

IDEALISM AND REALISM

By

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NOTE

The Essex Hall Lecture was founded by the British and Foreign Unitarian Association in 1892, with the object of providing an annual opportunity for the free utterance of selected speakers on religious themes of general interest. The delivery of the lecture continues under the auspices of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, as a leading event during the course of the Annual Meetings of the Assembly. A list of the published lectures still obtainable will be found at the end of this volume.

14, Gordon Square,
London, W.C.1.

IDEALISM AND REALISM

A. THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE SUBJECT

A BRILLIANT Oxford don once wrote a book entitled "Must Philosophers Disagree?", and history might suggest that the answer is in the affirmative. It has been a not uncommon complaint among the best of that tribe that their predecessors have left confusion in their path. A picture featuring the fortunes, or misfortunes, of the subject would furnish a Talkie of endless "disputations and verbosities", as Descartes unkindly called them. There is perhaps nothing so like a gallery of Aunt Sallies dressed in solemn funeral style and ready for the burial as the procession of philosophical systems down the grand alley of time, each in turn the victim of the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.

The macabre march of these fighting units engaged in a hereditary civil war, and always ready to turn the machine-guns of their destructive criticism on any new system, likely enough to offer a fairly broad target, is not so depressing as it looks. It is not a war of all against all, for right back through the historic adventures of ideas there has been a tendency for the units according to their specific gravity to coagulate into two main masses—one more instance of that duality which we observe throughout nature as inner and outer, subjective and objective, light and darkness, action and reaction, male and female, mind and matter, optimism and pessimism, and so on. In philosophy it appears as Idealism and Realism. These have alternated with and preyed on each other; now one and now the other seems to succumb, only to be resuscitated in a new body to carry on the hardy warfare of contradictions to fresh issues.

This process, generalized, has itself been erected into a philosophy and history interpreted under the rubric of thesis, antithesis and synthesis, the last becoming a further thesis generating its own antithesis, and so the routine

proceeds on the imperfect analogy of the hen and the egg, each synthetic state in turn fulfilling itself through its opposite in an ascending zig-zag or spiral movement till the final consummation. There is a good deal of evidence for this formulation of history and experience.

The fundamental presupposition is that truth and progress lie in the reconciliation or synthesis of opposites, which do not in reality contradict but rather complement each other. We must hold the duality in unity and the unity in duality, neither dividing the substance nor confounding the attributes. And this law I hold to be applicable to Idealism and Realism. Neither apart is adequate to the full balanced truth of things; they are correlatives which are necessary to each other. And it is by the recognition of their inviolable rights, each in its own province within the grand alliance, that this lecture proposes to establish a just and lasting peace between them. It is certain that the world cannot be saved without idealism nor preserved without realism. The choice between death by creeping paralysis which the repudiation of idealism would entail and destruction by misadventure which the scorn of realism would precipitate is a Hobson's choice to which we are not called and which common gumption will avoid by every instinct of survival.

There is a realism which has earned a bad name in literature through misapplication of the term to an obsession with the primeval slime that still adheres to the human species, and this misapplication is often put to pious but perverse uses in attempts to kill the reputation of any author whose work sets forth laws and facts, or contingencies, which happen to be disturbing to our security or unwelcome to our complacency. Thomas Hardy has even been blamed for the last war, for was he not a "realist" and, what is worse, an English one? For some of our sentimentalists it is always English realism, never German, that is to blame for world-wars. Providence seems to have cast England, with its kind paternal instincts, for the rôle of holding the unwanted babies. But I am not using realism or idealism in the usual literary sense but in their more proper philosophical sense,

which, after a brief and inadequate exposition, I shall apply to some practical questions of much importance for us in the present predicament.

IDEALISM

Idealism, of course, like most things worth while in the realm of thought, goes back to Plato, but it re-enters on the stage in modern dress with the advent of Berkeley, Kant and Hegel. A variety theatre, but among all the turns you find an underlying pattern in the programme. Idealism affirms that reality, including matter, is, when you examine it, of the nature of ideas—that is to say, it is, elementally, experience in its various forms and, as such, constituted by mind and dependent upon mind. When you are observing the world through your senses or contemplating it in thought you find it responds to these functions of the mind; there is a correspondence, perhaps a correlativity. Your life consists largely of speaking to the world or hearing it speak to you and what it says is significant, not mere nonsense but something you can understand. You converse with it as mind with mind, learn from it in such a way that your mind derives its content from it; without it you would be neither a sensible nor a rational being, indeed you would have no consciousness at all. You have no experience that is not experience of something in the world.

You are, let us assume, a man or perhaps a woman of sense, intelligence, reason and conscience, with an appreciation of beauty and music, all that may become a man or a woman; but how could you be all that if there were no external facts, no order or laws in nature, no beautiful things nor sounds in the universe about you? Evidently the physical is both necessary to and adapted to your rational, emotional and spiritual faculties; it is such as to furnish a groundwork of logical thinking, moral consciousness, aesthetic appreciation, in fact of the whole gamut of mind.

