead of heightening anxiety, the destitute man's absolute uncertainty of what tomorrow may bring seems actually (in Mr. Orwell's experience) to abolish anxiety.

The chronically underfed man obeys almost automatically the evangelical command "to take no thought for the morrow." Worry is a product of partial security. The smallest income will produce an enormous preoccupation with the future such as the destitute do not feel--a preoccupation which is not lost (and then by no means invariably) until we reach the other end of the economic scale, where the solidly rich enjoy as much security as it is possible for any human being to have.

To say that one envies the lot of the extremely poor would be the grossest hypocrisy. But the fact remains that their condition produces one characteristic which is genuinely enviable--their capacity to ignore the future.

One of the ends at which the art of life should aim is to make it possible for people to enjoy an income without worrying about tomorrow.

18 April 1933

Into the Future

Those twentieth century Walter Paters, who write advertisements for the shipping companies, find the most astonishing things to say about Winter cruises. Their liners never prosaically "call at West Indian ports"; no, they "sail into the glamorous romance of the Spanish Main." Ships do not just "visit the Mediterranean"; they "glide from old-world Moghreb to the sophisticated chic of Monte Carlo"--or words to that effect. But what none of these stylists has put on record is the fact (to my mind the most remarkable of all) that every Winter cruise is, in a very real sense, a cruise, not merely into romance, chic and old-worldliness, but actually into the future.

My own experience of cruising is not extensive. Indeed, it consists solely of one voyage between England and the West Indies, en route for Central America.⁶¹ But though not extensive, this experience seems from the accounts of old-standing cruisers, to be entirely characteristic.

What I observed on my ship was indistinguishable, so it appeared, from what might have been observed on any one of the dozens of ships engaged in the same line of business. So that my generalization is not unjustified; every Winter cruise is a cruise into (among all the other things) the future, into the world as our grandchildren will know it. For the inhabitants of a cruising liner constitute a typical sample, not of contemporary population, but of population as it will be in half a century's time.

The people who go on cruises are, in a majority of cases, elderly. Retired business men with their wives. Pensioned civil servants and officers. Widows and aging spinsters with incomes trying to escape from Winter and loneliness in the companionableness of deck life in the tropics.

A sprinkling of invalids and the definitely aged. Interspersed, one finds a certain amount of genuine youthfulness--and a lot of that rather trying middle-aged imitation of youthfulness--which is so conspicuous a feature of modern bourgeois life.

⁶¹ This voyage provided material for *Beyond the Mexique Bay* (1934).

Not, I repeat, a typical sample of contemporary population. But according to the prophecies of all the experts on these matters, a completely characteristic sample of the population of 1980.

For in 1980 the western world will be inhabited by a population somewhat smaller than the present and comprising (owing to the simultaneous decline in birth and death rates) a good many millions fewer children and young people and a good many extra millions of the elderly and aged.

There will be a marked diminution in the number of boys and girls, and a marked increase in the number of men and especially women (since women tend to live longer than men) of sixty-five years, old and upwards.

Buy a ticket for a cruise into the future and judge for yourself.

22 April 1933

Political Plans

In time of distress our fathers would address themselves to some benevolent and supernatural being--to St. Anthony of Padua, for example, or St. Thomas of Canterbury, or St. James of Campostella. Unbelief has deprived the greater number of us of the protection of saints. But though the saints have gone, the distress remains. The present depression has made us turn--with a credulity no less superstitious than that of our ancestors--to the contemporary substitute for their saintly providence--namely, the political plan.

Are we poor? The great god Plan will enrich us. Wretched? He will make us happy. Weak, a bit criminal, sadly bewildered? With his aid we shall become strong, virtuous, full of serene certainty. In a word, the great god Plan will settle everything for every one.

I should very much like to believe in this comfortable doctrine; but, alas, I find I can't. True, the principle of political planning seems to me sound enough--at any rate, in theory. (The trouble only begins with the practical application of a plan. For--and this is the vital question--is it possible to put a plan into practice without wholesale tyranny? Will the future planned society resemble the only planned society known to history--armies? Only experience can decide; and until it has decided we are not in a position to pass a final judgment on planning.)

Let us admit that the principle of political planning is good. Does it therefore follow that a plan will do all that its more fanatical devotees seem to believe that it will do? Not so. Our superstitious plan worshipers seem to forget that the things which are Caesar's are not the same as the things which are God's--in other words, that individual goodness and happiness do not necessarily follow from efficient political and economic organization.

To the scientific observer it is sufficiently obvious that man is not exclusively a political animal; he is also a solitary animal; alone in face of the incomprehensible universe. In order to achieve happiness and goodness the individual must satisfy the demands of the solitary as well as of the political animal within him.

Planning is, in its nature, concerned with events on the plane of political and economic reality. It has nothing to do with reality on the

plane of solitude--that is to say, with the reality with which most of the great religious teachers have been concerned. But man, as we have seen, is a solitary as well as a political animal. It therefore follows that planning can never provide the individual with that perfect happiness which the more fanatical devotees of the new providence expect from it.

29 April 1933

Suffering Fools

There is a scriptural injunction that we should suffer fools gladly. I have sometimes questioned the soundness of the advice. The fool is a more dangerous animal than, at a first glance, he seems to be; in the aggregate he may actually do more mischief than the knave.

For, as Anatole France has pointed out, even the worst knaves are compelled to take periodical vacations from knaving; whereas the fool is on the job twenty-four hours a day and for three hundred and sixty-five days a year. The knave does mischief only when he sees that mischief is to his advantage. It is of the essence of knavery to know when it pays to stop being knavish.

A fool, on the contrary, can never desist from folly. Foolishness is integrally a part of him. He can no more cease from being a fool than he can cease from being a vertebrate mammal.

Foolish behavior is behavior inappropriate to the circumstances which call it forth. How harmful this inappropriate behavior may be depends on the nature of the situation. But as fools are very many and foolish without intermission, it may be, as I have said, that they actually do more mischief than the knaves, who are relatively few in number and only intermittently knavish. This being so, we are justified in questioning the wisdom of suffering fools gladly. It may be that the worst enemy of civilization is not the deliberately wicked, but the naturally stupid man.

Hell, as we all know, is paved with good intentions--the good intentions, for the most part, of fools. And in this context it is worthy of remark that that great realist and most acute psychologist, the founder of Buddhism, included stupidity among the deadly sins. Rightly, I think; for if the tree is to be known by its fruits, then the fool's stupidity must be counted, because of the blight it spreads around, as a veritable upas.

The fool's place is at the bottom of the social hierarchy, where the range of his influence is smallest. The higher his position, the greater is his influence and the greater the harm he can do. Our duty, therefore, is not to suffer the fool gladly, but to see that he is kept down where he belongs and where he can do the least possible mischief.

Self-satisfaction is one of the most ordinary symptoms of folly. Fools are too stupid to realize the full extent of their inadequacy. It takes an intelligent man to understand the difficulties of thinking clearly and to be conscious of his own imperfections. The fool takes his untested opinions for truth and believes himself the equal of any one.

6 May 1933

Primitive Minds⁶²

Some journeys are merely spatial; others are also displacements in time. Thus you can travel from New York to Guatemala City and never stray more than a little way beyond the boundaries of the twentieth century. But the six-hour motor drive from Guatemala City to Chichicastenango is travel through time as well as through the mountains of Central America.

For in Chichicastenango, among the Quiché Indians, you find yourself in another epoch: you have passed out of the modern into the primitive world. Or, rather, you have not passed INTO this world; for it is all but a psychological impossibility for the inhabitant of our age to emigrate into another. He can never be more than a time-tourist, looking on from outside at a spectacle which, however curious and beautiful (and, having just come down from the Guatemala highlands, I can vouch for its strangeness and beauty), remains essentially alien.

We say that the Quiché Indians are primitive. But what exactly do we mean by the word? Let me attempt a definition. Primitiveness of mind is not necessarily associated with congenital inferiority of mind. That some races may be on the whole less intelligent than others is very possible. But let us not forget that, the most advanced nations were primitive once upon a time. Stupid people find it harder to behave and think in a modern way than intelligent people. But, conversely, intelligent people have no difficulty in thinking and behaving primitively when the environment imposes such modes of thought and behavior.

The main differences between the primitive and the modern mind are due to training. The primitive has been trained to accept the existing order as right and the current views about the world as true. He has been taught that it is impious (and therefore, since the gods are conservative and touchy, extremely dangerous) to ask questions or make changes.

Many of my readers will have noticed that this description of the primitive applies pretty accurately to certain people of their own

⁶² Much of this essay finds its way into *Beyond the Mexique Bay* (1934). Similarly, "Gladiatorial Shows", "Science, Bananas and Men", and "Mahogany".

acquaintance. And, of course, it is true that modern communities contain a large percentage of relatively primitive individuals. The environment, however, never allows their primitiveness to be complete. However reluctantly, they are forced to admit the possibility, even the possible beneficence, of change. They have been made to believe in Progress--which means that they believe that they are not in possession of the absolute truth and the perfect ethic.

How much happier is the untouched primitive, like the Quiché! Nobody has ever disturbed his certainty of being right, of knowing exactly what's what. Physically, he may live uncomfortably; but, mentally, he inhabits a paradise of unquestioning ignorance.

13 May 1933

Primitive and Civilized

Lucifer was cast out of heaven because he had tried to make himself equal to God. But excessive ambition is not the only sin. The servant who, instead of fruitfully using, buried the talents entrusted to his care was also condemned; a man who tries to become less than what he is intrinsically and by nature (or second nature) is just as much at fault as the one who overweeningly aspires to be more than himself. There are descending as well as rising Lucifers.

In our own and the preceding generation, two great artists, Tolstoi and D.H. Lawrence, have directed all their powers to the criticism of contemporary civilization. Looking at it, the one from the point of view of an early Christian, the other from that of a pre-Christian "Natural Man," they have denounced modern man for his Lucifer-like ambition to be more than a man. At the same time, Tolstoi advocated a return to Russian peasantry and himself made determined (and quite unsuccessful) attempts to behave like a peasant. Lawrence held up the ancient Etruscans and, more tentatively, the contemporary Redskins, as models for our imitation, and the later years of his life were spent in one long flight from the modern world.

I have never been in Russia; but I have seen enough of peasants in other parts of Europe and of primitive peoples (including American Indians) in other continents, to feel convinced that both Tolstoi and Lawrence were guilty of being descending Lucifers--that is, of trying to become less than they intrinsically and naturally were. For men like these--men who are capable of using all the modern opportunities for the widening and heightening of consciousness--any attempt to limit the scope of the conscious mind is wrong.

Now, it is sufficiently obvious that such men are rare and that, as Lawrence was constantly insisting, huge numbers of people are now trying, or being forced, to live, so to speak, above their mental station--with, on the whole, very bad results for themselves and for society at large. Nevertheless, I believe that any attempt at regression from our present culture would be profoundly wrong.

Primitivism and peasantry possess certain advantages over present-day civilization: primitive societies tend to be more stable than

ours, because primitive individuals tend, on the whole, to be more content than we are.

Our business is to attempt to combine these advantages with the no less indubitably good features of civilization--knowledge, elasticity of mind, health of body and power over natural environment. To imagine that, because we are civilized, we can ignore the excellences of peasantry and primitivism is to commit the sin of the ascending Lucifer. But we are no less guilty if we forget the merits of civilization and try to descend to the level of Tolstoi's peasants or Lawrence's Red Men.

20 May 1933

Bovarism

Madame Bovary, the protagonist of Flaubert's novel, was a woman who, condemned by nature and circumstances to be one kind of person, tried to behave as though she were someone of an entirely different type. The commonplace wife of a poor country doctor, she saw herself, romantically, as a great lady--rich, brilliant, above all, passionate--the typical heroine, in a word, of all the bad novels she had ever read.

"Bovarism" (to use the word so aptly coined by the French philosopher, Jules de Gaultier), or the tendency to see oneself as somebody else, is a fundamental human trait.⁶³ We all aspire, openly or secretly, to be other than ourselves--to play a more striking part in the drama of life than that which fate has assigned to us. It is lucky that we do; for it is difficult to see how, otherwise, we could be trained to behave with any degree of decency. All systems of moral education depend, for such efficacy as they possess, on the fact that if you hold up a noble example the pupil will respond by trying more or less earnestly to act the heroic part you propose to him.

The great classic of Catholic devotion bears the significant title of *The Imitation of Christ*. All human beings are spasmodically trying to imitate somebody. The function of the educator is to see that the model shall be the best available. Bovarism (as Madame Bovary herself so lamentably demonstrated) may be directed toward the unworthiest models. That "we needs must love the highest when we see it" is unfortunately not universally true.

A remarkable man may serve as an example to the people in immediate contact with him. But in order that he may become widely influential it is not enough for him to do great deeds and be an outstanding person; he must also be put on record--made the subject matter of a piece of oral or written literature. Napoleon realized this fact so well that he was at great pains to elaborate his own legend. Deliberately, in his own life time, he turned himself into the hero of a myth--a personage in the folklore of every people, a character in the

⁶³T.S. Eliot also found the term useful--see his comments on Othello in "Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca" (1927). Later Huxley applied the term to Pierre Drieu La Rochelle. Huxley, *Letters*, 517.

fiction of every European language. Hence the extraordinary influence which he exerted on the minds of his contemporaries--an influence which persists even today.

Most great men have never troubled to fabricate their own legend, and many have never had the posthumous luck to find an effective historian. They have therefore failed to exert any prolonged or extensive influence. To be in personal contact with an individual of heroic mould is the privilege of relatively few human beings. For most contact can only be at one remove from physical reality--with the literary record of the hero. Like Mme. Bovary herself, most bovarists see themselves as characters in books.

This explains the apparently paradoxical fact that many of the most influential figures in history have never had any real existence. Fiction has probably had a greater influence in moulding men's minds than the record of fact--(one of the reasons for this is that poets and other writers of fiction are generally better artists than historians). People have behaved bravely because bovarically, they saw themselves as Achilles or Beowulf; have behaved romantically because Romeo and Francesca da Rimini⁶⁴ lost everything for love; have behaved calculatingly because they were acting in real life the part of Rastignac. There have been imitations of Clarissa Harlowe, of Stavrogin, of Lady Chatterley, even of the Green Hat and Adolphe Menjou.⁶⁵

For the purposes of the bovarist a "picture of nobody" is just as satisfactory as a picture of somebody. Most of our spiritual ancestors never lived at all.

27 May 1933

⁶⁴ In Dante's *Inferno*, v. 97. As one of the lustful, she was consigned to the second circle of hell with her lover Paolo.

⁶⁵ Stavrogin was a revolutionary in Dostoevsky's *The Possessed* (1871). His spiritual torpor and response to ennui recall Maurice Spandrell in *Point Counter Point* (1928). *The Green Hat*, a fashionable novel of 1924 by Michael Arlen (pseud. of Dikran Kouyoumdjian, 1895-1956). Adolphe Menjou (1890-1963). A sartorially elegant Hollywood actor.

Functional or Ornamental

Each generation possesses certain key words with which (so at least it fondly imagines) it can unlock all the problems of philosophy, politics and art. For a few years these ideological keys seem to function perfectly. They slip into their respective locks; they turn as though they had been oiled; the door swings open--and reveals yet another of the riddles of the universe, duly solved! But this blessed state of things is not enduring. After a certain time people begin to notice that the key doesn't seem to fit the keyhole as well as it did; that it turns with difficulty; that, finally, it doesn't cause the door to open. And perhaps, they now think, it never did cause the door to open; perhaps--nay, certainly--the apparent opening was all an illusion. Grotesque, now, to think that such a key could ever open the door!

But with this new key...And somebody appears with another all-explaining word. And the new generation enthusiastically pushes it into the lock, turns and is triumphantly convinced that the door flies open. The old process has started all over again.

The key word which at the present time seems to open most of the artistic doors is "functional." To be good, buildings, furnishings, utensils must merely express their respective functions. Down with "fussy ornament"; up with the "engineer's job," with "stream lines," with "naked economy." And so on and so forth. Every article about modern architecture and decoration is fairly stuffed with such phrases--phrases which can all be expressed and summed up by the one magical open sesame, "functional"--the key word that explains the entire mystery of decorative art.

Sooner or later, of course, this key will cease to open anything. So far as I am concerned it has already done so. I can no longer believe, as once (enthusiastically) I did, that the word "functional" sums up the whole duty of the designer. No ornament may be better than bad ornament. But is there any reason to suppose that it is better than good ornament? In the past, most certainly, nobody would ever have thought so. The buildings and furnishings of every age distinguished for its artistic accomplishment have always been highly ornamented; and it was precisely in these ornaments that the spirit of each epoch found its

most characteristic expression. For the designers of the past a purely functional and ornamentless art was unthinkable--was *Hamlet* without the Prince of Denmark.

Why should this state of things have changed? According to the modern functionalist, it is because of the invention of new mechanical techniques. We have to use machines. Machines are not inventive craftsmen. Therefore (the logic is a bit wobbly) the absence of ornament is a sign of artistic merit. What has happened, in a word, is that we have made an aesthetic virtue out of an economic necessity--or merely an economic convenience. Like the tailless fox in the fable we have proclaimed that our altogether abnormal lack of a taste for ornament and of an ornamental style is a mark of superiority.

My own belief is that, on the contrary, it is a symptom of some as yet undefined lesion of the modern soul--some obscure psychological disease, for which mankind will soon have to set about discovering a remedy.

3 June 1933

The Child as Artist

In Mexico, the other day, I was shown an exhibition of paintings by boys and girls in the elementary schools. I left the exhibition, as I always leave exhibitions, feeling rather depressed--depressed not by the badness, but by the extraordinary goodness of the work exhibited. Yes, the extraordinary goodness. For if you leave children more or less to themselves--and, in Mexico, most of the art teaching seems to consist, sensibly enough, of providing paints and paper, and leaving the pupils to do the rest--they will, in every large number of cases, produce pictures of a really remarkable beauty. They are handicapped, of course, by their ignorance of technical methods and by their lack of manual skill. But their sensibility to color and rhythm is often exquisitely acute; and they display a power of composition and a feeling for pattern which mark them as genuine artists.

I have seen exhibitions of children's paintings in England, in France, in Germany, and now in Mexico; and wherever the teachers had not forced their pupils to make laborious imitations of some kind of adult art, there was always an astonishingly high percentage of charming and original compositions. It is precisely this fact which I find so depressing. For if you were to collect the paintings of the same children fifteen years later, when they had grown to be men and women, you would find, in all probability, no pictures giving evidence of the smallest aesthetic sensibility or power.

Much the same holds true even of most exhibitions by professional painters. Visit any academy or salon in any country of the world--out of the thousands of paintings hanging on the walls, how lamentably few will display any quality whatsoever beyond technical knowledge and manual skill! And yet these pictures are the work of professionals--of the tiny minority of men and women who feel that they have a vocation to be painters.

A walk through any one of the great museums of art makes one realize that, at any given epoch, the number of first-rate or even interestingly second-rate adult artists is remarkably small. Whereas a visit to any exhibition of paints by boys and girls brings the conviction that the number of good child artists is at all times remarkably large.

This means only one thing--that in the ten years which separate the end of childhood from complete physical maturity, the vast majority of human beings grow out of being artists and become aesthetic morons.

This dismal fact is due in part, no doubt, to the education of the adolescent, who tends to grow up (at any rate in the modern West) in a world where aesthetic considerations are completely ignored. But training will account only partly for the phenomenon. Even during the epochs when the general interest in art was most intense and when artistic talent was most highly regarded by society at large--even at such times the number of good artists was strictly limited. If favorable circumstances had power to prolong the artistic genius of childhood into maturity, then the painters of the Italian High Renaissance should all have been as good as Raphael. But, as a matter of historical fact, bad painters vastly outnumbered good painters, even in Raphael's day.

Whence we are forced to conclude that, for most children, becoming a worse artist is one of the normal developments of adolescence, like growing hair on the chin or developing a figure. No wonder if I find exhibitions of children's paintings a bit depressing!

10 June 1933

Force and Persuasion

In his recent broadcast to the American people, President Roosevelt touched--very briefly, as was inevitable--on what is perhaps the most important and fundamental of all political problems--the problem of compulsion. Two questions present themselves to anyone who considers the problem of compulsion. How far is the use of force justified by political success? And how far and in what circumstance is the use of force morally justified?

That "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church" is not always true. If there are not too many martyrs and if the persecutors are prepared to use force ruthlessly, then the church will disappear. Nevertheless, there are definite limits to the successful use of force. The first of these limits is automatically imposed in the very act of using compulsion. Let us take a hypothetical example. Here is a ruler who has some particular end in view and who decides to employ force in order to attain that end. But the employment of force on any considerable scale is liable to change all the existing sociological circumstances to such an extent that the goal, when it is attained, turns out to be quite different from the goal originally aimed at when the circumstances were different. Good ends do not justify bad means, because (among other reasons) the bad means are apt to change circumstances in such a way that the good ends, when reached, are no longer good.

There are also external limitations to the successful use of force. When the number of potential martyrs is very great, the practical difficulties involved in compelling them for any length of time to do things against their will become almost insuperable, "You can do everything with bayonets except sit on them." Prolonged violence is almost a contradiction in terms.

In an ideal world force would be unnecessary. The instruments of government would be persuasion and the appeal to reason. Political progress may be defined as the movement away from force toward persuasion.

Alas, this movement has not gone very far; we are still a long way from the ideal world. Man is not entirely rational, nor exclusively

gregarious. He is to a great extent a creature of instinct; and many of his instincts are anti-social. When the manifestations of these anti-social tendencies become dangerous, they require to be suppressed--forcefully.

Regarding the anti-social nature of certain activities, public opinion is almost unanimous. We are all agreed, for example, that murder, theft and swindling should be suppressed by force. Most people will even admit (though it goes against the grain to do it) that a government is justified in using force to make the governed pay their taxes. In a word, crime and tax evasion are generally regarded as anti-social.

But there are other activities, about which public opinion is not so definitely decided. Thus, there are some people who believe that the consumption of alcohol is an anti-social activity which should be suppressed by force. There are others of a contrary opinion. Hence the disastrous story of prohibition.

To use force in defiance of any considerable minority, which regards its employment as morally unjustifiable, is difficult and in the long run dangerous for the users. Realizing this fact, the Communists in Russia have combined the use of force with an intensive campaign of persuasion. They are trying to educate all Russians into agreeing that the private ownership of property is anti-social. If they succeed, less force will have to be used; and when force becomes necessary public opinion will approve its employment.

The President's reference to compulsion occurred in that part of his speech which dealt with the problem of co-operation. Industrial co-operation (so ran the implied argument) is essential to economic recovery. Failure to co-operate is therefore an offense against society. Accordingly, whatever minority refuses to co-operate will be forced to do so under the threat of punishment. To my mind, this is perfectly sound. But it remains to be seen whether a public, educated through generations to believe in the virtues of almost unlimited competition, will be able to reverse its judgment overnight and condemn wholeheartedly what it once approved.

Force will certainly have to be used against non-co-operators. But if it is to be used successfully over a long period, its use (so it seems to me) should be accompanied by a vigorous appeal to reason, an intensive educational campaign of persuasion.

17 June 1933

Animal Imperialism

"They will send no armed force of whatever nature across their frontiers," so wrote the President in his message to the rulers of the world. And let us hope and strive and pray that the ideal of world peace expressed in that message may soon be realized. There is, however, one form of invasion which no idealism, no appeal to reason and the better feelings will ever be able to suppress. Only by the most ruthless exercise of force, by a more than Machiavellian cunning, can men hope to stem the tides of the sinister imperialism of which I am thinking. And, contrariwise, even the best-intentioned, the most truly Christian people may be responsible, all unwittingly, for sending across their frontiers armies as destructive as those of Attila and Jinghiz Khan.

At this very moment, for example, England and Austria are the victims of an American invasion, which threatens to bring ruin to entire provinces. Even while President Roosevelt was making his appeal for peace certain of his compatriots were busy in Central Europe and the western counties of England on a campaign of wholesale destruction. And what makes the matter worse is that these compatriots of the Presidential peace-maker are doing their work of frightfulness without his knowledge and that, though citizens of the Republic, they are wholly unamenable to his authority. These American imperialists are musk rats.

The story of their overseas activities is a curious and alarming one. Less than ten years ago a few pairs of musk rats escaped from a Central European fur farm. Being strangers to the country they had no natural enemies to check the geometrically progressive increase of their numbers. Today, it is calculated, there are several million of musk rats in what used to be the Austrian Empire.

These American invaders do a certain amount of damage to crops; but if this were all there would be no very serious cause of alarm. They are dangerous for other reasons. Living as they do in waterside burrows, they have, with their tunnelling, so weakened the banks of certain rivers as to cause floods, waterlogging of hitherto dry ground, deflection of waters from their bed. If allowed to go on unchecked

these imperialists from across the ocean would soon reduce the Danube basin to one vast uninhabitable swamp.

On a smaller scale the same thing is happening along the banks of rivers in the west of England. Two or three years ago a pair of musk rats were let loose and now there are tens of thousands of them, all doing their best to spread ruin through the countryside. The authorities are counter attacking with energy. But the fight promises to be long, laborious and extremely costly.

Another American invader of rural England is the gray squirrel. Introduced some twenty years ago, this animal has now made itself master of most of the woodlands in the south of the country. The native red squirrel has been driven out by the larger and more ferocious foreigner--much to the regret of farmers. For the red squirrel did no appreciable damage to crops, whereas the gray is a wholesale destroyer of fruit buds.

I have spoken of America as the source of dangerous animal imperialisms; but she is also the victim. The latest wave of invasion seems to be that of the termites, or white ants, hungrily engaged in destroying woodwork in the neighborhood of New York. These destructive termites are inhabitants of the Tropics, and it is supposed that they may have been introduced with cargo coming by sea. It is equally possible, however, that some perverse entomologist may have released a living queen termite just for the fun of seeing whether the animals would flourish in these higher latitudes.

An idiotic thing to do; but, then, the history of animal imperialism records dozens of such idiocies. The jack rabbit in Australia and the gray squirrel in England, to name but two examples, were introduced into their new homes deliberately. Animal imperialism has been made possible, in many cases, only by human imbecility.

22 June 1933

Scapegoats

I forgot how the discussion started. All I remember is that there, all of a sudden, we were in hot argument about the relative merits of the domestic animals. Two of the party stood up violently for dogs; another, with all the enthusiasm of a religious fanatic, for Siamese cats. Then, in a very serious tone, "What about the ass?" said the economist of the company; and he began to propound a theory to the effect that all past civilizations had been based upon the donkey.

Fortunately, we were able to suppress him in mid-career by pointing out that the inhabitants of pre-Columbian America had got on very nicely without ever having seen a pair of ears longer than a man's. The economist subsided. Then somebody spoke up for the cow, and somebody else for the horse, and a third for the nitrogen-forming bacillus on the roots of leguminous plants. And, finally, as the discussion was now degenerating into frivolity, I raised my voice in favor of the scapegoat.

The scapegoat! I had meant to say something entirely pointless and ridiculous. But the moment I had pronounced the words I realized that, without meaning to, I had made a remark of the utmost profundity. For the scapegoat is the most useful of domestic animals--the only one that no people has ever been able to do without. Here were those ancient Mayas and Toltecs, for example; they had been able to live without the horse, the cow, the sheep and the ass. But, like the Hebrews at the other end of the world--like all the people known to history--they had found the scapegoat indispensably necessary. True, the scapegoats, on whose backs they loaded the sins of the people, were not horned and hairy, like the creatures which the Hebrews drove out into the wilderness.

The Central American scapegoat was human; and instead of being driven into the desert he was sacrificed on the top of a pyramid. But the principle was identical. A living creature had been symbolically loaded with the misdeeds and misfortunes of an entire community and sent off with his pack of troubles into kingdom come. After which the senders had felt, for a time at any rate, much better--better in mind, body and estate. And when they stopped feeling better they could sacrifice another scapegoat.

Even today the scapegoat continues to fulfill his immemorial function. The Germany of 1933 provides us with overwhelming proofs that he is still the most useful of the domestic animals. Performing a magical rite as old as history, Hitler has symbolically loaded all the sins and misfortunes, accumulated by the German people during the last nineteen years, on to the backs of the Jews. Staggering under the burden, these unfortunate scapegoats have been beaten and booted into the wilderness. And for the moment, no doubt, large numbers of the more simple minded of the German people are feeling much better for having participated in the performance--are sincerely believing that the country has somehow been saved by what they have done.

Pathetically come superstition! It is only the thought of the sufferings endured by the unfortunate human scapegoats that prevents one from bursting out into Rabelaisian laughter.

1 July 1933

Bookmaker and Author

Two men. One is a bookmaker, the other a maker of books. The bookmaker runs into a patch of luck on Epsom Downs (or, if it is shares he gambles in rather than horses, on the Stock Exchange) and finds himself in possession of a nice little capital. If he places this capital on deposit at his bank or invests it in industrial stock or buys a piece of land with it he and his descendants will be legally entitled to receive interest or rent till Doomsday; and if he sells his shares or real estate the capital will be his to do what he likes with.

How different is the case of the maker of books! He writes and, at the end of a good many months of pretty hard work, produces a novel. This novel is capital, which may or may not earn interest. Let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that it finds a publisher and a public--in other words, that the author's capital turns out to be interest bearing. Let us also suppose the public's desire to read the book persists over a long period, that the capital continues to bear interest even after the author himself is dead. Will not the author's descendants continue to be rich to the end of time, like the descendants of our fortunate bookmaker? The answer is NO. After a certain period, varying in different countries, but nowhere exceeding fifty or sixty years, the capital passes out of the hands of the author's legal heirs and becomes common property.

Here, then, are two classes of property--artistic on the one hand and non-artistic on the other. They are treated in radically different ways. To the producers and subsequent owners of the first kind the law concedes a brief possession: the artist has a little more than a life interest in his capital. But the owners of any other kind of property are owners, in theory, for all time. Why this invidious distinction? The question admits of no logically adequate answer. The only reasons for our discrimination between bookmakers and the maker of books are historical reasons, which have nothing to do with logic or general principles.

I happen to be a maker of books and so take a more than merely academic interest in this discrimination between the people of my profession and the other property owners. It seems to me absurd and

inequitable that we should receive a different treatment at the hands of society. Common justice demands that all owners of capital should be treated alike. This does not mean that I as a maker of books desire to be treated as bookmakers and other property owners are treated now. On the contrary, I think that it would be for the good of society at large if they were treated as I am. The theory of the eternal sacredness of an owner's rights to non-artistic property is responsible, at least in part, for our present miseries.

The world is staggering under an intolerable burden of old debts; and it goes on staggering because it has been taught that the rights of the property owners who advanced the loans are eternally sacred. It is time that this teaching was changed. The rights to artistic property are temporary rights: there is no reason in equity why the rights to non-artistic property should be permanent--and many practical reasons why they should not. Most governments have already gone part of the way to admitting these obvious facts. (Every increase in inheritance taxes, every deliberate inflation of currency is a confession that property rights are not the sacred and eternal things of nineteenth century theory.) It is time now to go the whole way--to bring the bookmaker into line with the maker of books.

8 July 1933

Anthropology at Home

Anthropology... The word conjures up visions of the wild men of Borneo, of pygmies scuttling through the African bush. For the ordinary educated European or American, "anthropology" is something which superior people practice on inferior ones. A kind of spiritual vivisection of lower animals.

That this should be the popular connotation of the word is historically inevitable. Men tend to take their particular environment for granted. Their curiosity is excited only by the strange and the remote... Thus, people have always been more curious about the behavior of lunatics than of their fellow normals. There were professional alienists generations before there were professional psychologists. A science of madness has been in existence for quite a long time; it is the foundation on which the modern science of normal psychology has been built. There had to be lunatics, in order that the sane should begin to pay attention to the workings of their own minds.

It has been the same with anthropology. People went to outlandish places to study the queer habits of the natives. A science of savage behavior was established. This is now serving as a basis for the as yet almost non-existent science of civilized behavior. The human mind being what it is, anthropology could not begin at home; but it will undoubtedly end there. And the sooner it does so, the better. Our reformers are all politicians and economists, never anthropologists. Hence their inefficiency.

