

THE WAGGONER ON THE FOOTPLATE

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**THE WAGGONER ON
THE FOOTPLATE**

BY

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THE WAGGONER ON THE FOOTPLATE

A comment upon the survival of the superstition of scarcity in an age of plenty.

"It is the survival, so to say, of the waggoner on the footplate of an express engine which has made the modern history of nations a series of such breathless adventures and hairbreadth escapes."

Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War,
by W. TROTTER

FOR B. P.-J.

PREFACE

THIS book does not pretend to be original, and it is in no sense a professional book. It is eclectic. It aspires to the position of a middleman of ideas. The ingredients are, almost without exception, old; it is at a partially new synthesis that an attempt has been made. Accordingly, I have not felt it illegitimate to quote literally *ad lib.* In most cases the debt owed to those from whom the quotations are taken will be implicitly apparent; but the amount of acknowledgment due in particular to two persons is not likely adequately to appear from the text.

To the lectures and writings of Mr. I. A. Richards, and to the lectures and conversations of Mr. Mansfield Forbes, I am more indebted than I can indicate.

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The Waggoner on the Footplate

CHAPTER I

Introductory

IN the past fifty years, two events have made impact on England, with effects of the utmost importance. In the realm of productive engineering the human race has finally gained the upper hand in its struggle with nature. In the realm of beliefs the Christian world has witnessed the decline of institutional "supernatural" religion. By the latter occurrence the Christian world has been largely deprived of its settled prospects of a richly compensating future life. By the former, the human race has been endowed with the basis for a much more abundant present life.

The War of 1914-18 established both the advent of the age of material plenty and the decay of organised beliefs. Nobody, in the light of the evidence of the war, can deny that the human race has at its disposal as great a productive power as it can ever need.

"Few, if any of them, realised prior to the Great War the colossal productivity of modern industrialised nations in consequence of science.

"But then we had the spectacle for all to see, and few will ever forget it, of the industrialised nations, combatant and non-combatant, working 'all out' without financial restrictions, producing munitions of war for mutual destruction. On the other hand, what the public do not fully realise would be almost a truism to

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a scientific man, that the same processes and the same machinery could be used as well, indeed the greater part was designed, for peace production."¹

Simultaneously England's own particular problem (so often declared insoluble) of how to produce enough food to keep itself for 365 days in the year, was well on its way to solution:—

If with the flower of our manhood engaged in fighting and many of the remainder making munitions, we managed to raise our output of home-grown food-stuffs by 30 days' normal supply, it is certain that it was at any rate no physical obstacle which had previously curtailed our home production.²

After the war, the effort fell away. The productive problem had been solved for all time; but with the cessation of wholesale destruction a new problem, that of distribution, had come into being. The product of British industry was no longer such as could be distributed free to an enemy; and it was clear to those in authority that it would be immoral to distribute it free to British citizens. The German infantry during the war did not have to pay for the product of our industry. The British people, including those who had been the British infantry, could not, after the war, pay for it; they had not sufficient money-coupons.

It was thought wiser and more convenient to cut down production than to give the British people more money-coupons.

Production was cut down. Acres fell out of cultivation; and England became able to support itself

¹ Professor F. Soddy, *The Inversion of Science*, p. 11.

² Cf. C. M. Hattersley, *This Age of Plenty*, p. 25.

for only 125 days in the year. As production was cut down unemployment increased. Suicides of unemployed men rose in 1932 to about two a day. Authorities were kept busy, installing labour-saving machinery with one hand, and devising schemes for relieving the consequent unemployment with the other. Labour-saving machinery, designed specifically to save labour, began to fulfil its function; politicians held up their hands in pained surprise. Eminent economists set themselves to find out how to "make work," ignoring the fact that work was the thing which, throughout history, eminent scientists had been at pains to abolish. Nobody seemed to be clear as to whether one worked to live, or lived to work.

In the sphere of beliefs the change was not less fundamental. The set of beliefs centring round the idea of some divertible God, capable of being persuaded to interfere in one's own interest, was crudely dissipated during the years 1914-18; the claims to attention were too numerous and too conflicting.

After the war, it was no longer practicable for the majority of people to turn to God for specific consolation or support. Lacking the mutual support of a streaming loyalty to a Cause, as in war time, it became necessary either to become self-supporting, or to turn for consolation and support to one or other branch of the appropriately new-born drug industry.

As a result of *A* set of causes, i.e. those connected with the advent of the age of plenty, the world is pursuing, as has been explained, two diametrically opposed directions.

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"On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays," in Professor Soddy's words, "it invents new ways of saving labour; and on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, devises new ways of relieving the consequent unemployment."

As a result of *B* set of causes, i.e. those connected with the decay of institutional religion, people are divided between two alternatives; between trying to be as widely and intensively conscious as possible; and trying to spend their lives in a state of virtual unconsciousness.

The two sets of tendencies are not unconnected, and will be found to converge conspicuously in the vital question of leisure.

The remainder of this book will constitute an attempt to scrutinise post-war civilisation in England in the light of the implications of *A* and *B*, involving a "smelling-out" of the Drug-motif in *B* and of the Sisyphean "live to work" motif in *A*.

CHAPTER II

The Parable of the Week-end

WHAT has happened is implicit in the behaviour of the week-end.