On the other hand, the mind, with its own initiatives, its inner logical laws and rational processes, its emotional capacities, is the key to the constitution of physical nature,

fitting the lock with its intricate devices. Here is not only a correspondence but a co-relativity, and we apprehend the truth of the meticulous mutual dependence of subject and object throughout the range of experience. Reality, as far as our apprehension extends, is subject-object, each apart from the other an abstraction. Reality, so far as it is manifested at all, is rational, spiritual, ideal, and nothing has been made that is made without the operation of mind. It is because there is a Mind in things that we can have our pure mathematics and empirical sciences. There is thus no conflict between idealism and realism; each is the indispensable complement of the other in a total philosophy. Every sound idealist has been a realist, and even Bishop Berkeley, who was an extremist but absorbed into his system stuff more substantial than tar-water or rose-water, never supposed that if he ran his head against a brick wall he would not get a bad headache, or that when he went out for a constitutional he was treading his own ideas underfoot. If he had he would soon have found himself in a lunatic asylum instead of civilized society—though it is sometimes difficult to see much difference between them.

HEGELIAN IDEALISM

In the Hegelian form of the doctrine absolute Reality is a timeless logical process in which by an inherent dialectic the so-called categories or thought-forms, each involving its opposite and developing it out of itself by logical necessity, and both being united in a synthesis and reconciled in the unity of the next more comprehensive and less abstract category, ascend in a series of such triadic movements from the lowest, which is bare existence, to the highest, most inclusive and concrete category of all—absolute Spirit, called the Idea. The Idea embraces in itself the entire system and process of the categories in a complete timeless unity. This eternal self-articulating thought-system is the underlying logical pattern which determines the cosmic process of evolution in space and time, from matter up

through all the successive forms and grades of organization to self-conscious spirit or the society of self-conscious spirits, an evolution which is thus rational in its essence. It is a process of increasing differentiation and deepening integration simultaneously, as in an organism within which fresh differences of structure and function gradually emerge, but are held together in a unity which grows ever richer while it becomes closer, more penetrating, more indivisible. One sees what is meant by observing the case of the human organism developing its many members from the comparatively unformed embryo into a more articulate unity, not only physiological but mental and spiritual. That is what is taking place on a cosmic scale in evolution and history, in nature and in humanity. Mankind, too, emerges from primitive homogeneity in a process of differentiation into tribes, races, nations, in all the exfoliating variety of their cultures, codes, civilizations, institutions, to be succeeded by a counter-movement of increasing economic, cultural, moral and spiritual integration and unity, by whose law they become more and more necessary to and dependent on each other in all the spheres of creative life through which the spirit of man finds self-fulfilment. Such is the dialectical movement of nature and history on the grand scale. It is the rational articulation of Absolute Mind or Spirit going out of itself into the universe in order to find or realize itself through its object or "other" in the form of self-consciousness. And so the cosmic evolution from the physical through the chemical, biological, psychological, moral, aesthetic, social, spiritual, has its reason and explanation in the immanence of the Absolute and the logic of its self-realization.

But the process can never be completed; it is asymptotic, for the Absolute can never be perfectly embodied in the category of time. The goal is inevitable, but there is no finality to progress making its way under an eternal urge or hunger for absolute reality and spiritual perfection. The finite is ever lured by the nostalgia or homesickness of the infinite which is in it but which yet eternally and forever

transcends it; it must ever seek but can never coalesce with the Idea with which it is in union and communion throughout its exile in time.

The *welt-anschauung* thus presented is that of a world of becoming, of change, amid all its apparent contingencies ordered and regulated, a world grounded, however, in an underlying ontological and more essential Reality, in its nature rational and spiritual. Such an absolute Idealism furnished a philosophical foundation for both Science and Ethics, not to say Religion. The world is embodied Reason and is intelligible through and through, setting no limit to intellectual exploration. And this is stated to be just the primary postulate of science, the sanction for its quest of complete positive explanation. It is also congenial to the scientific method, which consists in the progressive subsumption of the laws discovered in the special departments of nature under ever higher and more comprehensive laws, till at length the all-comprehending principle, the all-inclusive law, which will explain and unify all phenomena is reached. And the historical method of science has been differentiation and specialization as the means to final integration and unity.

In the ethical aspect it supplies a buttress to faith in an analogous moral order overruling and underpinning the long-drawn-out struggle of man to resolve the inner conflict which is the dialectic of the moral life in its individual form, and *pari passu* to build up in the world under the idea of the Good a kingdom or commonwealth in which moral evil, which is a form of separateness, will be overcome in community, and the differences of men and nations not abolished in some common mush of humanity but reconciled in all yielding their special contribution to the integral good of the whole.