Reformers who are not anthropologists tend to fall into the cardinal error of supposing that all the evils in the world can just be abolished--swatted like flies and swept into the dust bin. Now, some evils can be simply abolished. For example, most slums could easily be got rid of; it is just a question of spending enough money. True, there is in every population a small percentage of congenitally feeble-minded people, who can turn even the best housing estate into a slum. These would have somehow to be supervised and, if necessary, coerced. The rest of the present slum population would be only too thankful to live unslummily. Most people have no desire for slums; slums give them no

deep instinctive satisfactions. That is why slums can easily be abolished.

There are other evils, however, from which people unquestionably get an enormous "kick." Reformers who abolish these evils, without offering an alternative kick-producer, may actually do more harm than good. Thus, the suppression of head-hunting in Melanesia led directly to the depopulation of the islands. This horrible activity was the core, so to speak, of the local religious life; the natives derived from it their profoundest psychological satisfactions. Cut off from it, they were literally bored to death.

The modern colonial administrator, who has been trained in anthropology, is careful not to force through these destructive reforms. He does not abolish outright, but tries to find harmless substitutes for the evil. Thus, in New Guinea, certain tribes have been persuaded to use boars' heads in their ceremonies instead of human heads. They get all the "kick" of headhunting and religion, without doing any harm.

The same principle should be applied to the evils of civilized life. Nationalism, imperialism, war--these are the three great modern evils. But these evils, it is obvious, provide huge numbers of civilized people with profound instinctive satisfactions. Our reformers try to abolish them outright, without making any attempt to find alternative sources of satisfaction. Their intentions are excellent; but they achieve very little; and what little they do achieve is of doubtful value. Social idealism is a great and noble force--but a force which requires to be canalized by science. Hitherto, the only sciences used by idealists have been politics and economics. It is time that they added anthropology to their list.

15 July 1933

Mahogany

When I was a boy, there was hardly a respectable family of my acquaintance which did not eat off mahogany, sit on mahogany, sleep in mahogany. Mahogany was a symbol of economic solidity; it proclaimed the man of substance and, incidentally, of taste. Today I can hardly think of a single house with any pretension to taste in which mahogany plays more than the most casual and inconspicuous part. My friends eat off glass and metal, sit on metal and leather and sleep on mattresses that are almost innocent of enclosing bedsteads. If they use wood for their furniture, they use one of the lightcolored varieties, or else a soft wood painted to harmonize with the prevailing color scheme. Never mahogany. The dark, rich wood, so much beloved of our fathers, is now most hopelessly out of fashion.

There, so far as the historian of taste is concerned, the matter ends. Not, however, for the social historian. A recent journey through the Caribbean gave me the opportunity for playing, in the drama of mahogany, the second of these parts. In British Honduras I was made aware of some of the social effects of the change in our taste. Light woods, metal and glass are now in fashion for furnishing.

The result of this new mode is that, among the colored population of British Honduras, the death rate from tuberculosis has risen. True, the unfashionableness of mahogany in Europe is not the only reason for the fashionableness of consumption in Honduras. A reduced demand from America for chewing gum is also a contributory cause. For chewing gum and mahogany were the two staples of the Honduran export trade. When less chicle and fewer mahogany logs leave the country, its inhabitants have less money to buy food--therefore less power to resist disease. Tubercle takes its opportunity, and the State medical service is kept busy.

The inadequacy of man's imagination and his immense capacity for ignorance are notorious. We act habitually without knowing what the more distant results of our actions are likely to be--without even much caring to know. And our ability to imagine how other people think and feel, or how we should think and feel in some hypothetical future situation, is strictly limited. These are doubtless defects in our

spiritual makeup; but they are defects which carry great biological advantage. For any considerable increase in our capacity for knowing and imagining would be likely to have a paralyzing effect on our vital activities.

Take, for example, this little matter of mahogany. If we knew all the effects upon the people of Honduras of our choice of some other wood; if we could vividly imagine what it feels like to be chronically underfed, to die slowly of consumption; if our sympathy with them were what the word literally means, a genuine "with suffering"--should we then have the courage to buy anything but mahogany?

And if we bought nothing but mahogany, what about the people who live by the sale of other woods? Knowing the effect on them, imaginatively realizing their sufferings, how could we resist their appeal? The final result, for us, would be a hopeless neurasthenia.

What is true of mahogany is true of anything else about which we can make a choice. Excess of knowledge and imagination leads to paralysis. (The tragedy of this excess has been written by Shakespeare in *Hamlet*.) The capacity to choose depends on ignorance, the power to act on a lack of imagination. If we can do things, it is because we never know what we are doing and are happily unable to imagine how the results of doing will affect other people or our future selves.

Let us be grateful for the darkness in which Destiny has decreed that we shall live.

22 July 1933

Fiction and Fact

Fact is stranger than fiction. Why? Because fiction is always appropriate, whereas fact is just fact and merely occurs, brutally, regardless of its relevance to the people and things in its neighborhood. It would not, for example, be at all appropriate if the Archbishop of Canterbury were suddenly to roll in full canonicals, down the steps of St. Paul's. But a carelessly dropped banana skin might easily cause this indecorous possibility to become a fact--a fact much stranger than most of those recorded in plays or novels.

A writer of fiction is an artist with a certain philosophy. True, he may be a bad artist and his philosophy may be silly; but the fact remains that some art and philosophy are essentially processes of organization. The human mind is so constituted that it cannot bear to contemplate the (from our point of view) largely meaningless happenings whose undifferentiated flux constitutes the world of our immediate experience. It demands sense, meaning, clear-cut limits and distinctions.

Art and philosophy have been created to supply this fundamental need of the mind. Philosophers and artists take a bit of the chaotic and irrational world of phenomena and deliberately shape it into something that has meaning; something explainable and rational; something possessing, what reality never has, a definite outline, a beginning and an end. Art and philosophy are the transposition of the vague melody of our experience into another key--the key of the humanly significant and the rationally explicable.

In order to make this transposition artists and philosophers resort (in all good faith and with the best intentions) to a form of intellectual swindling. Certain elements of reality are more obviously meaningless (by human standards) than others. How shall they be rationalized and made significant? By a very simple process. Artists and philosophers just exclude them from their field of vision. They carry on as though these elements were simply not there. Fact is stranger than fiction: no wonder!

The irrational element in reality most sedulously ignored by fiction writers and philosophers is the element which man finds nearest to

himself--his own physiology. A Martian, whose only knowledge of humanity was derived from its novelists, dramatist and metaphysicians, might easily suppose that (except for death and a little sex) there was no such thing as physiology. He would be led to believe, for example, that individual happiness depended exclusively on the attainment of consciously pursued ends; that to be virtuous was just a question of will power, and that will power was a property of the soul, absolute and unconditioned. Such is the teaching of fiction and philosophy.

Not, however, of experience. Actual experience teaches that we are often happy or miserable without reason, even against reason; that some people are good from the same cause as they are fair-haired or dark--because they were born so; that wickedness is as often a symptom of bad health as of bad will, and finally that the will itself (whatever that abstraction from reality may be) is by no means an independent absolute, but is dependent on the state of the body. Viewed from outside, the lives of perhaps the majority of men and women seem intolerable. And yet suicide is rare. People go on living because their bodies often function with a high degree of efficiency and because, when bodies do so function, minds are conscious of a quiet well-being.

Fiction writers and philosophers have preferred to ignore this fact and to write as though all experience were humanly significant and had some rationally adequate justification. Starting with certain ideas of human dignity, they find that fact is humiliatingly senseless and irrational. They replace the real by the appropriate.

29 July 1933

Discipline

All "advanced" systems of education are distinguished by one characteristic feature--the relaxation of discipline. In so far as this has meant the abolition of that wholesale torture of children which the older schoolmasters regarded as indispensable, this slackening of disciplinary tension is wholly excellent. But discipline is not synonymous with torture.

Restrictions can be enforced patterns of conduct imposed, without any resort to the lash. The new systems of education have not been content to abolish torture; they have gone much further and essayed the abolition, so far as that was possible, of all restriction and active imposition. The child's personality (so runs their argument) is sacred; he has an inalienable right to be himself and happy. Repression and the imposition of alien-conduct patterns rob him of this right by painfully distorting his personality. Therefore repression and imposition must be abolished.

What the result of this abolition will be remains to be seen. The soundness of educational theories can be assessed only in the light of experience--or, better, of scientifically controlled experiment. In order to decide whether the disciplinarians are right or wrong, we should have to take two large samples of children, in process of being educated, one according to the old, the other according to new methods. Following these sample individuals through adult life, we should compare their careers and observe which responded the more successfully to the emergencies of existence.

Such an experiment has not been made, and if it started now could give no conclusive result for another half century. We must therefore be content with guesswork, supported by the teachings (always so hard to interpret) of history.

Guessing in the light of history, some observers have surmised that the modern relaxation of discipline, while making for the happiness of individuals during childhood and after, may turn out badly for society at large. Long drawn repression and imposition can undoubtedly help men to master their natural impulses. Disciplined people will resist fatigue and pain, will conquer fear and sloth and impatience.

(Incidentally, men can also be trained to conquer compassion, love and all the natural pieties.)

If society is relatively stable, it is because great numbers of men and women have been so conditioned by discipline that it seems "natural" to them to perform thoroughly "unnatural" acts. The remarkable toughness of the bourgeoisie (a toughness which, in the highly organized countries of the West, has enabled the class to survive all the revolutionary and economic shocks of the last hundred years) is probably due to the fact that the individual bourgeois child has, up till now had to undergo a much longer and more systematic disciplining than the average proletarian. Relaxation of discipline may lead to a softening of the bourgeois fibre and so to the downfall of the class and perhaps to a general instability of society.

To a Freudian this conclusion will be quite unacceptable. For according to the Freudian philosophy of history, social instability is due precisely to that repressive discipline which we have been regarding hitherto as the principal stabilizer of society. The unconscious self is in constant revolt against disciplinary repression, and finds in war and other forms of anarchy a refuge from the tyranny of ideals. That there is a certain amount of truth in this contention seems unquestionable. But to say exactly how much will be possible only when there is a society of unrepressed individuals to compare with our present society of the repressed.

Another argument in favor of relaxing discipline is this: People with strictly conditioned reflexes may be valuable citizens in a fixed environment. But where the environment is changing, mental elasticity is essential. The anti-disciplinarians claim that they are working, not only for individual happiness, but also for the good of society at large.

To decide between these various contentions is, I repeat, impossible in the present state of knowledge. All we can do is to set forth the opposed arguments, and, having done so, to watch the experiments that are being made with an open and always critical mind.

8 August 1933

Apocalypse

The Early Christians lived in the hourly expectation of the Second Advent. But as the years, the decades, and finally the centuries, passed, this hope of a suddenly miraculous transformation of the world died out among all but a small minority of the faithful. Few Christians now believe that the prophecies contained in the *Book of Revelation* are likely to be literally fulfilled. But the apocalyptic spirit has survived this particular scepticism--lives on even where there is a total lack of religious faith.

Many professed atheists firmly believe that the Kingdom of God will be made manifest on earth in their own lifetime. True, they do not call it the Kingdom of God; but in all essentials the Perfect State of their Socialist or Fascist imagination is indistinguishable from the transfigured earth of the Early Christian millennium. It is a world where truth, justice and mercy everywhere prevail; where reason dominates the passions; where men are exclusively their better selves.

The Early Christians believed that this transformation would be accomplished by the direct intervention of a higher power. Their modern counterparts smile at this ingenuous faith; they believe in Organization. The world is out of joint; but Organization will set it right--at once, in our time.

Time, our time, continues to flow, and still, in the words of the hymn, the cry goes up, "How long?" "After the third five-year plan," the organizers reply. "Or perhaps, at any rate, by 1950."

In the light of history, their answers seem rather painfully optimistic. The Stoics had proclaimed the brotherhood of man long before the appearance of Christianity, but slavery was not abolished in the United States till the middle of the nineteenth century, and in Hitler's Germany the Jews are being treated as though they belonged to some species of lower animals.

"*Dona nobis pacem*" the Church has been repeating for the last sixty generations; give peace in our time. We have got as far as a Disarmament Conference--but not as far as Disarmament. One could multiply such examples almost indefinitely. There is hardly a single reform carried out during the past century which has not the realization

of an ideal originally formulated far back in the past. Between the formulation of an ideal and its realization there is always an interval--very often of centuries.

Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics were the people ultimately responsible for the abolition of slavery in the West. But the causes were twenty centuries removed from the final effects. The millennium, if ever it comes, will steal gradually upon the world; the Advent will be a process, not sudden, but of age-long duration and prepared for by centuries of what seemed, at the time, unpractical thinking and unsuccessful action.

The value of an ideal is that it tends to create the social and psychological conditions in which its practical realization becomes possible--at any rate in part. This creation of favorable conditions has always been extremely slow. Perhaps it can be accelerated--this remains to be seen. At the present time the apocalyptic hope of sudden transformations is baseless. But this does not mean that such hopes are without value. They impel the hoppers to do work which, though apparently doomed to failure in the present, may bear good fruit at some future time.

19 August 1933

Proletarian Literature

The protagonists of all the ancient epics and dramas were invariably kings and queens, princes and princesses, the great ones of the earth. Today hereditary nobility cuts no ice. Oedipus the Tyrant, King Agamemnon, the Prince of Denmark and their like have disappeared from our plays and novels. Imaginative literature still deals with the great ones of the earth, but the great ones are no longer nobles. They are financiers, manufacturers, professional men. The heroines are as solidly of the prosperous bourgeoisie as the heroes. Dr. Ann Vickers has stepped into the shoes of Queen Dido, and the fatal Princess Helen of Troy has made way for the middle-class vamp of the modern novel and picture play.

The bourgeoisie is now the ruling class; and since our literature aspires, as every other literature has always aspired, to represent the life of the ruling class, its heroes and heroines are bourgeois.

Why have writers always chosen to deal with the ruling classes? The question can be answered, at any rate partially, in simple economic terms. Till very recently the ruling classes were the only ones in a position to pay for literature--writers must live; they have therefore written for and about their paymasters. Again it is difficult to be a maker of literature unless you have a sound literary education. Now, a sound education has always been an expensive luxury, reserved to members of the privileged classes and to those few individuals from the unprivileged strata on whom the rulers thought it worth while to bestow the gift.

Thus it comes about that most writers have either belonged, or else have been brought up as though they belonged, to the ruling class. They write about the sort of life they have been used to or have been taught to admire.

Here certainly are two good reasons for the non-existence of that "proletarian literature" of which Marx-conscious young writers are always so wistfully talking, and which they never produce. But there are, I believe, other reasons--reasons of a psychological, rather than an economic, order. One of these reasons is to be found in the fact that, by most people, literature is esteemed only in so far as it provides wish

fulfilments. Most human beings desire to be happier, freer, better and more heroic than they actually are. They turn to the world of literature as to a place in which this richer life can be vicariously enjoyed. But if literature reflects only the too familiar misery of proletarian existence, then no wishes are fulfilled--they are balked of their vicarious enjoyment.

Significantly enough, the literature actually consumed by the proletariat belongs to the type of the old-fashioned fairy story.

Dick Whittington, in the modern fiction magazine, always makes his fortune and Cinderella invariably finds her Prince Charming. The inhabitants of the world of literature must be members of the privileged classes, because it is only among the privileged that the unprivileged can hope to find wish fulfilments.

We see, then, that there is a psychological reason why readers should demand ruling-class heroes. The writers also appreciate them for a reason that may best be expressed in the words of Samuel Butler:

"That old, philosophic enemy, matter, the inherently and essentially evil, still hangs about the neck of the poor and strangles him; but to the rich matter is immaterial; the elaborate organization of his extra-corporeal system has freed his soul."⁶⁶

But where there is no possibility of momentous choice, drama, as we know it, can hardly exist--in other words, no drama without freedom. When souls are, "clogged and hampered by matter, which sticks fast about them as treacle to the wings of a fly," how can there be much choice? The unprivileged live under a permanent compulsion. One of the privileges they have lost is that of taking their place in the world of drama and epic. Realizing this, the exponents of "proletarian literature" demand the liquidation (to use a Russian term) of all heroes and heroines. "Proletarian literature" must deal, not with individuals, but the generality, with mass movements.

Can imaginative literature dispense with the free (therefore privileged) individual? It still remains to be seen.

26 August 1933

⁶⁶Samuel Butler, *Erewhon or Over the Range* (1872; East Brunswick, NJ: Associated Presses of America, 1981), 204.

The Pleasures of Dieting

Only one souvenir of my Springtime visit to New York did I bring home with me, and that was a diet. Enthusiastic friends converted me while I was there, and now all my meals are an esoteric ritual. If I eat, meat, no starches or sugars pass my lips; if carbohydrates, then perish the very thought of proteins or acid fruits! Such, in broad outline, are the main principles of this diet--principles which I have strictly observed ever since my return.

Now, I am certainly no worse for my diet; but, on the other hand, I am certainly no better. My health remains very much what it always has been--not wildly robust, but solid enough for my particular purposes: inadequate, no doubt, for an ascent of Mount Everest or for Sir Isaac Newton's eighteen hours of daily study and calculation, but sufficiently good to permit me to undertake each week some thirty-five hours of writing, twenty-five of reading, ten or twelve of painting and ten of swimming and walking.

If I stick to these figures, I find that I can manage well enough; and my experience seems to show that I manage as well off my diet as on it. Ten hours of daily writing and reading instead of eight are just as fatiguing now as they were in the old, unregenerate days of beefsteaks and chips and buttered eggs on toast. But in spite of this I propose to stick to my diet. For, though of no perceptible physiological benefit, it gives me, I find, considerable psychological satisfactions.

There was a time when it seemed to me incredible that intelligent Hebrews should continue to observe dietary taboos instituted by their uncivilized ancestors in remotest antiquity. But now I have learnt to understand them better. Quite apart from all considerations of piety or racial pride, the observance of taboos is, psychologically, its own reward. The act of deliberately refraining is pleasurable in itself--and is pleasurable even when one refrains from something that is recognized as being potentially delightful.

For an orthodox Jew the pleasure of not eating oysters or crabs may be greater than the pleasure to be derived from the flavor of shell fish. True, it will be a different kind of pleasure. The pleasure of refraining can never be a pleasure of the senses. One cannot taste a

consciousness of strength, or smell a feeling of superiority. Nevertheless, the feeling of strength, which follows an act of deliberate abstention, and the consciousness of superiority to other people, which is the complement of this feeling, may be sources of pleasure almost as intense and much more lasting than those of the senses.

We may commiserate with orthodox Hebrews because (though licensed to consume locusts) they are not permitted the flesh of rabbits, pigs and lobsters. But our pity will probably be waste for I suspect they get more satisfaction from abstaining from bacon than the rest of us ever derive from eating it.

Certainly my own efforts to keep the proteins apart from the carbohydrates provide me with an astonishing amount of harmless fun. Meals, for me, are no longer the purely physiological concerns that they used to be. They now require a considerable expense of mental and moral, as well as of mere masticatory and digestive power. First of all I have to think about the chemistry of the food before me and of my own internal workings. After this intellectual effort comes the moral struggle with temptation. This slice of mutton, for example, would be greatly improved by a few potatoes. But potatoes are tabooed; it is my duty to abstain. And when I have abstained, what a glow of conscious virtue runs through me! I am warmed by it, as though by a glass of rum. And when I compare myself to the self-indulgent or uninitiated persons who fall for the forbidden tubers, how good I feel in my superior strength and enlightenment!

Life, if we were wholly free, would be very boring, indeed. Arbitrary limitations of freedom, such as taboos, are like the fleas on a dog; they keep us busy, they stimulate our minds and exercise our will-power. There is, of course, a great danger for those who really believe in the taboos they observe. But a taboo like my diet, accepted for its own sake, in spite of complete scepticism--this is not only quite harmless: it is positively beneficial.

2 September 1933

Science, Bananas and Men

In the island of Trinidad there is an Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture, where research is carried out and experts are trained, not only for the West Indies, but for the whole of the tropical part of the British Empire. It is an excellent institution, and much good work has been and is being done there.

When I visited the place, a little while ago, the most important of the many lines of research then being followed was one on bananas. The banana plantations of the Caribbean have, for some years now, been ravaged by so-called Panama Disease. Eradication of the plague, once it is firmly established in any area, is all but impossible. There is only one entirely satisfactory method of combating Panama Disease, and that is to produce, by suitable cross breeding, a new variety of banana which shall be immune to the infection.

This new variety would have to combine such immunity with all the virtues of the *Gros Michel* banana of commerce. It would have to be large, thick skinned, handsome in appearance and prolific. Incidentally (though this is always the last thing that fruit growers seem to think of) it would have to possess a fine flavor. After some years of research, the geneticists of the Imperial College seem to have produced the ideal banana. It can't catch Panama Disease, it travels well, it tastes better (for I was privileged to eat the fruit of their labor) than most of the bananas now sold in Europe or the United States. In course of time, no doubt, this new creation will gradually displace the *Gros Michel* from its present position of undisputed supremacy. Science will have given the producer yet another source of bigger, better and securer harvests.

But, alas, bigger, better and securer harvests are precisely the things that, at the moment, we don't want. What we need is the means to buy any harvest at all. If only science would think of the consumer, for a change, and not the producer!

The problem for men of science is partly economic, but mainly psychological. Before economists can give the consumer the means of buying, psychologists have got to persuade him that being able to consume harvests in peace is better than being able to indulge hatred

for foreigners, pride of race, national and class exclusiveness. Men do not live by bread or bananas alone; they also live by their passions--their good passions and, still more, their evil passions. Which sort of fun does the consumer like best--the fun of being at peace and so able to consume and to create? Or else the fun of boasting, the fun of hating and despising, the fun of mob intoxication and mob irresponsibility, the fun of yelling *Deutschland, Deutschland ueber alles* and of sobbing, in company, over the final scenes of *Cavalcade*?⁶⁷

At present, most consumers pay lip service to peace and prosperity; but they behave as though they preferred the latter alternatives; which means that really, in the depths of their being, they do prefer them. It is the business of men of science to devise a technique for making peace and prosperity as satisfying, psychologically, as nationalistic hatreds and hysterias. It is, in most cases, only from motives of passion that people will act reasonably. Very well, then, the science of applied anthropology must discover the proper passions to be exploited. At present, enlightened self-interest is not acceptable to the great majority of civilized men and women. It fails to satisfy them, because it is less exciting than the indulgence of those animal instincts so richly gratified by nationalism.

Moral: Enlightened self-interest must somehow be made as thrilling as unenlightened animal impulse. To discover how this may be done is incomparably more important than discovering new varieties of bananas (which, anyhow, nobody can afford to buy). And yet Trinidad has its Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture, while London, Paris, New York and Berlin are still disastrously without their colleges of applied anthropology.

9 September 1933

⁶⁷ *Cavalcade* (1931). A patriotic historical play by Noel Coward.

The Reality of Progress

If you sit in a train at night, with the shades drawn and the windows closed it often happens that you forget which way you are moving. Cut off from the outer world, you have nothing to tell you your direction, nothing indeed to show whether you are going at all. The observer standing by the track feels no such doubts. The train rushes past him, the very embodiment of directed speed. So far as the immediate experience of the man inside the train is concerned, movement in one particular direction does not exist. For the man outside, it is the most obvious of realities.

The analogy of the train helps us to understand the obscure and unsatisfactory notion of progress. The dispute between those who affirm and those who deny the existence of progress is a controversy between observers outside and passengers within the train. Historians are people whose business it is to look at the train of human affairs from the outside. To them it is pretty obvious that the machine moves and that its movement is preponderatingly in one direction. From time to time, it is true, the train disconcertingly runs backwards for a century or two; but the forward movements tend to last longer than the reverses, and in certain respects we are clearly a good way further up the line than were our palaeolithic ancestors.

The movement has been in the direction of increased knowledge; and increased knowledge has led to increased control over nature and so to greater comfort and safety. Intellectual progress has been accompanied by emotional progress. There is not only more knowledge; there is also more emotional sympathy. This has made possible the formation of ever larger social groups.

For the historian, then, the existence of progress in certain fields is not in doubt. But the historian is the man who looks at the train from the edge of the track. For the passengers in the train, the reality of progress is by no means so obvious. To start with, the historical train, though an express compared with the evolutionary and geological trains, is appallingly slow in comparison to the rocket of an individual human life. No one man can ever hope to live through any considerable process of advance. Each individual is born into a mental and

emotional situation which he takes as much for granted as the air he breathes. We do not know what it feels like to be a palaeolithic savage; therefore we cannot compare, except in the abstract, our condition with his.

Again, we accept existing knowledge, standards of life and emotional cultures almost as though they were a part of the order of nature. So did our palaeolithic ancestors. The defects in our system cause us as much distress as the defects in theirs caused them. True, to an observer outside the train it may seem that many of the things we regard as evils are intrinsically and absolutely less bad than the evils our fathers had to put up with. But the man does not live in a world of absolutes; and if our lesser evils are as great relatively to our higher standard of living as our ancestors' greater evils were to their lower standard, then these evils will afflict us as painfully as theirs afflicted them.

Men's tendency is to compare their present state, not with earlier and less perfect states (about most of which they know only by hear-say), but with a hypothetical state of perfection. The newly rich are seldom heard rejoicing in their progress from shanty to mansion; they are too busy envying Mr. J.P. Morgan and complaining about the third footman. Man, as a species, may continue to advance; but men, as individuals, will probably never enjoy the intimate feeling of advancing. Progress may be known from without, but never inwardly experienced. It is a reality for the intellect, but not for our intuitions.

16 September 1933

German Bonfires

I listened in, some few evenings ago, to the most curious piece of broadcasting that ever came my way across the ether. Its source was a Southern German station and its occasion was one of those solemn book burnings, which have become such a feature under the new regime. The entertainment began with a speech by one of the lesser ministers of the Nazi cabinet--a grand oration addressed to German youth, to that *Hitler-Jugend*, which is to transform the corrupt republic into a kind of Wagnerian paradise.

The performance was dramatic and the stage management most effective. The committing of each book to the flames was preceded by a sinister roll of drums, such as used to prelude a military execution. Then the harsh bawling of the orator broke out, denouncing the author; calling him a swinish internationalist, a dirty Jewish traitor, a vile perverter of youth, an underminer of patriotism and morality.

The speaker's favorite epithet, outside a limited repertory of words of abuse, was "un-German." "Un-German spirit," he yelled of every author whose book was burnt. If it had not been such a tragic reversion to tribal barbarism, I should have laughed. For that "un-German" was really very funny. It is as funny as "un-English" or "un-American," as "un-French" or "un-Jugo-Slavian," as "un-Esthonian" or "un-Venezuelan."

Patriots of every country, including Monaco, Andorra and San Marino, make copious use of this kind of abusive adjective. And its meaning is in every case the same: it signifies "not to my personal taste." For a Nazi, an un-German German is a German who happens not to agree with him and whom he therefore hates. If Einstein and Thomas Mann were ever to talk of un-German Germans (which they probably do not) they would be referring to the Nazis--to the men who are busily destroying the things which these distinguished exiles regard as most valuable in German civilization.

Is there such a person as a truly German German, a genuinely Finnish Finn? The question is unanswerable. All one can say is that there is apt, very naturally, to be a certain similarity of thought--and behavior--patterns among people who have been brought up under the

same tradition. There is, for example, a kind of Lowest Common Denominator of Englishness, which is different from the L.C.D. of Americanness.

Most eminent men depart, by the very fact of being eminent, from the mean of their country. Each nation is proud of geniuses who are essentially un-national.

29 September 1933

The Unending War

City-dwellers regard the conveniences of urban life as a part of the order of nature. The sun rises every day and, similarly, when you turn the switch, on goes the electric light; morning brings the dew and, no less inevitably, the milk, the letters and the newspaper. What could be simpler, more 'natural'?

The immense efficiency of modern organization lulls us into a false security. Civilization is not a natural product, but the result of innumerable and incessant efforts of humans well directed by human intelligence. Civilized life has come to have something of the smooth regularity of natural processes; but this simulation of nature is achieved only by unremitting war against nature. Nature is the universal enemy, and if it were not for the skill of a highly trained professional army of technicians, we should find ourselves reduced from civilization to the most abject and dangerous barbarism.

The precariousness of civilization and its dependence on the unsleeping activities of the technical army, are vividly illustrated in the recently published memoirs of L. O. Howard, late head of the United States Bureau of Entomology. Nature attacks us with an endless variety of weapons, of which the most spectacular are not necessarily the most dangerous. Earthquakes, for example; are terrible; but they are an occasional and local phenomenon, and the harm they do is strictly limited. A microbe or an inconspicuous little insect can cause incomparably greater loss of life and property than an earthquake.

Mr. Howard was a distinguished soldier in that tiny force of experts, detailed to protect civilization from the insects. In the course of his half-century of service he successfully organized America's defenses against several mass attacks by the forces of insect imperialism. Thus, quite early in his career, he helped to save the California citrus orchards from the complete extinction threatened by the so-called 'fluted scale,' a bug introduced accidentally from Australia. By the importation of an Australian ladybird, whose grubs made the fluted scale their food, the entomologists made it possible for California to develop one of its commercially and humanly most valuable industries.

America is particularly vulnerable, where insects are concerned. The reason is this: Most American crops are of foreign origin; the crops brought their pests with them; but the pests very often failed to bring their natural enemies. Freed from enemies, they flourished outrageously.

In the latter part of his tenure of office, Mr. Howard had trained entomologists stationed in Europe and elsewhere observing the pests in their home surroundings. Whenever some particularly efficient parasite of a pest was discovered, specimens were sent back to Washington to be tried out on the naturalized American insect. On the entomological front, the defenders of civilization turn nature's weapons against herself; insect imperialism is kept in check by other insects, the enemies of the invading imperialists.

One closes Mr. Howard's book, wondering rather uncomfortably what would happen if the supply of technicians for the defense of civilization against hostile nature were, for any reason, to give out. The disappearance of all entomologists would alone be sufficient to make our life very uncomfortable and even, in certain parts of the world, unlivable. Withdraw the expert armies from a few other fronts, and civilization would go down at once. Triumphant nature would have us all dead before a year was up. Let us therefore thank heaven for Mr. Howard and his fellow soldiers in the unending war against the primal, the only real enemy.

6 October 1933

Lotteries

The news that the French Government has established a national lottery is of more than local interest. First prize, five million francs; fifteen second prizes of one million each! The words will float in a golden glory of promise before the inward eye of innumerable men and women all over the world. To get something for nothing is a universal ambition.

To the student of politics the news is significant for a different reason. It means that our rulers have begun to approach their task of keeping us in order, not in the uncompromising spirit of the Hebrew prophets, but realistically, as good anthropologists.

During the eighteenth and the earlier part of the nineteenth centuries state lotteries existed in France, England and America. In the course of the nineteenth century it was decided that lotteries were intrinsically immoral, and they were everywhere prohibited. As in the case of the prohibition of alcohol in the United States, abstract moral principle had triumphed at the expense of common sense.

Now abstract moral principles are admirable things; but before you start trying to put them into practice on a large scale, it is as well to find out whether in fact they can be put into practice.

Modern psychologists have shown that, if you suppress an emotionally satisfying activity, the urge which drove men towards it will try to find an outlet elsewhere--often in a most undesirable manner.

And anthropologists have observed that prohibitions imposed on primitive peoples in the name of our higher morality often result in evils far greater than that which it was originally intended to combat. That is why no up-to-date colonial administrator will ever prohibit any activity without first seeing that people have some harmless but psychologically rewarding substitute for it.

By what seems a paradox, the art of government in civilized countries is less highly developed than in the colonies which these countries administer. Still, our rulers are coming on. A faint awareness that there is such a thing as psychology has begun to dawn on them.

Bootleggers' whiskey and the eighteenth amendment are going, and beers and wines are coming in.

And now here is the French lottery. It is clear that the love of gambling is as universal as the love of alcohol. It may be undesirable, but you cannot repress it. The statute book of every civilized State is packed with laws against gambling--and the streets of every city swarm with gamblers.

A sensible ruler would begin by admitting the irrepressibility of gambling. "But some forms of gambling, he would say, "are more harmful to society than others. These should be prohibited, but the prohibition must be accompanied by compensations. That is why I propose to make the less harmful forms of gambling legal and respectable."