Consider, for example, our grandfather, and the mass of professing "supernatural" Christians like him. Even in "those" days the Saturday noon brought our grandfather back from the office, or from the farm, or from the amiable factory, and settled him in his chair that he might duly prepare himself for the rigidly formulated agenda of the Sunday. For a day and a half our grandfather was released from his meandering vegetable week-day routine; but that release did not mean that he had time on his hands. Sunday took him, in the prescribed manner, to church in his bowler hat, and brought him back to lunch; sometimes it had previously brought him back to breakfast, and almost invariably it subsequently brought him back from evensong. Our grandfather was one of the army of professing "supernatural" Christians. There is, therefore, no good reason to doubt that the duration of his time in church was spent in devout requests to the Deity for things required, and in vague speculations on that assured future life which was guaranteed to compensate him for all the discomforts and disamenities of this present life on earth. He was a *professing* Christian. He had inherited his faith, as

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he had inherited the quality of permanent freedom from doubts.

There were no vacancies in our grandfather's life-series, and his existence, to judge from most accounts, was not subject to periodically recurrent intolerablenesses.

Visualise, by way of variation on this theme, our grandfather the feudal landowner, sitting in his armchair, recalling with complacent compassion how there had always been the rich and the poor and honestly asserting that there always would be. Because, if you split up the whole caboodle and gave an equal share to everyone, why! bless me, there wouldn't be half enough to go round. Which was one way of saying that in an age of *scarcity* a really high standard of life was not possible for everyone. Which was plainly sense.

And our grandfather the tenant-farmer, returning from his *evenly-matched* struggle with the land, touched his cap to our grandfather the feudal landowner, himself believing in the legend about the rich and the poor.

Consider now, on the other hand, us. Assume that we have, in the post-adolescent period, discarded our institutional "supernatural" religion. At any rate we do not belong to the so diminished and diminishing number of professing Christians. Us, too, Saturday noon brings home from the office, or from the mine, or from the unamiable factory, or from the lecture room, or from the laboratory. Us Saturday noon causes to percolate through the Tubes of London, to gush up into the streets of the

Black Country, to jostle each other down Thread-needle Street, to flow over London Bridge. For a day and a half we are subtracted from our automatic, mechanised, staccato routine. We crawl out of the monstrous apparatus of the new industrialism into the hesitant sunlight; regaining semi-consciousness only to become half-aware of the immanence of a cyclical weekly tiredness. On Sunday we shall not go to church. We have, therefore, a day and a half on our hands; a day and a half which has to be got through somehow, before we can lapse again into our anaesthetic mass-automatism.

This day and a half, this vacant accidie, so soon to become intolerable, how are we to get over it? How best pass the time till we can "get to work" again? We can no longer forget it by losing ourselves in speculations about a future life which might compensate us for all this disagreeableness; we can no longer send up hopeful requests to the Deity to "call off" this sense of oppressive restlessness. We have fallen out of the habit of believing in a future life, and, in an orgy of self-congratulation, have given the Deity notice to quit.

No assistance, it seems, from that side. How then to face the fraying restlessness and vacancy of the eternally recurrent week-end? The march of civilisation (!) has provided us with two instruments of escape: something to lean against, and something with which to drug ourselves. We can go and lean up against one or other of the more elaborate and recent beliefs, or, sitting upon our own haunches we can lapse into a blessed week-end coma. Not till the

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last pint is drawn, the last American film seen, the last Edgar Wallace read, the last jazz record heard, the last newspaper perused, need we despair of forgetting the fact of a vacant and intolerable week-end, the fact of a difficult interval between two periods of relatively painless automatism. The Deity to whom we have so recently given notice to quit has yet put all the beer, American films, whisky, Edgar Wallace novels, weekly papers, jazz tunes, opium, prostitutes, wireless talks, cocaine in the world between us and the necessity of facing the fact that we are alive and therefore intended presumably to try to live, as opposed to trying to suspend continually the business of living.

Visualise, as a variation on the same theme, us the banker, and us the business man and us the rentier, sitting in our clubs and, with an ill grace, making out cheques in favour of the Income Tax Commissioners, and recalling, as our one remaining consolation, how there have always been the rich and the poor, and strongly and with a creditably bold front asserting that there always will be. Which is another way of saying that in an age of *abundance* a really high standard of life is not possible to everyone. Which is plainly nonsense. And note, moreover, how we the miner, and we the factory hand, and we the engineer, returning each day from the superintendence of those machines which have both gained for us the mastery over the bounty of nature *and* made our own muscles obsolete, read in our evening papers of the flames which rise from the millions of pounds of coffee which is being assiduously burnt in

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Brazil, and of the wheat which is being used as fuel for Canadian locomotives ; and observe how we begin to wonder why we can barely afford coffee at two-and-sixpence a pound and bread at threepence-halfpenny a loaf. And note, finally, how we begin to consider why, with all this abundance in the world, certain people should be so loud in protesting that the poor will be always with us.

A penumbra of uneasiness tending towards the conclusion that the twentieth century establishment has not achieved a net gain from its action in turning out the Deity, nor made the best of its new-found abundance, must lead us to a consideration of the reasons for that eviction and an examination of the way in which that abundance is, and is not, distributed.