It is no accident that the outstanding Idealist philosophers of the 19th century in Britain—men like T. H. Green, the Cairds and Henry Jones—were animated by a great faith in moral, political and social reform, expressed in the finest Liberalism of their time. They were animated by a belief,

at once philosophical and religious, that encompassing their human will to the Ideal was the *nisus* of reality itself, an Absolute eternal in the heavens yet immanent in nature, and reaching consciousness of itself in the soul of man. The ineluctable urge behind evolution was no other than the self-incarnation of eternal Spirit through nature and in the mind and soul of man, which is nature come to consciousness of itself.

THE REAL AND THE ACTUAL

The Ideal is thus the Real. It has not actuality but it is the meaning and purport of the actual, that towards which the actual is a transition stage in the process of becoming, at once self-affirmation and self-negation, the two dialectical moments of self-transcendence. Self-transcendence is the truth which inheres in and operates through everything that exists in time and space, from the most elementary forms of the material up through the entire range of being, inanimate and animate. Accordingly what we ordinarily call a thing or a situation is an abstraction. It has no existence in itself apart from relation to all that surrounds it, no meaning except in relation to all that it becomes. It can only be partly explained by its past and fully interpreted by its future and its final destiny. It is its past, present and future, a continuing focus within sense of forces and relations in an order partly actual and partly ideal. This may seem a mere play of paradoxes, and yet it is only plain common sense, that genuine realism which cannot be made perfect without idealism. They are not mutually exclusive, they belong to each other like the two ends of a stick.

To illustrate. You may describe every element and feature of a spring bud in terms of every sense by which it is perceptible. You may trace every item in its origin and history. And yet that bud will not be an intelligible thing. It will remain an enigma. All the senses together do not make sense of it. For the bud not only is, it is more than it is, more than appears to present sense. It has a meaning which can be grasped not by sense but by intelligence. A bud is

what it is only as a transient phase of what it is to become—viz., a flower. Only he who has seen the flower can know and understand the bud, for the flower alone explains it; it is the reality of the bud, or the *idea* in it unconsciously, that for which it exists.

Or let us suppose you had looked at this lecture in the throes of gestation when it was still embryonic or worse, a lot of illegible notes on various subjects with no coherence or mutual relevance—all the symptoms we usually associate with mental distraction and acute distress. Neither apart nor jumbled together did those notes present any signs of reason. A valley of dry bones, and behold they were very dry. And in the night when deep sleep cometh upon a man the writer had a dream in which he saw the bones come together, bone to his bone, with sinews between them and skin covering them. They appeared to stand up before him in array as a mighty lecture. And in the strength of that dream he went on many days and nights calling "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these dead notes that they may live." But that was not enough, so he applied artificial respiration and genuine perspiration, rubbing it in to supply the marrow and so organize them into a living body. Each of these notes was dead and dry because it was an abstraction; but organized by the dream, the idea, they unfolded their meaning as incoherent efforts towards a whole in which they were invested with sense, as one would fondly believe. This lecture is the reason for the notes, and as a completed process interprets and explains the imperfect phases of their organization.

So all through the movement, whether it be of evolution or creation, the *ideal* is the real, for it is the essence and meaning of the actual, apart from which the latter is just dead, senseless fact, a thing without eyes, or ears, or soul, and the reality of the thing is its *soul*. If it has no soul, or if it is not soul in the making, it is just nothing. And whether you say with Hegel that Logic is the creator of the entire movement of things upward in space and through time, or whether you prefer that Logic and its method, by which is meant Reason

and its laws, are the mould and pattern of the whole evolution of inanimate and animate nature, it comes to the same. In either case mind or spirit is the essence, the meaning, the reality of everything from matter right up the runway of cosmic evolution. The actual is at all stages the vehicle of the Ideal and on the way to it. That is the fundamental law, the paradox, of the world we know, what I have called the law of self-transcendence, which involves also partial transcendence of space and time.

THE ETERNAL IN THE TEMPORAL

It is characteristic of philosophical Idealism to see the essence and reality of all temporal things in their fulfilment, and to regard the whole in which they find their context and meaning as in some indefinable but effective way ever present as operative in and determinative of the series of their changes. These come and go in ceaseless flux, it abides all through, and is at once the final cause and the dynamic law of their becoming. The last is thus also first; it is at once transcendent and immanent. Being indivisibly bound together in the logical chain of our reasoning there is no ground for separating them in the factual world. The eternal and the temporal are interwoven on the loom of reason and so neither can be unravelled in objective existence. What reason has joined together it were sheer irrationalism to put asunder. The eternal apart from the temporal is empty, the temporal apart from the eternal is blind. This truth is expressed in the affirmation that all that becomes or evolves is the progressive manifestation or unfolding in time of the Absolute, the Idea.