The most harmful form of gambling is gambling in stocks. The fluctuations in the value of stocks, engineered by gamblers for their private profit, inflict great hardship on other stockholders and often, indirectly, on the workers in the industry whose stock is being manipulated. That gamblers should ruin themselves is a matter of indifference; but that they should be in a position to ruin others is not to be borne. A sensible ruler would prohibit stock market gambling, while permitting games of chance. Hitherto the policy of governments has been the exact contrary of this; they have done their best to draw gamblers from roulette board and race course to the stock exchange--from places where they could harm only themselves, to a place where they could injure others.

In the planned economy, which the rulers of almost every civilized country are now trying to impose, there will be no room for speculation in stocks. But people will not accept the outlawry of speculation unless they are given compensations.

Moral: Re-establish the lottery and license the building of casinos. Fifty Monte Carlos are less mischievous than one stock exchange.

12 October 1933

The Music Industry

We may safely presume that, when Mr. Sigmund Romberg makes a pronouncement about popular music, he knows what he is talking about.⁶⁸ In a recent address to the American Club of Paris he let fall some remarks which, coming as they did from an expert, seemed to me extremely significant. I cannot do better than quote his actual words:

"I don't know," said Mr. Romberg, "how music is considered here in France; but with us in America it is an industry. Through the difference in time between California and New York--five hours--you get programs on the air continuously for twenty-four hours a day, and eighty per cent of them is music. The average composition written by American composers used to last for six months or a year. Now it lasts only ten weeks. The boys can't write as fast as the radio absorbs their music. There should be some control for no composer can write anything really worth while if he knows his work will be dead in a few weeks."

Again, "radio in America is a marvelous system and provides marvelous entertainment. But it is overdone and people are fed up with turning on the radio."

And finally, "It is absolutely sure now that we are only about a year from television. Television will mean a great revival of business, because everybody will want to buy a television set."

For the student of contemporary life, what a wealth of interesting matter is here! Thus the fact that the life of a popular song should have been reduced from a year to ten weeks is of the highest significance. It is a symptom of that general speeding up of what I may call the intellectual and emotional turnover which is everywhere apparent. Ours is an age of rapid technical progress and the desire for incessant novelty is a natural product of this environmental change.

Moreover, tending as it does to increase consumption, this desire for novelty is artificially encouraged by manufacturers. Economically, this is doubtless excellent. But is it so good psychologically? Was there not more social stability and personal contentment when people

⁶⁸ Composer (1887-1951) of operettas such as *The Student Prince* (1924) and *The Desert Song* (1926).

savored their pleasures more slowly and gave themselves time to feel and think?

Of the composer Mr. Romberg says that the knowledge that what he writes will be dead in a few weeks prevents him from writing well. I believe something of the same kind affects the listener. This same knowledge of the impermanence of what he is hearing prevents him from attaching any real significance to it; and conversely the habit of listening to stuff that can be understood instantly and without effort, and which will be replaced in a few weeks by other stuff of no better quality, deprives people of the capacity to listen to anything else.

Good work requires an effort on the part of the listener; but the effort is worth making, for with every deepening of the listener's own experience such work will be found to gain in significance.

Mr. Romberg thinks that people are "fed up with radio." Not a very good advertisement of the "marvelous entertainment" which it is supposed to give. But the truth is that marvelous entertainment automatically ceases to be marvelous if it lasts twenty-four hours a day and becomes a mere routine. The effort to enliven it by speeding up the artistic turnover is unavailing. All genuinely marvelous entertainment is something of good quality and relatively rare occurrence.

I do not know if practical television is no more than a year away; but I think Mr. Romberg is right in his prophecy that its coming will lead to a certain revival of business--because "everybody will want to buy a television set." This compulsion will come partly from without, in the form of advertisements, and partly from within as a result of boredom and its complement, the desire for novelty at all costs. It seems a pity that we cannot base our economic prosperity on a more satisfactory psychological foundation than ennui.

20 October 1933

Politics is so Old-Fashioned

We have given up the wearing of swords; we no longer go from place to place on horseback; we prefer the electric light to torches. And yet in two of the most important departments of organized social life we still obstinately cling to medieval methods which modern technique has rendered completely obsolete. We live in the twentieth century; but where politics and higher education are concerned we employ the methods of the thirteenth.

Parliaments rule us and universities provide us with higher education. What is a parliament? A parliament is a place where people make speeches at one another. What is a university? A university is a place where young men and women are forced to listen to lectures.

Lectures and speeches. Our politics and education are still to a great extent based on talk. Now, this was quite reasonable in the Middle Ages. Books had to be copied out by hand and were, therefore, inordinately expensive. A poor man could acquire knowledge in only one way--by listening to the lectures of the learned. Given the circumstances of medieval life, lecturing was the perfect educational technique.

Similarly, oratory was the perfect political technique. To make a thousand copies of a document by hand was a laborious and costly process. But a thousand persons could easily listen to a single speaker. As a technique for imparting information and expressing opinion speechmaking was, in the past, a model of efficiency.

Today we have wood pulp paper and the rotary press. The written word can be multiplied indefinitely and at a very cheap rate. Information and expert opinion about any event of political, social or scientific significance is almost instantly available to the whole community. And yet, by absurd force of habit, we go on conducting higher education and political debate as though we were still living in the time of King John. Students are compelled to go and listen to professors droning out information which they could find in any text book. Politicians sit in their parliaments and solemnly recite out loud facts and figures and opinions which everyone has read. Very slowly and with an infinity of humming and hawing, relays of orators Bray out

familiar platitudes by the hour. Compared with a political speech, a university lecture is concentrated stuff. The substance of the average hour's lecture can be read in fifteen or twenty minutes. But I have seldom listened to an hour of political oratory which contained more than five minutes of attentive reading.

A twentieth century technique of politics and higher education would be one that made full use of all our resources. At least three-quarters of the time now wasted in the legislative assemblies of the world could be saved by a sensible use of the printing press. And out of every five lectures now given at our universities certainly three could be abolished and the time devoted to some more profitable form of self-instruction.

The trouble is, of course, that most politicians don't want to save time; they enjoy braying and (incredible as it may seem) even enjoy listening to braying. *Mutatis mutandis*, the same is true of university students. Listening to lectures is a slow, lazy way of picking up information; it is also a sociable way. Reading is a solitary act. Moreover, if people spent as much time reading as they now spend listening to lectures they would have to learn much more than they do at present.

A modern technique of education and politics would mean harder work, closer thinking and fewer emotional stimulations. That is why people cling so tightly to the obsolete technique of the Middle Ages.

27 October 1933

The Race Racket

Certain materials are conductors of electricity, and in just the same way certain words are conductors of nonsense. All the idiocy diffused in the human atmosphere--and, heaven knows, there is enough of it--seems to condense at the approach of one of these words; a torrent of the moronic fluid is discharged into the nonsense-conductor; and so intense is the flash of the moronic ale, so loud, the thunder of ignorance and prejudice, that the rational bystander is left dazed and deafened by the shock.

The best nonsense-conductors known to contemporary editors are woman, the modern girl and marriage. Then follow a number of religious and political formulas which, though not quite such perfect conductors as the best sexual words, can yet be guaranteed to draw out of the atmosphere innumerable sparks of the purest idiocy at a tension only a little below the highest. One of the most effective of these political nonsense-conductors is the subject of race. Take the word "Nordic," for example. During the last fifty years innumerable kilowatts of moronic energy have flowed through it, and today it is still faithfully doing service as the electrode on to which millions of Germans are discharging the whole of their surplus nonsense.

Talk about European races has all the academic charm of talk about snakes in Iceland. There are no snakes in Iceland and no pure races in Europe. Even in the remotest recesses of the continent there has been some intermingling of blood. Absolutely pure Nordics or Alpines do not exist. And even if they did exist, would they constitute separate races?

The only objective way of establishing difference of race is by what is called the Precipitin Test, which is carried out with the serum of blood drawn from members of the supposedly different races.

Large numbers of Precipitin Tests were recently made by Professor Suk, of the Masaryk University of Czecho-Slovakia. His conclusions were summarized in a recent issue of *Nature* and are as follows: The various groups among Europeans are not races, but inconstant variations. There has been no tendency in recent history for populations to develop types, such as "Nordic," "Alpine" and so forth,

but only to form itself into groups according to geographical distribution, such as "English," "German," "Italian." There seems no reason to suppose that such groups will ever reach the status of true races. From the available evidence it must be concluded that the various European types are all of one stock and that Europeans in general are a very ancient variation of the species *Homo*.

Professor Suk's are only the last and most decisive of a number of similar conclusions. For years past, most serious anthropologists have been questioning the dogmatic assertions of Houston-Chamberlain and other race-mongers.⁶⁹ Their questionings and Suk's experiments will not, of course, have the smallest influence on the politicians, who want to use the race myth for their own beastly ends. Nazis, Jingoers, Chauvinists--all use the demonstrably untrue philosophy of race-difference and race-superiority as a means for exciting one set of human beings against their fellows.

Houston-Chamberlainism is the ideological equivalent of cantharides--a drug whose only function is to arouse men's baser passions. Indeed, this lying race-philosophy is worse than cantharides, inasmuch as the hatred it arouses is more bestial than even the very degraded form of love aroused by this drug. It is also much more harmful; for whereas a dose of cantharides affects only one person and his immediate companions, a dose of the Houston-Chamberlain hate-potion can throw whole populations into a frenzy of detestation and may lead in the long run to international war.

And yet, such is the confusion of our moral code that we censure only the purveyors and users of drugs; the purveyors of lying hate-potions are honored and the intoxicated users given the flattering name of patriots. So far from restricting the dangerous traffic in hate-potions, many governments now make its distribution compulsory.

3 November 1933

⁶⁹English-born German author (1855-1927), champion of the notion of Aryan supremacy.

Gladiatorial Shows

There is, in St. Augustine's *Confessions*, a story which is as topical today as it was fifteen hundred years ago. It concerns a young man called Alypius, who had conceived (thanks to Augustine's own teaching) a horror for the then universally popular gladiatorial games. It was a theoretical horror, for Alypius had always refused to witness a fight.

One day, however, he met a party of sporting friends who dragged him by main force to the amphitheatre. The fighting began, but Alypius kept his eyes resolutely shut and refused to look. Then suddenly, as one of the combatants was wounded and fell, a huge shout of savage glee went up from spectators. Alypius's curiosity was aroused; he could resist no longer. Uncovering his eyes, he looked: "But so soon as he saw that blood," writes St. Augustine, "he therewith drank down savageness; nor turned away, but fixed his eye and was delighted with that guilty fight, and intoxicated with the bloody pastime."

Civilized people are now trained, as Alypius was trained by Augustine, to regard cruelty and the infliction of avoidable suffering as morally wrong and esthetically disgusting. Moreover, society is so organized that they seldom get the chance to gratify their more ferocious passions. Cruelty is punished and such savage displays as the gladiatorial shows are prohibited by law. But if we were suddenly given the opportunity of being actors or spectators in a scene of cruelty, how should we behave? My belief is that a good many of even the more refined and high-principled among us would find themselves acting like Alypius.

The gusto with which tens of thousands of young Germans have taken to the pastimes of Jew-baiting and Communist-hunting and the approval with which a majority of the general population regards their beastly activities are painfully significant, for the impulse to cruelty is almost as violent in many people as the impulse to love.

It is alarming to find that civilized Europeans can so easily--so gleefully, indeed--revert to the practice and theoretical justification of cruelty. The conclusions to be drawn from this unpleasant fact are:

First--The suppression of brutality is the work of a small minority of exceptionally sensitive reformers who contrive to force respect for their moral intuitions on the masses.

Second--Large numbers of people are ready to rebel against the ethically superior minority whenever the opportunity arises.

From which it follows, in the third place, that care should be taken not to give them this opportunity.

At this point we are brought face to face with the problem of prohibition. If we are justified in prohibiting gladiatorial games and the beating up of political opponents, why are we not justified in prohibiting the consumption of alcohol? The reason is this: Alcohol gives pleasure to the individual without doing any serious harm to society. Cruelty also gives pleasure, but at the same time does a great deal of harm. To encourage brutality is to make war probable and intellectual and moral progress impossible. Where revolvers take the place of logic and persuasion, mind and will are enslaved; and, next to total anarchy, slavery is the worst disaster that can overtake any society.

A further practical consideration is this: There are certain psychologically satisfying and socially harmless substitutes for cruelty and bullying, but not for alcohol. The desire to conquer and be violent can find a harmless outlet in sport. The only substitutes for alcohol are poisons, like cocaine. The prohibition of cruelty has the merit of being practicable as well as socially useful; that of alcohol is neither the one nor the other.

15 November 1933

Decline of Speech

Here are two groups of people. The first is composed of factory workers and clerks from some great metropolitan centre, like New York or London. The second consists of peasants from Tuscany, say, or Valencia. All members of the first group have received an elementary education and some have gone through a course of secondary education. In the second group some individuals are completely illiterate and none has attended school beyond the age of twelve or thirteen.

In which of these two groups will you find the more elegant, correct and measured speech, the richer vocabulary? From personal knowledge of both types of people I should answer unhesitatingly: in the second group. The almost illiterate peasants will speak much better than the relatively highly educated city dwellers.

Never, I imagine, has spoken language been so poor as it is today in the great urban centers of the West. The Italian and Spanish peasants, of whom I have spoken, are survivors from a time when the art of talking was highly appreciated, and when the language was treasured as a thing beautiful in itself and valuable for the traditional wisdom contained in it.

Universal education has had a number of unexpected results. None is more unexpected than the degradation of language. And none is more distressing.

Why should universal education have resulted in the decadence of language? There are several reasons. First, it has led to a discrediting of religious dogma and this has led to a neglect of the religious books, which were almost the only literature known to the uneducated in the past.

Secondly, universal education has created an enormous reading public, and a great industry has sprung up whose function it is to provide this public with stuff to read. Now, artistic talent is very rare; therefore most literature must, in the nature of things, be bad. Practically all the reading matter distributed to the newly educated is of very poor quality; it cannot be otherwise. The literary models for spoken language were once the Bible and the Prayer Book.

Finally, universal education has made profitable the development of large-scale advertising. There can be no doubt that advertisement copywriters have done a very great deal to debase ordinary language. By using noble words for avowedly commercial, catch-penny purposes they have made the general public very shy, not only of the words themselves but also of the ideas behind the words.

Thus advertising men will glibly cant about "service." Now service is a fine word and stands for a noble thing. That it should be debased for sordid commercial ends is no less than a disaster. For it means that all sensitive people become shy of the word and mistrustful of the thing. Whenever they read "service" they automatically start debunking what they feel to be a piece of hypocritical cant. This is all right where the word is used in connection with X's pills or Y's breakfast food; but it is far from all right when it refers, shall we say, to the activities of Lincoln, or Pasteur, or Elizabeth Fry.

"Service" is by no means the only word defiled by advertising men. "Purposive," "manly," "gracious," "personality," "beauty," "romance" and a score besides--these have all become profoundly suspect. Their only reaction to such great words is a desire to debunk them. Robbed of its noblest elements, their language becomes poorer and poorer; and, worse than this, so does their system of values. The realities are debunked and banished along with the words. People find themselves at last left spiritually naked.

20 November 1933

Doctors and Doctoring

In his recent published book, *The Great Doctors* (W.W. Norton, New York), Dr. Henry E. Sigerist has written a history of medicine in biographical form. The sixty great doctors he has chosen as his subjects were those responsible for the development of medicine throughout the ages. I found the book absorbingly interesting, not only for its stores of biographical detail but also and above all for the light it throws on the workings of the human mind.

That passion for a single, simple explanation of everything, for example--how it has always haunted human beings and into what extravagances it has led them! Doctors are no exception to the rule. They have always been ready to sacrifice, on the altar of a favorite theory, whole armies of the sick. A tragedy; but with its comic side.

One cannot help smiling, for example, over the achievements of the nineteenth century Frenchman, Broussais. Like certain modern doctors, he believed that all diseases were merely the symptoms of derangements in the gastro-intestinal canal. But whereas the modern exponents of this notion, such as Dr. Hay, of Hay diet fame, are content to prescribe mild dietetic remedies, Broussais called for more violent methods. Auto-intoxication, he believed, could best be cured by bleeding--especially bleeding by means of leeches. So fashionable did his theories become that in a few years France had completely exhausted her own supply of leeches and enormous numbers of these blood-sucking animals had to be imported. From one hundred thousand in 1824 the number of imported leeches had risen by 1827 to thirty-three million. What torrents of blood in the name of an over-simplified theory of disease!

Notions such as those of Broussais are short-lived. More interesting than the story of these eddies in the current of medical thought is that of the main stream itself. But "stream" is an inadequate image. For the progress of thought is fitful and proceeds by leaps. For long periods men will think only one kind of thoughts. Then, suddenly, an individual will appear who is not content to think the old thoughts. Nature has given him the power and therefore the desire to think in a new way. His new thoughts seem at first outrageously heretical. Then,

gradually, they are accepted, become familiar, and men are astonished that their predecessors should have been unable to think them.

An example: In every case of disease the first thing a modern doctor does is to translate the symptoms into numerical terms. He takes the sick man's temperature, counts the number of pulse beats per minute, measures the blood pressure, and so forth. The proceedings seem to us obvious, natural. And yet, before the time of Harvey and Santorio, the first doctors to use the new methods of Galileo in the early seventeenth century, it was psychologically impossible for such simple measurements to be made. Quantitative thoughts were unthinkable; doctors could only think qualitatively. We are astonished by their blindness. But then our great-grandchildren will be astonished by ours.

A man of genius is one who can transform a piece of the unthinkable into the thinkable. We have to make the best of what is already in human consciousness. But we have to remember that all our certainties are only provisional. Men will come who can think new thoughts. We must be prepared to receive their message thankfully and with an open, unprejudiced mind.

27 November 1933

Psychology of Unemployment

Unemployment has been with us for years; but surprisingly little has been done to determine its exact psychological effects. That these effects are disastrous must be obvious to the most superficial observer. Those men loitering at street corners, listless and as it were empty of life--it is clear that something terrible has happened to them, but precisely what?

A systematic attempt to answer this question has recently been made in Austria, where Dr. Lazarsfeld and his collaborators investigated the mental life of a village practically all of whose fifteen hundred inhabitants had been unemployed for three years. The special value of this investigation consists in the fact that it deals with an extreme case. The average income of an inhabitant of the village in question was about ten cents a day, but many were living on as little as eight and seven cents. For the citizen of an industrialized country with a cold Winter this must represent pretty nearly the absolute minimum required for subsistence.

It is by subjecting matter to abnormal conditions that we learn new facts about its nature; the same is true of the human spirit. Very queer things happen to people who achieve colossal wealth and power, and equally strange things happen to people at the other extreme of the social and economic scale.

What then are the psychological effects of unemployment in this extreme case? Dr. Lazarsfeld has summarized his answers in an article published in the latest number of *Character and Personality*. First of all, "a narrowing of the psychological sphere of wants occurs, so that the pressure of external circumstances is not felt in its full force."

But the contraction of psychic life expresses itself not only in diminished wants but also and more disastrously in diminished interests. Before the days of unemployment Lazarsfeld's villagers were keenly interested in politics. Today they never go to a meeting, never read a newspaper, even when they can have one for nothing. The circulation of books in the free library has fallen off by fifty per cent.

People have just ceased to care about anything. This fact throws a significant light on the recent rise of dictators throughout the world.

Where prolonged unemployment has reduced huge masses of the population to hopeless apathy it is obviously easy for a dictator at the head of an active minority to impose his will.

Prolonged unemployment has another curious effect. "The people lose the sense of the fixed points by which we commonly reckon time; they become unpunctual and can no longer give any account of how they pass their time." In other words, they take on one of the most striking characteristics of all primitive peoples.

And it is not only in this respect that they are primitivized. All the changes recorded by Lazarsfeld are changes in the same direction. If one had to sum up the matter in a single phrase one would be justified, I think, in saying that prolonged unemployment at minimum subsistence level leads inevitably to a reversion toward a lower cultural condition.

Modern industrial society condemns a large percentage of its members to all the disadvantages of primitivism, without giving them any of its very real and substantial compensations.

4 December 1933

The Tired Business Man

At present we regard work as the most important thing in life, and leisure as a mere relaxation from work. But in a society so equipped and organized that it can get its production done with a minimum of work days, the case is altered. Work loses its old primacy; the really important element in life is leisure.

Our amusements are made for people doing our kind and quantity of work. These people are tired after a long day in factory, field or office. Moreover, their life is not only, in most cases, pretty monotonous and boring; it is also, economically, very precarious. Most men and women live subject to a week's or a month's notice; at any moment they can be precipitated into the abyss of unemployment and poverty. Economic uncertainty, boredom, fatigue--the remedies for these ills are sought in spare-time amusements. These must demand no effort on the part of the tired participator; must furnish fairy-tale wish-fulfillments to the poor and anxious; must stimulate the bored with strong emotional and sensuous excitements. Almost all our diversions are merely the equivalents of drugs. That "tired business man," for whom all popular plays, movies, novels and songs are composed, requires a substitute for opium to soothe him, for cocaine to liven him up and for hashish to give him hallucinatory visions.

But in a model society business men will not be tired, because working hours will be short. Economic security will have abolished the chronic anxiety in which most people now live, and a decent standard of life will allow the majority to enjoy good health. Drugs will therefore be superfluous. Our narcotic amusements will not suffice to fill the longer and healthier leisures of the near future. People will demand something more significant, something of higher value.

Some Utopia-makers think that we should try to turn all men into philosophers and artists. But this is absurd. Philosophy and art are for the few who have a gift for such activities. For the majority, other forms of valuable activity must be found. What forms? That is the question.

Many people have hobbies, to which they are devoted; and my belief is that the solution of the coming problem of leisure will be

found in this disinterested passion for doing something well and doing it for its own sake. Long-range planners would have to devise methods for giving hobbies a dignity and social significance which at present they often lack. Moreover, opportunities for practising these hobbies would have to be multiplied, and education so modified that young people would find themselves with the necessary skill and enthusiasm to undertake a disinterested spare-time activity.

If the world is freed from excessive work only to wallow in the diversions suitable to tired business men, then the gift of leisure will prove hardly worth the acceptance. It will be the business of long-range planners to see that leisure is not a curse but a blessing.

20 December 1933

Something for Nothing

You cannot expect to get something for nothing. In one way or another every good thing has to be paid for. The more intemperate believers in progress talk as though good things could be got without paying. Or, more accurately, they talk as though the only payments owing were payments in advance; as though, the preliminary efforts once made and the desired end attained, no further payments fell due.

But experience shows that destiny always charges twice for the benefits it sells us--once before the goods are delivered and again in an indefinite series of deferred payments afterwards. In other words, men have to work for every mental or material advance they make, and when they have made it they can enjoy the fruits of their labours only on condition that they give up the privileges enjoyed before the advance was made.

Thus the development of power production has brought with it many material and psychological advantages. But these advantages cannot be enjoyed except at the expense of those other advantages that accrued to individuals and societies under the system of production prevailing before the industrial revolution. What the mass producer has gained may outvalue what the craftsman has lost. Or *vice versa*. It is a matter of opinion. What is certain, however, is that industrial progress has been and is still being paid for.

The same is true of purely mental advances. Heightened self-consciousness and increased intellectual powers are paid for by a certain loss of emotional and instinctive spontaneity. Most thinkers take for granted that the gain outweighs the loss. But a few, such as William Blake and, more recently, D.H. Lawrence, have believed that the loss involved in this mental progress outweighed the gain.

In some cases the price of progress is fixed and cannot by any means be diminished. In others destiny is ready to grant a substantial rebate to the intelligent. Occupational diseases, such as lead poisoning and phosphorus necrosis, have been to a great extent eliminated, and the invention of suitable safety devices will do the same for the new maladies resulting from the new industrial processes. Even the price paid for power production could be considerably reduced. By planning

deliberately to that end it should be quite possible to incorporate into a modern industrialized society many of the most valuable features of the pre-industrial world.

But in the case of mental progress there seems to be no way of avoiding the payments; destiny will tolerate no bargaining. A highly self-conscious civilized individual cannot behave as though he were an unself-conscious primitive; the advantages of spirituality and intellectuality are incompatible with those of the pre-spiritual and pre-scientific state. It is impossible in Christian terminology to be at once the Old Man and the New Man. It is a question here of choosing and of paying installment after installment, the full and irreducible price of the goods you have decided to take.

27 December 1933

Ape and Child

The typically modern hero is not the soldier, but the record breaker or the scientific investigator. Among these new heroes a high place, it seems to me, must be assigned to Professor W. N. Kellogg, of Indiana University, and his wife.

In *The Ape and the Child*, recently published by McGraw-Hill, they have described an experiment carried out by them in 1931 and 1932--an experiment of which it is absorbingly interesting to read, but one which it must have been appallingly difficult, trying and exhausting to perform.

This heroic couple took a baby chimpanzee, about thirty weeks old, into their home and, for nine months, brought it up with their own child, a little boy some ten weeks older than the ape. No differentiation was made between the two infants. For nine months the human baby had a little sister, and the little sister was a chimpanzee. During these nine months Professor and Mrs. Kellogg kept the pair under continuous observation, and undertook a series of careful comparative tests and measurements. The result of their labors is contained in *The Ape and the Child*.

Let me begin by briefly summarizing the physical differences between the two infants. Although younger, Gua, the ape, was more mature than Donald, the human, her senses of hearing, smell and sight were acuter than the corresponding senses in the child. Against these congenital advantages must be placed a serious congenital handicap--Gua's hand was incomparably less efficient than Donald's. Compared with man, the chimpanzee is a clumsy manipulator.

So much for the physical foundations. What, now, of the psychological superstructure? Judged by the accepted tests, the boy was normally developed. He may be regarded as a good average specimen of *Homo Sapiens* in infancy. This fact gives special significance to the achievements of the chimpanzee. For in learning to perform such simple intelligent actions as moving a chair so as to reach a tempting piece of food suspended from the ceiling, or manipulating a wooden hoe so as to get a piece of apple placed beyond the reach of the unassisted hand, the ape actually proved quicker and brighter than the

child. Her memory seemed to be as least as good and so apparently was her understanding of simple verbal statements, commands and questions. She was more obedient than the child and seemed more ready to co-operate with the experimenters.

Oddly enough it was in the sphere, not of intelligence, but of feeling that the ape displayed inferiority most conspicuously. The chimpanzee's capacity for getting flustered and panic-stricken was enormous. Moreover, her love for her foster parents amounted almost to an obsession. She was abjectly dependent upon them and, if left alone, would simply go to pieces. The child, on the contrary, was sufficiently independent to play quite happily by himself. The power to control emotion is probably the major secret of human superiority. Reason, however highly developed, is useless if it is always at the mercy of feeling.

Another point: The ape displayed her intelligence only when she had a strong emotional motive for doing so. She would use her wits in order to get food or to win the approval of her foster parents; not otherwise. Whereas the child would undertake activity simply for the sake of the activity. Manipulating and investigating were their own rewards. Donald, in other words, was a rudimentary man of science disinterestedly probing the secrets of nature.

Professor Kellogg made prolonged efforts to teach Gua' to say "papa"--but without success. He thinks it possible, however, that with longer training an ape might be taught to say a few words; but never more than a few. The inability to speak must clearly constitute an enormous obstacle in the way of later learning. It would have been interesting to know exactly when and how this inability would have affected the ape's performance in relation to the child's. When the experiment stopped Donald could still hardly talk. Let us hope that the next scientific heroes who follow the Kelloggs' lead will keep their ape till it is full grown.

3 January 1934

Crime and the Weather

That the physical climate has some influence on the inward weather of the mind is obvious. We have all experienced the depression which comes of long weeks of wintry sunlessness; the exhilaration, the sense of abundant life imparted by the brightness of a Spring morning; the lassitude of thundery afternoons in Summer. Every convalescent knows the stimulating and curative effects of a change of air; and, moving from place to place, every traveler has felt himself responding in a variety of ways to the influence of varying climatic conditions. Statistics prove that even suicides prefer certain months for cutting their throats; and though there is no closed season for crime, an off-season definitely exists. Without any doubt the human organism is a kind of barometer.

The trouble is that it is a very funny kind of barometer. With an aneroid or a column of mercury you know exactly where you are; similar causes will produce similar effects. But not with the human instrument. Where one man will rise, another will fall; and, at different times, the same person will respond in different ways to fundamentally identical meteorological stimuli. Man is affected by so many internal and external forces besides the weather that it is very difficult to decide where the influence of meteorology begins or ends. It is almost equally difficult to decide which is the element in a particular climatic situation which produces a given effect on the mind and body. As a scientific study, what I may call Human Meteorology is hardly further advanced today than it was three hundred years ago, when Burton wrote his famous "Digression of Air" in *The Anatomy of Melancholy*.

The most recent attempt to correlate character and weather comes from the University of Cincinnati, whose Professor of Experimental Medicine, Dr. C. A. Mills, has formulated the theory that crime is, to a great extent, a product of weather. According to Dr. Mills, wide and rapid fluctuations of weather tend to produce an abundance of human energy. "Great problems have arisen in America as a result of immigration by millions from lands of lower climatic energy into our very energizing storm area. It has been the very marked increase in physical energy of the children and descendants of this immigrant

stock, without a corresponding increase of social inhibitions, which has brought to the United States some very serious social problems"--the problems of wholesale crime.

I am ready to believe that this theory contains an element of truth. But how much truth? That is the question. Dr. Mills seems to evade the problem. He talks of crimes being committed by the children of immigrants in whom the weather has generated increased energy, *without a corresponding increase of social inhibitions*. But once you admit the efficacy of social inhibitions, where are you going to stop?

It might be argued that crime in the Middle West has nothing to do with the local weather, but with the breakdown in an unfamiliar environment of the traditional taboos which, in the old continent, had kept the immigrants virtuous. History makes it abundantly clear that social traditions can cause a rise or fall in the criminality of people of the same stock, subjected to the same climatic conditions.

The English are now a mild and law-abiding people. There is no reason to suppose that the climate of England has perceptibly changed during the last thousand years. And yet the English were once notoriously brutal and criminal. The change in national character has been due solely to a change in tradition and "emotional culture."

Dr. Mills will have to invent a technique for measuring the parts played, in any given psychological drama, by the weather and "social inhibitions" respectively. Until he can do this in some objectively scientific way, his theory must remain unfruitful.

10 January 1934

Behind the Doctor

In his latest book, *Mystery, Magic and Medicine* (Doubleday, Doran & Co., New York), Dr. H. W. Haggard makes some very interesting and suggestive remarks about the relations existing between medicine as it is practiced today and the other sciences and useful arts.

"The application of the sciences of chemistry, physics and mathematics in the field of invention produced the industrial revolution...These same basic sciences applied to the problems of medicine have yielded much of the modern advancement in this field. But the relation does not end there. The development of industry and the development of modern medical practice have in turn been directly related. It has been through the aid of industry that many of the life-saving measures of modern therapy have become practical realities."

Dr. Haggard illustrates this point by the following example: "a research worker in one of the great universities or hospitals finds a chemical compound, a vaccine or an antitoxin which is beneficial in preventing or curing disease, but such discovery remains only of academic interest unless the product can be made readily available to the practicing physician. Neither the physician nor the dispensing pharmacist is equipped to prepare the product himself, nor is the research worker in a position to manufacture and distribute it. At this point the manufacturing chemist, distributing through the dispensing pharmacist, steps in and supplies the indispensable link between the research worker on the one hand and the practicing physician on the other. Industry has thus contributed to make medical advancement possible and practical."

Drugs are but one of the many weapons used by the modern doctor in his battle against disease. He also possesses a whole armory of machines for acting on the body by purely physical means. Now, all these machines have to be manufactured in elaborate plants, supervised by highly trained technicians. Diathermy, x-rays, ultra-violet light--these have become indispensable therapeutic instruments. Their existence and availability are due to a small army of scientific research workers, or trained metallurgists, electricians and engineers, of expert

managers and accountants and, finally, of more or less highly skilled manual workers. The patient sees only the doctor, but behind the doctor stand literally hundreds of invisible collaborators.