CHAPTER III

The Age of Plenty

TAKE first the question of the material abundance. Man's struggle with nature is over. We have entered upon the Age of Plenty. The world certainly can, and England almost certainly could, produce as much as it can ever want, no matter how much its population may increase. It will be as well to be sure on the matter of fact, and then to meditate on it, and to meditate on it again. The reader is referred for full figures to *This Age of Plenty*, by C. M. Hattersley, and *Food Production in War*, by T. B. Middleton.

First as regards food. It is astonishing how many otherwise ill-assorted parties unite to take refuge in the slogan "Oh! but we can never feed ourselves." Can't we? The figures of food production during the war, quoted in the first chapter, seemed to indicate that it was at any rate no physical defect which was preventing us from so doing.

Prince Kropotkin, in his *Fields, Factories and Workshops*, considered that, given intensive cultivation, Great Britain could at that time support a population of 90,000,000. Since 1912 great advances have been made in land cultivation and agricultural science generally.

Those who believe that England has no chance of becoming, if necessary, self-sufficient in foodstuffs,

should glance at the history of Germany's home production since the end of the war. The necessity for restricting imports and gaining an export surplus to pay Reparations forced Germany, a country then as badly placed as England in the matter of home food production, to become virtually self-sufficient.

There is no reason to believe that England could not do what Germany has done. In England in the few years since the war we have allowed two and a half million acres to slip out of cultivation, simply from lack of remunerative markets.

Leaving the question of home self-sufficiency aside, it is blatantly obvious that, in the world as a whole, the problem, if there is one, is one of exchange, not production.

As regards clothing, it has been estimated that the Lancashire cotton industry working to capacity for three months at the outside, could supply the whole population of this country with cotton clothing for one year. The same applies to the boot and shoe trade.

In the building industry, the ability, the labour and the raw materials needed to produce a very surfeit of houses is manifestly present.

Of food, warmth and shelter we have, even taking England by itself, a potentially ample supply.

Man's struggle with nature is over. We can produce virtually anything we want. A new Plenty, almost incredible to visualise, is at our disposal. The Age of Scarcity is over. This should be the first lesson to be taught in our schools, this should be the text of our sermons, the headlines of our newspapers,

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the legend over our doors. Each and every inhabitant of the world should be made to meditate upon it till he has apprehended it as the exciting and revolutionising truth that it is.

We can produce as much as we want. That is the first implication of the Age of Plenty. Yet orthodox Economics never rises above the hypothesis of a limited and insufficient supply of the necessaries of life. The second implication is not less important. It is that, from henceforth, we can produce as much as we want *with a continually decreasing proportion of our available man-power*. The reader is referred for evidence of this to *This Unemployment*, by V. A. Demant.

Examples of labour-saving devices are everywhere apparent.

A brick-making machine makes 40,000 bricks in an hour. It used to take one man eight hours to make 450.

Two men now do the work which formerly required 128 in loading pig-iron.

In shipbuilding, during eight years, 154,337 men were eliminated by Rationalisation.

In 1928, in America, the farmers were using 45,000 harvesting and threshing machines and with them had displaced 130,000 farm hands.

Two facts, therefore:—

Firstly, we have taken the jump into the age of Plenty. The increase in the production of food and raw materials over the pre-war maximum amounts in 1930 to an increase of 25 per cent. Over the

same period the population of the world has grown 2 per cent.

Physically, the world can produce as much as it wants. There is likewise no reason why even Britain must always be *physically* dependent for her food supply on foreign trade.

Secondly, we can produce as much as we want with an ever-diminishing fraction of our available man-power.

Labour-saving machinery is intended to displace labour; and it does so.

Upon these two facts there cannot, at present, be too much meditation.

CHAPTER IV

The Twin Implications of the Age of Plenty

THE Age of Plenty, then, has two immediate implications. Firstly, we can produce as much as we want. We belong to an age that can produce practically everything, but buy practically nothing. In other words, civilisation, in the material sense, is now possible for everyone; but very few possess it. And the years since the war have seen the growth, in all types of English people, of a social conscience which is continually urging that the rendering of civilisation to all is the first and only immediately important job of work.

The second implication of the Age of Plenty is that we can produce as much as we want with *a continually decreasing amount of our available man-power.*

The productive labour of a quarter to a half of the population is, and will continue to be, simply unnecessary.

The reaction to this second implication is two-fold. The usual attitude, blatant in the utterances of nearly all politicians, and latent in the pronouncements of most economists and preachers, is that the leisure which results from the displacement of men by a machine is something morally undesirable. Only work is moral. If the machine now does most of the essential work, nevertheless work of some sort,

even though it is rather less essential, must be found to be done. This Sisyphistic notion, a legacy from the age of Scarcity, is responsible for the grotesque antics of politicians in their efforts to "cure" unemployment, and it is an implicit and unquestioned assumption behind all Parliamentary debates on the subject. Unemployment is a disease.

The alternative, and infinitely rarer view, holds that unemployment is not a disease, but a symptom of health. The objective of human effort is to make, not work, but leisure.

When the situation is looked at as a whole it is clear to us that there is a conflicting demand made upon industry. It is expected to perform its own essential function of supplying economic needs with the greatest possible efficiency with the most up-to-date scientific facilities available, and at the same time to continue providing people with employment on the same scale.¹

Disregarding at present the small body of opinion which explicitly advocates scrapping all machinery and starting again at the beginning, we proceed to examine the two outstanding reactions to the idea of Plenty: The principles of "Sisyphism" or "work for work's sake," and what, for the moment, we may call the "obligation to communism."