The tendency of Idealism, therefore, has been to regard all things and their changes as mere appearances of a Reality that is changeless, in which they are rooted and from whose absolute value they derive whatever worth they possess. In it the apparent separateness and independence, due to the limitations and abstractions of our finite senses, are done away and they find their native home in the total unity of that

system of inter-relations by which they are, in scientific fact and doctrine, constituted, a system in which their sensuous or material elements are penetrated by and woven into that rational or spiritual texture of which they are as it were the knots. Only in this context are things intelligible.

But I want to emphasize what indeed is, I believe, true to Hegel's own thought, that the Absolute must not be allowed to engulf the long-drawn-out process as a serpent might eat up its own sinuous body, and to insist that there can be no final fulfilment of anything if everything is just *mere* appearance without any substance in it. The truth of the matter rather is that as everything in the process of time and pattern of space finds an ultimate place and has a function in the absolute reality, so far from that denuding it of all existence and value, it rather confers upon it, *in its time and place*, something of absolute value and invests it with some reality and significance.

MODERN REALISM. PROCESS

So 19th-century Idealism has itself produced Realism as an antithesis to its thesis. True-blue Realism is a reaction from Idealism, with its emphasis metaphysically on the Eternal and Rational and psychologically on the intellect and cognition. Its first outstanding protagonist was Bergson, who described the intellect as the faculty which by abstraction flattens out the concrete rotundity of reality, moving in time, into the spatial dimension. For Bergson, Time, the refreshing river, with its drive persistently searching through the material for fresh channels of advance and, like the cutting prow of a ship, flinging off a stable wave of space to either side of it as it surges on with creative power, is the very stuff of reality only to be apprehended by concentrated intuition, a force blindly feeling its way towards some far-off consummation which does not yet exist and so cannot be determinative of the process. Becoming *is* reality, the forward sweep of dynamic being in creative evolution from matter to mind.

This in essential features is the realism also of Alexander and Laird, a flux not originally spiritual, not intrinsically intelligible nor fundamentally rational, brute fact which just pops up and happens so, and that is all there is to it; internally teleological in its emerging patterns but not of free idea or conscious design. No God presided over its birth and yet a lure of Deity draws it ever on and up toward a divine destiny, such as eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive. "The freer step, the fuller breath, the wide horizon's grander view", that is reality; a virgin birth out of the primitive womb of space-time, conceived but not begotten, it just grows and grows like a tree stretching out its branches, unlocking its buds, unfolding its leaves, opening its flowers, as time rolls on—a phenomenon indeed, with no metaphysical roots, no habitations in eternity, a phantasmagoria rising, coagulating, dissolving like a kaleidoscope and articulating itself into new patterns on the background of the inane; a wild adventure out of contingency into behaviour that seems to exhibit law and order; a *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, a monstrous birth and growth behind which our rude forefathers felt they sensed some Power intangible and inapprehensible, which we would faintly indicate by our word God and in contemplation of which Laird himself feels some misgiving that perchance after all that word has place and meaning in the cosmic syntax.

Thou'rt nigh, and yet my labouring mind
 Feels after Thee in vain :
 Thy herald is the stormy wind,
 Thy path the watery plain :
 But Thee in tempests who can find,
 Or in the trackless main ?

It is not, I think, unlikely that the whirligig of time will bring Idealism to the top again in modern thought, but it is miscalled a "whirligig", for the present is always gathering into itself the past and transforming itself into a future that is strange and unprecedented.

Thus the new Idealism will have to incorporate into itself whatever is true in Realism. Time and its succession will have to be taken seriously, given their full rights instead of being reduced to mere appearances which we can ignore. The Ideal must not short-circuit the process. In other words, our Idealism must be realistic. Rational and ideal principles must be patient and not in so great a hurry as to overrun the stages which must intervene and by which they must travel before their consummation can be attained. It is beyond the power of any science or art to produce, *e.g.*, the complete man at one stroke. His creation takes time and must go through the stages of embryo, infancy, childhood and youth. What is any man who has never gone through these phases nor gathered into his manhood the harvests of experience and memory in the gardens along their way? At best he can be nothing but a bag of tricks in the shape of a man, as empty a contraption as a balloon with a face painted on it. Creation is neither a flare up nor a pop up nor a bust up out of the void; it grows, and flows. And that holds true in every department and province of experience.

Ideals must be wrought out of the raw material of the world along its natural grain, bit by bit, here a line, there a line. Your principle may be absolute and *a priori* but if it is ever to be achieved it must submit to the prescriptions of the temporal order. The sovereignty of the Principle dare not violate the rights of the factual. Such is the sacramental marriage of Idealism with Realism which man puts asunder at his peril. They are opposites to be synthesized in the dialectic of progress toward the goal of our vision.

B. CURRENT PROBLEMS AND APPLICATIONS

§ I. MAN

It is against this philosophical background that we would now consider briefly two or three dogmas or assumptions that are current in much thinking to-day, usurping the name and fame of idealism.