In the past, these invisible collaborators were very few. The surgeon, it is true, had to apply to the cutler for his instruments and the physician depended on the herbalist for his drugs. But in the main, doctoring was a one-man job. Which is one of the reasons why the death rate was so unpleasantly high.

Increase of knowledge has made necessary and inevitable a closer co-operation between a greater number of individuals. This is true, not only of medicine, but of practically every human activity involving the application of science. Thus, the modern farmer depends for his fertilizer on the manufacturer of chemicals, the modern showman cannot begin to amuse his public unless he first calls in trained experts from a score of fields. And so on.

The more we know and the more we apply our knowledge to the activities of life the more dependent upon one another do we inevitably become. Men still spend an enormous amount of their energy in fighting or preparing to fight. But, inexorably, vast impersonal forces are driving greater and greater numbers of would-be combatants into a condition of reciprocal dependence.

People may hate one another, but the circumstances of the modern world are such that they can't do without one another.

17 January 1934

Swindlers and Swindlees

Recent events have somewhat shaken the popular faith in inevitable and universal progress. But doubters may console themselves with the thought that there is at least one field in which the reality of progress is undeniable: our swindles are bigger and better than ever before.

Kreuger was obviously a man of genius and, if greatness is to be measured by results, his most recent successor,⁷⁰ Stavisky, has proved to be even more Napoleonic.⁷¹

But all this is by the way. For my theme is not the result of swindling. I am concerned with the psychological conditions in our society which make swindling possible. There can be no swindlers without their complementary swindlees.

Now the most remarkable fact revealed in all the big swindles that come to light is this: the victims are just as likely to be "hard-headed business men" as "soft-headed business men" as soft-headed old ladies or country bumpkins with a stocking full of savings. Indeed, where the swindler works on a large scale his victims must necessarily be "hard-headed business men"--for the obvious reason that only hard-head business men dispose of enough money to permit of large-scale financial operations.

For crooks of the first magnitude old ladies and bumpkins are useless. Working with millions they naturally turn to the people who can supply these millions--to bankers, to stock brokers, to directors of issuing houses and insurance companies. And the extraordinary thing is that they hardly ever turn in vain. With the most punctual regularity these "hard-headed business men" hand over huge wads of cash.

⁷⁰ Ivar Kreuger (1880-1932), the "Swedish Match King," whose career as an international financier came to a sudden end after major financial scandal, through probable suicide. The protagonist of Huxley's play, *Now More than Ever*, Lidgate, is modelled on a "Kreuger-like figure". Huxley, *Letters*, 364n.

⁷¹ Serge Alexandre Stavisky (1866-1934), French swindler whose activities led to allegations of widespread political corruption. Two essays in this collection, "Swindlers and Swindlees" and "Nights Out" take the aftermath of the Stavisky scandal as their point of entry.

Having never, most fortunately, been in a position to dispose of millions I have never received the attentions of a swindler. But I have no doubt whatever that if it were worth anyone's while to swindle me I should fall an instant victim to his wiles.

Beggars with plausible stories always get money out of me. Swindlers are just bigger beggars with better stories--beggars who arrive in Rolls Royces and who promise you thirty per cent on your capital. Obviously, they are irresistible. I, for one, should be as wax in their hands.

The evidence made public at every trial for fraud shows that business men are hard-headed (and hard-hearted) only towards inoffensive and respectable citizens, not towards persuasive rogues.

But the real criminal, the man who ends in jail or with a bullet in his brain, goes to the same inflexible manager, outlines his latest scheme for the rationalization of the turtle soup industry, asks for a million or two to put it into operation and receives the money.

Such are the rewards that go to rapacity when combined with impudence, a persuasive gift of the gab and the right brand of physical charm. Brooding over our latest rebuff at the hands of the bank manager, we respectable citizens are filled with a resentment like that felt by the virtuous girl towards her pretty and successful rival.

1 March 1934

The Strain of Modern Life

That the pressure of modern life is too high for human nature to bear is one of the commonplaces of our age. Doctors and statisticians, who assure us that nervous diseases are growing commoner and that the suicide rate is twice what it was half a century ago.

And yet, if we are to believe the well-known psychologist Dr. J. A. Hadfield, "the experience of applied psychology, and especially psychotherapy, points towards the conclusion that we are living far below the limits of our possible selves."

An apparent paradox confronts us. The strain of modern life is too much for us; and yet we are not living up to the limits of our potentialities. It is as though a man who never spent more than half his income should go bankrupt. How is such a state of things possible? In an excellent essay recently reprinted in pamphlet form by Macmillans, Dr. Hadfield has explained the apparent paradox. If we go bankrupt without spending the half of our income it is because we don't know how great our income is. "There are open to us resources of power, available through the right use of our instincts, which, if directed to noble purposes, will free our minds from those worries, anxieties and morbid fatigues which spoil our lives and will free us for a life of energy and strength."

The crux of the matter lies in that phrase, "if directed to noble purposes." How shall we find means for directing the instincts (those ultimate sources of all human power) towards those noble purposes that are ultimately vital purposes. That, precisely, is the question. It is finally, as Dr. Hadfield insists, a matter of faith. If we have faith in our own powers, our powers automatically tend to justify that faith. Danger, for example, will give us a faith in our own powers that often allows us to perform extraordinary acts. Faith may also be imparted by means of hypnotic suggestion.

Faith in what? This, it seems to me, is the fundamental problem of the present time. If the "strain of modern life" is too much for so many people this is because they believe in nothing for which it seems worth while to stand the strain; because they have no faith in the excellence of something outside themselves to call out faith in the adequacy of

their own powers to overcome difficulties for the sake of that something.

Many individuals have private faiths which serve as sources of power--the faith, for example, in the value of a loved person; the more selfish faith in the supreme desirability of money or power. But the loved person may die, or grow up, or prove unworthy, or simply not exist; and there are people temperamentally uninterested in money and power. Private faiths are of their nature uncertain and of limited applicability. Religion provides a public faith in values so fundamental that most men and women can believe and so obtain an accession of power.

For various historical reasons there has been a general decline in the intensity of faith. Those lucky enough to possess a private faith have derived power from this. Of the rest, some have remained wholly without any source of extra physiological power, and so have become the victims of our famous "strain of modern life." Others have turned to some public religion-substitute from which to derive faith in themselves and consequently power.

This is sound psychology, but, often, disastrous politics. For example, the individual may find in extreme nationalism inexhaustible sources of energy, enabling him to overcome difficulties which people without his faith would find impossibly great. So far as he personally is concerned this is excellent. But so far as humanity at large is concerned it is fatal; for this religion-substitute creates and releases energies that are finally solely destructive. It is the great tragedy of our time that the only public faith which enables large masses of the population to stand the strain of modern life should be a faith that must almost inevitably result in wholesale murder.

5 March 1934

Nights Out⁷²

Man is a reasonable animal--but reasonable, in most cases, after the fact, not before it. Having given rein to some instinctive impulse or emotion, he proceeds to look for a logical explanation for his actions and for the similar actions of his fellows. And, looking, he duly finds--dozens and dozens of the most specious reasons. The procedure is absurd, but touching; for it shows how much men would like to be reasonable, what a home-sickness they feel for logic and scientific method. Hypocrisy is the tribute vice pays to virtue; and similarly rationalization--the finding of reasons after the fact--is the tribute paid by emotional impulsiveness to logic.

As I write, there is still turmoil in the streets of Paris. Shootings, head crackings, heavings of bricks. Why? The newspapers are full of reasons. Rioters are protesting against the dismissal of the prefect of police. Alternatively, they are protesting because this gentleman was not put into jail as well as dismissed. Some are advocating a return to monarchy. Others are rioting for the sake of Karl Marx. All are supposed to be protesting against the implication of politicians in financial scandals. Plenty of reasons. But, for the great majority of the rioters, they are reasons after the fact. If they rioted, it was because they were discontented and bored and because, once the rioting had been started, they were thoroughly enjoying themselves.

To keep healthy, people need occasional orgies of intense excitement, brief holidays from everyday dullness and everyday responsibility. Hence alcohol and the movies, hence revival meetings and political demonstrations, hence jazz bands and stump oratory, hence detective stories and prize fights and wild parties. Hence, also, riots.

A riot combines the exciting elements of many kinds of emotional "nights out." To start with, it is a mob phenomenon; and there is nothing that men like more than to throw off the burden of individual responsibility by merging themselves in the sub-human personality of the crowd. In the second place, it allows people to give vent to those

⁷²The typescript version is reproduced here, since the newspaper version deleted the second paragraph. See page 247, n.71.

tendencies towards cruelty and physical violence, which, in most civilized communities, are so carefully suppressed or sublimated. Many men, it is evident, derive vast pleasure from knocking a victim about; and, if it does not go on too long, even a fair fight is satisfying. The joy of battle is a real joy; and as rage and fear cause large quantities of adrenalin to be released into the blood, the body may be stimulated and its health actually improved by an occasional free fight. Finally, rioting makes it possible for people to destroy things; and destruction is among the keenest of human pleasures. Smashing crockery is one of the regular side-shows at fairs; a penny gives you the right to throw a coconut at a pile of plates. During a riot, there is no penny to pay and instead of a few paltry plates, the rioters have shop windows, lamp posts, buses--a profusion of things to break and burn. Rioting is hugely popular when it begins: no wonder.

There are, however, several reasons why these delightful nights out do not occur more frequently. The first is external: there is a police force. The others are psychological. Civilized people have formed habits of law-abidingness. Moreover, in normal circumstances, they enjoy enough exciting distractions to make the wild orgy of a riot psychologically unnecessary. People take to these savage amusements only when circumstances are abnormal--when life seems, for whatever reason, unsatisfactory and when other amusements are either unobtainable, owing to lack of money, or have come to seem insufficiently thrilling. It is at such moments that systematic rebels attract to themselves huge masses of politically indifferent rioters, who merely want to have a bit of fun; at such moments too, that the leaders of fascist or communist armies obtain their recruits. The successful mob leaders of our age are successful because they provide their followers with the equivalent of a permanent revival meeting and periodical free bullfights. Rioting is more wildly exciting than being a member of a political army. But the latter entertainment makes up in length for anything it may lack in intensity. It is a night out that lasts mildly, for months and years.

14 March 1934

Catastrophes

Catastrophes are very unpleasant for the people who actually live through them--still more unpleasant for those who die through them. But for society as a whole, for that immortal organism persisting indefinitely through time, these same catastrophes may actually turn out to be blessings in disguise. There is, of course, nothing certain or necessary about the matter. Catastrophes can be made to serve a useful purpose if men have the will to make them do so. Not otherwise.

After the Great Fire of London, Sir Christopher Wren worked out a comprehensive scheme of reconstruction. If this plan had been accepted, Central London would now be as fine and convenient an urban area as any in the world. It was not accepted. London was rebuilt on the old plan. The city has all the disadvantages of mediaeval town design and none of its picturesque advantages. It is a collection of modern or near-modern business premises aligned along tortuous thirteenth-century alleys. The community as a whole gained nothing from the catastrophe of the Great Fire.

To extract a dividend from misfortune, men must have not only the will, but also the necessary knowledge. Consider in this context the case of Russia. The breakdown of social and political organization during the war was followed by its almost total obliteration during the years of pestilence, famine and civil strife which followed. A small, intelligent and ruthless minority had the will and the knowledge to exploit this catastrophe for socially useful ends. With how much success?

A partial answer to this question appears in a recently published book by Sir Arthur Newsholme, formerly Principal Medical Officer of the Local Government Board of England and Wales, and Mr. John Adams Kingsbury, the former Commissioner of charities of New York City.

Red Medicine (Doubleday, Doran) is an account of a tour of medical inspection made in 1932 and is full of valuable information, not easily or fully available elsewhere. But almost more interesting than the facts and figures are the authors' occasional comments. Sir Arthur Newsholme has an intimate knowledge of the English health

services and is the author of an exhaustive study of the private and public medical systems of the other countries of Europe; Mr. Kingsbury possesses corresponding knowledge with regard to America.

This is how they sum up the results of their investigations: The Russian State Medical Service is "a unique system of public health and medicine which in planning and to a large extent in accomplishment is more comprehensive and better unified than any we have found in making our surveys of other countries."

This is an impressive verdict. What (the question at once arises) are we going to do about it? "The only way we can ultimately compete with the Russians is to be, at least, equally zealous for social reform." But a question suggests itself: can we expect reforming zeal to produce results as rapidly as it has done in Russia?

Here, it seems to me, we come back to the problem of catastrophes. Russian society was relatively simple and primitive; therefore the destruction of its social and political machinery did not lead to its total disintegration; people were near enough to nature to be able to go on living without elaborate organization.

In the West our very existence depends on such organization; we cannot allow it to be destroyed, cannot, in other words, stand more than a limited dose of catastrophe. In many fields the Bolsheviks started almost with a clean slate. They did not have to transform an old system; they had (and this is generally a quicker job) to create a new one.

A catastrophe which at one stroke destroyed the social and political machinery of Western Society would destroy that society itself. We must be content to transform, not to create anew. The fact that our present medical system is so good of its kind may actually be an impediment in the way of its being made rapidly better and more complete. The zeal prescribed will very likely have to be content to get its results rather more slowly than in Russia.

22 March 1934

New Era

Upon the training and instruction of the human young time, money and personal devotion are lavished in almost incalculable quantities. With what results? The sum of information is certainly greater than in the past; more people, that is to say, know more things.

But has there been any corresponding increase in the sum of virtue or wisdom? Are more people braver, for example, or more altruistic? Is the art of life more highly developed among greater numbers? He would be a bold man who would answer definitely in the affirmative. Up to the present, we have to admit, the results of education have been a trifle disappointing.

Up to the present, I repeat. For it is possible that we are, at this moment, on the threshold of a new era in the history of education. After reading a record of the experiment now being undertaken at the children's hospital of the Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center of New York, I for one am quite ready to believe it.

The subjects of this experiment are a pair of twins, now nearly two years old, and the experiment has been going on since within three weeks of their birth. One twin has been brought up in the ordinary, traditional way. The other has been carefully conditioned with a view to developing his physical and mental abilities to their highest possible pitch and the experimenters have produced a child who is perfectly fearless, ready to explore any novel situation, mentally precocious, and able to perform physical feats incredible in a baby of his age.

Thus, when placed on a pedestal nearly six feet high, he will without hesitation jump into the arms of a grown-up standing below; and, if left to get down, unaided, will lower himself to arm's length and drop. At nineteen months he could swim, dive, climb almost anything and was also an accomplished roller skater.

Brought up in the traditional way, his twin brother cannot be induced to get down alone from a pedestal only six inches high and he no more dreams of swimming, diving, climbing and skating than does any ordinary child of the same age. He is also mentally more backward than his brother, takes less interest in the how and why of things and is subject to innumerable fears.

The experiment is still in progress and its results will not be fully apparent for another twenty years. When these babies have grown into men, what will be the difference between them? It seems reasonable to suppose that the attitude of the conditioned twin towards people and events will be much more confident and fearless than that of his unconditioned brother.

With regard to ability, I should guess (perhaps quite wrongly) that an intelligence test will not reveal great differences between them. Nevertheless, the advantage will be with the conditioned twin; for it is obvious that a confident and fearless man is in a position to use his wits much more effectively than a timorous defeatist.

At this point the devil's advocate comes out with a question. Assume, he says, that the experiment turns out to be completely successful and that henceforward all children undergo Johnny's conditioning. In the resulting world--a world where nobody is afraid and everyone is bursting with self-confidence--what will happen? Who will accept whose authority, and why? Who, in a dispute, will give way to whom? And where every man is an athlete and a hero, what is going to prevent an immoderate increase in the number of free fights?

It will be for our grandchildren to answer, not for us. Meanwhile, let us rejoice in the prospect of the manifold goods which these new methods of training seem to promise.

29 March 1934

Unknown Fears

Of all the numerous enemies that man is doomed to carry about with him, the worst is probably fear. Excess of fear is the root of innumerable evils. It can reduce men to a despairing inactivity, or rouse them to frenzies of violence and cruelty; can make them give up hope when they ought to be struggling, and fight when they ought to be keeping the peace; it can transform them now into idiots, now into fiends, now into a mixture of both.

Science is often praised because of its power to cast out fear. The primitive lives in a world where there is no natural law, but only the caprice of evil spirits; where every event has been brought about for the express purpose of punishing, or more rarely rewarding, some human being.

The conception of natural uniformity put an end to this horrible universe of devils. In the very dawn of scientific thought such philosophers as Democritus and Epicurus were already fully conscious of being the destroyers of fear.

But the campaign for the liberation of the human spirit from its ancient terrors was vigorously opposed--for long periods of history, with the most lamentably complete success. For the medieval mind, the world was as fearful a place as it had been for the stone-age primitive; it was as though the Greek men of science had never existed.

And even after the revival of Greek learning and the rise of modern science, we find evidence of a strange home-sickness for the old darkness. Thus, Shakespeare seems to have resented the casting out of fear. "They say that miracles are past," he makes one of his characters say, "and we have our philosophical persons to make modern and familiar, things supernatural and causeless. Hence it is that we make trifles of terrors, ensconcing ourselves into seeming knowledge, when we should submit ourselves to an unknown fear."⁷³

⁷³The allusion is to Lafew's speech in *All's Well That Ends Well*: 2,3,1-6. Huxley also quotes this speech in *Beyond the Mexique Bay*, (London: Chatto, 1934), 308. He goes on, "Nevertheless, I prefer Spinoza's freedom through knowledge and understanding to emotional bondage, however deliciously creepy with 'unknown fears'."

Shakespeare's is the protest of the artist who resents what he regards as the de-poetization of life by science. "Unknown fears" are more thrilling than a knowledge of physics and chemistry; and thrills are the artist's raw materials.

Shakespeare is by no means the only poet to complain of science. Blake raged at the physicists who dared to think mathematically of the world. Keats detested Newton because he had robbed the rainbow of its poetry by explaining how it was produced.

Poets would like the universe to be as creepily exciting as a crook-play; and they resent the activities of those who, in the name of science, turn the crook-play into a (for them) unutterably boring philosophical treatise.

I can sympathize with their feelings; but not sufficiently to make me wish to repudiate science and return to the world of devils. And, anyhow, thrill-lovers can console themselves with the reflection that, if science has diminished men's fears of the natural world, it has probably increased their fears of other men.

Men have always been afraid of one another; but they have never had so much reason to be afraid as they have today; for never, in all history, have they possessed such effective means for doing one another harm. Science has purged the world of devils, only to fill the vacuum with poison gas and high explosives; we have exchanged the Prince of the Air for fleets of high-speed bombing planes. Our "unknown fear" has been removed; but science has given us instead an only too well known and definite terror--that of our next-door neighbours.

Even without devils the world is quite thrilling enough. If the pacifists should ever be successful, we shall doubtless have some future Shakespeare denouncing his contemporaries for "ensconcing themselves into seeming peace, when they should be submitting themselves to the fear of trinitrotoluol and progene."

4 April 1934

Reason Eclipsed

"There is probably no other period in history, since modern science began, when the particular values it incorporates were so rarely to be encountered in other human activities. The human tendencies to prize certitudes and fear knowledge, to indulge emotion at the expense of reason, were probably always as strong as they are today; but the circumstances of the time did not show them up in so pitiless a light... If we are to judge by what seems the overwhelming evidence provided by such activities as politics, business, finance, we must conclude that the attention and respect accorded to science are directed wholly to its results, and that its spirit is the most unpopular thing in the world."

So writes J. W. N. Sullivan in his recently published *Limitations of Science*.⁷⁴ It is a depressing conclusion; but can we doubt its substantial correctness? Every morning the papers bear eloquent witness in support of it. We read of whole populations joyously accepting the fantastic certitudes of Nazi propaganda; fearing and therefore loathing the objective knowledge which might undermine their faith.

We read of riots, hysterical mass demonstrations, senseless but intoxicating mob oratory-- of countless occasions, when men come together to "indulge emotion at the expense of reason."

Of course, it is only to be expected. Reason is dull; emotion is thrilling. Certitudes console and strengthen; whereas knowledge can never in the nature of things be complete and must therefore always be accompanied by an uncomfortable and debilitating suspense of judgment.

Moreover, knowledge is often knowledge of intrinsically depressing things, and the certitudes men accept are all certitudes of their own superiority and future happiness. Emotionalism and certitudes are popular; no wonder. So is alcohol and for precisely the same reasons: it is thrilling and makes you 'feel good.' But whereas alcohol does comparatively little harm, and then only to the individuals

⁷⁴J(ohn) W(illiam) N(avin) Sullivan (1886-1937) was a writer on science, and a friend of Huxley's. His *Gallio, or The Tyranny of Science* (1927) suggests that the only possible answer to the theory of Behaviorism is a satire in the manner of Voltaire's *Candide*. Four years later, Huxley obliged.

who indulge in it, the desire for religious and political certitudes and the craving for the emotional thrills that one gets from doing things in a crowd are mischievous vicariously and on an enormous scale. Thus, fortified by the crazy certitudes of nationalism, intoxicated by mob feeling, people will do things that may bring death, suffering and ruin to half the world.

History seems to show that the desire for certitude, the fear of disturbing knowledge and the craving for emotional thrills in common, remain pretty constant. But the circumstances in which men give vent to these passions are subject to change. Thus, until a comparatively short time ago, people sought certitude and emotional stimulation in organized religion and hated knowledge in so far as it threatened their religious faith.

Today, men look for another communal activity through which to satisfy these passions, and find it in politics. People are no longer burnt for holding the wrong views about the nature of the unknowable; they are only shot for having the wrong kind of blood in their veins, only beaten to death for expressing the wrong opinions about private property. Is the change for the better or for the worse? It is hard indeed to say.

Religious wars, heretic hunting and sectarian intolerance were certainly horrible. But no less horrible are nationalistic wars, the baiting of Jews, socialists or bourgeois, whichever the case may be, and the intolerances of class and party.

Progress is not, as some pessimists proclaim, a leap out of the frying pan into the fire; but, alas, it is only too often a passage from one frying pan into another frying pan.

12 April 1934

Illegal Humor

The smallest and most inconspicuous items in the news are often the most interesting. Here, for example, is a four-line paragraph, which appeared, in small print and a long way from the front page, in my morning paper of a few days since: "The sale of post cards depicting comic scenes and caricatures of Bavarian life has been forbidden, the Nazi authorities considering that there is nothing funny about Bavaria." That was all. But what a fascinating and significant piece of information!

"There is nothing funny about Bavaria." Similarly, there is nothing funny, intrinsically, about Jews, or mothers-in-law, or the inhabitants of Aberdeen. Life is as serious, as tragic even, for people called Cohen or Macpherson as for anyone else. But laughter is indispensable for the health of the body and soul; and there happens to be a tradition that the sayings and doings of people with these names are laughable.

Men cannot always be inventing new jokes, any more than they can be always inventing new religions or new styles of poetry. Hence traditions. There are certain venerable laughter-provoking traditions, just as there are certain piety-provoking traditions and certain traditions of literary expression.

The formation of a laughter-provoking tradition entails the creation of a mythology. Scots and Jews have an established place on our Olympus of the ludicrous; and, until the Nazis forbade people to laugh at them, so had the Bavarians upon the comic Olympus of Germany. The victim-heroes of these mythologies seldom resent the laughter of their fellows; for they realize that, in provoking it, they are acting as the benefactors of a humanity that gets all too few opportunities for hilarity.

Germans have now had one of their few sources of laughter taken away from them by public decree. It was, I suppose, only to be expected. Bavarians are Nordics and Nordics are, by definition, divine. Jokes about sacred things or people are blasphemous. Hence the ban on the funny post cards and caricatures.

In their first flush of zeal all revolutionary governments have felt impelled to pass judgment on all kinds of private matters regarded, in

normal times, as ethically indifferent. Thus the ban on Bavarian caricatures is exactly paralleled by the ban placed, during the French Revolution, on visiting cards and New Year greetings.

In December, 1791, the use of visiting cards was forbidden by a decree of the Assembly. The next year the Convention went a step further and prohibited, under the pain of death, the sending of good wishes through the post and the old custom of calling upon one's acquaintances on New Year's Day.

This fantastic piece of tyranny was imposed (as usual) on the highest moral grounds. The sending of good wishes to mere acquaintances was denounced as hypocritical; paying one's respects in person was a disgraceful act of flattery. Such things were unworthy of rational beings, enjoying the blessings of liberty, equality and fraternity.

Nazi theory promotes only Nordics to divine rank; the French revolutionaries insisted that *Homo Sapiens* as such was divine. And if he behaved undivinely, if he was more *Homo* than *Sapiens*, then he had to be punished.

It is comforting to learn that, after only a few years, the decree of the Convention became a dead letter. Under the Directory people were using visiting cards and paying calls as freely as ever. Let us hope that by 1940 the Germans will once again be chuckling over the aged jokes about Bavaria.

29 April 1934

Stiff Collars

A flannel shirt, a sweater, a pair of shorts, shoes and stockings--these constitute the ordinary costume of most contemporary schoolboys. Ten years before the war, when I first went to school, I had to wear a starched collar every day of the week and, on Sundays, a shirt with starched cuffs and an armor-plated front. During the later part of my school life I was permanently dressed like the chief mourner at a funeral.

Looking back, I am moved to indignation by the remembered spectacle of myself in these ridiculously unsuitable garments. But at the time, I confess, I felt no particular sense of outrage. There is almost nothing, from human sacrifice to a happy marriage, which cannot be taken for granted. Habit makes people accept the greatest goods and the greatest evils as though they were part of the order of nature, like rain, or cold weather in Winter.

For the little boys of 1934 shorts and sweaters are part of the order of nature; stiff shirts and collars were a part of the order of nature known to little boys before the war. My son does not know how lucky he is; nor was I, at his age, aware of my misfortune. It is easier to measure progress from outside than to experience it from within.

But to return to clothes. The evolution of the schoolboy's costume is only a phase in a more general process. Formalism has everywhere declined. Half a century ago the consumption of starch among the wealthier classes of society must have been prodigious. Today even the greatest bankers are to be seen in soft collars and with limp cuffs.

The change may seem trivial; but it has, I believe, a considerable significance. In the past every class had its peculiar uniform, and those who were highest in the social hierarchy wore clothes whose stateliness, formality and expensiveness were in harmony with their wearers' importance.

Recently the members of the ruling classes have renounced this pompous uniform. Their motives for doing so were never consciously formulated; all that any given individual knew was that he was following a certain fashion, or else that he wanted to feel comfortable inside his clothes.

But the fashion had its profound reasons, and the desire to be comfortable was indulged only because there was no stronger desire to be stately. Clothes were de-formalized because, in a superficially democratic age, the real rulers of society did not want to make themselves conspicuous.

Where everybody is, theoretically, as good as everybody else those who in actual fact, are the masters find it politic to pretend that they are just like other people. In the past a great man advertised his greatness to all beholders. Now, if he shows off, he only does so vicariously, through his women. The Paris model is the last relic of that sumptuous class uniform by means of which the great ones of the earth used to proclaim their supreme position in the social hierarchy.

In the new dictatorial States there has been a change in the sartorial policy of the ruling classes. In these anti-democratic societies men are no longer even theoretically equal. The rulers are therefore no longer constrained to conceal their identity behind an informal disguise. On the contrary, they are as keen to advertise their own greatness as was any king or prelate or nobleman in the pre-democratic past.

But a long habit of drab tailoring has caused the splendors of a Henry VIII or even of a George IV to seem absurd. The distinguishing uniform of the new dictatorial rulers of Europe is a military uniform. They advertise their greatness, not by the glittering facts of brocade and velvet, but by the algebraical symbols of authority--by top boots and a cartridge belt, by lines of braid on the sleeve and tabs on the shoulder.

A corresponding formality is reinvading the schoolroom. I and my contemporaries had to put on stiff shirts in order to learn Latin; there are now countries where it can be studied only in black shirts or in brown.

26 April 1934

Cultured People

A French journalist of my acquaintance recently carried out an enquiry into the extent and nature of the General Knowledge possessed by the "man (and woman) in the street."

The investigation made one thing abundantly clear: the General Knowledge of the man in the street is...well, remarkably sketchy, to say the least of it. A little star here and another little star there--and in between vast expanses of darkness. Reading this record of ignorance, the academically trained person feels a patronizing astonishment. How is it possible, he wonders, that anyone should fail to know such obvious things?

But now suppose that the men and women in the street were to examine the academically trained person, not in General Knowledge, but in the various special knowledges of which each of them is a master. Here, for example, is the mechanic who will ask him to give a brief account of the way in which exhaust valves are cam-driven through adjustable tappet rods.

After that the farmer will want to know why soils fertilized with sulphate of ammonia have to be given periodical dressings of lime. And the dressmaker will question him on the difference between chain stitch, split stitch and satin stitch. And so on, indefinitely.

In almost every case, our academic person will have to confess that he can't answer. He is as ignorant of other people's special knowledge as they are of his General Knowledge. What it comes to, in a word, is this: General Knowledge is the academic person's special knowledge. But--and this is the really interesting and significant point--the brand of knowledge possessed by the academic person has always been and is still regarded as being in some way superior to other brands. His General Knowledge is dignified with the name of culture; other people's special knowledges are not.

Why should this be? The Marxians are ready with a simple explanation. General Knowledge is the special knowledge of the privileged classes--of the men and women who can afford not to be bothered with useful, money-making knowledge about machines, fertilizers, dressmaking and all the rest. The possession of such

knowledge is almost as good, for purposes of social display, as the possession of expensive jewelry or a large house. Therefore the poor and unprivileged have always regarded such knowledge as being highly desirable, and have accepted without protest the contempt poured on their own special and professional knowledges by the rich. The rich believe in the supreme value of "disinterested" knowledge. No wonder!

There is, unquestionably, a great deal of truth in this explanation. Nevertheless, when all possible allowances have been made for caste prejudice and snobbery, it still remains true that General Knowledge has certain cultural advantages over other kinds of knowledge. A man with an intensive knowledge of tappet rods and an extensive ignorance of everything else is mentally at home in only a very small corner of the universe of thought. Whereas a man with a fair General Knowledge of history, literature and the development of ideas, though he may not be absolutely native anywhere, is yet sufficiently at home in a very large part of the universe.

Soviet education is trying to produce a person who shall be absolutely native to some small corner of the thinkable world, but at the same time reasonably at home elsewhere. Pupils are trained in some particular branch of useful, specialized knowledge and, simultaneously, in disinterested General Knowledge. The Russian ideal for education seems to me an admirable one. Its only defect is that it imposes a very heavy strain on the pupil. You must have a great deal of energy if you would make the best of both worlds--the practical and the pure intellectual. For a person of low vitality this strain is apt to be excessive.

"The writer shall not dig," was Emerson's conclusion, after an experiment in farming. He generalized too sweepingly; but there can be no doubt that, for people of a certain physique and temperament, his rule is entirely sound.

3 May 1934

Ceremonials

Easter in Rome is always a very grand occasion, but this year the ceremonies were more than ordinarily splendid. For on the Easter Sunday of 1934 a new saint was added to the calendar: Giovanni Bosco, the founder of the Salesian Order, was solemnly canonized in St. Peter's.

I have seen kings crowned and buried, armies reviewed, the pomp of Indian princes, but never a ceremony that could compare for elaborate splendor with the rites performed in honor of the new saint. Magnificence succeeded magnificence; complication was added to complication. In their rich hieratic vestments the Princes of the Church performed the interminable series of ritual gestures prescribed by ancient tradition. One had the feeling that they were moving through a kind of ceremonial labyrinth of which they alone possessed the secret. From outside the uninitiated could only look on and marvel at the certainty and precision of their advance through the complications of that mysterious maze.

There was a time when all human existence was a great deal more ceremonious than it is at present; when not only religion but every-day living had its elaborate rituals. Good manners were once a labyrinth almost as complicated as that through which a Pope must move during a canonization. Today they have become informal to the point almost of disappearing altogether.

Our ambition is to get through life with the minimum of fuss and at the maximum speed. It is all very convenient, no doubt. But I sometimes wonder whether we do not pay rather highly for our convenience. For, to start with, informality is by no means invariably more convenient than formality. The performance of an elaborate ritual of good manners may be a long and tiresome job, but it may easily spare us all manner of unpleasant shocks and frictions.