The Sisyphistic idea has two component ingredients, the economic and the moral. Both ingredients unite in the practical aspirations and admonishments to "make work" "create employment," "set the nation to work." Moral Sisyphism proclaims that work is, in itself, good. Economic Sisyphism affirms that

¹ *This Unemployment*, by V. A. Demant.

work is desirable because, except in return for work, there is, and can be, no remuneration to the individual.

"If ye will not work, neither shall ye eat," said St. Paul, half moralist, half economist. "Work or starve," said the rulers of the age of Scarcity, not without a certain justification. "Work or starve," implicitly repeat the politicians of the age of abundance, unaware that their parrot-cry is as heartless as it is prehistoric. To about a third of the population there is, under the present system, not two alternatives but one only; because their work is not needed.

There is no necessary work for them to do. But our Sisyphistic politicians and financiers cannot devise any pretext for giving them purchasing power except in return for work. Consequently all kinds of futile and unnecessary work must be devised. Into such an absurd position has the Sisyphistic community got itself that it is now considered more moral to do any kind of "work," no matter how futile, irrelevant or even destructive it may be, than to do no "work" at all.

So long as men, whose services are not required in satisfying the spontaneous needs of the community, are not credited with a share of the product, they will have to find some service for which they can persuade others to pay them.¹

Not only are the Sisyphistic ideas widely propagated from the pulpit, tacitly assumed in Parliament, inculcated in schools and universities, subtly fostered by the daily press, but the most eminent current

¹ *This Unemployment*, by V. A. Demant.

authorities are disastrously, if often quite unconsciously, fettered by them.

In March, 1933, Mr. J. M. Keynes, who has, twice at least, proved himself a prophet to be respected and has, in his Treatise on Money, lucidly described the *minutiae* of the present system, produced in *The Times*, not without a certain flourish, a series of articles entitled "The Means to Prosperity." This series, while probably contributing nothing else, did contribute a conspicuous example of insidious, because semi-conscious, Sisyphistic influence. Mr. Keynes claimed that his plan would put the nation back to work. Not that it would affect the problem of Distribution, not even primarily that it would augment the country's wealth, but that it would put the nation back to work. No matter how irrelevant or futile the work, apparently, the nation would be put back to it. So that, after production had got under way, and people had "earned" their wages (thus satisfying the grotesque moral demand), that after all that they might spend their wages, and that *then* at last Consumption might begin to rise. A somewhat circuitous way, it may be observed, to increase consumption. Why? Because the idea of remuneration otherwise than in return for work is outside Mr. Keynes' ken. Psychologically he is still in the age of Scarcity. In an age of mass production and ample supply he can find no pretext for distributing purchasing power otherwise than in return for work. And, for the requirements of a universal high standard of plain living, the work of one-third of the population is not necessary. Ergo,

unnecessary work must be devised by Mr. Keynes for them to do before he feels justified in allowing them purchasing power.

The profits of the entrepreneurs are, to Mr. Keynes, the trigger of the system. In order that profits may be increased, investment must be increased. Only after loans have been borrowed at a high rate of interest, only after industry has been put more heavily in debt to the banks, only after production has been initiated, and only after profits have been distributed in wages and salaries—only then will the recipients of wages and salaries begin to raise their consumption. For those who are unfortunate enough not to be able to put themselves into a position to earn wages there will be no raising of consumption. That lot of men the machine has made obsolete. The obsolescence of human muscles was the intention of the other lot of men who made the machine.

“Master,” said the robot in a recent *Punch* cartoon, “Master, I can do the work of fifty men.” “Yes,” says the Master, “that may be, but who is to support those fifty men?” A naïve enough question, but one which, as far as the old school of economists and politicians is concerned, has gone religiously unanswered.

The other main implication of the Age of Plenty is that which has previously been referred to as “the obligation to communism.” To any fully conscious man surveying the state of the world, it is claimed, one fact must stand out and demand prime attention. The so-called paradox of plenty: hunger amidst overflowing wealth. Milk being

poured into the rivers; millions of children unable to obtain milk. Calves shot and left to rot on the plains; meat too dear for millions of English men and women to buy. Wheat being used to fuel locomotives; economists piping that we are living beyond our means. Universal over-production; and politicians feverishly prattling of the necessity of economy.

To all this, the reaction of the fully conscious man seems to be: This is a thing which *before anything else is done* must be attended to. It is the only question which has an insuperable first claim on the attention of all fully adult moderns. Thirty years ago civilisation was, in the physical nature of things, possible only to a comparative few. We were still in an age of Scarcity. Now we have taken the jump into an age of abundance. Civilisation is possible to all. It is the first duty of every man to see that civilisation reaches all. Until that is done, everything else must wait. The fully conscious man *must* be pre-occupied with the matter of repairing the material poverty situation.

That is a very crude account of the kind of state of mind from which emerges the feeling of the "obligation to communism." This obligation manifests itself in two main ways which must now be distinguished. On the one hand we have those Socialists who would repair the situation by means of a purely external economic revolution. On the other we have those Socialists who feel that an economic revolution is not enough; that the age of plenty implies also an individual, internal, spiritual revolution.