The status of man it is no concern of ours to deny in terms of a false theological realism. We leave the denigration of our race to the fashionable theologians who have acquired a nasty habit of turning up their noses at Liberal Religion as a feckless myth that has outlived its Victorian reputation and respectability and now lurks in the ecclesiastical underworld in the last stages of destitution. But I could summon in support of its essential affirmations and general outlook an array of philosophical idealists, realists and scientific positivists, men of a wider knowledge and deeper thought than I discern among neo-Calvinists and Barthians crowing on the dunghill of humanity to the low key of Hitler and Himmler and others made in their inhuman image, and theologically deaf to the heart-beat of nations drumming out heroic marches across the battlefields of Europe to a grander tune. This is not the hour for the theme of human depravity and impotence on the lips of English Christianity, when her common men in tens of thousands, having defied terrific odds, are draining their dearest veins and dying in order that a civilization in some sense Christian as to its scale of moral values and human in its codes of conduct shall not perish from the earth.

§ 2. WAR AND THE VIRTUES

Purist idealism was shocked by Mussolini's Fascist philosophy with its doctrine that war is the field on which are displayed the most heroic virtues of man. But realism to-day is asking where else has the mercenariness which is the motive embedded in too much of our industrial history and of which capitalists and "the workers" accuse each other, on the principle of the pot calling the kettle black, been more spectacularly transcended than on the battlefield? This is indeed a disconcerting phenomenon for the moral idealist who would regard war as the ultimate evil and therefore at no time and under no circumstances and from no motive whatever to be undertaken. War may after all be that antithesis to the idealist thesis of peace at any

price out of which a higher synthesis may emerge in the process of our civilization.

Here we have two antithetic opposites. There are in the world people and parties who hold that war is the only way of finally settling disputes between nations, and others who maintain that it settles nothing; those who teach that in war men and nations rise to their highest and those who maintain that they sink to their lowest. I myself belonged to the latter but now I confess my belief that neither dogma represents the complex truth. I don't sit on the fence; I find myself on both sides of it, a somewhat uncomfortable position. But Morality is not distracted, for there is still a world of difference between men who rise to their highest in war for a good cause and men who sink to their lowest in fighting for a bad one. Men's virtues are usually mixed, like most things in this world, but the distinction between right and wrong, good and evil is not diminished. Justice is justice even if it is a blackguard who demands or does it, and iniquity remains iniquity even when the majority votes for it. On the other hand, a belief is not necessarily true because only a small minority is convinced of it, nor a policy necessarily wrong because only a few conscientiously object to it. The assumption of the superiority of the minority may be a fallacy. Neither does a bad argument become good or less bad by being made to support an idealist dogma. It has to be recognized that idealism can lead to disaster if it is not controlled and guided by realism as to the right time and appropriate means, just as Icarus may take a flight to the sun but if his wings are of wax he is sure to finish in the sea. Ideals are not immediately practicable, they cannot be actualized at once in all their pure integrity; they are, as Kant said of Ideas of Reason, not to be taken as constitutive but as regulative. A ship may be sailing for a certain port but if it acts in mid-ocean as if it had got there already it never will. And the young idealist who decides to have nothing to do with anything but the perfect girl of his dreams postpones the blessed estate of matrimony *sine die*. Even God could not create a world such as ours in a moment of

time. Genesis allowed Him six days, but we see Him still at it after six thousand years of Archbishop Ussher's highly concentrated chronology. Such is the tardy tempo of omnipotence itself in the concessions divine idealism must make to the inevitable laws of natural realism. Much of man's trouble has been due to his "majestic instancy" and to being in too big a hurry, transgressing laws and outstripping facts in his eagerness to be at his goal. He seizes opportunity with both hands, by its tail as well as by its forelock, so the poor animal just turns round or stands still, instead of doing his will.

§ 3. THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

That was the tragedy of the League of Nations. Its principle of international co-operation and collective security was surely sound, and another war has only made it surer that civilization cannot survive on any other principle. *But the nations were not ready for it.* They had not made nor were prepared to make either the sacrifices or the exertions that were necessary to make the ideal actual and effectual. The League was thus a political skeleton, not a living body, an idol with no breath in it and a death-trap. The scepticism that was hidden in its heart was evident in its very faith, the fond faith that it could dispense with force by making a threat do all the work, so the League itself would not have to do anything. And so it collapsed into a dishonourable grave, and that collapse brought other catastrophes in its train. The sworn devotees of force had seen the sceptre fall from its withered hands and made a mental note that the nations in it had no punch in them and could easily be knocked out of the ring. Hence this war worse than the first. It was a League of goodwill without will-power; A Daniel expert in idealistic dreams in a den of realists, but the God of Daniel who once shut the mouths of the lions has changed His technique and accepts no direct responsibility or rôle in such situations. So Hitler could go on nation-eating and Goebbels gabbling; that was our affair.