Informality easily becomes mere boorishness; and if men discard the elaborate hypocrisy of good manners it is, too often, only to indulge quite frankly and without restraint in their natural selfishness.

And this is not all. A ceremonious existence is an existence, so to speak, larger than life. For most of the time, it must be confessed,

living is a rather flat, undignified affair. Ceremonies enrich and variegate and beautify the natural--the all too natural--process, heighten its significance, and lend it something of an ideal dignity. The participants in an elaborate and symbolically significant ceremonial are temporarily promoted to a higher grade of existence.

The Church has proclaimed that the personal defects of the priest do not detract from the efficacy of the rites he may perform. The doctrine has a deep psychological truth; for a man seems and feels superior to his ordinary self when he is occupied with some impressive ceremony. That ceremonial gives men a profound psychological satisfaction is proved by the persistent and rather pathetic attempts made to revive it in countries where the traditional excuses for it have disappeared.

In America, for example, a congress of almost any description will be made a pretext for a staging of complicated rites. And a hunger for ceremonial is doubtless one of the causes of the success achieved by the various Fascist movements in Europe. The salutings and parading, the singings and shoutings and trumpeting, all the military rituals of Fascism, provide people with excitements and fulfilments which they cannot find elsewhere.

Liberalism has lost ground (among many other reasons) because it was too rationalistic to give its adherents the rites and ceremonies they needed. A liberal is expected to live and die on the merely human plane. But men aspire to be larger and more dignified than life. That is why, if they find the established religions unsatisfactory, they put on colored shirts and march about with band and banners.

10 May 1934

Unnoticed Event

History has never been written by naturalists, seldom even by men who took much interest in the common affairs of daily life. That is why, if you look up the year 1730 in any text book of English history you will find long paragraphs devoted to the dispute between the Prime Minister and his Foreign Secretary, but no reference to the much more important event which took place in or about the same year--the introduction into England of the brown rat.

That the coming of the brown rat was more important than the going of Mr. Secretary Townsend can be demonstrated by simple arithmetic. For, whereas nobody, except perhaps Townsend himself, was a penny the worse for that gentleman's retirement from office, millions of Englishmen then living and many more millions yet unborn were to be injuriously affected by the arrival of the brown rat.

The brown rat was a larger, fiercer and more voracious animal than the native black rat, which, except in the neighborhood of certain ports, was soon completely ousted by the new arrival. The damage done by brown rats was greater than that done by the native black. It is quite possible that the event of 1730 has cost the English nation anything from ten to twenty million pounds a year ever since. Which makes, in two hundred years, the comfortable total of two to four thousand million pounds of extra damage to English property, all attributable to the introduction of a new species of vermin.

In the light of these figures the silence of the historians seems inexcusable. Why bother us with records of the perfectly unimportant squabbles of politicians while saying nothing about an occurrence which has injured, directly or indirectly, every English man and woman for the last two centuries? It is time that history became a little less frivolous.

The story of our rats is not yet finished. Indeed, the best is yet to come. During recent years great efforts have been made to combat the brown rat. The cost of his upkeep is calculated at about seventy million pounds per annum. We could clear the slums and support an extra million of unemployed on what this expensive pest consumes each year.

The creature has been attacked directly with every known weapon from dogs to poison gas, and at the same time the defense works against its assaults have been systematically strengthened. New buildings are ratproof from the start, old ones are expensively fortified against the brown invader. This campaign has been remarkably successful--only too successful, indeed.

For the chief result of ousting the brown rat from his dominant position in the great English cities has simply been this: freed from a dangerous rival, the old black rat has increased and multiplied.

In a paper read before the Linnaean Society Mr. M. A. C. Hinton has described the situation in an amusing paragraph. "We have shut the rival out, established attractive kitchens on the roofs, fitted with plenty of nice open sky-lights, and we have linked up roof and roof and bridged the horrid streets with a lovely network of telephone wires and cables. No primitively arboreal species could imagine a nearer approach to paradise. Every night there is a procession along these cables and over the roofs; new colonies are established in every possible place. The black rat is now once more the common rat in many parts of our great city. We are thus fast getting back to the state of affairs which existed in the seventeenth century."

In our efforts to undo the event of 1730 we brought about what may be called the event of 1930. We have provided the old black rat with a perfect environment in which he may increase and multiply so much that he will end, perhaps, by doing more damage than the more mischievous, but also less numerous, brown rat. This is serious; but it is also rather funny. Man is a self-important, fussily energetic creature. When the Nature he so loudly boasts of having conquered turns round and plays one of her quiet little practical jokes on him one simply has to laugh.

17 May 1934

Space Shrinks

For the last two generations hardly a day has passed without someone breaking into print or public oratory about the annihilation of distance and the shrinking of the world. It has been said (how many thousands of times!) that science is bringing the peoples together, is in process of uniting them in a single economic, cultural and political whole.

Prophetic voices were saying it when the first railway was built; and with every new invention in the fields of transportation and communication they have gone on saying it, louder and louder. During the last few years radio, flying and the automobile have caused the world to shrink in the most astonishing fashion.

And yet, in all the course of modern history, there has never been a time when nationalistic feelings ran higher, when international competition was more savage and political barriers to trade more numerous. We are as far from economic and political unity as ever--perhaps even farther than we were in the past.

Half a century ago applied science had imposed upon the nations an unprecedented measure of economic solidarity, had made them interdependent as they had never been before. Countries that specialized in manufacture exchanged their products for the raw materials and food-stuffs of agricultural communities. The Argentine produced the beef required by England and England produced the locomotive required by the Argentine; it seemed a dispensation of all-wise Providence.

Conceiving that the future would be like the past, observers of this process had prophetic visions of closer and closer economic interdependence, resulting finally in political unification. Unfortunately, they forgot that, if applied science could create industries in one country it could also create them in others. Originally, it is true, industrial development had depended on the presence of coal. Then it became possible to convert the energy of falling water into electric power. Industries could now be established in what had been the most unlikely places. At the same time cheap transport made raw materials available wherever they were needed. There was no longer

any reason why, say, Peruvians or Turks should import their cotton cloth from Lancashire; they could make it themselves.

Paradoxically enough, the countries that had grown rich by exporting manufactured goods provided the capital for the new industries which were to oust them from their foreign markets. Exporters have always been under the necessity to finance their own competitors. Our economic system is such that it is hard for them to take in cash or goods the whole equivalent of the things they sell abroad. Some of their gains have to be spent on the spot. Hence "foreign investment," which is simply the supplying of foreigners with the capital they require for establishing industries that will compete with yours. Applied science made universal industrialization possible and the exporting countries provided the money for realizing these possibilities in practice.

What has been the result? The old specialization is disappearing. All countries produce, or would like to produce, all kinds of goods. Where everybody is trying to sell the same things, competition naturally tends to become more intense. From being interdependent the peoples of the world are fast becoming mutually independent. Never have men been so close together and never have they been so far apart.

21 May 1934

Bridge Players

We complain when we are sick, are surprised and dismayed by any manifestation of social disorder. But the really astonishing fact is that we are ever well and that society ever enjoys a day of tranquil existence. Our bodies are so fantastically complicated that the odds against their functioning correctly are enormous. Still greater are the odds against social stability. For a society (particularly a huge industrialized society of the modern type) is, to a great extent, an artificial affair--and alas, we all know that even the best of man-made machines are horribly unreliable by comparison with the living mechanisms of Nature.

Modern social arrangements are working badly enough, heaven knows; but the remarkable thing is that they should work as well as they do. Holdups, riots, head-crackings--the papers are full of such unpleasant items. But still the light goes on when we press the switch, the buses run, we can walk in the streets unarmed and without serious risk of being killed. The fact of so much social stability and quiet in the midst of so much confusion is even more extraordinary, it seems to me, than the analogous fact of bodily health in an environment full of potential reasons for being sick.

Man has been called a tool-making animal, but he is also (and this, so far as society is concerned, is the more significant characteristic) a rule-making animal. He is the inventor of chess and military drill, of football and the sonnet, of higher mathematics and bridge--in a word, of the game with rules. He loves rules for their own sake, because the performance of actions in accordance with rules is a source in itself of profound satisfaction. The knowledge that such observance of the rules is often good policy may strengthen man's love of rules for their own sake. But it is obvious that this love can exist apart from all considerations of self-interest.

If society is as stable as it is that is because most human beings are, so to say, born bridge-players and congenital footballers. Force and the appeal to self-interest reinforce the native love of rules for their own sake; but they are certainly not strong enough by themselves to ensure the stability of society. The truth of this is clearly illustrated by cases

where individuals stubbornly refuse to abide by the accepted rules of the social game. If they are sufficiently clever and ruthless these rule-ignorers can inflict mischief that is out of all proportion to their numbers.

We have seen, in America, the difficulties experienced by the police in dealing with bandits like Dillinger.⁷⁵ If the number of such determined criminals were suddenly doubled the existing forces of public order would be utterly inadequate.

Luckily, very few people are like Dillinger. Nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand men and women are born bridge-players who accept the rules even when it is not to their advantage to do so, and actually seem to take a certain pleasure in abiding by them. That is why we can get on with so few policemen. And that is why, in spite of the enormous sum of incompetence, iniquity and consequent suffering, revolutions have been so astonishingly rare.

28 May 1934

⁷⁵ John Dillinger (1903-34). American gangster killed by the F.B.I. in Chicago.

Tall Stories

Stories of prophetic dreams are as old as literature--probably a great deal older. From the scientist's point of view this is unfortunate. For stories are like trees; they grow taller with the passage of the years. After a few centuries they are lost to view among the clouds, and the scientists refuse to have anything to do with them. Such refusal is comprehensible, though by no means always justifiable. Some tall stories are like balloons, floating unattached through the thin air of pure fantasy. But some are in the nature of towers; their tops may be in the stratosphere; but they have been raised from foundations in reality.

Prophetic dreams, for example--are these balloons or towers? Balloons, the majority of intelligent people would now unhesitatingly say, mere balloons. And yet, suspiciously tall as most of these stories are, there is a certain amount of by no means negligible evidence for the existence of a connection between their fanciful tops and the firm ground of experience far below.

Perhaps the most interesting and convincing evidence for such connection is that brought together by Mr. J.W. Dunne, who has recently published a third and enlarged edition of his *An Experiment with Time*. Mr. Dunne is an engineer with a taste for mathematics, who some years ago found himself dreaming things which subsequently happened. The evidence derived from his own experience and from that of a few other people who have been fired by his example to record all their dreams immediately on waking has convinced him that, during sleep, some minds are sometimes able to see future events as though they were present.

In this matter, it is clear, absolute and irrefutable proof is hardly possible. At the best, only a high degree of probability seems attainable; and this high degree of probability can be secured only by the convergence toward one conclusion of a number of individual cases so great that explanation in terms of chance coincidence becomes absurd. Mr. Dunne's experiment with time should be repeated on a large scale; for it is only by the cooperation of many individuals that we can hope to establish beyond all reasonable question the fact of

dream prescience and to fix the circumstances in which this strange faculty can be exercised.

If it should turn out that the future can really, in certain circumstances, be perceived as present, then, it is obvious, all our existing theories about the physical and moral universe will have to be revised. Our practice, however, will hardly be affected; for we act while we are awake and, whatever we may be able to do in dreams, in our waking hours we are compelled by the very structure of our conscious minds to behave and believe as men have always behaved and believed. The future may in some obscure sense be already in existence; but our waking minds are such that we can only think of ourselves as perched on the luminous knife-edge of the present, advancing into an empty and formless darkness.

Again, events may be foreseeable and therefore completely determined; but we are so made that we cannot avoid believing in the freedom of our will. Philosophical theory has never disturbed unphilosophical practice. At the dinner table Professor Einstein and Bishop Berkeley eat roast beef, not a cloud of electrons or a subjective illusion.

It is the same with the dream prophets. In the day time, they must live, willy-nilly, as though they enjoyed free choice and were wholly ignorant of the future. And this is doubtless fortunate; for, to beings like ourselves, life would become unbearable if the future were known in advance. If the conscious mind rejects the knowledge possessed by the subconscious during sleep, it does so for the best biological reasons--in order to preserve itself. And it is noteworthy, in this context, that almost all the events foreseen in dreams by Mr. Dunne and his friends should be of the most trivial nature. It is as though a knowledge of significant future facts were rejected by the subconscious as being too dangerous, a burden too great to be borne even during sleep.

4 June 1934

Audible Books

Reading, writing and arithmetic are still regarded as the fundamentals of an elementary education. But the recent development of mechanical invention has been such that one may wonder, how long the Three R's will retain their old supremacy.

For example, a sound knowledge of arithmetic was once a first-class commercial asset. But calculating machines are now mass-produced; there seems to be no reason why a man should not go very successfully through life without a knowledge even of the multiplication table.

Meanwhile, the talkies and the radio have invaded the schools; children do more and more of their learning by listening to the spoken word and looking at moving pictures.

We are now, it would seem on the threshold of a new mechanical development--the production of audible books. Indeed, Mr. Frank Dyer has already produced them; blind people in America are listening to them at this very moment. What Mr. Dyer has done is to invent a method for increasing the number of spiral grooves cut into the face of a phonograph record and another method for decreasing the speed at which the disc is turned.

The result is that, instead of playing for only four minutes, his record will give as much as an hour and a quarter of words or music to each face. No more chopping of symphonies into incoherent fragments; no more sacrifice of sense and beauty to the inadequacies of a machine. What a comfort that will be! But it was not to the musicians that Mr. Dyer gave the demonstration recently reported in the press; it was to the publishers. The new record is to be used, above all, for the making of audible books.

What are the prospects for these audible books? The blind, the weak-sighted, the infirm--these will obviously want to buy them. But I believe that ultimately the market for them will prove to be far greater than is at present suspected.

Nobody who has had anything to do with teaching can have failed to notice the fact that all children and most grown-ups can learn very

little from books, but find small difficulty in assimilating information imparted by the spoken word.

The economist will tell you that the persistence of lecturing at our universities is an absurd anachronism. Medieval students had to attend lectures for the good reason that there were few text books and those inordinately expensive. Today books are plentiful and cheap. There is no economic reason why anybody should go and listen to professors saying out loud what they have written and published in their books.

And yet lectures are still attended. Why? Because most people derive more mental nourishment from talk than from print. It is only a few thousand years since writing was invented--not long enough for the human race to have become fully accustomed to this difficult novelty. Radio, talkies and now the audible book are henceforward going to make it possible for men to enjoy all the advantages of talk in conjunction with all the advantages of cheap printing.

The forces of conservatism may hold out for a time. But sooner or later people will insist on choosing the alternative they find easier and more agreeable. But there is reason to believe that the majority of men and women prefer talk to print; and so talk is what, in the long run, they will insist on having, both for themselves and for their children. It will be goodbye in the schools of the future to the Three R's of educational tradition. Reading, writing and arithmetic will be replaced by the more up-to-date arts of looking, listening, telephoning and working the calculating machine.

11 June 1934

Best Sellers

A few weeks ago Mr. Edward Weeks published some very interesting facts and figures on the subject of best sellers in America since 1875.⁷⁶ I hope that this is only a first instalment and that he will finally give us a list of all the books that have enjoyed outstanding popularity in every part of the civilized world. Such a list would constitute a social and psychological document of the first importance.

One's first reaction to Mr. Weeks's account of American best sellers is one of rueful dismay. "The pen," we are constantly being told, "is mightier than the sword." But if this is really so how is it that the life of the American people as a whole has remained, it would seem, so completely unaffected by its favorite books?

Many of these favorites, it is true, were never intended to affect their readers' lives in any profound or revolutionary way; they were merely intended to amuse and thrill, to provide people with the artistic equivalent of their own wish-fulfilling day dreams. *The Shiek, If Winter Comes* and even such admirable books as *Huckleberry Finn* and *Treasure Island* are just entertainers and wish-fulfillers. Their authors were not trying to change the world around them; they were trying to please it.

But there are also best sellers of another kind, best sellers written by people who no doubt desired to please their readers, but only in order to be able to influence them more effectively. *Ben Hur* for example; *Quo Vadis* and *In His Steps* were written with the intention of making people more virtuous and religious. *All Quiet on the Western Front* is a tract against war; *The Outline of History*, a tract in favor of internationalism and scientific planning.

These and many other books-with-a-purpose have had gigantic circulations. Thus, in the United States alone *In His Steps* sold 8,000,000 copies, *All Quiet* about 600,000 and *The Outline of History* over 1,000,000. With what results? Have Christianity, anti-war feeling and internationalism made notable strides in the society which invested so heavily in Wells, Remarque and the writers of religious fiction and

⁷⁶Edward Weeks (1898-1989). American critic, editor of *Atlantic Monthly* from 1938-66.

manuals of devotion? We are compelled by the observable facts to answer no.

We may, of course, derive a certain comfort from the thought that things might be much worse than they are if these books-with-a-purpose had not been best sellers. But the comfort is at best cold comfort. And anyhow, there is no known means of discovering whether the comforting theory is true.

That some books have profoundly affected whole peoples is certain. But they have generally exercised their influence at one remove and not directly by becoming best sellers. A book may be very unpopular; but if it happens to mould the thought of individuals who are in a position to impose their ideas on an entire society its indirect influence may be enormous.

Thus, Sorel never sold more than a few thousand of any of his books; but among his few thousand of readers was a man called Mussolini. If the pen is to become mightier than the sword it must first affect one or more of those few highly gifted and determined people who are ready and able to use the sword more effectively than those who, at the moment, happen to be in power.

A book may sell five million copies and never come into the hands or touch the heart of one of these rare beings. Another book may bring its publisher almost to ruin but indirectly, by influencing a single mind, it may change the face of a whole society.

8 June 1934

100 Years Hence

A hundred years hence what will our descendants be doing and thinking? According to the most pessimistic school of prophets, they won't be doing or thinking anything--for the excellent reason that they won't be there. The final war-to-end-war will have been a complete success: It will have ended the human race.

Less extravagant pessimists foresee only partial destruction and a return to primitive barbarism. The survivors among our great grandchildren will be chipping flint arrow heads and thinking about the wild beasts they hope to kill with them.

But not all of our prophets are Jeremiahs. There are some to whom the future looks not black, but brilliant pink. They admit that there may be a few wars, a generation or two of confusion. But, after that, men will have learnt their lesson and all will go well. A hundred years hence our descendants will be living in a Wellsian paradise.

My feelings, when I read the outpourings of these optimistic prophets, are always uncomfortably mixed. At one moment I curse the fates for not having made me my own great-grandchild. At another, I congratulate myself on having had the sense to be born when I was. I can never quite make up my mind whether I should find the future paradise a golden dream or a nightmare.

For those who actually live in it it will probably be both. Life, as it is lived by the individual, has always been both--a routine tempered by extreme miseries and moments of intense delight. True, the optimistic prophet seems to imagine that things like television and scientific education, international world government and rocket planes will somehow completely eliminate the nightmare element from human life. And certainly, if you look at human life in the mass and, so to speak, from a great height, there is some truth in this contention.

Such obvious large-scale nightmares as war and extreme poverty and preventable disease may unquestionably be eliminated. But the elimination of large-scale nightmares does not necessarily entail the elimination of individual nightmares. Sick people who become healthy and poor people who become rich do not thereby become permanently

and invariably happy. It is a matter of common observation that they find, even in their more prosperous state, new causes for misery.

For misery is always relative to the individual's existing circumstances. To the outside observer the causes of a rich and healthy man's misery may seem frivolous when compared with the causes of a poor and sick man's misery but, so far the healthy rich man himself is concerned, they are real and sufficient reasons for suffering. There are nightmares corresponding to all the conditions of life, golden dreams for every purse.

Many features of the Wellsian paradise seem to me delightful; others strike me as very unpleasant. But if I were actually living in this promised land it is probable that I should neither be specially charmed by the features which today seem to me most desirable, nor specially pained by those which, being what I actually am, I think most odious. My joys and my miseries would be relative to my paradisaical existence--conditions quite different from those of contemporary life.

Progress is a reality for the historian who thinks in terms of society as a whole. For the individual who actually lives through a progressive epoch it is much less of a reality. He is born with his own private reasons for feeling miserable, and he takes these along with him, even into paradise.

Conceivably, the doctors and psychologists may find means for curing human beings of their unpleasant passions and making them feel perpetually cheerful and benevolent. If this were ever to happen individuals would feel convinced of the reality of progress, even though, from the historian's point of view, civilization were steadily deteriorating. Between individual happiness and social and mechanical advance there is no necessary, point-to-point correlation. To a considerable extent each can flourish or decline independently of the other.

25 June 1934

Derby Day

One and a half miles of race track. Twenty horses. Five hundred thousand people. Such is the Derby in terms of simple arithmetic.

The theory is that the five hundred thousand people assemble on Epsom Downs in order to look at the twenty horses running the twelve furlongs of their appointed course. But this theory, as anyone who has been to Epsom Downs on Derby Day can see for himself, is completely belied by the facts. Of the half million assembled on the Downs only a minority can ever hope to catch a glimpse of those twenty horses. Two-thirds, or perhaps three-quarters, or even four-fifths of the people see nothing but one another. Nor, to judge by appearances, are they particularly anxious to see more.

The course encloses a space of, I suppose, about seventy acres. This gigantic chicken run is packed from end to end. None of those more than five yards from the rails can see anything whatever of the race. Nevertheless, there the people are, by the tens and scores of thousands, all busily enjoying themselves, in spite of the fact that the race they are theoretically supposed to be looking at is as remote from them, for all practical purposes, as an entertainment on the moon.

The real truth, of course, is that the twenty horses are only a pretext. And, for most of the five hundred thousand, even the thrill of betting is only a secondary excitement--a kind of extra titillation over and above the solid, fundamental joys of the occasion. Those hundreds of thousands assemble on Epsom Downs for the mere pleasure of assembling.

Crowds, like virtue, are their own reward, and the name in which "two or three (or two or three hundreds of thousands) are gathered together" is a matter almost of indifference. It may be twenty race horses or Chancellor Adolf Hitler; it may be a revival meeting or a boxing match; the crowd really doesn't much care. All that it needs is some excuse to be a crowd. For a crowd is a source of profound satisfaction to all the individuals composing it. Or rather to most of those individuals. For there is always a minority that would prefer to be alone.

The love of solitude is due in part, no doubt, to upbringing and the circumstances of childhood; but partly, also, to some congenital peculiarity of temperament. Crowd-haters are born as well as made; and if you happen to be, by nature as well as by nurture, a person who enjoys solitude, then crowds and crowd-life will be a real torture to you. Up to the present a taste for isolation has been regarded as something one need not be ashamed of. Certain philosophers and religious teachers even made a virtue of it.

"Advanced" thought has changed the old standards, and under Communism a desire for solitude is highly suspect. The good Communist is expected, in Russia, to be continuously in contact and communication with his fellows. To wish to escape from crowd-life into individualistic solitude is regarded as selfish, anti-social, positively criminal. From all the accounts I have read and heard the existence of a good party man in the Soviet Union is one continuous Derby Day of social work and social play, of social eating, meeting, walking, talking, thinking, drinking, reading and even (owing to lack of house room) breeding.

Softened by a modicum of comfort, this kind of crowd-life would probably suit most people down to the ground. But what of the minority of congenital crowd-haters? Their lot in the new world will indeed be pitiable. It is with the eye of a potential sufferer that I always contemplate those five hundred thousand on Epsom Downs.

2 July 1934

Animal Writings

Man has a monopoly of speech and writing. All literature is exclusively human literature. We don't know what the ants, say, or the kangaroos or the herrings think about life.

I have often thought that it would be amusing and at the same time profoundly instructive to try to construct this non-existent animal literature. For example, I would try to project myself imaginatively into the mind of an amorous spider and make him tell his tragic love story.

At a certain moment he feels himself drawn by an irresistible attraction toward some female of his kind. She sits there in the center of her web, displaying the arachnaean form divine to his enamored gaze. Eight-legged, hairy, divinely beautiful! But, oh, how enormous! Two or three times as big as her longing admirer. He feasts his eyes on her loveliness; he is intoxicated by her delicious perfume. Longing draws him, draws him; but at the same time an awful terror drives him back. Terror of this huge creature, so much stronger than himself, so chronically hungry.

He loves her and, at the same, time, he knows, in his obscure spider's way, that if he gets into her amorous clutches she will eat him. He advances, burning; her formidable bulk looms over him, and he scuttles back. But oh, that perfume, those eight perfect legs! He edges forward once again. Love against fear--the awful conflict rages within him; and at last, at last, it comes to its foregone conclusion. Love triumphs. He can resist no longer, but rushes into her many-jointed arms--and is promptly devoured.

So much for the spider's romance. And what curious love lyrics one would have to write in the name of the salmon and the octopus! And then what would the elegies of a submarine nature-poet be like? What, indeed, would be "nature" as perceived by a Wordsworthian crab or sea urchin? And how would the termite write her proletarian novel? Imagination staggers in the effort to answer such questions. But luckily the world contains other creatures than fish and insects. There are also the mammals, our cousins. It is easier to imagine their literature.

Here, for instance, is the summary of a short history of the feline race, as compiled by some learned and philosophic cat. The book, we

find, is essentially a religious work, in the manner of the providential histories of humanity composed by St. Augustine and Bossuet. It opens with a gloomy account of feline life in the days of unregenerate savagery--a wicked and miserable existence of hunger and cold and universal ferocity. Contemplating this state of things thoughtful cats are forced to the conclusion that, during all this period, their race lived under a curse, in the shadow of the divine displeasure.

But better things were to come. At a certain moment in history some religious genius among the cats discovered a method for appeasing the wrath of heaven. The rites of the new religion were simple. All that cats had to do was to go to certain sacred places and there catch mice, look handsome and purr when caressed. If they did this Destiny (incarnated in the persons of certain of its terrestrial agents called Men) would answer all their prayers, provide them with milk, the heads of fishes and warm places to sleep in.

Providence, hitherto so malevolent, was thus domesticated to the service of cats. From dark and uncertain the feline destiny became glorious and assured. The inhospitable world was apocalyptically converted into an earthly paradise. A tone of grateful and triumphant piety pervades all the manuals of feline history. In view of the extraordinary and manifestly miraculous facts of that history it is only to be expected.

9 July 1934

Idolatry

Idolatry is ranked by the authors of the Bible as one of the major sins. The fact, I remember, always puzzled me. Those thunderous denunciations seemed, to my childish mind, a waste of moral energy--much ado about very little. Idolatry? But I couldn't imagine that anyone in the world I knew could be tempted to bow down before the statues of calves or fishes. And in the second place I couldn't see why, if people were thus inexplicably tempted, they should not be allowed to indulge in what seemed to me a bit of harmless imbecility.

With age and the increase, if not of wisdom, at least of experience and knowledge, I have learned to understand the significance and point of that age-long campaign against idolatry recorded in the Bible. I have come to realize that the temptation to behave idolatrously is just as strong today as it was in the time of Moses or of Solomon, and that its results are so deplorable that--on the principle of trees being known by their fruits--it richly deserves its high place in the hierarchy of sins.

Literally, idolatry is just the worship of images; but it has come to carry more than its merely etymological significance. In this larger sense idolatry may be defined as the worship, not of the Creator, but of a creature, or of the creation of a creature.

Our own age has witnessed a huge and violent recrudescence of idolatry. The old transcendental religions, with their worship of the Creator, their insistence on universal spiritual values, have been replaced in large sections of modern society by the worship of such man-made organisms as the State, the Nation, the Class, the Party. Particular national values, class values, party values have usurped the place of universal values. The material symbols to which respect is paid are such things as flags and badges; the images hung up in public places and in the icon-corner of the home are those, not of saints, but of the local politicians. These last, in certain cases, are made the object of a cult hardly distinguishable from that which was paid in antiquity to the successors of Alexander the Great, to the generals and administrators of republican Rome, and later, with a wealth of elaborately organized rites, to the Roman emperors.

Here are two typical quotations from inscriptions and letters dating from the great age of man-worship--the centuries immediately preceding and following the beginning of our era. "The council and People of Ephesus honour Caius Julius Caesar. God manifest and Universal Savior of Human Society." "The Providence which orders the whole of human life has conferred upon life its most perfect ornament by bestowing Augustus, whom it fitted for his beneficent work among mankind by filling him with virtue, sending him as a Saviour for us and for those who come after us, one who should cause wars to cease, who should set all things in fair order." And so on.

We smile; but language only slightly less fantastically blasphemous is being used at this present moment about the various dictators now engaged in "saving society" in Europe and elsewhere. All the resources of modern propaganda--the press, the radio, the movies--are being used to disseminate this idolatry of men and nations. The sin, if we continue to practise it, is bound to bring its own punishment. To make gods of politicians and the nations they represent is merely suicidal. For the only prayer these gods can answer is a prayer for war.

16 July 1934

World Symphony

Imagine an orchestra in which the fiddlers insisted on playing twice as fast as the cellists and the trumpeters were absolutely incapable of keeping up with the wood wind. The sublimest symphony, interpreted by the best of conductors, would be transformed by such an orchestra into a hell of conflicting noise.

Our planet bears a distressingly close resemblance to this hypothetical orchestra. There is nothing much wrong with our music, for most of us are only too anxious to listen to the peaceful harmonies of a great World Symphony. Nor are good conductors lacking, for we have many statesmen of first-rate ability. The trouble is that, owing to temperamental or environmental idiosyncrasies, we simply cannot play our parts at the same rate. The result is that our World symphony degenerates into a hideous pandemonium.

A striking illustration of the way in which the tempo of human activity varies in different parts of the world is provided by the experts in population problems. The studies undertaken in America by the Scripps Foundation and in France by Professor Richet are most illuminating in this context.⁷⁷

Thus, we learn that the rapid decline in the birth-rate of all peoples of European descent will probably lead, within a generation, to the stabilization of the world's white population at a figure not more than two or three scores of millions higher than the present total.

But meanwhile the colored races will have been increasing at a vastly greater speed and will almost certainly continue to do so long after the white population has reached stability. Richet foresees that, a dozen years from now, there will be on this planet about 30,000,000 more white people than there are today, and about 140,000,000 new Asiatics.

What makes these variations in the tempo of population-increase so specially significant is that they are accompanied by variation in the tempos of many other human activities. Thus, it is obvious that a rapidly expanding population will tend to be more imperialistic than a

⁷⁷Charles Robert Richet (1850-1935). French physiologist; prolific author awarded the Nobel Prize in 1913.

stationary or declining one. As their birth-rate has declined the white races have become more humanely considerate of subject peoples; the tempo of white imperialistic effort is slackening off. But among the peoples of Asia there are signs that the tempo of yellow imperialism is being accelerated. I don't mind betting that there are already Japanese Kiplings writing prophetically about the Yellow Man's Burden.

"God is on the side of the big battalions." The remark is fortunately not quite so true as it used to be. Thanks to recent technical progress, the "nation in arms" is today something of an anachronism. It looks as though the armies of the future were to be highly trained and elaborately equipped professional armies. This being so, the big battalions will be less of an advantage than they were. All the same, those hundred and forty millions of new Asiatics are obviously no joke.

As the birth-rate declines the number of old people in the population tends to rise. The Scripps Foundation calculates that in 1980 nearly forty per cent of all Americans will be over forty-five. Today only twenty-two per cent of them belong to this age group. Now the middle-aged and old are more conservative than the young.

We may therefore anticipate, throughout the whole white world, a great slowing down of the tempo of progressive politics and liberal thought.

"Rather fifty years of Europe," wrote Tennyson, "than a cycle of Cathay!" That was in 1842. In the old people's Europe of 1980 young poets may be pining for the livelier tempo of life in China.

23 July 1934

Million Thoughts

"A penny for your thoughts," we say, jocosely, when our friends fall silent. Not a very large sum, certainly. Shakespeare and Professor Einstein might justifiably regard the offer as inadequate; and even in the lives of much less eminent people there are hours when a penny would be very far from a just price for their thoughts.

