

Britain's foremost statesman-philosopher seeks a criterion with which to guide and to judge man's progress.

Shaping Our Civilization

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IN WHAT, after all, does civilization consist? If Japanese aggression in China were successful, would it bring to the Chinese a higher civilization or subject them to a lower? Sidney and Beatrice Webb entitled their spacious survey of present-day Russia *Soviet Communism: A New Civilization?* with a query at the end. In a postscript to that book they give reasons why they think that query might be omitted. But Hitler, Mussolini and Franco assert that Communism is not a civilization at all, but an embodiment of the forces of destruction, to be resisted at all costs and to the death.

In our ordinary lives we have to decide every day which values are best. Take for example the problems of the educator. How far should the education of children be literary and humanistic, or scientific and utilitarian, theological, artistic, athletic, military? Different schools of thought, here and elsewhere, put

different values upon these elements. Which is right? Or are all of them right? Or none of them?

Consider the problem which underlies the economic situation in this country—and in all countries. The advance in science, invention and technical organization and skill has vastly and rapidly increased the productivity of industry and agriculture. The benefits of that progress may be distributed in various ways. They may go to the employing class in larger profits. Or they may go to the workers: in better wages, or else in more leisure, or perhaps in less labor for married women, young persons, or children. They may go to the consumers: in lower prices, or in the better quality of goods, or in more convenient methods of distribution. They may be diffused in a growing expenditure upon forms of trade competition. Or they may be taken by governments in taxation and spent either upon social services and the like, or upon arma-

ments and war. The political and economic controversies of our time spring very largely from differences of opinion as to the comparative worth and necessity of these various purposes.

The market values of commodities themselves are not determined, as Marx taught, by the amount and quality of the labor needed for their production, but in the first place by the ideas that govern the demand for them. A country house which cost perhaps a hundred thousand pounds fifty years ago may not be worth one thousand today; the bigger it is and the more it cost, the less it is worth. As much labor would be needed to produce a crinoline now as in the eighteen-sixties; it would have fetched a price then, it is worthless today. A fat pig has considerable value in Chicago; it has none in Mecca or Tel-Aviv.

To take a different class of cases, young men and women have to choose occupations of some kind; and the choice is not solely a question of opportunity, but in varying degree also of predilection. Unless we are to be like thistledown, blown haphazard upon the wind, taking root or failing to take root wherever the floating seed may rest, there must be some judgment as to the kind of life, within the limits that are open, that is most worth while.

The answers given to all such questions determine the kind of civilization we shall have. In turn, the kind of civilization that we have helps to determine the answers that we give. We are in a circle; our choice of values determines our civilization, and our civilization determines our choice of values. Unless we can find some

standpoint outside the circle where we can frame an independent criterion, we may go on for ever round and round.

II

For thousands of years religion set the standards. The character of a civilization was determined by its creed. It was a Christian civilization or Islamic, Buddhist or Hindu, Confucian or Shinto. God had spoken, or the prophets and the sages; the peoples had only to accept. Beliefs crystallized into customs. In Europe all through the Middle Ages civilization was based on Christian theology—the theology especially of Saint Thomas Aquinas, which had drawn into alliance Aristotle's philosophy and found its interpreters in the Church and the Schoolmen. Throughout the Middle East and among Moslems elsewhere the Suras of the Koran gave the answer to every problem. The Crusades were the typical manifestation, on the one side and on the other, of the civilizations of the age. Judaism had become largely a matter of Rabbinics, the meticulous application of verbally inspired texts. In India the caste system grew up as a religious ordinance. In China popular Confucianism and Taoism developed their own codes of morals.

There came the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with the beginnings in Europe of modern science. Astronomy and physics in general, anatomy and all branches of physiology began rapidly to develop, and there arose straightway the great conflict between the established theology and the new science. Giordano Bruno was burnt at the stake; Galileo was indicted and persecuted; Spinoza

excommunicated by the synagogue; Descartes intimidated by the attacks of theologians.

When the cause of intellectual liberty had won the victory, the scope of the human mind speedily expanded. It no longer felt itself, to quote a sentence of Mr. H. G. Wells, 'boxed in imaginatively by the Creation and the Day of Judgment.' It saw its background in a history immensely prolonged, and visualized an almost boundless future.

The eighteenth century brought the *philosophes* of France and their Encyclopædia, the 'Philosopher Kings' of Prussia, Austria, Russia, Sweden and Spain; in England appeared the precursors of the Philosophic Radicals, who were to influence so greatly the century that followed. Philosophy was no longer conditioned by theology, but began itself to mold religious thought.