Now we know that at their stage of spiritual development devils are not to be mesmerized by pacific passes nor exorcized by pious prayers. We cannot yet transmit even our most far-reaching ideas to Hitler and his militarists by telepathy, nor exert the slightest effect on their demoniac will and method except with the help of the *dynamics* of divinity and the *mechanics* of morality. An international order of righteousness and peace we can rightly enthrone as the eternal ideal and may fondly cherish as the final state of humanity. It is absolute as a principle which should direct personal aims and regulate political policies. But it is not yet actual, and while there are nations and governments which discredit and deny it, conduct adjusted to it is only tolerable as the perquisite of a small minority without effective influence in peace-loving nations. It is fatal to try to live in the ideal and evade the actual. That is just confused thinking expressed in self-frustrating action. It is against the cosmic chronology, an anachronism which can only spell disaster, as it has done. Pacifism is living in Paradise—a fool's paradise—without waiting for the resurrection, an emotional indulgence in the sentiments of perfection before the men to be made perfect have announced their arrival and presented their credentials. "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the sun." That is the inured wisdom of old Ecclesiastes, profound enough to be proverbial.

It is just bad history to say that war settles nothing; it has often settled for good the particular issue in dispute, as Marathon, Bannockburn, the Boyne, Waterloo, the American Civil War and the Battle of Britain attest. In this world nothing is finally settled by anything. It is a sobering reflection that if it had not been for idealism, badly mistimed in English pacifism and Peace Pledge propaganda and sadly misplaced in the Oxford Union and other places where immaturity sows its wild oats on the east wind, Hitler would not have blown across Europe with such gusto, nor probably the world have reaped the whirlwind. When the lion sees the peace-loving passive lambs, it does not

become a lamb but a roaring lion seeking whom it may devour.

Idealism *in vacuo* unwedded, or even unequally yoked, to realism is barren. There is no parthenogenesis in nature. Throughout the whole range of animate nature new birth is the result of a synthesis of dual opposites, male and female, and no living creature develops but by initiating commerce with its actually existing environment, by assimilation of the raw material it provides. There is a polarity in things, and you cannot have a soul till a fitting body is prepared for it. Idealism is the soul of which realism is the body, and they are correlates. Human personality grows to its fulfilment not by self-absorption but only by going out of itself, to create the institutions and embodiments which become its sustaining environment or reciprocating social *milieu*. It cannot live in the future, though it must live for it. If the individual is adjusted to the remote future he passes as a freak or is perhaps tolerated for his nuisance value so long as there are not too many of him for civilization to survive. The present can manage along with a few futurists and with extremists in strict moderation.

§ 4. HUMAN EQUALITY

It is one of the marked characteristics of unrealistic idealism to indulge in *a priori* principles which have no visible means of support and to fuddle the brain with the swing music of popular phrases. One of these is the familiar and flattering dogma of the equality of all men. And as this is not very perceptible to human observation, the saving clause "in the sight of God" is commonly added. Being devoid of any factual evidence within human experience, it is thus accorded transcendental status and divine authority as an eternal truth, which is just a more imposing way of saying a theological dogma, defined as a revealed truth which is above reason and to be accepted by faith because it is beyond rational proof and goes in the face of common sense. Let us examine it.

By human equality is certainly not meant that all men are equal in physical height or weight or beauty, or (to be up to date) sex appeal; neither that they are all equal in mental endowment, whether intellectual ability, emotional sensibility or imaginative capacity; nor that they are all equal in moral character, political competence or spiritual quality. What is left? The whole organization and balance of society are based on a fundamental cosmic principle—viz., unity in and through difference. Life in community is the art of the *proper* exploitation of the inequalities of men, and democracy itself is in practice only possible, tolerable or successful in the degree to which it succeeds in applying a valid differential calculus to its human material so as to secure government by the wisest, ablest and best.¹ Aristocracy is the saving element and agency in democracy, which in spite of its idealistic equalitarianism is realistic enough to discredit the idea of selecting those competent to hold high offices of state in its legislature, judicature and executive by the method of putting all the names on the electoral roll in a hat and drawing them out by chance. The commonalty is fully aware that the world will only be safe for democracy, and democracy or any other crazy “crazy” safe for the world, if it succeeds in securing an aristocracy to guide and govern it, while retaining the right to criticism. For where one can construct, ten thousand can criticize who can do little else, and anyhow their criticisms largely cancel each other out. This is only to admit that mankind needs and will always need *leadership*, from which it is an immediate inference that in all vital practical concerns men are not equal, though equally with rights and to be respected. That is the actual fact at all stages of history. Hence equality is not an eternal truth but a false dogma if taken as fact. It is, however, an eternal *ideal*. In that sense it sets one of the goals towards which human effort in every sphere is to be directed and a norm by which it is to be judged. It is, again adopting Kantian nomenclature, a regulative Idea of Reason. But

¹ This applies also to industry and business.

this gives no ground for the dogma that one is as good as another—if not better. Its validity lies in the depths of metaphysical reality, as *an ideal* that can never become actual in time. Thus there will never be an end to its allurements and inspiration or to man's indefatigable striving after it in a warfare from which on earth there is no discharge. And history past and present and to come is the only progressive verification of such Ideals.