But for most of us, most of the time, the thing is, I believe, a perfectly fair proposition. Our thoughts may be very precious to us; but, measured by any generally accepted standard of values, they are not worth more than the penny at which immemorial usage has assessed them. Often, indeed, they are worth much less. There are many occasions on which we are being extravagantly overpaid when we accept a penny for what is going on inside our skulls.

Some day, no doubt, a complete census will be taken of the queer and silly inhabitants of man's interior universe. An army of observers will go round, classifying the subjects of conversation in every class of society; psychologists will question representative men and women about their fancies and desires; volunteers for introspection will be asked to record their day-dreams.

The census will be a great and costly undertaking, but very useful, I believe, to any ruler who orders it. For it is clear that the cheapest and on the whole the most efficient instrument of government is, not the bayonet, but propaganda. Now propaganda cannot be used with full effect unless you know exactly what, in circumstances of any given kind, people think, feel and desire. As yet, however, no census of mind-land has ever been taken. We must be content with the fruit of our own personal experience and the results of such partial investigations as psychologists have chosen to make.

Here, for example, are a few figures from a recently published study of human reactions to repetitive work. Among a group of young girls, engaged in the packing of chocolates and kept under observation for more than a year, the commonest topic of conversation was (as perhaps one might have guessed) the opposite sex. For every seven times they mentioned home life, boys were discussed no less than forty-two times. Films and film stars scored twenty-seven; but clothes,

surprisingly enough, only twelve (the same as dirt-track racing). Newspaper stories of suicides, murders and accidents secured ten mentions, and local scandal fourteen. Photographs were discussed as frequently as home life; but food and swimming got only five mentions to the home's seven, and football a miserable two.

Such statistics as these are interesting; but of course they enlighten us only about one type of human being and, even with regard to that one type, tell but a fragment of the whole story. People think about many things to which they never or seldom refer in conversation. There is, for example, that vast world of wishful day-dreams in which most of us spend so much of our time. The world where we marry the Prince of Wales or Mae West, whichever the case may be; where we step out of the Rolls-Royce into the Ritz-Carlton; where we regularly win the Irish Sweep and are applauded twice nightly by a vast and adoring audience.

Of this delicious universe we rarely speak; for, to tell the truth, we are a little ashamed of ourselves for liking it so much. The collection of accurate statistics about men's compensatory paradises would certainly be difficult; but it would probably pay someone to take the trouble. For though each of these wish-fulfilling thoughts, taken by itself, is not worth the traditional penny, a knowledge of the whole mass of them might prove enormously valuable. By spending a million pennies for a million futile thoughts, the scientific statesman may acquire knowledge that he would not sell for a hundred times that sum.

2 August 1934

Common Enemy

For the city dweller there is, at ordinary times, no such thing as Nature. The world he lives in is entirely man-made. Night falls; he presses a button and there is light. It freezes; he turns a knob and it is warm. He is thirsty; water comes out of a tube at his command. Hungry; the products of every zone and season are his for the buying. For years at a time he can live in his city and forget the very existence of the old primeval mother and enemy. He has his troubles, of course; but, like the rest of his environment, these are all man-made. His foes are such things as slumps and armaments, not the forces of untamed Nature. So far as he is concerned, Nature has been conquered.

And then, suddenly, conquered Nature rises up and deals him a formidable blow. Here is London, for example, threatened, as I write these words, with a water famine. Now, if ever there was a country in which Nature seemed to have been completely domesticated, that country is England. And yet the drought has already inflicted enormous hardship and threatens, if it goes on, to turn into a first-class disaster. Still more disquieting are the events recorded on the other side of the Atlantic. Throughout the Middle West the drought is already a major catastrophe; and this past Spring even the city dwellers of the East received, in the shape of the great dust storm, a startling reminder of Nature's continued existence and implacable enmity.

Ironically enough, this particular manifestation of Nature's hostility would never have occurred if man had not attempted, and for a time achieved, a too complete conquest. "Excessive grazing," writes an official of the United States Forest Service, "which destroys the protective vegetation cover, and the ploughing up of naturally well sodded lands for grain crops, make it easy for the wind to whip up the dry soil and develop a destructive dust storm." And, he adds: "This is the way deserts start." It looks as though the net result of man's conquest of the prairies would be the creation of a very fine new Sahara.

Exactly the same results are attending man's conquest of Australia. Central Australia has always been a desert. Now, thanks to the white man, with his sheep and his crops, the desert is rapidly spreading.

Apparently defeated, Nature has turned against the victor with a new and more dangerous energy.

Sometimes, when I read about such things as the failure of the Disarmament Conference, I find myself wondering whether we ought not, for the good of humanity, to wish that there were many more droughts and dust storms than there actually are.⁷⁸ If Europe suddenly showed signs of turning into a desert, its inhabitants would have something better to do than prepare for another war. They would have to afforest and irrigate; to reform the techniques of agriculture; to devise means for supplying their cities with food and water.

And if the desert disregarded frontiers and were impartially to invade every country, men would be forced into co-operation, Frenchmen with Germans, Nordics with Slavs and Latins, Aryans (appalling thought!) with Jews, all working together to stem the advance of the invading sands. Friendships are most firmly cemented by the possession of a common enemy.

If Nature would only consent to play the part of active and universal enemy, men might at last know the blessings of peace and good will. To the prayer, "Give peace in our time, O Lord," we should add, "Give drought in our time, or the threat of an ice age."

Up to the present, unfortunately, the most violent rebellions of conquered Nature have taken place in the countries that, politically speaking, least required them. The Australians and the Americans already enjoy peace and have no need of a common enemy to unite them. If only the menace of their growing deserts could be transported to the Old World!

9 August 1934

⁷⁸The League-sponsored Disarmament Conference opened in February, 1932 and continued until July. The conference resumed in February, 1933 and continued until the fall of 1933. In October, 1933, Germany withdrew from the Disarmament Conference and from the League of Nations.

500 Prophets

"When Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord, Obadiah took an hundred prophets and hid them by fifties in a cave, and fed them with bread and water."⁷⁹

Mr. Alfred P. Sloan, president of General Motors, has done better than Obadiah; for recently he collected no less than five hundred prophets and so far from hiding them in caves, exposed them to the full glare of publicity in the grounds of the Chicago World's Fair. What he fed them with is not recorded. But from personal knowledge of the habits of contemporary prophets, I doubt whether bread and water would have seemed very acceptable.

Chicago's five hundred were not Jeremiahs. On the contrary, they were unanimously optimistic. This conference of prophets proclaimed its faith in the real existence and irresistible force of progress. In a short time, they promised, the average length of life will be seventy years and the average speed of trains two hundred miles an hour; domestic drudgery will be completely abolished and radio movies and teletype laid on in every home, like gas and water.

I have no space to go into the details of their forecasts. Suffice it to say that they covered every field of human activity, from artificial resin to higher education, and that all of them were optimistic.

Many of the Old Testament prophets were occasionally optimistic. But theirs was what I may call a conditional optimism. The world will be transformed, but only if men bring themselves to behave righteously; such, in essence, was their doctrine.

The optimism of modern prophets is unconditional. Their promise of a better world contains no reference to preliminary good behavior. For the world is to be transformed by improved technique, and technical progress depends on sound organization, not on virtue.

True, our modern prophets do sometimes speak of righteousness; but whereas, for Isaiah, righteousness was the condition of world transformation; for the modern prophet it is the consequence. Technical progress brings abundance, security, comfort; it is also good because it can be made to eliminate the causes of evil behavior.

⁷⁹ See 1 *Kings* 18:4.

For example, much crime is obviously due to poverty and mental defect; but industrial progress and economic reform can abolish poverty, and defective stocks can be stamped out by means of eugenics.

Again, research in physiology will ultimately provide us with means for regulating temperament and emotion. In the future, people subject to violent passions will not have to rely on self-control; they will take pills and be permanently serene.

Similarly, a new type of education will prevent children from developing those mental twists which today are responsible for such an infinity of misery and wickedness.

There are obviously scores of other ways in which technical progress could remove the reasons for wrongdoing. Scientific research has opened up possibilities of which Isaiah could not have dreamed--of which, indeed, he might not have wished to dream, even if he could; for, to a moralist of the heroic school, the prospect of suppressing all wrongdoing by merely mechanical and external means would probably seem rather ignoble.

One is led to wonder whether technical progress will finally result in the complete disappearance of individual moral struggle. I doubt it; for it seems to me that man's hunger and thirst after righteousness is so intense that he will always invent new moral problems to take the place of those mechanically eliminated by the improved techniques of living.

In the perfectly organized world of the future most of our ethical difficulties will be non-existent. But I believe that there will be other and subtler cases of conscience, struggles with as yet unsuspected embodiments of evil.

Men are not satisfied with mere happiness; or rather, their idea of happiness is a good deal queerer and more complicated than most of our contemporary prophets care to admit.

16 August 1934

Water Needs

At ordinary times one takes water for granted. It is there--in rivers and lakes and reservoirs, spouting out of pipes, falling from the sky. One never thinks about it. For the ordinary, non-scientific person, thought about the essential elements of his environment begins only when something goes wrong and these essential elements start to fail him. It needs a stomachache to remind us of our digestions; and similarly it needs a drought to make us think about water.

Confronted by the melancholy spectacle of dead grass, of wilting flowers, of dusty foliage, of cracked and brick-hard earth, most of us have been forced of late into a more or less acute awareness of water. This unwonted awareness was accompanied, in my own case, by an unwonted curiosity about a subject to which hitherto, I had given no attention. How much water, I found myself wondering, as the drought lengthened out, do we need? How much, directly and indirectly, does each of us consume? What is the least amount we can get on with? The figures, when at last I found them in Lotka's *Elements of Physical Biology*, left me gasping with astonishment.

In the course of a year an adult drinks only about one ton of water. Five or six bathtubs full--a very moderate amount. But these six bathtubs serve to wash down about two hundred pounds of bread and about two hundred pounds of meat.

Now, crop plants require for their growth a quantity of water from three to six hundred times the weight of the plants after drying; and, in addition to the moisture passing through the plants by transpiration, the soil requires an even larger quantity to maintain a texture suitable to crop growth.

Roughly speaking, then, it takes about one thousand pounds of water to produce one pound of vegetable food. This means that the man who eats two hundred pounds of bread in a year has consumed indirectly four hundred tons of water.

What now of his two hundred pounds of meat? We have seen that it takes a thousand pounds of water to produce a pound of bread; but according to reliable computations, each pound of meat represents a water consumption fully ten times as great. A man who eats two

hundred pounds of meat in a year has consumed indirectly as much water as would be displaced by a couple of destroyers and a submarine.

It sounds Irish, but it is none the less true that for every ton of water we drink we eat four thousand four hundred tons. And this, of course, represents only a part of our consumption. For we do not only eat. We also wash; we also consume innumerable commodities, such as paper, textiles, gas, transportation, which cannot be produced without large quantities of water.

It probably takes the best part of twenty tons of water per diem to keep a civilized adult in the style of life to which he is accustomed--and it takes (I speak, at any rate, for myself) a disastrous drought to make him aware of this elementary and important fact.

23 August 1934

Road Hogs

A train is derailed, ten people are killed: all the papers in the country publish the news on the front page, and the event is recorded by the press of the whole world.

Meanwhile, in every populous modern community, men, women and children are being killed by motor traffic at the rate of several dozens a day and are injured by the thousands. The facts are recorded, if at all, in comparatively obscure space of the local press. To achieve mention in a foreign paper, the victim of a motor accident has to be at least a millionaire or a movie star.

In a word, railway accidents are news, road accidents are not. The chief reason for this is to be found in the familiar psychological fact that we are impressed by the unusual, but tend to regard things that happen frequently as part of the order of nature, to be taken for granted.

Our imagination responds to railway accidents, because railway accidents are extremely rare. The very frequency of accidents on the road makes us indifferent to them. More over, railways are systems, and so possess, for us, something of the majestic quality of the stars in their courses. An accident to a train seems to us almost as shocking as would an accident to a planet.

Roads and cars have none of the impersonal majesty of rails and trains. Cars are not part of a system; they belong in most cases to private individuals. We regard them as physical extensions of the driver's personality--an extra and more adequate set of limbs added to man's natural equipment. Trains are astronomical, cars are essentially human. But, knowing what human beings are, we can feel no particular astonishment at motor accidents.

Such, it seems to me, are the psychological reasons for our curious lack of interest in the daily slaughter of the roads. Efforts are made from time to time to compel the public to be emotionally and imaginatively, as well as intellectually, aware of this slaughter. But without much apparent success. Cars continue to kill more and more people. (A record was set up this Summer in England, when, in one week, 180 people were killed and nearly 6,000 injured in road

accidents. Train accidents during the whole of 1933 caused only six deaths.)

In spite of Safety First campaigns, reckless drivers are as abundant as ever. And this brings us to another very interesting psychological fact. The process of driving a car tends to transform the character of the driver; and this transformation is generally for the worse. It is a matter of everyday experience that people who are at ordinary times gentle, courteous and considerate become, when at the wheel of a car, violently selfish, autocratic, careless of other people's rights and convenience. From civilized beings they are temporarily reduced to savage beasts, immersed in the evolutionary struggle.

And here, I suspect, lies the greatest charm of motoring, the profoundest reason for its popularity. A car gives the ordinary civilized man opportunities, otherwise denied him, of venting his lust for power, of assuaging to some extent that characteristically human desire to be more than human. In absolute control of a swift and powerful machine, he tastes the intoxicating pleasure of mastery, he fulfills long cherished wishes for domination and finds compensation for ingrained inferiorities.

To his dog, every man is Napoleon; hence the popularity of dogs.⁸⁰ A car possesses most of the advantages of a domestic animal--it can be dominated, it is the most abject of slaves. But it can also give a man something no dog can give--the reality of superhuman speed and power. The temporary superman at the wheel tends to become heedless of other people's security and convenience; it is only to be expected.

"Safety First" is an appeal to reason; but the car is an instrument for the satisfaction of profound passions. So far, passion has had the better of the contest. Its success is measured by the mounting casualty list.

30 August 1934

⁸⁰William Randolph Hearst alludes to this passage in 1942. Upon mourning the death of his dog in his column "In the News", he wrote to a friend, quoting Huxley and taking exception to his thesis.

Sciences's Growth

Nature recently published an interesting exchange of views between a German and an English scientific worker. The German set out to justify the present educational and cultural policy of the Nazi regime on the ground that, in a country in Germany's political situation, the pursuit of objective truth was less important than the cultivation of a spirit of militant patriotism. The Englishman in his reply admitted that, in moments of national crisis, even trained men of science will sacrifice truth to passion and interest; what he thought dangerous and wrong was the elevation of this discreditable behavior to the rank of a religious duty.

For myself, I agree with the Englishman. Objective truth, it seems to me, *ought* to be respected in all circumstances. (Perhaps if I were a German and had lived in Germany during the years of post-war humiliation I might think otherwise.) But the ethical problem is not the only one to be raised by this correspondence. There is also the factual problem. Most of us, outside Germany, are agreed as to the way in which scientific workers ought to behave. But this leaves untouched the question of how in fact they do behave, and why.

That scientists should speak and act unscientifically in times of panic is what anyone with a knowledge of human beings would naturally expect. Nor can we be surprised if, even in normal times, the man of science should show himself, when he is out of his laboratory, just as unscientific as anyone else.

What is more difficult to explain is the fact that we have highly developed techniques for dealing scientifically with some things, and no technique at all, or else a technique of the most rudimentary nature, for dealing scientifically with others. Why, for example, are there so many more trained chemists than trained psychologists? Why should England have an Astronomer Royal, but no Sociologist Royal? Why, in a word, are the sciences what in fact they are?

The historical development of science seems to have been determined by three main factors: religion, economics and personal ability. Thus, people invented astronomy because they worshiped the heavenly bodies; astronomy originated as a kind of practical theology.

Again, economic pressure has been directly or indirectly responsible for some of the "purest" of pure scientific discoveries. The Second Law of Thermodynamics was formulated by Carnot as a direct result of his investigations on steam engines. Accurately to determine longitude at sea was a vital necessity for the roving English imperialists of the seventeenth century; there were the best possible economic reasons for Newton's astronomical researches.

The sciences of anthropology and psychology are very young. These sciences did not seem to hold out any prospect of a cash return and therefore remained for a long time completely unendowed. Today anthropology has shown its usefulness for the possessors of colonies; and industrialists have realized that, by applying the results of psychology, they can get more and better work out of their employees. Endowment is now flowing into these scientific departments, as it flowed in earlier times into the department of astronomy and physics.

The final determining factor in the development of science is personal ability. Newton responded to the economic demands of his age with a complete scientific cosmology, that served as a fruitful working hypothesis for more than two hundred years. There is no reason to suppose that any other man of his time could have done the like. The economic demands were the same for all; but Newton's response was unique.

Science is what it is because of religion, economics and the accidents of genius. We may discount our own prejudices, we may resist the compulsions of the mob. But, however great our love for objective truth, we cannot transcend the limitations imposed by history upon the intellectual machinery for discovering truth.

12 September 1934

Suicide

Self-murder is a great deal commoner in books than in life. A census of the world's literature has never, so far as I know, been taken. But I guess that if it were it would reveal a suicide rate among the heroes and heroines of fiction amounting to as much as three or four per cent. In real life the rate varies, among civilized communities, from .01 to .025 per cent. The difference between the real and the fictional rate is a measure of the importance attached to suicide by the popular imagination.

Popular imagination is doubtless right in dwelling so persistently on self-destruction. That the act has immense significance for the suicidal individual and his friends is obvious. But it is also sociologically significant. The suicide figures in the census returns are rich in all manner of interesting and unexpected social lessons.

The most disquietingly significant fact revealed by the statistics is that, in all civilized countries, the number of people who put an end to their existence tends steadily to increase. Like cancer, suicide goes hand in hand with progress. With every addition to the complexities of social life the rate increases.

There are doubtless many ways of assessing the value of a given culture; but, judged by the suicide test, the most desirable mode of life is that of the piously believing and practising peasant.

Hardly less disquieting than the general rise in the suicide rate during the last half century was its sharp temporary fall during the War. In the principal belligerent countries this fall amounted, among non-combatants, to as much as thirty per cent, and falls of ten per cent were registered even among the neutrals.

In other words, for all those who were not actually in the trenches life in war time was nearly one and a half times more worth living than life in peace time. The reasons for this are not far to seek. War arouses powerful group emotions which keep the individual in a state of chronic intoxication. Jobs which in peace time seem intolerably dull and pointless take on a new significance when dignified with the name of war-work.

Finally, war is the source of endless emotional stimulations and excitements. Each day's news is the latest installment of a long-drawn thriller, and so absorbing is this Edgar Wallace novel of real life that even neutrals, who are not directly involved in the vicissitudes of the plot, are charmed by it into forgetting their reasons for killing themselves.

It appears then that consciously or unconsciously non-combatants like war--so long that is, as they are in no personal danger. (There is not much likelihood that they will enjoy the next war.) If they didn't like war the suicide rate would rise or at least remain stationary. That it actually declines in war time is a fact which all who desire international and domestic peace should carefully meditate.

In the ideal state peace will be made psychologically so satisfying that people will neither wish to kill themselves nor take pleasure in the personal or vicarious killing of others.

19 September 1934

Synthetic Voice

Oratory is evidently one of the primary human needs. If it were not, it could never have survived the invention of printing and the spread of primary education.

Radio and the talkies have heightened the orator's prestige and greatly increased his range of influence. Pericles could talk only to those few thousands of Athenian citizens who happened to be within bawling distance. The modern politician can shout or whisper to an audience of millions scattered over half the globe.

Why are some speakers fascinatingly persuasive, while others, who have just as much or even more to say, either send their audiences to sleep or arouse in them an active hostility? Any political party or religious sect that discovers the answer to this question, and that acts upon its knowledge, will find itself on the road of sure success.

Of the many factors that make for success in public speaking I have space to mention only one--the quality of the voice. It is, however, a factor that broadcasting has made particularly important. A visible orator can produce telling effects by means of gesture and facial expression. The broadcaster must rely, apart from the substance and style of his speech, exclusively on the noise he makes in delivering it.

Most voices are emotionally neutral; some are definitely antipathetic to the average listener; and a very few are almost magically fascinating. Certain men and women are gifted with the power of making noises so intrinsically charming that crowds will follow them as eagerly as the children followed the Pied Piper.

Thus, a great deal of Robespierre's success was due to the fact that his otherwise not very interesting speeches were pronounced in a voice of the most insinuating beauty. Or consider the case of George Whitefield, the great evangelist, who made such a profound impression wherever he preached in England and America. His printed sermons, however, are almost unreadably dull.

Of the contemporary orators I have heard, either in the flesh or over the ether, the most accomplished in the art of emitting a fascinating noise was, in his great days, Mr. Lloyd George. President

Roosevelt's microphone voice lacks the magical Pied Piper quality, but is still extremely persuasive in its quiet intimacy of tone.

Of our great star orators, the one whose success I can least understand is Hitler. His tone is that of an angry drill sergeant, and the harsh sound of his voice is, to my ears at least, most unattractive. To his great German audiences, however, he seems to be irresistible.

Wherein does the orator's secret reside? To answer this question one would have to make records of the voices of the most successful speakers of the age and subject the sounds they produced to a detailed analysis. This analysis would show what sort of noises (measured in terms of pitch, volume and timbre) are most attractive when emitted in conjunction with words bearing a particular kind of emotional content. In the light of this knowledge, would-be orators could be tested for their chances of success and perhaps corrected of their faults.

Nor is this all. It is already possible, by making suitable marks on a sound-track, to produce synthetic noises never previously heard in nature. We may expect that men will ultimately be able to produce any kind of synthetic noise that may be desired. Using the knowledge gained from the analysis of attractive speech, future sound-track authors will be able to create bodiless voices so overwhelmingly charming that people will find themselves incapable of resisting their persuasions.

Some of us may live to listen-in to orations composed by the most skilful writers of the day and uttered by synthetic voices combining the charms of utterance of a Whitefield and a Robespierre, a George Arliss and a Lloyd George.⁸¹ When that happens the enslavement of the human race will be complete.

26 September 1934

⁸¹ George Arliss (1868-1946). Stage and film actor. Won an Oscar for his role in *Disraeli* (1929-30). David Lloyd George (1863-1945). Liberal statesman and prime minister from 1916-22.

Mind Reading

Telepathy and clairvoyance--these are subjects to which many excellent men of science react in much the same way as Victorian spinsters reacted to Casanova's Memoirs or the comedies of Wycherley. Such "supernormal" phenomena are, for them, the equivalent of indecent behavior; and they see in the literature of the subject a kind of scientific pornography.

The reality of telepathic communication was definitely established in the 'eighties of the last century. But, the subject being scientifically indecent, very little systematic work has been done on it since then. Recently, however, Professor J.B. Rhine, of Duke University has published under the title, *Extra-Sensory Perception*, a book which marks a definite advance in the scientific study of this curious and important subject.⁸²

In the course of experiments which have been going on for the last three years, Professor Rhine has established a number of important facts. For example, he has devised experiments for telepathy which exclude the possibility of clairvoyance and experiments for clairvoyance which exclude the possibility of telepathy; in this way he has demonstrated the existence of the two faculties as completely distinct from one another.

He has shown that a gifted clairvoyant is able correctly to "see" the designs on a series of cards, not only abnormally often, but also, if he so desires, abnormally seldom. And he has also shown (which is of still greater practical importance) that there is a phase during the experiments during which many percipients guess abnormally wrong without having any conscious desire to do so; for reasons of its own, their subconscious refuses to be right even as often as the laws of chance would allow it to be.

Few people can perceive extra-sensorially; and, even those most highly gifted with this strange faculty come very quickly to the limit of their powers. The present position of the gifted telepathist or

⁸²J.B. Rhine (1895-1980). American psychologist and pioneer of parapsychology. Co-founder of Parapsychology Laboratory at Duke University in 1930.

clairvoyant is probably analogous to the position of a gifted mathematician in the days of the cave man.

Heredity being what it is, we must suppose that Newtons and Einsteins were periodically born into a world still ignorant of simple arithmetic and in which no system of writing, to say nothing of mathematical notation, existed. These people would be condemned to almost complete impotence. Their natural talents however great, would be able to find no outlet. A technique for developing their peculiar faculties had to be evolved; a whole art and science of mathematical expression gradually built up. Only then could the potential Newton make use of his gifts.

In the modern West no method for training the "super-normal" faculties has been evolved; we are without any rational technique for making extra-sensorial perception easy and effective. One thing, however, seems to be fairly clear: Telepathy and clairvoyance (together with most of the other "super-normal" faculties hitherto studied) are incompatible with intellectual activity of an analytical kind. If we want to develop our extra-sensorial gifts we must discover a technique for ridding ourselves of the analytical habit.

Now techniques of this kind have for centuries been practiced by the Yogis of India. If the "super-normal" faculties are ever to be systematically trained, it will have to be, I suspect, along the lines laid down by such Hindu psychologists as Patanjali. Unfortunately, the training described by Patanjali is long and arduous. But this, after all, is true of any serious training whatever. There is no reason to believe that one can become a good telepathist or clairvoyant without taking at least as much trouble as one would have to take in order to become a good mathematician.

The trouble, it is true, will be of quite a different kind. For while the mathematician must painfully learn to concentrate and to analyze; the telepathist must do just the contrary; he must learn to "deconcentrate," he must forget analysis and compel his mind to face the world in a state of integrated quiescence.

A hard job. But then all jobs worth doing are hard.

3 October 1934

Soul Builders

"We need mining engineers, construction engineers, electrical engineers, engineers to build blast furnaces, engineers to build cars and tractors. But no less great is our need for engineers who know how to build human souls. Writers, you are the engineers who build human souls!"

These words, which are taken from a recent speech by Stalin to a congress of Soviet writers, are symptomatically "modern." They show how far the world has travelled from the romantic notion of the poet as a solitary individual with nothing to do but wait for inspiration.

Literature has become a branch of engineering. Communists and Fascists alike regard the writer as a kind of state functionary, closely attached to the Ministry of Propaganda.

But unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, the ideal is not the real, nor can all plans be carried out. Modern dictators may think it desirable that literature should be a branch of engineering under communal control. But this desire is in itself no guarantee of the practical effectiveness of such spiritual engineering.

Do writers really build souls? Only the facts of experience can answer that question. But unfortunately the evidence of history, on which we must mainly base our conclusions, is extremely difficult to interpret. For at one moment history seems to demonstrate that talented writers do build souls, at another that they are, in spite of their talents, quite ineffective.

Their success or failure as spiritual engineers seems to depend almost entirely on the nature of the raw materials with which they have to deal. A piece of literature influences only those who consciously or (more often) unconsciously desire to be influenced by it. A successful soul-builder is a writer who happens to be saying the things that his contemporaries desire to hear.

At any given moment, what is it that makes people wish to listen to one doctrine rather than another? Social and economic circumstances do much, no doubt, to form their literary and philosophical tastes. (Thus, the slump has everywhere brought popularity to the literature of planning.)

Nor must we forget the influence of fashion; at any particular time there are smart ideas and feelings, just as there are smart clothes and entertainments.

The tendency of children to despise what their fathers admired is another factor making for doctrinal instability. Fascists and Communists try to counteract this tendency by subjecting children from the earliest age to a stringent process of mental conditioning.

And finally there is the fact that human beings are easily tired. Loud and constant repetitions of one set of ideas produce fatigue and disgust. (At the moment, the favorite film in Germany appears to be *Charley's Aunt*: that aged farce provides a much needed relief from too much propaganda.)

A gifted writer who says things that are unfashionable and inappropriate to the circumstances of his age will have no influence as a soul-builder; whereas, if he formulates momentarily acceptable ideas, a man of inferior talent may achieve great popularity and, apparently, great influence. I say "apparently"; for where, as is always the case, a writer convinces only those whom circumstances have already converted to his way of thinking, it is obviously very hard to assess his real influence.

We call the first half of the eighteenth century "the Age of Voltaire." But it seems quite possible that the intellectual and ethical history of the time would have been just the same if Voltaire had never been born.

One fact emerges quite clearly: the writer who wishes to be a soul-builder must begin by selecting his souls. Some souls will always refuse to let themselves be built according to his plan. If these are momentarily in the majority, his influence, real or apparent, will be small. If, for whatever reason, they happen to be in a minority, then he may become one of those great spiritual engineers after whom a whole epoch takes its name.

13 October 1934

Medical Styles

Skirts are being worn longer this year; but tonsils, on the contrary, are being worn shorter.

Bright colors are all the rage; and so is Vitamin D.

The Bulgarian bacillus is as hopelessly out of date as the Eton crop.

I have lived to see the rise and subsequent fall of Metchnikoff and the picture hat, of Coué and crimson toenails.⁸³

I have known people who had had their large intestine removed in the belief that the operation would prolong their lives; and I remember the time when women looked like a mixture between hour glasses and swans' necks.

I remember the Gibson girl; and I have dined with a Fletcherite, who took nearly twenty minutes to eat one walnut.⁸⁴

I remember the time when parasols were nearly five feet long and when it was widely supposed that diabetes could be cured by fasting and cancer by eating garlic.

I have lived through the age when every man wore a waistcoat and swallowed paraffin before going to bed into an age in which waistcoats and paraffin are out of favor and their places have been taken by mucilage and pullovers.

Medical fashions change for fundamentally the same reasons as do fashions in clothes. People get bored with wearing the same things, imagine they will look better in something different; and they are encouraged in their fickleness by the tailors, dressmakers and textile manufacturers, whose interest it is that styles should change as often as possible.

⁸³ Ilya Metchnikoff (1845-1916). Succeeded Pasteur as director of the Pasteur Institute. Postulated an influential theory of inflammation. Emile Coué (1857-1926). French pharmacist and theorist of auto-suggestion. Coined the watchword, "Every day in every way, I am getting better and better".

⁸⁴ Gibson girl. Drawings of Charles Dana Gibson (1867-1944) conveying the American ideal of femininity, popular at the turn of the century. Fletcherite. Follower of Horace Fletcher (1849-1919), American nutritionist who advocated the thorough mastication of food.

Similarly, people imagine that they will be healthier if they adopt a new drug or diet, if they undergo some novel course of mechanical or psychological treatment. It is to the interest of the makers of pills, concentrated foods and electrical appliances, of the publishers of books about self help and how to be happy though married, of all, in a word, who make their living out of the genuine or imaginary ailments of humanity, that men and women should try as many different kinds of treatment as possible.

Medical fashions will continue to come and go for just as long as medical ignorance persists. Wherever it has been clearly demonstrated and generally realized that one treatment is more effective than all others, the reign of fashion ends and that of science begins. But there are still vast areas of medicine, through which the practitioner has to fumble his way in almost unrelieved darkness.

"It will hardly be believed, but it is the truth, that we do not yet know what is the optimum intake of calories for children of different ages...We do not know the minimum need for, nor the optimum supply of, first-class protein at any age. We are still quarreling about the influence of Vitamins A and D upon infection of the body and upon bones and teeth. As regards the minimum and optimum requirements of the various mineral constituents of the food, we know next to nothing."

So writes an eminent physiologist, Professor V. H. Mottram; and when one reflects that the great kingdom of medicine has many provinces plunged in a darkness almost completer than that which envelops dietetics, we need not be surprised at the continued existence of charlatans, faddists and millionaire pill mongers.

If the public were properly educated and if all the available scientific knowledge were systematically used by all doctors (which, alas, it is not), the numbers of these fanatics and exploiters might be considerably reduced. But so long as there is ignorance, some will survive.

Luckily, we are all a good deal tougher than we think. The human organism can adapt itself to the most unpropitious circumstances and will pass through fearful ordeals almost unscathed. Medical fashions come and go; but vast numbers of men and women live to a ripe old age.

The greatest miracles are the everyday facts of life.

17 October 1934

On The Go

It was with tears in their eyes that our grandfathers proclaimed that there's no place like home. Our children, as they slam the front door behind them, accompany the same words with a heartfelt "Thank goodness!" and hurry off as fast as their internal combustion engines will carry them.

These are fashions in dress, in diet, in philosophy; there are also fashions in happiness. At the present time most civilized men and women are convinced that they can be happy only on condition that they go somewhere else. For them the essence of happiness consists in not being where they are.