On the one hand, it is held that the problem is almost purely a technical problem, involving a reshuffling of the ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange. On the other, it is held that the problem is also one which must catastrophically affect each individual in himself and in his relation to other individuals. Between the two modes of consciousness there exists a slightly nebulous, originally bourgeois type of consciousness which declares an obligation to identify itself with the proletariat, to become one with all men in a kind of blood-brotherhood.

"On the one hand," says Mr. G. D. H. Cole (referring to the "Curse of Plenty" situation), "it is the duty of every man that believes that this is the situation in which the world is now placed to do everything he possibly can to combat the reluctance of ordinary men and women to face fundamental issues, and to force this one really vital problem of our day and generation into the forefront of our political life."

"On the other," says Mr. Middleton Murry, in *The Adelphi*, "to become a revolutionary Socialist, is to be revolutionised oneself."

And between the two, the explicit evangel of the most representative of the modern poets, Stephen Spender's:—

Oh young men, Oh young comrades,
It is too late now to stay in those houses
Your fathers built where they built you to build to
breed
Money on money.

C. 'Day Lewis':—

Let us tell them plainly now they haven't a chance.
We are going about together, we've mingled blood;
Taken a tonic that's set us up for good.
Their disguises are tabled, their movements known in
advance.
We have found out who hides them and gives them food.

And finally, and most explicit of all, Marx, quoted by John Strachey in *The Coming Struggle for Power* :—

Just as in former days, part of the nobility went over to the bourgeoisie, so now part of the bourgeoisie goes over to the proletariat. Especially does this happen in the case of some of the bourgeois ideologues, who have achieved a theoretical understanding of the historical movement as a whole.

On which Mr. Strachey comments:—

Incidentally, the last sentence of Marx sums up almost the whole duty of the honest intellectual of to-day. His duty is to master "the historical movement as a whole." If he does so he can have no possible doubt as to the necessity of throwing in his lot with the workers.

In the next chapter we shall try to arrive at some more precise conception of "the annihilation of self," of the process of "throwing in one's lot with the workers," and of the commingling implied in the two verse quotations: the obligation to a communism which is more than a merely economic revolution.

CHAPTER V

The Obligation to Communism

IN the last chapter we divided those who were fully conscious of the "obligation to communism" into three types.

Those who think that a purely technical revolution is all that is required; those who feel that the technical revolution must be accompanied by a revolution of the self; and a middle type, consisting of those who feel that the technical revolution must be accompanied specifically by a transformation of the bourgeois into, or indentification of the bourgeois with, the proletariat.

The Labour Party and the *Daily Herald* are typical of the first type. Replace the technique of capitalism by the technique of "socialism," i.e. State or National control—and nothing more will, in their opinion, remain to be done. The Labour Party denies the need for a radical re-orientation of aim and motive.

G. D. H. Cole, more radical than the Labour Party, desires a society based on "human fellowship," which seems, however, to be envisaged as an easy by-product of the economic revolution, born, perhaps, of the system of working co-operation. Cole would appear in this to stand half-way between the attitude of the Labour Party and the attitude of those who, like Middleton Murry, posit a *revolution* in the self;

not a slow, almost incidental growth towards fellowship, but a catastrophic "turn" into classlessness. Somewhere between the two again stand those who are for "going over to" and identifying themselves specifically with the proletariat.

It is not immediately important to examine the adequacy of the view that a technical revolution is all that is required; it suffices to point to the fact that very many people feel it to be inadequate. Very many people feel that there should be an over-riding of class boundaries other than an economic over-riding. The class boundaries may have been set up chiefly through economic monopoly and exploitation; but something more positive than mere economic community is felt to be due. There is manifested a wide-spread effort, almost a yearning, for an emotional equality, a living exchange which no class considerations can obstruct. A tearing up of spiritual hedges and spiritual "trespassers will be prosecuted" notice-boards.

And it is at this crucial point that we shall see the man who is aware of the communal implication of the age of plenty, on the one hand, and the man who is fully alive to the insidiousness of the drug power in a post-Christian age, on the other, converging together upon, symbolically, the public-house.

The first man, because the "pub" is imagined to be a convenient starting-place for his journey into identity with the working class; the second, because he has realised that a narrowing of his consciousness or a cutting out of any section of the community,

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may have the effect of a drug, and he is therefore determined to be as little exclusive as possible.

The mode of life of each of these two types involves for different reasons a rooting up of class hedges; involves, more importantly, an *effort* towards it. On the degree of self-consciousness of this effort depends the chance of success.

Let's go down to the "pub" and play them at darts. Good evening, sir. Good evening. Have this one on me. (Here is congeniality!) Presently the "sirs" are dropped. Christian names, first one-sided, then shyly reciprocal, come into currency. Look! we have come through! We have made contact. We have identified ourselves. We are at one with the world and our fellow-men. We have rooted up the hedges. Here, at last, is fellowship.

Is it, though? Is it fellowship? Or is it just dope? A kind of mutual conspiracy and "frame"?

The answer is incapable of generalisation.

But the question is vital. The nature of the next civilisation may depend on it.

Mr. W. H. Auden's "Song" in the first number of *New Verse*, brilliantly pins and fixes the type of public-school bourgeoisie which, in its instinctive wriggling to escape from things as they are, is just sufficiently conscious to half-apprehend its motive in going to play darts in the "pub."