§ 5. THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY

The slogan of Equality gets a good deal of its wind from another dogma, that of “the Infinite Value of the Individual”, which has recently been deduced from the fundamental Platonic premiss of “the Primacy of Reason” in combination with the Christian one of “the Primacy of Sympathy” by W. T. Stace in the course of a first-rate book misnamed “The Destiny of Western Man”, which should be read voluntarily in England and compulsorily in Germany, though I do not myself accept all his massive argument for Democracy nor his method. But it contains a richly educative effort at the derivation of idealistic ethics and politics from the empiricist principles of a Humanist philosophy. “The Infinite Value of the Individual” resembles Emerson's dictum,

One accent of the Holy Ghost
The heedless world has never lost.

As someone asked, “How did he find that out?”

As Christ cannot strictly be said to have the value of God, so neither can any finite being be said, except loosely, to have infinite value, though Infinity may be partially immanent in them and they may be the bearers or nuclei of infinite values which transcend themselves. Both statements would thus have a *pragmatic* validity. The Infinite Value of the State or of Society, which stands in a dialectical relationship with the individual, might likewise be asserted, for it also incorporates and is the repository of such values

and for a far longer time. In actual fact we commonly admit it to be an indefeasible principle that the State is of more value than many individuals and that they may rightly be sacrificed for it but not it for them. It may be doubtfully argued that the individual as a self-conscious spiritual personality is higher in the scale of being than the State, which is only personified in metaphor. On the other hand, the State is a synthesis or community of such personalities and these have not even the rudiments of personality except within such community. The whole must be greater than its parts, as the body is greater than its members. "If any member causeth thee to stumble, cut it off." This is the Christian assessment of values as between an organized body and its constituent members. Accordingly the State or the Society, as the more comprehensive unity and the continuing community or body of individuals who appear and pass within its perpetuity, transcends them in value; even while it may have to be recognized that only in the individuals and not in it do the intellectual, moral and spiritual qualities which constitute worth, at any rate primarily, inhere. I can see no escape from this assessment of a subordinate status to the individual in relation to the State except through a Religion which claims for men a direct relationship to the only real Infinite, God, and assigns him membership of some transcendent City, eternal in the heavens. But even this transcendental dogma of Religion does not alter the facts of the empirical order within time nor their actual claims. Realism compels us to concede that while rebellion against any actual State may arise in the name and under the sanction of God it can have no other justification than as the means to a more ideal State, a more real Society. The Society is vested with the higher validity and superior authority as, though only as, the repository of the well-being of all its citizens, not only those who exist in the present but those too who will exist throughout the future. Hence its right to claim our life and to take it, and our readiness to give it. And here again a genuine idealism demands a place for stern realism wherein the individual

may have to reckon his personal existence and value as of no absolute value. He gains his true life and self through self-surrender. The grandest self-affirmation lies through self-negation. In soldierly speech which can be translated into all forms of human service, Who dies, if Humanity lives, the Great Society?

§ 6. HUMAN FREEDOM

The last application time allows is to the problem of Freedom. Freedom too is a principle which only realizes itself by degrees or an ideal to which we approximate through the development of personality and society, rather than an actuality which we possess by the endowment of heredity. Only the faculty for it is given. This holds alike socially and individually. In this respect it is like the self of which it is the property. It is a funny thing which does not reflect very creditably on common thinking, that good people will be indignant as at a mortal offence to their moral dignity if you deny that they are always free to determine their actions as they choose or are perfectly free in their choice, and yet they won't show any resentment if you deny that they are complete and perfect selves. They evidently consider the full possession of what they call freedom of will as more vitally important than the possession of selfhood, of which will is only one faculty. In the matter of the self they are satisfied to be only in part but not so in the matter of will, a property or function of the self. The self may be subject but the will must be sovereign or an autocrat; the self is limited, the will unlimited. This is sheer faulty psychology, discredited by the slightest reflection; long dead but not yet buried, and it has a powerful ghost. The contention that the will in morality is only determined by itself and not by anything outside it, is neither realism nor idealism but moonshine. Yet such are the aberrations of greatness that something like that view was held by Kant, a genius who did some expert juggling to keep hold of it, and by Martineau, who put it among the intuitions to be accepted on trust. The one said you *can* do a thing if you *ought* to do it, which

flies in face of a mighty lot of obvious human experience; the other that anyone can infallibly and intuitively discern the morally higher and lower, which does the same. It reminds one of Emerson's inspired half-truth,

When duty whispers low, thou must,
The youth replies, I can.