With Kant the idealist school arose, acquired a predominant position, but brought no conclusions generally agreed. Authority, whether religious or philosophic, was found to be insufficient. To fill the need, various currents of thought flowed in. Science was inclined to materialism, and set a trend that way.

Marxism followed the trend; the aggrieved elements in an economic system disorganized by the Industrial Revolution found in it a creed and a purpose. Then came Nietzsche and the intuitionists, starting an anti-intellectual movement; and that movement gave room for Sorel, Spengler and the philosophy of violence. Out of these ideas have now arisen the Fascism of Italy and the National-Socialism of Germany. A lack of accepted standards in morals and

politics have led thought into chaos, action into confusion and have given us the world that we see around us today.

III

'Turn back, O Man, forswear thy foolish ways,' says a poet of our time. His words would find an echo in many minds. Widespread among us is the feeling that there must be a fresh start. It is often said that in these days civilization itself is in peril. But in what civilization consists, or should consist, we do not quite know; and not everyone is sure that the civilization we now have deserves to be saved from whatever perils may threaten it.

Who is to answer these questions? Who is to give us the independent criterion of values that we need? Where shall we find again the authority that has been lost?

'The philosophy which a nation receives,' wrote Emerson, 'rules its religion, poetry, politics, arts, trades and whole history.' But the nations of today do not receive—or at all events do not accept—any coherent philosophy of any kind. The reason is not far to seek. It obviously comes from the disagreements among philosophers. The ordinary man might be willing to accept their guidance if they spoke with one voice, but wisely recognizes that he is not competent to decide between them when they differ. 'Moreover,' as Dr. Joad says, 'many of the disputes of philosophers are disputes about what exactly it is that they are disputing about.'

Bishop Gore wrote in his Gifford Lectures: 'It must of course be admitted that if a student today reads in succession the works of a number of

contemporary or almost contemporary philosophers—surrendering himself to each in turn before he seeks to estimate the ultimate value of his speculations—he will be impelled toward a final skepticism, because he will find the conclusions, confidently presented to him for acceptance, so different and irreconcilable. But to acquiesce in the skeptical attitude, which is content to find all views interesting while abandoning the attempt to reach a conclusion or conviction of one's own, is to abandon the very aim of reason, which is the conviction of truth.' Yet to this surrender many thinkers feel themselves obliged to consent, in despair of reaching definite conclusions.

Some among them find an excuse by asserting that, after all, it is the search that matters and not the finding. They accept the defeatism which says—I have heard Lord Baldwin use the quotation more than once—'it is better to travel hopefully than to arrive.' Or else they take refuge in a theory that at bottom a man's philosophy can never be anything more than the expression of his temperament. This is the same as Fichte's doctrine: 'The kind of philosophy that a man chooses depends upon the kind of man that he is.' Such views may be amusing; they have in them a touch of good-humored cynicism; but if they were taken seriously they would be fatal to any prospect of help from philosophy in finding an issue from our troubles. Philosophy would sink into a matter of personal taste.

But how is philosophy to escape from the swamp of mere speculation, of assertion and counter-assertion, of 'proclamation without proof?' For my own part, I feel convinced that we

shall find firm ground, that we shall be able to make a fresh start with any hope of success, only if philosophy, with full deliberation, accepts science as its basis.

IV

It may be said that since there is no permanency in science, since its conclusions change as knowledge grows, philosophy on this principle will find its premises ever shifting. To some extent this must be so. And is it wrong that it should be so? If in earlier times philosophy had had at its disposal the knowledge that has now been brought by physics, chemistry, psychology, biology in all its branches; and the social sciences also, politics, economics, eugenics—can we doubt that it would have shaped itself differently? Plato and Aristotle must needs have written differently, and Descartes and Spinoza. And there is no reason to doubt—or to regret—that in so far as the basic conclusions of the science of the next century will differ from those of the science of today the philosophy of the next century will be modified correspondingly. There must be what Ernst Mach called 'the gradual accommodation of thoughts to facts.'

We may see, looking back, that it was the dualism of Descartes that set us on the wrong track. His principles, says Whitehead, 'lead straight to the theory of a materialistic, mechanistic nature, surveyed by cogitating minds. After the close of the seventeenth century science took charge of the materialistic nature, and philosophy took charge of the cogitating minds.' The human mind has ever sought a window through which it might look upon the universe; idealis-

tic philosophy gave it only a mirror, so that it was merely itself that it saw.