I'll get a job in a factory;
I'll live with working boys;
I'll play them at darts in the public-house;
I'll share their sorrows and joys.
Not live in a world that has had its day.

They won't tell you their secrets,
 Though you pay for their drinks in the bar;
 They'll tell you lies for your money,
 For they know you for what you are,
 That you live in a world that has had its day.

The whole Song, like many of Lawrence's "Pansies" has a crude dogmatism and unambiguity which may detract from its value as a poem; but, documentarily, it is a classic. It appears to have at least two implications which are directly relevant to this thesis. Firstly, that a *genuine* commingling, over-riding class-distinction, is to be desired. Secondly, that for the vast majority of the inhibited bourgeoisie, such a commingling, such an identification, is totally impossible.

Where is the trouble?

It seems to lie in the fact that the devotees of the obligation to extra-economic communism aim at a self *re*-classification. Whereas self *de*-classification seems to be the most that can (this generation), be achieved. Indubitably, the ambition of the generation of people of whom Auden, Spender and Day Lewis are the most articulate representatives, is to identify themselves with the proletariat; to be indistinguishable from the proletariat.

Something akin to this fact has been seized upon by Middleton Murry in *The Adelphi*.

The desire of all save one in a thousand proletarians is to be bourgeois. On the one man in a thousand (perhaps one in ten thousand) who has the imagination and endurance to cease to be proletarian without becoming bourgeois, the possibility of revolution in this country depends: for that man, who already belongs

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to the classless society, is a born leader of his fellow working men. With such men, the bourgeois who has ceased to be bourgeois in reality, and is therefore incapable of the silly mummery of trying to be proletarian, is in natural alliance.

Something has here been well said. But "the possibility of revolution. . . ." ? What revolution ? A technical revolution could take place without the leadership of the classless man. It is doubtful whether one or even a dozen classless men could circulate the infection necessary for the revolution which is extra-economic.

If self *re*-classification is impossible, self de-classification seems to be, in practice, too rare an experience to justify the technical revolution's waiting for it to increase and multiply.

Before turning to trace the reactions to the Decline of Religion, we may say that, with regard to the necessary implications of the Age of Plenty, there is a potential activity directed towards the ensuring of material civilisation to everyone. This activity is obstructed, however, partly by the self-centred apathy of the majority of people, and partly by the "all or nothing" attitude of those people who do in fact realise the necessity of ensuring civilisation to everyone.

For these reasons the material abundance, which indubitably exists, is quite inadequately distributed.

It is now time to turn our attention to the present potentialities of abundance in people's non-material lives ; and to observe in what ways that abundance also is effectively thwarted.

CHAPTER VI

The Decline of Institutional Religion

WE have to examine the twin influence: the decline of institutional religion. Start, if possible, from the essential idea of religion. The reader is referred to Mr. William Brown's essay in *Science, Religion and Reality*, edited by Doctor Joseph Needham and published by the Sheldon Press.

Religion itself, in Mr. Brown's view, is a state of mind, a mental attitude towards the universe; it is an attitude which we take up towards the totality of existence.

There are, Mr. Brown thinks, three main attitudes with which we may face existence.

- (1) A cognitive attitude, based upon the desire to know. We meet the universe and all its contents with a question, asking what it is and what are we as parts of the universe.
- (2) An aesthetic attitude, based upon the desire to appreciate, to do full justice to the beauty of existence, and perhaps to play a part in adding to that beauty, if the individual is an artist.
- (3) An ethical attitude, based upon the desire to achieve the highest good possible in individual conduct.

The relevant question now is: "Is there a further general attitude remaining over after these three attitudes have discovered their appropriate fields of

activity? There seems to be such a field in the experience of personal relationship towards the universe, as that upon *which we completely depend.*" This attitude of complete dependence may justifiably be singled out as the essential element in the religious consciousness. "And then there are the further feelings called out in our mind by that idea, the feeling of the infinite power of the universe, the feeling of the tremendous, of complete otherness, something entirely different from ourselves, the feeling of mysteriousness, of majesty, and of fascination, in which fear and attraction are blended."

These, Mr. Brown thinks, are the essentially and fundamentally religious feelings.

And these feelings, for the last nineteen hundred years and over a good half of the earth's surface, have been associated with the idea of a Christian God, who was in the majority of cases perhaps imagined as being a Person. The pseudo-Christian idea of a personal God added to the primary essential religious feelings another feeling—also noted by Mr. Brown—that of creaturehood. The idea that "It is God that hath made us and not we ourselves."

In the last fifty years the particular association of religious feelings and ideas known as Christianity has apparently lost much of its hold on the world.

It seems, on the whole, permissible to *assume* that at least numerically orthodox Christianity has declined very considerably in the last fifty years.

This appears to be due partly to the comparative popularisation of scientific knowledge which has deprived the earth and the universe in general of much

of its mystic "supernatural" quality; and partly to the habit lately developed among civilised people of thinking rationally and for themselves, instead of accepting the prejudices, antipathies and largely superstitious beliefs handed down to them by their parents and by pastors and masters.

It is perhaps reasonable now to ask the following question: How, in the face of the spread of rational thought and of scientific knowledge, do there manage to be as many veritable "supernatural" Christians left as there are?