The prevalence of this particular mode is strikingly reflected in the traffic statistics for any great city. I cite those of London, because I happen to have been looking at the London County Council's monumental year book for 1934, but all the other capitals would show analogous figures.

Thirty years ago the number of vehicles passing London's most congested point, between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. of a sample day, was a little under 30,000. In 1933 it was a little over 80,000. An increase of over 150 per cent; whereas the population of Greater London has gone up during the same period by less than 20 per cent.

No less remarkable is the increase in the number of passengers carried by the various transport services. These amounted in 1933 to nearly 4,000 millions. Just before the War the figure was round about 2,000 millions and at the beginning of the century some 500 millions less.

We can put the matter in another way and say that in 1900, every man woman and child living in the London area took on an average 158 journeys a year. The corresponding figure for 1933 was 472. We move from place to place about three times as frequently as our fathers did.

Some of the enormous increase in the number of vehicles in the streets and of passengers carried by public conveyances is due, no doubt, to an increase in the volume of business transacted, and also, perhaps, to changes in its nature. But there can be no doubt, I think,

that most of it is due to altered habits, not of work but of pleasure; to the new fashion in happiness with its insistence that bliss is always somewhere else, or on the road to the other place.

The rise of this new fashion was made possible by the invention and subsequent mass production of the automobile and by the mechanical improvement of all other modes of transport. Moreover, the interested parties have made systematic efforts to popularize the modern notions of happiness. Study the advertising of the car manufacturers, of the transportation companies; you will find it full of lyrical, of almost hysterical rhapsodies about the joys of being somewhere else and the hardly less exquisite delights of getting there.

But opportunity and propaganda are effective only upon those who start with at least a sub-conscious desire to exploit the propitious occasion and let themselves be persuaded by the sales talk.

The soul, said a Father of the Church, is naturally Christian. The history of the last century has shown that it is also, among many other things, naturally a railway passenger, naturally automobilistic, naturally air-minded. As soon as it was given the chance of being these things the soul immediately took it, with an eagerness that seemed to show that it had only been waiting for Stevenson, Daimler and the Wright brothers to express an inborn passion for train and car and plane.

If our grandfathers sang *Home, Sweet Home* it was only because Mr. Ford had not yet revealed to humanity the thrilling and altogether more congenial possibilities of singing *Abroad, Sweet Abroad*.

24 October 1934

Special Training

A recent article in *Scribner's Magazine* summarizes the results of an investigation conducted by the Carnegie Institution into American higher education. The methods adopted by the investigators were simple; 27,000 young people graduating from high schools were examined for intelligence and general knowledge. Those of them who proceeded to the forty-nine colleges cooperating in the scheme were then further tested at intervals during their university course.

These tests consisted of a very large number of questions in the various fields of knowledge.

The results, as tabulated in the examining committee's report, are really appalling. In many colleges the seniors, who had spent four years acquiring a "higher education," knew perceptibly less than they did as freshmen. Their vocabulary was smaller, their spelling and grammar worse, their knowledge of mathematics, literature and history distinctly poorer than when they left school. True, the figures for the whole group showed a small rise. But how very small! For example, the average freshman recognized 56 out of 100 words "in familiar use by educated people"; the average senior recognized 61. Five new words after four years supposedly spent in reading the world's best books!

Oddly enough, the young people who were training to become teachers were distinctly below the average. The future guardians of culture knew even less than their fellows. The only students with a lower record were those preparing to become business men.

For this deplorable state of affairs the investigators chiefly blame the "credit system," current in almost all American colleges. In other countries the student gets his degree on the strength of an examination at the end of his course. All his activities during the entire time he spends at the university are co-ordinated with a view to this one comprehensive test of his knowledge.

In America, on the other hand, the student takes a series of short courses, is tested at the end of each and gets his degree by instalments. The American system thus encourages its victims to forget all about each course the moment they have finished with it. Other systems may be less unsatisfactory. But I suspect that if similar tests were carried out

in universities elsewhere they would reveal a state of things different only in degree from the state of things in America.

The truth is that most students are simply not interested in the sort of knowledge which universities exist to impart. But what the mind finds uninteresting is either not assimilated at all or if assimilated (for the purpose of getting a degree) is soon rejected.

Just how soon I know by personal experience. As a young man I read for a degree in English language and literature. I was passionately interested in the literature, but the language bored me to death. In spite of which I learned enough Anglo-Saxon and Germanic philology to take me with credit through my examinations.

But within a few months I was incapable of translating a line of Old English and could not have answered the simplest question about philology. Whereas the memory of my excursions into the by-ways of English literature has remained with me to the present time. I was fortunate in being interested in at least a part of my studies.

But a great many young people have definitely anti-academic minds and take no interest in any of the things that are taught at universities.

They should be somewhere else. But where? The non-academic equivalent of universities remains to be discovered. The nineteenth century ideal was universal education--the same academic training for all. The twentieth century will have to invent a new system of particular education--a special kind of training for each type of human being.

31 October 1934

Old Lamps

In his latest book the French philosopher, Henri Bergson, suggests that the biological function of religion is to protect the individual and society from the disintegrating effects of intelligence.⁸⁵ Religion is nature's "defensive reaction" against the logical reason.

This is, it seems to me, a profound and highly significant speculation. Too exclusive a reliance on the analytical intelligence can undoubtedly disintegrate a human personality or a society.

There are certain thorough-going and rather naive rationalists who refuse to admit the value of activities springing from the emotional and impulsive nature. But the emotional and impulsive nature is the major part of the total nature of man.

These people are engaged in disparaging and explaining away the very substance of their being. They live, self-impooverished, a life that seems to themselves unsubstantial, devoid of significance, without any profound reasons for action. A society containing a considerable proportion of rationalists of this type tends to lose its internal cohesion and its power to react energetically to hostile forces.

Religion, from the biological point of view, is a device, first, for preserving important areas of man's emotional and impulsive nature from destruction by the analytical intelligence and, secondly, for the binding together of societies menaced by the same forces.

The traditional religions have become, for very many people at the present time, unacceptable. But, threatened by the disintegrating forces of misdirected intelligence, nature has put up her old defensive reaction. It is a case of, Religion is dead: long live Religion! Such divinities as the Nation, the Class, the Party have rushed in to fill the vacuum left by the departure of God. New lamps for old; but, alas, the old probably gave better light and were certainly less dangerous than the new.

Religion, I repeat, is nature's defensive reaction against intelligence. But unhappily it is in the main a blind and therefore clumsy reaction. A fully effective reaction would have to be conscious.

⁸⁵ Henri Bergson (1859-1941). *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1932).

In other words, the intelligence itself must prepare the social and psychological defences against the disintegrative forces inherent in its own nature.

What is required of the intelligence is, first, the admission that the emotional and impulsive nature has its rights and then the deliberate formulation of a plan of life allocating to the emotions a sphere in which they can express themselves in the most satisfying and least harmful way possible.

At the present time, under the influence of the political substitutes for religion, intelligence and emotion are assigned their respective spheres of influence in such a way that though each individual may be satisfied and each community held together, humanity at large is exposed to the most appalling dangers.

The situation may be summed up in a single sentence: we are rational about small matters; we are hysterically emotional about important matters. Dealing with the broken radio set, we behave scientifically; dealing with international politics, we behave like the hysterical at a revival meeting. Result: the radio set gets mended, but we drift into wars.

Theoretically, there seems no reason why the emotions should not be able to express themselves in some way satisfying to the individual, integrative for the particular society of which he is a member and safe for humanity at large. But, between theory and practice, a great gulf is fixed. It will be a long time, I suspect, before nature's defensive reaction to intelligence comes to be dictated by intelligence itself.

7 November 1934

Word-Bathing

The leaves are falling. So are the new books - an avalanche of fluttering paper. The "season of mists and mellow fruitfulness" is also the publishing season.

About ten thousand new books are published each year in Great Britain, a few more in the United States, a good many more in Germany, a few less in France. Forty thousand volumes a year in the three principal languages of the West. How many in the other languages of Europe, Asia and Africa? Perhaps an equal number.

Twenty-five thousand days are the allotted span of a man's life. If he were to read three volumes a day, from the day of his birth to the day of his death, he might, with luck, succeed in getting through the world's output of new books during a single ordinary year.

But there are also the newspapers and periodicals, vastly more numerous. To read all those that appear throughout the world in any given week he would have to live to be at least a hundred.

The thought of all these countless sheets of blackened paper is appalling. Particularly appalling to me. For I am one of those whose profession it is to swell the great ocean of printed matter in which our minds are perpetually bathed.

Mine, it is true, is a fairly modest stream--a mere trickle compared with those mighty Amazons and Mississippis of the really prolific authors. But still a genuine stream, steadily carrying its burden of words to the common sea.

Looking out across that infinite expanse of heaving verbiage, at the crowded millions who splash and paddle in the shallows, I find myself filled with the most uncomfortable misgivings. An ocean of words--but of what sort of words? Conveying what truths, expressing what beauties, inculcating what goodness?

And this incessant word-bathing, practised by all of us, all the year round, this endless wallowing in commonplace ideas, vulgar sentiments and bad literary art--is it healthy, may it not be actually harmful? Were people worse off, were they any stupider, in the days when the world (so far as books were concerned) was a desert; when there was no ocean of words, but only here and there a lake; when the bathers were

few, but on the whole hardy and skilful, prepared to swim far and plunge deeply?

These questions are unanswerable; what is disquieting is the fact that they can, they must, be asked.

Meanwhile, the ocean is here, all around us; the word-bathing goes on continuously. Along with cigarette smoking, reading is the great modern vice. For millions of people in Europe and America free time without print has come to seem a bad time. To have five minutes to spare and no reading matter at hand is for them a torture.

We have all of us seen--have most of us actually been--the person who, having come into a restaurant alone and without a book or newspaper reads through the bill of fare from soup to sweets without missing a single word. Not because he takes the smallest interest in the price of apple dumplings or ice cream, but simply because he must read something, because he would be miserable if he didn't.

Our ancestors, before the days of cheap printing, knew how to sit still and be happy doing nothing. We go to school to unlearn this most useful art. Like the drug fiends who love to initiate fresh victims, our teachers introduce us to the print habit. We resist at first, then succumb. Life without the dope of words becomes impossible. We are the slaves of our vice.

14 November 1934

Pistol Fiends

I saw the other day a photograph of the pistol used by the man who assassinated King Alexander of Yugoslavia. It was a large weapon, nearly a foot long; had a magazine with a capacity of twenty cartridges; could be fired either like a revolver, shot by shot, or like a machine gun, continuously, at the rate of four bullets a second, till the supply was exhausted or the pressure of the finger on the trigger was relaxed. A pretty toy. By comparison, the classical six-shooter of the Wild West film seemed a hopelessly antiquated and inefficient instrument.

To what end do technologists lavish such care on the improvement of pistols? What are these weapons used for? Try to kill small game with a pistol: you are merely wasting your powder. Try to kill big game with it: you are just asking to be eaten.

There is only one animal so tame that you can come within a few yards of it, but so observant that it will notice any larger (and therefore more accurate) weapon than a pistol and take alarm. An animal that, in ordinary circumstances, you can only kill by surprise and with an easily concealed weapon. The name of this animal is Man. Pistols have only one function: the murder of human beings.

Everybody knows this perfectly well; and yet the manufacture of pistols is still permitted and the restrictions on their sale are so slight that, in some countries, practically anybody who has the money to spend can get possession of one of these instruments of murder.

Countries like England, where it is really quite difficult to procure a license to own a pistol, are the exception. There are many highly civilized communities in which a large proportion of the adult male population is armed. Moreover--and this perhaps is even more significant--public opinion in these countries is not particularly shocked by the fact. Possession of a pistol is regarded as being intrinsically no odder or more discreditable than possession of a radio set.

The attitude of the law and of public opinion towards pistols seems the more surprising when we consider their attitude towards drugs and poisons. What fearful difficulty I used to have, as a youthful butterfly collector, to get a bit of cyanide of potassium for my killing-bottle!

Here there was some justification for restrictions; for cyanide of potassium is a very deadly poison.

But the law, at any rate in England and in many other countries I know, makes just as much ado about the mildest sleeping draught. There are places where it is easier to buy a revolver than a hundred drops of somnifene.

The attitude of the general public towards drugs is well illustrated by the usages of current speech. People talk of "dope fiends"; but who ever heard of a "pistol fiend"? There is an international committee to regulate and, if possible, suppress the manufacture and sale of opium; but few bother to suppress the manufacture and sale of pistols.

Consider, in this context, the case of alcohol. The theory of Prohibition was that it should be impossible for any American to buy any alcoholic drink whatsoever. But the money saved on beer might be freely spent on revolvers.

One is forced to the conclusion that what the pious reformers really object to in drugs and alcohol is not the fact that, when used in excess, they can endanger human life, but that, when used in moderation, they can give pleasure and relieve pain. Pistols can give nothing but pain, therefore arouse no righteous indignation in the bosoms of Puritans.

But, alas, most of us have a streak of the Puritan in us. We may not disapprove of our own pleasures; but we are generally shocked by other people's. Hence the curious fact that public opinion approves the laws against drugs and even tolerates considerable restrictions on the sale of liquor but has no objection to pistols being sold to any intending murderer who has the cash to buy them.

21 November 1934

Stimulants

Of the world's total income, what proportion is spent each year on stimulants and narcotics? It is impossible to answer with any degree of accuracy; the statistical materials are lacking. For example, how many pounds of intoxicating toadstools are eaten in Siberia? How much hashish is smoked in India and the Middle East? Nobody knows.

Fortunately, there are many classes of stimulants and narcotics for which reliable statistics are available. Thus, the world consumes each year about four thousand million pounds of tobacco, about twelve hundred millions of tea and about three thousand millions of coffee. The figures for wine seem to be in the neighborhood of five or six thousand million gallons, while for beer they are even more astronomical. Of other fermented liquors, such as the palm wine of the East and the pulque of Mexico, all that one can say is that vast quantities are certainly consumed.

Conjecture in these circumstances is obviously very hazardous; but I will risk the guess that humanity as a whole spends a good ten per cent of its earnings on stimulants and narcotics.

Why do human beings make use of all these pick-me-ups and stupeficients? For two reasons: because they are bored with their surroundings and because they are bored with themselves. Life is, for most people, monotonous and fatiguing; for many, actively painful. They need stimulants to tide them over their spells of weariness and to make them feel gay and excited when circumstances are depressing and dull.

But pick-me-ups and sedatives are used even when circumstances are propitious. This is because men desire to escape not only from external but also from internal reality. There is not one of us, I imagine, who has not at some time felt the desire to transcend himself, to take a holiday from all his habits of thought and feeling, to change his character and become, if only for a moment, somebody else.

By means of a glass of wine or even of a cup of coffee or a pipe of tobacco we can temporarily change our characters; and the larger the dose or the more powerful the drug the more complete is the transformation.

In recent times the chemist has synthesized many new and powerful drugs. But it is a remarkable fact that practically all the natural stimulants and narcotics were discovered and used long since by primitive peoples wholly ignorant of science. How these discoveries were made is hard to imagine. We can only suppose that primitive man went browsing around, tasting every leaf, twig, berry and root that he could find. Sometimes he died of his curiosity, or was sick; more often nothing happened at all.

But occasionally, as when, for example, he first nibbled a coca leaf, or first drank the fermented juice of the grape, he felt himself mysteriously transformed, made other, better, happier than himself. For the sake of that delightful transformation he was prepared to give almost anything that was asked of him. To this day his descendants pay out a tenth of their incomes for this same physiological privilege.

28 November 1934

Adding Machine

I was born in the late horse and middle railway age. Today, at forty, I inhabit a world where men can fly from England to Australia in less than three days, where snapshots can be sent by wireless, where Finns can converse with Patagonians and Alaskans can ring up their friends in Borneo.

Our traditional relations with space and time have been radically altered. It is all very astonishing. And yet the odd thing is that it seems to make very little difference. I ask myself how these enormous changes have affected me in my capacity as a human being--as a creature that thinks, enjoys and suffers, that loves and hates, that is capable of good and evil--and I am surprised to find how slight has been their direct effect upon me.

The truth is that men are not made more or less happy by high speed travel or long distance telephone. What affects them is the way airplanes and telephones (and, for that matter, all other objects) are made.

In other words, the humanly significant devices are not those which have changed our relations to space and time. Space and time don't seem to matter very much. It is what we do in space and time that matters.

Mechanical devices that usurp the hitherto exclusively human functions of thinking and skilful action--these are the gadgets that affect men's happiness.

A calculating bookkeeping machine, for example, is much less spectacular than a plane that can fly from England to Australia in three days. And yet, judged by its effect on human well-being, the plane is the less significant of the two inventions. It is only in exceptional cases that it makes any serious difference whether you get to Australia in three days or three months.

But the fact that bookkeeping is rapidly becoming a job for unskilled labor will affect the lives of millions in the most intimate way. (For the purposes of this argument I am leaving out of account the possibility that planes may be used for dropping bombs. The

annihilation of life has no necessary relation to the annihilation of space, which is the plane's true function.)

That machines can now undertake the simpler forms of thinking and artistic creation and are obviously destined to perform these functions to an ever greater extent is a fact whose significance cannot be exaggerated.

For it means much more than the unemployment of those whom the machines have displaced. Unemployment is certainly a difficult problem; but a solution is possible--a solution by the relatively simple means of social organization.

Our thinking and creating machines do much more than throw people out of work--they raise problems of individual psychology as well as of social organization. For what they do is to make men and women seem useless in their own eyes. Very few of us, for example, have the ability to be higher mathematicians. But what is the good of learning to be a competent lower mathematician when machines can do everything you can do, much quicker and without ever making a mistake?

Machines will soon be doing all that the ordinary person can do in the way of thinking and creating. They thus tend to put an ever higher premium on men of exceptional talents and to make the ordinary person increasingly superfluous.

As technology advances society will have ever less use for unexceptional men and women. All they can do will be better done by machines. When this fact is generally realized a problem will arise, incomparably more difficult to solve, because so much less amenable to solution by means of social organization than the problem of unemployment.

5 December 1934

Changing World

Where circumstances remain unchanged the man who has the greatest experience is the man who (other things being equal) will know best what to do in any given situation. But to have had great experience one must have lived for a long time. In all the older literatures wisdom is an attribute of old age. They were written when it was actually an asset to be old.

But circumstances, as we now know to our cost, do not always remain unaltered. In a changing world old age ceases to be an asset and may become a serious handicap. We learn, says the proverb, by experience. But the experience by which we learn most effectively is the experience of youth, and if our youth happens to be some way back in time, the chances are that, in an age of change, experience will have taught us the wrong things. It is no use being supremely wise about horses in a world where everyone travels only by car.

This point is brought home in a report recently issued by the English Agricultural Research Council. More than a thousand farmers in the eastern counties of England were classified in groups according to their age. It was found that the younger the age group the higher were the average profits; the older, the more considerable the average losses.

The reasons for this state of things are obvious. Agriculture has ceased to be a traditional craft with rule-of-thumb methods handed down from father to son and applied more or less efficiently according to the amount of experience possessed by each individual farmer.

It is now an applied science, in which new techniques and processes are being constantly invented. The old farmer with his ripe but generally irrelevant experience, his conservatism, his mistrust of change, finds himself hopelessly at a disadvantage in competition with the young farmer.

What applies to farming applies equally well to many other occupations. In most industries, at the present time, age and mere experience are more likely to be handicaps than assets.

The report of the Agricultural Research Council is particularly significant in view of two facts--first, the intensification of scientific research and, second, the decline in the birth-rate.

Scientific research leads to new inventions, and new inventions make necessary constant readjustments in technical processes and social and economic institutions.

The fall of the birth-rate, on the other hand, is rapidly leading to a great absolute decrease in the numbers of the young people most ready and capable of undertaking these necessary readjustments, and to a great relative increase in the numbers of the elderly.

In the England of 1970 there will probably be just half as many children under the age of 15 as there are today, and the number of people under 45 will have fallen by twenty-five per cent. But the advance of medical science will doubtless have raised the average expectation of life by several years. A very large proportion of the population will therefore be like the unsuccessful farmers of the Research Council's report.

If the birth-rate were declining in all countries at the same speed there would be no great cause for anxiety. But whereas Western Europe and America may be expected to follow a course similar to that of England, countries like Russia and Poland, to say nothing of China and Japan, will still be swarming with young people, unhandicapped by experience, unafraid of change, eager for adventures and experiments of every kind.

Not being a Slav or an Asiatic, I find the prospect disturbing.

12 December 1934

The Peanut

A priori and on general principles there seems to be no necessary reason why peanuts should have any effect on the landscape of southern France. But, in actual fact, the influence exists. Peanuts are changing the face of all the country bordering the Mediterranean--changing it, unhappily, for the worse.

Nearly 50 per cent of every peanut is edible oil. The peanut is therefore, the rival of the olive--a rival equipped by nature with so many economic advantages that one can only be astonished that the olive should have held out as long as it has. Peanuts are the seeds of a tropical and sub-tropical annual, immensely prolific and requiring constant pruning, spraying and manuring. Peanuts can be shoveled out of the ground. Olives have to be hand-picked by people on ladders. Even in the country of its production olive oil costs more than twice as much as peanut oil. The vast majority of our contemporaries have probably never even seen the oil which Jehovah gave to man "to make him a cheerful countenance."

From the remotest Greek and Roman antiquity Provence has been celebrated for its olives. The old trees, with their strangely twisted trunks, their twin-hued leaves, now darkening, now brightening to silver under the wind, are the very soul of the Provencal countryside. Or, rather, they were the very soul. For, already, they have begun to disappear. The old aristocrats of the classical and Biblical traditions--the trees, whose leaves were the emblems of peace and the oil of whose fruits was used to anoint the chosen of God--are in full retreat before the attack of the upstarts from the tropics. Year after year, thousands of olive trees are cut down. They have ceased to pay and must go. Gradually, the whole face of southern France is being changed. The airy glitter and the mysterious green-black darkness of the olive groves are giving place to the alternate verdure and brown barrenness of vineyards and vegetable gardens. Another 30 years and the triumph of the peanut will be complete. Provence will have become a different country.

The peanut is not the only enemy of southern French landscape. The organic chemist has also done his bit to change the face of the

land. In the past, most scents were made of flowers, which were grown in astonishing profusion on the sunny hills round Grasse. Today they are made out of coal tar. The typical scent factory is no longer a pretty white building embowered in the roses and jasmines of the Riviera; no, it stands among the slag heaps near the shaft of a coal mine, with the coking ovens on one side of it and the benzol, tar and ammonia plants on the other. The flowers, once so typical of eastern Provence, are being rooted up and their place taken by peas and lettuce.

Shut up as we are in the narrow cell of domestic and professional relations we are apt to think of ourselves as isolated and self-sufficient beings. But, in reality, nothing that we do is indifferent to the rest of humanity. We are, as it were, perpetually pulling levers connected, all unknown to ourselves, with mechanisms at the other side of the world. Whether we like it or not we are continually influencing the lives and fortunes of people we have never heard of. By changing our tastes, or else by unchangingly buying in the cheapest market, we alter the face of countries we have never visited; we bestow benefits and inflict punishments on unknown individuals; we cause population to migrate and condemn entire communities to death. From time to time it is well to reflect on the distant consequences of our most trivial acts. The acts may be trivial; but the consequences may be very serious indeed.

15 December 1934

The Right Size

Martyrs and missionaries are not the exclusive property of religions. Systems of philosophy also have their grand inquisitors and their howling dervishes; even scientific hypotheses can be superstitiously believed, fanatically preached and intolerantly imposed.

To take but one instance, the psycho-analysts have for years past been trying, with all the fury and energy of True Believers crusading against Heretics, to convert the world to a purely and exclusively psychological interpretation of man's destiny and behavior.

We are ill because we subconsciously want to be ill, because influenza or cancer or whatever it may be is the only way out of an otherwise insoluble conflict. The very accidents of which we are the victims have been planned for us by the mysterious personage who lives out of sight in the basement of our mind. Readers of psycho-analytic literature must be familiar with (and, if they are at all like myself, also heartily tired of) this exclusive and fanatical psychologism.

The truth, of course, is that the body influences the mind at least as much as the mind influences the body; it is a matter of universal and daily experience and the denial of it is an outrage to our common sense.

In Stockard's *The Physical Bases of Personality* we find a succinct and readable account of the scientific researches into the body-mind and body-character relationship.

As a corrective to the superstitious psychologism of the analysts it is wholly admirable--the more so as Stockard, unlike too many of the analysts, is throughout exceedingly careful never to overstate his case and never to make assertions for which there is no sufficient evidence. With much less evidence and no notion of the possible causes of the observed correlation, Stockard's predecessors in the same line of research were much more dogmatic.

Among the most remarkable of these predecessors was Honoré de Balzac, in whose novels you will find many bold and sweeping statements about the body-mind relationship. Of these bold statements the one that has always delighted me most is that which affirms that all

men of genius must have short necks, for the cogent reason that genius is the result of a close cooperation between the head and heart and that the shorter the neck the nearer to one another these organs necessarily are. (Balzac himself, incidentally, had almost no neck at all.)

The theory is endearing in its preposterousness. But there lurks in it at least this much of truth: long-necked men are generally long-bodied and long-legged; and very few men of genius have, as a matter of historical fact, been conspicuous for their height.

Balzac himself was short, a typical example of Stockard's lateral type. Shakespeare, if we may judge from the very insufficient evidence surviving, was not tall. Byron stood only five feet eight in his stockings.

Shelley and Tennyson, it is true, were above the average stature of geniuses, Keats and Napoleon below.

Sir Isaac Newton was of middle height; so are Einstein and Planck; so was Beethoven; so was Dickens.

One could continue this list almost indefinitely and never, I believe, come across a single man of genius more than six feet tall.

Which provides me, alas! with yet another good reason for supposing that I am not a man of genius. History conclusively proves that the truly divine afflatus cannot be lodged inside a skull whose crown is six feet and five inches above the level of the ground.

7 February 1935

The Truth about Thinking

How rarely, in spite of our sincerest intentions, how very rarely do we ever succeed in telling the truth about ourselves--even to ourselves! The event is so uncommon that when a man actually does tell the truth about himself in public we are amazed, we are often positively shocked.

And it is not only by such technically *shocking* things as may be read, for example, in the *Confessions* of Rousseau, the autobiography of André Gide, the *Fallen Leaves* of Rozanov, that we are startled. The revelation of much less "shy-making" idiosyncrasies will often produce a similar embarrassment.

Any letting of cats out of bags is disturbing, for the good reason that, according to all the polite conventions, bags are either hygienically empty or, if they should contain any cats, filled exclusively with pedigreed blue Persians and prize-winning Siamese. Such, I repeat, is the theory. But in actual fact, whenever the bags are opened, what mangy gutter-cats, what long-clawed and ferocious rat-catchers, what irrepressible females or caterwauling toms come leaping out! Creatures, in a word, hideous, grotesque or terrifying. That is why the majority of us prefer to keep our bags securely shut.

These reflections were suggested by the reading of a most startlingly truthful paragraph in the Life of Sir Edmund Gosse.⁸⁶ The passage occurs in a letter which Gosse wrote in 1886 in answer to one--a very serious and philosophical epistle--from Robert Louis Stevenson. Gosse says:

"I do not know how it is that you and so many others--indeed, it seems to me most people except laborers and maidservants--have a gift entirely denied to me, the gift of thought. If I can be said to think at all, it is flashingly, along the tip of the tongue or the pen; and when I hear people talk of sustained exercise of thought, it is of things unknown to me. We learn to be very hypocritical about the attitude of our minds. If I am strenuously honest, I should have to confess that when I am not

⁸⁶ Sir Edmund Gosse (1849-1928). Dubbed "the official British man of Letters" by H.G. Wells. Translator, literary historian and critic, author of the classic autobiography *Father and Son*, (1907). Librarian of the House of Lords, (1904-14).

working my mind is absolutely idle. I have no anxiety about my soul--I am infinitely and sufficiently amused by the look of people, by the physical movement of things; out of doors, I stare at the girls--one of the pleasures of life which I had always expected to cease or change, but which shows no signs as yet; at home, I think of my meals, of my little personal ambitions, of what my children say and do, little palpable things that carry me over the pleasant blanks of non-working time."

The jumping of Gosse's little cat made me start as I read these words. The truth was out--the comic and slightly humiliating truth about the mental processes of *Homo Sapiens*, of that creature concerning whom Pascal wrote that "he is manifestly made for thinking--and in thinking consists his whole dignity and merit."

Telling the truth about himself, Gosse has told the truth about the vast majority of human beings; they seldom or never do anything which can be dignified with the name of thinking.

I am not a professional--cannot claim to be more than an interested amateur of thinking; but though pensive by nature, though temperamentally addicted to studious or meditative solitude, I must confess that Gosse has let out my cat as well as his own. A sustained exercise of thought is not, indeed a thing "unknown to me." But it is a thing I know only at intervals.

The continuously and consistently thoughtful man is a most exceptional being.

9 March 1935

Sentiments

The wind is our slave, the water does what it is told. Commerce has harnessed fire to work for man's profit and convenience. But there is also another force of nature, no less powerful than the rest for being subjective, no less natural because it resides within the mind of man himself--the force of sentiment.

Sentiment in the state of nature is like Niagara before the age of electricity: a torrent of profitless power. But the power can be impounded, the torrent led along economic channels and forced to turn the mills of trade. The harnessing of an important human sentiment is an engineering feat of the first magnitude and, when successful, almost limitlessly profitable.

For example, what cataracts of filial love ran fruitlessly to waste until Mr. Hering of Indiana, the father of Mother's Day, laid down the pipes which now connect the hearts of American sons and daughters with the manufacturers of candy, the growers and sellers of expensive flowers! For the first time, so far as I know, in all recorded history the affection of the child for the mother has become an appreciable factor in a nation's commercial prosperity.

Abolish Christmas, and the shopkeepers of Europe and America would lose a substantial proportion of their profits. And yet how recently did Christmas become the economically precious institution it now is! That classical Christmas described by Dickens in the *Pickwick Papers* is remarkably unlike the Christmases of the present day. There is no hint of a tree (the tree was imported from Germany by the Prince consort) and, much more important, no hint, beyond Mr. Winkle's promise of five shillings to Sam Weller, of Christmas presents.

The sentiment of good will had not yet been profitably canalized. People contented themselves with eating and drinking together; the habit of buying things to give to one's friends had not yet become general. At some time during the nineteenth century benevolence was taught to express itself in terms of presents. A natural force had been harnessed. Industry and commerce were greatly the gainers.

In the hierarchy of human feelings the sentiments which have reference to death are particularly important and have been harnessed

in a great variety of ways. A whole treatise might be written on the economics of death and bereavement.

I can do no more than record a fact, hazard a guess and a generalization. In one of his books the French historian Michelet notes that, in his youth, (he was born in 1798) nobody used to put flowers on graves, but that when he was middle-aged this expression of natural piety was universal.

It has remained universal. The florists have effectively harnessed bereavement. And yet, in spite of their gains, I should guess that the amount we spend on death is less in proportion to our income than the amount spent by our ancestors.

Our sepulchres, at any rate, in the Anglo-Saxon countries (for Italian cemeteries are still museums of sculpture), are less elaborate and costly than in the past. We spend less trying to immortalize ourselves, but more on our condolences, more in the immediate expression of bereavement.

The facts seem to point to a simultaneous increase, on the one hand, of sensibility, on the other of rationalism.

4 April 1935

Angry Ape⁸⁷

At moments like the present--moments of dangerous political crisis--I always find myself thinking of a certain episode in *Gulliver's Travels*.

Gulliver is in Brobdingnag, among the giants. He has already had trouble with the local wasps and frogs, and now much worse awaits him. One day, when his guardian is out of the room, he is seized by the queen's pet monkey who carries him off onto the roof of the palace. There, six or seven hundred yards above the ground, the monkey proceeds to play with his living toy. Powerless in the grip of that enormous fist, Gulliver is kept, for what seems an eternity, dangling over destruction.

Help comes at last; the monkey drops his captive (fortunately, on the tiles and not over the edge) and frisks away. Gulliver gets off with nothing worse than some bruises and a fright.