From this the conclusion does not follow that philosophy is to be regarded as nothing more than a branch of science without specific functions of her own. She may draw her materials from science, but she must choose her tasks and reach her results for herself. We may regard, then, the frontier where science and philosophy meet, where the conclusions of the one are handed across to become the premises of the other, as the vital center in the wide realm of thought.

V

Philosophy ought not to be a matter of choosing one of a series of pigeon-holes inscribed with the names of thinkers or of schools of thought, of creeping in and sliding to the cover. Philosophy, I would submit, should rather devote itself in these days to a new clarification of its own ideas in the light of those new and fundamental discoveries of science. Then it may seek a synthesis with science and with religion. It is that threefold synthesis which may be able to offer to the world the guidance it so urgently needs; may be able to tell us what values are really worth while, in what a high civilization really consists.

Such a synthesis will not give us, indeed, a definite program of practical action. That is the province of politics and economics, of the specialized sciences and of religion separately; religion molded no doubt by philosophy and by science, but animated by its own authentic spirit and bringing its own specific contribution. The function of philosophy, in union with the others, is rather to set the aims

which practical action should seek. As Hume said, 'We come to a philosopher to be instructed how we shall choose our ends, more than the means for attaining the ends.'

But mark the number of practical issues besetting our minds day by day on which this synthesis of philosophy, science and religion will have a bearing. Is the State or nation a real entity, as Hegel taught and the Nazis and Fascists believe? Or is it only one more 'fictional abstraction?' Does the individual exist ultimately for the State, or the State for the individual? Is war between nations the outcome of a supreme natural law of a struggle for existence leading to the survival of the fittest, and therefore in the end beneficent? Or is this merely a misapplication of biological conclusions to a sphere they do not fit?

Is it true that thermodynamics proves conclusively that the earth is doomed to become lifeless, as the moon is—that the universe itself is on the way to ultimate death? If so, does this involve a fundamental pessimism in our general outlook, with a repudiation of the optimistic element in the religious creeds? Is it possible to find a sound basis for ethics apart from theology? If it is, in what does the basis consist? If it is not possible, does it follow that theological dogmas ought to be accepted even if they are believed not to be true?

How far, if at all, should political ideologies influence scientific conclusions? Sidney and Beatrice Webb, in their book on Soviet Communism, quote the following watchwords from *The Journal for Marxist-Leninist Natural Science*: 'We stand for Party in Mathematics;' 'We stand for the purity of the Marxist-Leninist theory

in surgery.' Is this an example to be imitated?

If the principle of Causality is acknowledged to be supreme, what will be the effect upon the current popular superstitions? What shall we think, for example, of the Town Council of Margate, which decided in January, 1937, that no house in any new street on its housing estates was to be numbered thirteen? What shall we think of some of our newspapers with vast circulations which print week by week columns of astrological prophecies under such titles as 'The Stars Foretell?' And what shall we think of their readers?

These are features—some more important, some less—in the civilization of the twentieth century to which a synthesis of philosophy, science and religion may address itself.

VI

I would end by venturing, perhaps rashly, to submit some of my own beliefs as to the direction in which such a synthesis may lead us. It may come to be recognized universally that, as Bernard Shaw says, 'Civilization needs a religion as a matter of life and death.' That religion will no doubt take various forms to meet the needs of various races and temperaments and under the influence of various traditions. But it can hardly fail to be at bottom theistic. Religion in the future will necessarily be purged of ideas in the sphere of physics and biology that have been inherited from the past but are now discredited. It must be such as to invite and to satisfy both the saint and the scientist.

The civilization that may come

cannot be materialist. It will not lay too much emphasis on 'things.' Let each nation do honor to those of its members who are engaged in material production; but I cannot imagine a really great civilization being content to take as its symbol the tools of industry and agriculture, the hammer and the sickle; or spending for long its chief enthusiasm upon factories and tractors. That is to see in man a body that makes and consumes, rather than a mind that thinks and creates, understands, aspires and enjoys. A civilization in which economic factors are not kept as servants but are raised to be rulers, or even gods, can never suffice the human soul.

When the 'fictional abstractions,' have disappeared, the individual man will be left clear-cut against the sky, no longer enshrouded by metaphysical mists. State, nation, industrial corporations and the like will be seen for what they are, nothing more than groupings or patterns of men and women. Then may be ended the domination of political myths; peoples will no longer be willing to surrender the right to think for themselves; no longer consent to become fodder for ideologies, as well as *Kanonenfutter*; no longer submit to be intellectually enslaved, to sink to the status of Helots of the mind.