To be a veritable Christian nowadays seems to imply that the person in question has had some sort of revelation. And the fact of revelation must inevitably put an end to all argument. If a person says: "I know there is a personal Christian God (or an impersonal Christian God) *because, intuitively, I feel it,*" then it is not possible to argue with him, because the matter is no longer on the plane of argument. Mr. T. S. Eliot wrote in the *Criterion*: "Those of us who find ourselves supporting what Mr. Murry calls Classicism believe that men cannot get on without giving allegiance to something outside themselves."

It seems that the cause of the decline in the number of Christians nowadays lies in the fact that, whether or not owing to the spread of scientific knowledge and of rational thought, fewer people are having revelations nowadays. Or, to be more accurate, fewer people who have what we may call "revelations" nowadays, put these experiences down to the personal interest of a Christian God.

One cannot help feeling that the discredit thrown by late nineteenth-century thinkers on the idea of a personal God must have hustled the decline of professional Christianity. "Certainly one's own grandfather who definitely thought of God as what Mr. Bernard Shaw has described as "a portly gentleman in white robes who sits on a cloud," derived great confidence from that idea.

Thomas Hardy, who was in this, as in other things, ahead of his time, and who must, presumably, judging from *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, have called a good deal upon a personal God in his youth without getting any change out of Him, had no illusions as to the questionableness of the doctrine that God made man in His own image; implicitly observing that it was much more probable that all along the line man had made God in *his* own image. That throughout history instead of God having made man a replica, one size smaller than Himself, man had made God, a replica one size larger than *himself*. That man, having created a God out of his imagination, proceeded to pray to that God, to flatter it, even to invest in it.

Most people, presumably, in their youth, ask some sort of God of their own design quite blatantly for things in their telephonic prayers. And then, if the required things come to them, they praise *Him* and jubilate *Him*, not pausing for one minute to enquire whether it was, in fact, *He* who, so to speak, answered the telephone. They *assume* that God is the supreme telephone operator; ruling out of court the possibility that the telephone system may be an automatic one (as Coué's system and the Christian science system

and the spiritualist's system seem to be very possibly automatic).

So far, so natural. It is natural for the boy to accept his mother's inherited account of God, the objective idea of a personal God who interests Himself in human affairs.

But the time comes when he must begin to consider the matter for himself. There must be a moment of transition from the objective acceptance of God to the subjective speculation on the matter. There must, that is, be one literally psychological moment when this transition takes place. When the boy sees the whole business of God in a fresh manner peculiar to himself. A manifest instance of this moment is provided by the story of a little boy who came down one Christmas morning in a state of legitimate indignation at having discovered the deception of the Christmas stocking and said: "Mother! I've found out about that Santa Claus; and now I'm jolly well going to look into this Jesus Christ business."

It is exactly this moment of subjective creative doubt in that boy's mind which corresponds to the sudden transition from the infant human race's acceptance of inherited prejudice to its paroxysm of creative doubt which took place at the end of the last century.

Perhaps it was the Great War that finally illustrated the ultimate futility of thinking of God as a personal God who interests Himself in human affairs. Because, during the war years, pseudo-religious men began to employ God definitely in the nationalist interests

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And the more militant Christians in England, applying the old formula of making God in their own image, talked of, and wrote of God as a superlative John Bull, while their German brethren talked of and wrote of him as a superlative Kaiser.

The position was neatly taped by J. C. Squire:—

To God the embattled nations sing and shout
“Gott strafe England,” and “God save the King.”
God this, God that, and God the other thing.
“Good God,” said God, “I’ve got my work cut out.”

And so the supernatural nationalist God, having failed adequately to oblige any of the nations involved in the war, lost most of His prestige with all of them. By the last year of the war there was very little left of the orthodox Victorian-Christian idea of God. And the process of rational thought had not failed to leave its mark on the orthodox idea of Christ as the Son of God. Because, to the rationalist, the idea of Christ as Son of God was more credible when God was believed to exist in man’s image, than when God began to be thought of as either non-existent or vaguely accounted for as a “spirit.”

But if Victorian rationalists did not accept Christ as the Son of God there were not lacking individuals among them who regarded Him from various aspects as an extremely, to say the least of it, eminent man.

CHAPTER. VII

The Substitutes for Religion

IN the meantime we must take it as so far established that twentieth-century man has, in Mr. Joad's expression, knocked the bottom out of the spiritual universe and sent the Gods and their beliefs packing.

The main difference, therefore, between twentieth-century man and his Christian predecessors is in respect to one particular belief: the belief in immortal life. The main and fundamental difference between a Christian and an agnostic is that the agnostic is concerned exclusively with this life, with life in this world, whereas the Christian is equally and sometimes even more concerned with a prospective life after death. Or, it is possible to hold that a great part of a Christian's time is wasted in futile speculations on a future life, which, even supposing it existed, would be quite irrelevant to the business in hand. The business in hand being to live as fully *now* as possible. To attain more life on this side of the grave, more life qualitatively as well as quantitatively.

Twentieth-century man then has sent the beliefs in God and immortality packing; *but* "he has still to come to terms with the need which created them."

It is possible to hold with Mr. Joad that twentieth-century man is the victim of an unconscious need to believe.

It seems important in that case to try and discover why all through history man has evidently felt the need to believe.