Had he never known a student holden in a comfortable bed in the morning? It is certain that Martineau with his noble moral intuitions was not born and bred in Nazi Kultur and that the other two lived before the era of psycho-analysis. Personality is much more complex than the old moralists remembered in their theoretical moods, though they knew it all right in their heart and were not quite so innocent when they went out of their study among their neighbours. They often talked of "*blind* and *helpless* sinners". Moral freedom as understood by the libertarians is a pure abstraction with no marrow of morality in it, for it means arbitrary freedom, the fiat of a hypothetical self uprooted from every context and as independent as the wind which was supposed to blow where it listeth. It took no stock of the actual person who is a creature compounded of physiology, psychology and history, which are inescapable because they enter into the very stuff of will and substance of personality. Organized together they *are* the self and the limitations of such a self are inevitable limitations of its freedom.

Man himself is only in the making all through history and life; he too is in process toward the ideal. But the ideal is a power within him, not external to him; it is *his* ideal, that which he is to become, the truth or reality of him, unfolding with his intellectual, moral and spiritual development; at once transcendent and immanent, but never in time can he fully attain to it, for it grows with his growth. The true saint never counts himself to have apprehended.

Freedom is not indeterminism, determinism by nothing, but determinism by one's ideals, which represent one's real self. The vital difference between a person and a thing is not that the one is not determined and the other is, but that

the determinism in the one case is a different sort from that in the other; it is spiritual determinism by ideas, one's own free ideas, as against determinism by merely external forces. All created beings and things are under some necessity, the human under moral or spiritual necessity, the material under mechanical necessity. The actions of a man of character in a given situation are free yet predictable, for he will always act in character; it is the insane man and the man of morally unorganized personality of whom it is said, you can never depend on him or tell how he will act. Accordingly there is no contradiction between a sound idealism and realism in ethics. If men were free in the libertarian sense of being able arbitrarily to determine the fiat of the will, because we think that the element of sheer contingency is implied in moral freedom, there would be little meaning in moral discipline and education. Determinism is the very principle of morality, as order is of liberty. Contingency would be the disorder and dissolution of nature, society and life.

§ 7. CONCLUSION

We can and must say dogmatically of all the eternal ideals, which constitute not positive actuality but metaphysical reality, the very meaning, sense and rationality of history, that if at any period they decline and fall, as they may through man's error, perversity and rebellion—witness the phenomena of the German Reich in this demoniac epoch of Nazi ideology and practice—they decline and fall to rise again; unless indeed humanity itself with all its cloud-capp'd towers and gorgeous palaces like an insubstantial pageant faded shall dissolve, and man's history prove not a reality but only a lucid moment in a frenzied dream. To take that view would be absolute scepticism and nihilism, a contradiction of the very essence of our spiritual consciousness. There is no marrow in such a philosophy, no speculation in its eyes; it amounts to reasoning oneself into sheer irrationalism. Of each as of all of these Ideals which underlie man's life and action from the beginning of time to

its end and are the fountain light of all our day, the master light of all our seeing, though it be a light that never was on sea or land, if they ever suffer eclipse we can say :

Thou hast left behind
Powers that will work for thee ; air, earth and skies ;
There's not a breathing of the common wind
That will forget thee ; thou hast great allies ;
Thy friends are exultations, agonies,
And love, and Man's unconquerable mind.

In conclusion let me repeat the thesis of this lecture, that idealism and realism are not divided or contrary, that in the sacrament of history the elements of actuality must be there and remain as the appointed media of the Ideal and that its Real Presence does not in the long process of their gradual transubstantiation into the Ideal abolish their accidents or the natural laws to which, being in time, they are subject. These temporal laws must be respected. Conduct, while always *sub specie aeternitatis*, must be adapted to the particular stage and existing situation if the Ideal is to find progressive embodiment and ultimate self-fulfilment. Evolution is the sacrament of Reality, and it is also the sacrament of the Ideal, for these two are one, metaphysically and mystically. Therein lies the guarantee that if, as to our sight they do, individuals, nations, civilizations develop as living nuclei of an efflorescence of faculties and excellences and then perish, if this whole cosmic order wax old like a garment and all the gorgeousness of it become a bloody vesture of decay, still it will not have passed as a tale that is told. If the analogy which has held throughout history ceases suddenly to hold at the end and man's creations and achievements are not transmitted to some other succeeding world-order elsewhere in this inconceivable universe containing other forms and dimensions than those of our space and time, nevertheless this cosmic order has grown from metaphysical roots beyond time and has eternal habitations ; translated into the idiom of Religion, which is, I think, the basic human consciousness and speech, it is the Word of God who is from everlasting to

everlasting, the great I Am, and when it returns unto Him it will not return unto Him void.

In such rise and fall, such emergence and disappearance of world-orders, we may be contemplating the mighty affirmation and negation which constitutes the dialectic of the Absolute in its sublimest form.

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