It is, I repeat, of this episode that I always think when something more than usually frightful is happening in the political world. Faced by the menace--or, worse, by the accomplished fact--of war, or revolution, or national bankruptcy, I feel (with how sickening a sense of utter helplessness!) like Gulliver in the paw of the Brobdingnagian ape.

Human, I suddenly realize that I am in the clutches of something unhumanly strong, stupid and irresponsible. The gigantic monkey, whose name is Politics, keeps me dangling over the abyss--and keeps not only me; for all of us are gullivers and all are helpless in the same huge, hairy paw.

Human behavior exhibits the most astonishing inconsistencies. Man behaves, now with an almost more than human rationality, now with a bestial stupidity; now with the goodness of an angel and at other times so cruelly that we have to look for parallels among the scorpions and spiders. "What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! How

⁸⁷ Allusion to *Measure for Measure*: "...but man, proud man,/Dress'd in a little brief authority,/Most ignorant of what he's most assur'd/ (His glassy essence), like an angry ape/Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven/As makes the angels weep..." (2,3,117 ff).

infinite in faculty!" Hamlet is right; but so, alas, is Isabella when she says that man, "like an angry ape, plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven as make the angels weep."

Politics is one of the realms of activity in which man has elected to behave like an angry ape. Confronted by man's political record since 1914, we certainly do not feel much inclined to say, "How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty!" Our spontaneous reaction to the majority of political events is the horrified scream of Gulliver within the monkey's paw.

Angry apishness is relatively harmless when indulged in sporadically and on a small scale. But politics is angry apishness systematized, magnified, impersonalized and equipped by reason (for man compels his reason to serve his apishness) with an elaborate machine. That is why it is so dangerous. A machine that, once set going, continues to move by the force of inertia; it is extraordinarily difficult to stop. Thus, no politician consciously desires to destroy civilization. Nevertheless, he is forced by the machine he is operating to behave as though the destruction of civilization were the goal of all his effort.

13 April 1935

Thinking With One's Hands

Following the custom of his people, St. Paul was brought up to have two professions, one intellectual, one manual. He was at once philosopher and skilled artisan.

The educational system of the Hebrews has been revived in Communist Russia, where training in pure science goes hand in hand with practical training in factory work. The future mathematical physicist or chemist learns to be also a machinist, a molder, a skilled electrician. The principle, I am sure, is admirable--not only because it is always prudent to have two strings to one's bow, but, above all because most intellectual and administrative professions make a call only on part of the mind and leave the rest unexercised.

Consider the business man, the government official, the teacher, the journalist, the writer. All these people do their thinking exclusively in terms of words. Now verbal thinking is, with mathematics, the most practically useful kind of thinking known to us today. Moreover, it enjoys this immense advantage over other kinds of thinking, that its results can be indefinitely multiplied by the printing press. But this usefulness must not blind us to the fact that other modes of thinking exist and are of the highest importance.

There is, to begin with, musical thinking. One has only to read the letters of Beethoven and then to listen to his music to realize that a man can be actually rather stupid in terms of words and at the same time incomparably profound, subtle and discriminating in terms of music.

Far commoner than the gift for thinking in terms of music is the gift for thinking in terms of manual activity. The hand is man's most characteristically human organ, and it is significant that the control of manual activities requires as large an area in the brain as the control of the organs of speech. By his physical constitution man is as much a handler as a speaker. Those who neglect manual for purely verbal thinking are allowing a faculty to fall into disuse--a process which is bad, not only for the manual faculty itself, but for all the other faculties, too: for the mind is a whole, and by allowing one part of it to atrophy we affect adversely the entire organism.

We have seen that musical geniuses may be verbal fools. The same is true among the manual thinkers. Indeed, I once knew an eminent art critic who held that it was impossible to be intelligent, according to the current verbal standards, and at the same time a good painter. This is perhaps a bit too sweeping. Still the fact remains that many excellent painters are quite incapable of expressing their real profundity and subtlety except with their hands.

Science also has its manual geniuses--men who have no great gift for words or for mathematics, but with an extraordinary talent for experiment--men who can devise apparatus whose functioning will solve problems which, to the verbal or mathematical geniuses, had seemed insoluble. (Conversely, it often happens that mathematicians will solve problems regarded as insoluble by the manipulators. Both types of talent are needed if science is to flourish.)

Everyone is capable of some kind of manual thinking, and everyone, I believe, would profit by a training in one of the disciplines of handwork. (Hobbies and gardening represent the efforts of oververbalized people to think in the other, manual way which is, at bottom, more suited to them.) My own education was mainly, and my profession is entirely, a matter of words. I like my profession; but I often wish that, like St. Paul, I had been brought up to know a second, manual trade.

Recently, to my delight, I have discovered in painting exactly what I needed. The results of my labors with the brush are doubtless not very grand; but the process of laboring is, I find, an unmixed pleasure. While painting I find myself, for the first time in my life, thinking with my hands and in terms of something other than words.

11 February 1933

Population and Politics

Population is a subject, about which our public men seldom talk and seldom, it would appear, even think. We were offered not so long ago the curious spectacle of a city government undertaking gigantic works for the increase of its water supply and discovering, when the works were half finished, that the decline in the birth rate had made them unnecessary; there would not be enough new people to drink the new water. A vast sum of money had been wasted because the city fathers had either not read the available statistics, or had failed to understand their significance. Stupidity is the most expensive of luxuries.

Here are two examples which illustrate the enormously important part played by population in the drama of world politics. In 1914 about a million and a quarter immigrants entered the United States. Most of them came from countries where birth control was either not known or, if known, disapproved of. In the years that succeeded 1914 they increased and multiplied with remarkable energy.

In 1915 France had been at war for a year. Most of her potential fathers were at the front, waiting to be killed; and most of her potential mothers were engaged in the production, not of babies, but of munitions. Result: the birth rate was cut in half. It was only in 1920 that anything like the normal number of children began to be produced again.

The full effects of these two events of twenty years ago--record high immigration into America and record low birth-rate in France--are only now about to manifest themselves. The babies produced by the immigrants of 1914 are now young Americans on the threshold of manhood and womanhood. And the babies who weren't born in France, from 1915 to 1920, will represent, from 1935 to 1940, a huge population of non-existent youths and marriageable girls. The number of people entering the labour market in search of work will suddenly be halved and, as there will be the usual number of deaths and retirements, the problem of unemployment will, so far as France is concerned, automatically solve itself.

Nothing of the kind can be expected in America. On the contrary, very large contingents of young people will be entering the labour market between 1935 and 1940. The effects of the restriction on immigration and of the declining birth rate will not be felt for another ten years at least. Unemployment will not cure itself automatically, as it is bound to do in France. It can be eliminated from America only by thorough and judicious political planning.

Economically, France should be, for some few years to come, a little paradise. But an economic paradise may be a military hell. There will be only half the usual number of young men entering the labour market; but this means that there will be only half the usual number entering the army as conscripts. In Germany, the decline in the birth-rate was as strongly marked, between 1915 and 1920 as in France; but Germany's gross population is considerably greater than that of her neighbour. In 1930 there were about three million young Germans between the ages of twenty and twenty-five. In 1940 there will be about two millions. The corresponding figures for France are sixteen hundred thousand and eight hundred thousand. These figures speak for themselves--speak in the most disquieting tones. Population is a subject about which our politicians hardly ever bother to talk. But it is upon population that, under the existing economic system, the prosperity of nations must to a large extent necessarily depend. And when, in the immediate future, decisions have to be made involving peace or war, it will be upon considerations of population that those decisions will be made.

13 December 1933

Religion, Science, and Man

Professor James Leuba, of Bryn Mawr, is a writer whose books are always deserving of respectful attention.⁸⁸ His *Psychology of Religious Mysticism* remains one of the acutest and most sensible of the many studies devoted to this very important subject and his most recent volume, *God or Man*, is one which no student of contemporary society can afford to neglect.

Let me briefly summarize the important issues with which it deals. We observe that believers derive great psychological and even physiological benefits from the practice of their respective religions. Is the power to confer these benefits a monopoly of the religions? Or can they be obtained in other, non-religious ways? Finally, can we enjoy the advantages of belief without paying the rather high price which, in a civilized society like ours, the religions inevitably extort?

Professor Leuba begins with a discussion of "miraculous cures". He is sceptical. But then so are many of the professedly religious. A committee appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1924 to investigate the subject reported that there was no evidence that spiritual healing could produce cures different in kind from the cures performed by psychotherapists outside the pale of religion. Professor Leuba goes further and proclaims that the efficiency of psychotherapists is much higher than that of religious healers and miraculous images. And of course, if divine healing is a natural process susceptible of being studied scientifically, this is only to be expected.

With regard to character formation and reformation Professor Leuba's conclusions are identical. He considers that secular methods for building up a desirable personality are already more efficient than religious methods and that, by the systematic application of scientific thought to the problem, they can be made to fulfill their moralizing function far better than religion can hope to do.⁸⁹ He points out, moreover, that many of the devices used by

⁸⁸ American psychologist and educator (1868-1946) who advocated a new experimental psychology.

⁸⁹ In a letter dated circa April 1931, during the composition period of *Brave New World*, Huxley recommended Leuba's *Belief in God and Immortality* to a correspondent. Certainly Leuba's proposed methods of personality formation are congruent with those used for sinister purposes in *BNW*; and even more consistent with the benign methods employed in Huxley's positive utopia, *Island* (1962).

religious teachers for the formation and reformation of character have no essential connection with religion, but can be (and are) employed by lay educators without any references to the supernatural.

"The present age," he concludes "is characterized not by a new aim, but by a new method." Ideals remain the same; (being the expressions of innate tendencies, they have no reason to change). But instead of employing religious methods of attempting their realization, we have begun to use secular means. Professor Leuba's belief is that by a consistent application of scientific method to the problems of human life men will advance towards the fulfillment of their ideal purposes much more rapidly and certainly than they were able to do when using the devices supplied by their religions.

It is not very helpful to criticize a book for what it does not contain; but I cannot refrain from drawing attention to what seems to me a notable omission. Professor Leuba has failed to mention the modern religion-substitutes, of which the most important, the most harmful and the nearest in form to one of the existing religions is nationalism. Most human beings feel a strong desire to believe in something certain and unquestionable, to evade responsibility by abandoning themselves to authority, and to feel themselves associated with other human beings in a common cause. The established religions used to give such people what they wanted; but for many, the old doctrines are now unacceptable. They turn for satisfaction elsewhere. If these seceders from the religions all came under the influence of intelligent humanists, like Professor Leuba, all would be well. But, alas, most of them leave frying pan for fire. Unable, because of a smattering of scientific education, to believe in the teachings of their religions, they find no difficulty in accepting the equally incredible and more mischievous doctrines of nationalism. Why men should strain at one camel and swallow another is a matter which it would take too long to discuss here. The fact remains that, at this moment of history, the nationalistic camel is easier to swallow than the religious camel. Nationalism is a crusading pseudo-religion. How shall it be combated? This is a matter to which Professor Leuba might fittingly have devoted a chapter.

31 January 1934

Racial History

The Conquest of a Continent is described by Professor Henry Fairfield Osborn in his introduction as "the first attempt to give an authentic racial history" of the United States. Opinions may differ as to the significance of the word "racial"; but every reader of Mr. Madison Grant's book must be grateful to him for the way in which he has set forth the facts of American development.⁹⁰ The constitution of the population in every State of the Union is clearly shown and its modifications carefully traced through the three centuries of American history. Anyone who wants to know by what people North America was settled, when and whence they came; whither they went and where they or their descendants are living to-day can find the answers to these questions in the pages of Mr. Grant's book.

So far so good. The trouble begins when Mr. Grant interprets the facts he has collected and passes judgments of value upon them. For the interpretation is throughout in terms of race and the judgments are based on the assumption of Nordic superiority.

With some of Mr. Grant's conclusions almost everyone will agree. Miscegenation should be prevented, because there is evidence to show that cross-breeding between individuals of widely different race is biologically unsound. The offspring of such individuals tend to inherit their dissimilar traits in an inharmonious and even chaotic manner. Stockard's experiment with dogs prove that certain crosses result in offspring that simply "won't work"; after a time they break down and die.⁹¹ Something similar, though less catastrophic, often happens in the case of human-mongrels. Let us frankly admit that the policy pursued by white men towards the coloured races is often dictated by nothing higher than selfishness, fear or arrogance; it still remains true that, insofar as it prevents indiscriminate miscegenation, this policy is probably for the ultimate good of all concerned.

⁹⁰ American ethnologist (1865-1937).

⁹¹ Charles Rupert Stockard (1879-1939). Author of *The Physical Basis of Personality*, 1931, to which Huxley refers in the essay "The Right Size" in this collection.

It is when Mr. Grant talks about the different races of Europe that we begin to feel doubtful. For reasons which I cannot discuss here some excellent authorities regard the three so-called races of Europe--the Nordic, Alpine and Mediterranean -- as being, at any rate at the present time, inconstant variations of a single race. Even Mr. Grant has to admit that "there has been so much admixture in the past that it is hard sometimes to assign a given individual to a specific race"--and impossible, he might have added, to predict what "race" the offspring of two such mixed individuals will belong to.

Until 1860, the population of the United States was drawn almost exclusively from England, Scotland, North Ireland and parts of Germany. After that date Nordic immigration declined and a prodigious flood of Alpines and Mediterraneans poured into the country. Mr. Grant holds that this influx has been in the main an influx of inferior stock and that the authorities were wrong in not discriminating against Alpines and Mediterraneans. Now, it seems unquestionable that much of the new immigration was of rather poor quality. But was this a *racial* defect? Mr. Grant admits that the "poor white trash" of North and South Carolina is of almost pure Nordic stock. And this fact surely provides us with the key to the whole problem. No branch of the white race has a monopoly of intelligence. Probably a quarter of every population is to some extent sub-normal, while a tenth belongs to what Lidbetter has called "the social problem group," only just above the border-line of mental deficiency.⁹² The chief fault of the "new immigration" was that, unlike much of the earlier immigration, it came from the lowest strata of European society. Now it is obvious that, after making all possible allowances, there is a certain correlation between lack of success in the social struggle and lack of intelligence. The thing that immigration officers should discriminate against is not race (except in those cases where miscegenation leads to biologically undesirable results), but stupidity. A country's first need is good brains, not blue eyes.

7 February 1934

⁹²Ernest James Lidbetter, *Heredity and the Social Problem Group* (London: 1933).

The Importance of Stupidity

Suppose that by some miracle the number of stupid people could be very greatly diminished, the number of intelligent ones correspondingly increased. What would happen? Perhaps the millenium would begin. Or perhaps, on second thought, it would not.

In one of his stimulating little books on the art and science of efficient living, Professor Walter B. Pitkin throws out the following significant remark: "As a matter of fact, I think it lucky for the people who aim high that most people have no aim at all. The world might be in a mess even worse than its present one if all of us devoted ourselves to the task of becoming Franklin Roosevelt."⁹³

Alas, I suspect that the professor may be right. At the present time the supply of men and women capable of successful activity in various fields hardly exceeds the demand. In many cases indeed, society's normal demands remain unsatisfied, either because there is an absolute deficiency of individuals possessing the right kind of intelligence, or else because the mechanism for transporting the right man to the right place is still so very inadequate.

High intelligence is always conscious of itself and eager to exercise its powers. A man of great natural abilities may resign himself to wasting them, but he can never actively rejoice in being a candle under a bushel. In most cases, he cannot even be resigned, but struggles to emerge from forced inactivity into a position where he can use his talents. In a world where the number of such people was greater than the number of jobs requiring high intelligence of one kind or another, the scramble for the desirable jobs would be desperately violent.

Already the problem of unemployment among the highly educated is preoccupying all the governments of the world. No class is more potentially dangerous to social stability than a class of educated unemployed.⁹⁴

⁹³ Walter Boughton Pitkin (1878-1953), American educator and author of self-help books, including the best-seller *Life Begins at Forty*.

⁹⁴ The founders of the Brave New World ensured stability by providing employment for all. The greatest threat to social stability in the novel occurs when the highly intelligent Alpha Pluses, Bernard Marx and Helmholtz Watson, begin questioning the value of their jobs.

Fortunately, perhaps, for society, one can become highly educated without having been born with high intelligence. If great natural abilities were added to the educational qualifications of this class of unemployed the danger to any established system of social order would be enormous.

Too much stupidity is certainly the source of innumerable evils, but it seems quite possible that too much intelligence might be the source of even more numerous and greater calamities.

14 February 1934

The Hundred Best Books

The headlines jumped out at me as I turned the page. 35 PROFESSORS LIST 100 BEST BOOKS OF THE WORLD. Just 2.85 books per professor. These pedagogues, I said to myself--they're a cultured lot. Reading on--for I can never resist anything that has to do with books--I learned that the list was intended as a guide to good reading for American students. All short cuts to culture must necessarily be unsatisfactory, and this one was no exception to the rule. For example, what a very inadequate conception of the Roman World would be obtained from a reading of the books listed under that section: the *Aeneid*, the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius, Plutarch's *Lives* and, astonishingly enough, Flaubert's *Salamambo* (which happens to be about Carthage.) And, looking under the heading, "Modern Formal Philosophy", I found, to my yet greater amazement, the name of Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*--and nothing else! Again, "Science and Scientists" are represented solely by *The Origin of Species*. And the section, "Biography and History" contains, very properly, Carlyle's *French Revolution*, but omits--which is really inconceivable--Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

Perhaps the most interesting thing about this list is what would have seemed to our fathers its extraordinary boldness. Imagine thirty-five Victorian professors recommending their pupils to read Boccaccio's *Decameron*, the short stories of Guy de Maupassant, the *Jurgen* of Cabell, Voltaire's *Candide*, *Tristram Shandy*, Pepy's *Diary* (in any but an abridged version), Anatole France's *Penguin Island* and the works of Rabelais! Imagine, I repeat. But it is unimaginable. They simply couldn't have brought themselves to recommend such books to the young. As well expect them to recommend vodka, cocaine and fornication. But all these books are on the list compiled by their children and grandchildren, the professors of today. Their presence there is taken for granted, excites no comment. Reaction against nineteenth-century prudery is so complete that there is no longer any need to defend or justify it.

Another most significant characteristic of this contemporary list of the Best Books is the conspicuous absence from it of philosophical

literature. Philosophy up to the year 1500 is represented by Plato's *Republic* and the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius. More's *Utopia* is, as I have already noted, the sole specimen of Modern Formal Philosophy admitted. (Where does its "formality" come in? I confess myself unable to imagine. But let that pass.) Informal philosophy is represented by Bacon's and Emerson's *Essays*, *Walden*, *Candide* and *The Education of Henry Adams*. Good books, all of them; but surely a little inadequate?

This dearth of philosophical literature seems to me symptomatic of modern taste. Pragmatism and Bergsonism have now oozed down, in a simplified and distorted form, into the popular mind, justifying the plain man's mistrust of metaphysical speculation and his lazy reluctance to make use of logic. Our Thirty-Five Professors have merely followed the current fashion in thought. The practical exclusion of philosophy from their list is of the deepest historical significance.

If I had to compile a list of the Best Books, I should certainly give more space to philosophy. For two reasons: first, because I regard certain philosophical works as books of the highest literary value; and, second, because the present attitude towards speculation seems to me so vicious that every effort should be made to correct it. I should begin by recommending Montaigne's *Essays*, the *Thoughts* of Pascal and Spinoza's *Ethics* and *Correspondence*. Montaigne for the doctrine of humanistic relativism; Pascal for the Christian answer to Montaigne; Spinoza for his noble, scientific rationalism. Finally, I should suggest Hume, as the best introduction to the problem of knowledge, and Henri Poincaré as the best introduction to the philosophy of modern science. To have read these five authors is to have laid the foundations of a real intellectual culture. Not to have read them is to have missed several of the Best Books as well as much of the point and meaning of the modern world.

1 March 1934

Cars and Babies

One might have thought the world's present distresses were enough to keep men's minds fully occupied. But look through the social and economic literature of the last few years; you will find that a surprisingly large portion of contemporary worrying is at long range, worrying that concerns future situations which the worriers cannot possibly live to see. Of all these as yet remote disasters none is more pregnant of present distress than that which is at the heart of the population problem.

A hundred and twenty years ago, when Malthus wrote his famous *Essay*, the population problem was also disturbing the equanimity of prophetic thinkers. Population, they believed, increases by geometrical progression, food by arithmetical progression. A moment must therefore come when men will starve. Malthus and his friends were perturbed. How different is the population problem of the present day! Thanks to the chemists, the soil scientists, the geneticists, we can produce food of better quality and in far greater quantities than was ever possible in the past. Given a rational system of distribution, the planet could support several times its present population. Malthus's fears have proved groundless. But meanwhile new fears have arisen to take their place. What frightens us is not the prospect of numbers outstripping means of subsistence; it is the prospect of a progressive decrease in those numbers.

Now, if all populations were to decline at the same rate and to stabilize themselves at some level considerably below the present figure, there would be no cause for alarm. On the contrary, it would probably be one of the best things that could happen. But, alas, there is no good reason to suppose that either of these conditions will be fulfilled. The more highly civilized white races will be declining in numbers while the coloured races are still rapidly increasing; and there seems to be no guarantee that the decline will stop anywhere this side of extinction.⁹⁵ If Europe and America wish to survive, they must find means for keeping up their numerical strength in relation to Asia and

⁹⁵ This is an uncharacteristic statement. Huxley's opposition to racism can be seen in this volume; for example, "The Race Racket" (227) and "Scapegoats" (195).

Africa. Later, when and if the coloured populations begin to decline, the white races can permit themselves the luxury of having fewer children. But then, if the human species is to survive, some device will have to be invented for arresting the fall of numbers before it goes too far.

In a society like ours, where success is measured in terms of cash, fertility is a serious handicap. Men and women are penalized for having children and rewarded for being sterile. As things are now, social success is incompatible with biological success. Individuals can climb to the top of the ladder only if they condemn their stock to extinction - that is, to biological failure. This incompatibility between social and biological success can be largely mitigated by the introduction of such economic reforms as family allowances, tax rebates, state endowment of children. But would this mitigation provide a complete solution to our problem? Only experience can show. Meanwhile, I venture to express a doubt. If we look at the world around us, we find that a high birth rate is almost invariably correlated with a low standard of life, a low birth rate with a high standard. Where people have nothing else, they have children. But where things and services abound, they have those and not the children. Give people the choice between baby and that symbol of modern well-being, a car; a clear majority, I suspect, will choose the car. And it is only to be expected. A car imposes fewer responsibilities than does the baby and provides its owners with a richer variety of amusements. Fertility, it would seem, is incompatible, not only with social success, but also with prosperity and the cult of the high standard of life. If people really find cars more rewarding than babies, how can they be persuaded to have babies? Perhaps they can't be persuaded. Our grandchildren may live to see the introduction of compulsory fatherhood and the conscription of mothers.

5 September 1934

Political Murder

Dollfuss, Schleicher, Roehm--these are only the latest and the most conspicuous of a long series of victims.⁹⁶ In Central Europe assassination has come, in the course of the last few years, to be a recognized instrument of policy.

Of the morality of political murder I do not propose to speak. It is enough to say that supposedly good ends are very seldom a sufficient justification for indubitably bad means. My theme is not the ethics of the act, but its feasibility and its effectiveness. In other words, is murder practical policy? And, when accomplished, does it pay?

To the first of these questions history returns a hardly qualified affirmative. The murder even of highly placed and well guarded people is not extremely difficult. If the murderers are discreet, patient and careless of their own safety, they can be pretty sure, sooner or later, of getting their man. The greatest murder society that ever existed was that from which our word "assassin" is derived. The Hashishin, or eaters of hashish, flourished in Syria and Persia for more than a century and a half and, though numerically weak, were the terror of every potentate in the Middle East. The Old Man of the Mountains, as the chief of the Assassins was called, kept a band of guards, trained up in habits of unquestioning obedience and unquestioning religious faith. These were the agents who carried out his policies of murder. Groups of them would be sent to distant courts, where they would spy out the habits of the proposed victim, and insinuate themselves if possible into positions of trust. After months, sometimes even years, of patient waiting, a favourable opportunity would present itself; the victim was struck down. In their palmy days the Old Men of the Mountains succeeded in murdering, besides innumerable minor personages, two Grand Viziers, a Sultan, two Caliphs and two Christian princes,

⁹⁶Englebert Dollfuss (1892-1934). Authoritarian Austrian chancellor and ally of Mussolini; assassinated by Austrian Nazis in July 1934; Kurt von Schleicher (1882-1934). Rival of Hitler who was liquidated by the Nazis during "The Night of Long Knives", June 30, 1934; Ernst Roehm (1887-1934). Another rival of Hitler who was liquidated on June 30, 1934.

Raymond of Tripoli and Conrad of Montferrat. The activities of the Assassins were well known and the most elaborate precautions were taken against them. Nevertheless, they generally succeeded in killing the men they had marked down.

Modern history also shows that political murder is not, technically, a very difficult matter. Since 1865 two Presidents of the United States, two Presidents of France, two Emperors of Russia, an Empress, a Crown Prince and a President of Austria, a King of Italy and a King and Queen of Portugal have been murdered. In twenty years, the Nihilists managed to kill about fifty important Russian officials and statesmen. Many were the leaders assassinated during the Irish Civil War and one, General O' Higgins, was tracked, it is said, four or five years before he was finally caught unguarded, in 1927, and shot. Political assassination, I repeat, presents no insuperable technical difficulties. It is, in this sense, a perfectly practical policy.

But is it a policy that pays? In the majority of cases, I should say, the answer is pretty definitely, No. The sporadic assassination of important personages has seldom produced any striking change in general policy. This is specially true of modern and highly complicated communities; for in these, single individuals, however exalted their position, are seldom as indispensable as they themselves think they are.

"The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church"--but only, we may add, where the martyrs are few in relation to the total number of believers. If *all* the believers are killed, there is clearly no soil in which the martyrs' blood can germinate. This was shown in Spain, where the Inquisition completely stamped out Mohammedanism, Judaism and Protestantism. What is true of religious persecution is true, *mutatis mutandis*, of political assassination. Sporadic assassination arouses more anger than fear. If a party is to be terrorized into a change of policy, its members must be killed systematically and wholesale. But terrorism on this scale ceases to be mere political assassination and assumes the status first of civil war and then, if the killers are victorious, of a mass persecution by the *de facto* government.

Theory of Buses

Five years ago, when I first knew this particular French village, the railway and a singular motor bus sufficed to deal with all its transportation problems. Four or five trains in each direction stopped daily at the local station and the solitary bus made two journeys, there and back, to the neighbouring town, ten miles away. This year the railway service is still what it was; but in place of the solitary bus there are now dozens of buses, with departures every quarter of an hour from either terminus.

What has happened in this village has happened all over the world. Why has it happened? For orthodox political economy there can be only two reasons for this sudden enormous increase in the means of transport--an increase of population, or an increase of, or at any rate a change in, the local industrial activity. Now, the population of the Mediterranean coast of France is increasing fairly rapidly. But this increase bears no sort of proportional relation to the increase in the number of buses. Again, there has been no striking change in the economic activity of the region. Most of the inhabitants are still what they always were--small peasant farmers. There has been no expansion of the local industries, some of which, such as ship-building, have even declined. The only considerable increase has been in the so-called "tourist industry"; there are more hotels, restaurants and bars than there used to be. But this fact provides no adequate explanation of the twenty-fold increase, during the last five years, in the number of buses.

No, orthodox economic theory cannot account for the buses. There has been no economically justifiable increase in the demand to create the increased supply. People have taken to moving about the country, not because their business compels them to do so, but because the means for doing so exist and because they have been hypnotized into believing that it makes them happy.

The only people who have an economic interest in multiplying bus services are the owners and manufacturers of buses. These people, and the others who profit by the tourist industry, are continuously emitting clouds of propaganda. It is astonishing what you can make people believe, if you set about the job in the right way. The public is now

persuaded that the physical liberty to move from place to place is in itself a source of happiness. That exactly the same things are done in each place does not enter into the question. It is the moving that counts.

"Freedom," said Goethe in one of his conversations with Eckermann, "is an odd thing, and every man has enough of it, if only he knew how to be satisfied and settled. What avails a superfluity of freedom which we cannot use? Look at this chamber and the next--in which, through the open door, you see my bed. Neither of them is large;... but they are enough for me. I have lived in them all the winter, scarcely entering my front rooms. What have I had out of my spacious house and the liberty of going from one room to another, when I have not needed to use them? If a man has freedom enough to live healthily and to work at his craft, he has enough."

Goethe was not only a man of genius; he was also rich and universally respected. There was no need for a person with a mind like his ever to feel bored with his own company or ever to feel the need of escaping, physically, from a squalid environment. Nevertheless, even after we have made all the necessary personal discounts, the fact remains that what he says about the physical freedom to move from place to place is fundamentally true. Our contemporary belief that movement automatically produces happiness is mainly a delusion fostered by the magnates of the transportation and tourist industries. Will people ever discover that it is a delusion? Time alone will show.

Jonah and Politics

When the Lord said to Jonah, "Doest thou well to be angry?" that much tried prophet replied, "I do well to be angry, even unto death." He was wrong of course, as the Lord proceeded to explain. Considered objectively, anger is a thoroughly bad thing. The tree is known by its fruits, and the fruits of anger are such horrible occurrences as the destruction of Nineveh. Nobody in his senses wants to destroy "a great city, wherein are sixscore thousand persons." But to be angry is to take leave of one's senses and so become capable of such atrocities. When Jonah said that he did well to be angry, he was not considering his anger objectively. He was considering his own private feelings. To yield freely to any natural impulse, even a bad one, is always pleasurable, and anger was poor Jonah's natural reaction to the circumstances of his life in Nineveh. When he said that he did well to be angry, he was as right, subjectively, and, objectively, as utterly wrong as he would have been, if he had said, "I do well to drink too much alcohol" or, "I do well to make a grab at every presentable female that I meet."

Political reformers tend to live in a world of abstractions. For them, all problems are just matters of poor organization. The machine has been fitted together wrongly; all that is necessary is to plan a rational re-arrangement of the parts; the moment people realize the theoretical excellence of the plan, they will raise a paean of joy and put it into practice. But, alas, experience proves that they don't do anything of the sort. Consider, for example, the case of reparations and war debts. From the first, all informed economic opinion was agreed on the self-evident fact that large-scale international debts can only be paid in goods and services. But all creditor countries have been unanimous in refusing goods and services from their debtors. In other words, they have been unanimous in rejecting the only known method of collecting their debts. At the same time they have all gone on demanding payment. You do not have to be a financial genius to perceive that this policy is self-contradictory. A child of six, if he set his mind to it, could see it. And yet it took fourteen years for the electorates in the allied countries to agree to the abolition of German

reparations, and it will probably take at least another five before the debt question is finally settled. Are voters, then, less intelligent than children of six? No. They simply refuse, in this matter, to use their intelligence. And they refuse to use their intelligence, because they prefer the indulgence of their passions to their own manifest interests. Political reformers, as I have said, ignore this fact, and go on talking about politics as though it were an abstract world apart.

It is true, of course, that politics give scope for the indulgence of only a few of the deleterious passions. There is no such thing, for example, as political lust, political gluttony, political avarice, political sloth. But on the other hand politics provide opportunities almost unique in the contemporary world for the indulgence of anger, envy, and pride. Physical violence against individuals and even verbal abuse are punished by law. Not so physical violence towards aliens and libellous abuse of foreign countries. Such actions are not regarded as crimes, but as virtues, and are called, or miscalled, "patriotism". The whole system of nationalistic politics is an elaborate justification for large-scale indulgence in anger, envy and pride. There are times when we all enjoy hating, when we all enjoy wishing ill to other people, when we all enjoy feeling superior. Nationalism provides the occasion for gratifying these beastly impulses of our nature, and assures us at the same time that "we do well" in behaving badly. Like the good impulses, the bad are an essential element in man's make-up. They cannot be completely suppressed; but to some extent at least they can be sublimated and at the same time they can be made to flow along channels where they will do relatively little harm. Given modern weapons and modern economic interdependence, the canalizing of anger, envy and pride in organized nationalism is very bad policy. The real problem before the political reformers is to find less harmful outlets for these odious passions.

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