A synthesis of philosophy, science and religion will keep intuition in its proper place, make it subject always to the guidance of the rational judgment. It will not under-estimate the value of common sense; will be suspicious of philosophic paradox; will believe that an idea need not be false merely because it is obvious, and that even a truism may still be true. It will find the road to wise conclusions in the

world-wide and age-long process of observation and experiment, trial and error, practical experience and free discussion.

Among the truisms, among the things that are obvious, is the infinite mischief done by the two great evils of the modern world, War and Poverty. When Oswald Spengler says that 'War is the creator of all great things,' he gives us the authentic utterance of barbarism. Mankind will come to see that by far the greatest danger to its own welfare is the existence of States which combine technical strength with moral weakness, the possession of great means with indifference to good ends. Nor will the future be likely to tolerate that mingling of splendor and squalor which the twentieth century has inherited from the eighteenth and nineteenth—a brilliant garment on a body dirty and diseased. First let the body be cleansed and cured; then array it. When intelligence and goodwill get fully to work on our social system, they will bring about great changes.

It is easy to stress the evils of the civilization that is now around us. We may easily come to think that it offers little else than evils. Yet the men of the Middle Ages, could they reappear, would envy us our freedom from the more constant wars, the more desperate poverty, the widespread ignorance, the unchecked diseases and constant epidemics from which they suffered. The study of the conditions of the past is often the best cure for pessimism about the present.

So philosophy coming out of its phase of classicism, science coming out of its phase of materialism, and religion from its servitude to dogmas that are outworn, may join in con-

structing a spiritual and intellectual framework for the future. They may give to mankind clear-cut ideas, simple, easily grasped, alive in the mind and powerful to guide conduct. 'Meliorism' may become a key-word—the discard, that is to say, of both optimism and pessimism, with emphasis on the need and the hopefulness of effort to make things better.

Conscious Evolution may be another root idea. Man has come to understand, however imperfectly, his place in the history of things: his environment, and how in some degree it may be modified; his own nature, and how in some degree it may be molded. The knowledge will stimulate his efforts, help to determine their direction, immensely accelerate the pace of his progress. 'Man is in the making,' Lowes Dickinson wrote, 'but henceforth he must make himself. To that point Nature has led him out of the primeval slime. She has given him limbs, she has given him brain, she has given him the rudiment of a soul. Now it is for him to make or mar that splendid torso. Let him look no more to her for aid; for it is her will to create one who has the power to create himself. If he fails, she fails; back goes the metal to the pot; and the great process begins anew. If he succeeds, he succeeds alone. His fate is in his own hands. Of that fate, did he but know it, brain is the lord, to fashion a palace fit for the soul to inhabit.'

Such are the ideals to which our trinity of philosophy, science and religion may point. There we may see in what a true civilization consists. Lighted by that conception, the landscape through which we are passing need not seem so gloomy, but will have the sunshine slanting through it.

Two articles reveal conditions in the German chemical industries and within the concentration camp at Dachau.

Under the Nazi Lash

I. HITLER'S POISON KITCHENS

By HEINZ WILHELM

Translated from the *Neue Weltbühne*, Prague German-Émigré Weekly

AS SOON as the express puffs out of Weissenfels in Thuringia, the experienced traveler closes the window. He knows he is now entering Central Germany, the land of smokes and fumes. Here, in thousands of stills and tanks, the world's most up-to-date chemical industry brews its products. It is a veritable witch's cauldron that is unrivalled both in the volume and the diversity of its output.

Central Germany offers two important advantages to these industries, and both are invaluable to the modern war machine: A protected location far from any dangerous frontier, and nearby natural resources like lignite, potash, copper, clay, rock-salt, etc. The new network of highways is an additional asset to the region. The six-lane express roads from Berlin to Munich, from Breslau to Cologne and from Hamburg to Dresden all intersect between Halle and Leipzig. The German witch's cauldron is therefore

directly connected with all important parts of the Reich, a fact of great strategic importance. At the same time these white concrete highways, which are usually visible even at night, are excellent targets for attacking airplanes. In an effort to protect these roads and industries against possible attack from the air, a belt of airports, many of which are provided with subterranean hangars and shops, has been constructed.

During the past four years many new chemical plants have been erected in this region or transferred there from the Western and Eastern parts of the Reich.

This process has been accelerated recently, for large areas of farming lands have been expropriated for industrial purposes within the last few months. The peasants were compensated so well that they have been able to buy elsewhere much better farms than their old ones. Condemnation