"Religious ideas," says Freud, "have sprung from the same need as all the other achievements of culture; from the necessity for defending oneself against the crushing supremacy of nature."

In other words, all through history, when life has seemed too intolerable to be endured, when there have been famines or volcanoes or pestilences, or their internal, psychological equivalents, people have gone and leaned up against the idea of a God, who was interested in the welfare of the human race, and who would, if bribed for long enough, call a halt on the volcanoes or famines or pestilences, psychological or physical.

But now, in the last forty years, scientific knowledge has shown that volcanoes, famines and pestilences, physical, are not, in fact, the irritated manifestations of a temperamental God, but the rational manifestations of the inherent order of things; and psycho-analytical knowledge has made it clear that it is not God who is the capricious creator of volcanoes and pestilences psychological.

And—and this is very important indeed—the world is now divided into people who are prepared to face up to these facts and those who are not prepared to do so. The vital and fundamental division in the twentieth-century agnostic world is the division between those who spend their life stimulating themselves and those—the majority—who spend their life drugging themselves. Once a person

realises that those times when life is intolerable are not due to the whims of a God who can be brought round by sufficient cajolery, then from that moment that person must *either* begin systematically to drug himself against the periodical intolerableness or vacancy of life, or he must set about living so fully, so quickly, and so freshly, he must stimulate himself to such increased activity that the intolerablenesses and the vacancies do not obtrude themselves, he must live more abundantly, that the intolerablenesses may vanish in a fuller life.

All the substitutes for religion to-day, all the pseudo-religion now fashionable, can be classified either as stimulants or as drugs. Stimulants or drugs used to combat the intolerable or the vacant periods of living.

To illustrate the proposition in concrete form. It would appear that the drug or stimulant dilemma is most evident in the psychology of the average twentieth-century human being's behaviour on every Saturday night of every week in the year. Life, for the majority, seems apt to be on Saturday evening both intolerable and vacant. At any rate *subconsciously* this appears to be so. Automatic man, liberated for a short day and a half from the routine of the office or the factory or the mine walks blearily out into the comparatively sunny light, and is aware first of the vacancy, and then of the fundamental intolerableness of life. Life is vacant. The past week has been rolled up and inserted in a ledger. It will be a full day and a half before he can get going on a new week. A full day and a half which.

somehow or other has got to be got through. In the old days of universal belief in God and immortality that day and a half could have been profitably used by members of "investment" religions in getting into communication with God and by meditating on immortality.

The above remarks apply exclusively to that mass of formerly professing Christians who to-day have even fallen out of the habit of professing; the followers that is, not of Christ, but of institutional Christianity. There are two ways in which institutional Christianity seems to have distorted the essential religious experience. Firstly, by tending to encourage people to use the religious experience not for stimulating communion but for support—for *leaning up* against. Secondly, by encouraging people to use the duration of communion for purposes of speculation upon an immediately irrelevant future life, represented as likely to give them compensation for the ills of this life. Both these two activities were indulged in by institutional Christians, perhaps especially at the vacant and otherwise intolerable, week-ends.

To-day, what happens? What are the facilities most readily available now-a-days for "passing the time" during the vacant and intolerable day and a half?

I suppose that perhaps the first substitute for this aspect of religion is the Cinema. The Saturday night "flick," a certain "full house" in every town in England. More or less in the same category as "the flick" comes "the Play" and "a show." In the same category also the entertainment provided, on

most Saturday nights, by the British Broadcasting Company.

In the second group of substitutes for the consolation quality of the week-end religion, we have a more honest and explicit species of drug. Beer, whisky and stout are all found to be efficacious in this respect; and who can fail egocentrically to sympathise with those who, finding themselves at five minutes to ten, still regrettably conscious of this little matter of life, drink up three successive "bitters" with, physiologically, disturbing effects?

The third group of narcotics reverts to more directly mental drugs—the "programme of week-end reading." The writings of Mr. Edgar Wallace, of Miss Ethel M. Dell, of the contributors to monthly magazines, of the editors of week-end reviews—the explicit mild dope-tablets of the tired business-man.

In the final and miscellaneous class we may compile the various activities of "Patience," "Bridge," "Card-games" in general, "a Sunday walk," the contemplation of pictures, and would-be narcotic sexuality as manifested in the pastime—traditionally supposed to be in favour among business-men—of "week-ending."

It is of interest to enquire how far the substitutes for week-end religion now available have the effect of stimulants or of drugs. Probably comparatively few of these substitutes are, objectively, exclusively stimulating or exclusively narcotic. But most of them can be used either as stimulants or as drugs. It appears possible from the nature of this catalogue that the case of the present day agnostic who is

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impelled to go and, consciously or unconsciously, drug himself each week-end (not to mention other odd times as well) may, on balance, be even worse than the case of the nineteenth-century professing Christian. Because, after all, it is improbable that even the most thorough Victorian-Christian's "prayers" were *wholly* taken up in investing or bargaining or in irrelevant speculations on an irrelevant future life. And so far as the Christian ethic concerns itself with this world it provides manifestly an efficient if unoriginal-stimulus to wholesome social activity.

It was said a little while ago that once a person realises that those times when life is intolerable or vacant are not due to the whims of a God who can be brought round by sufficient cajolery, then from that moment that person must *either* begin to drug himself against that periodical intolerableness, *or* he must set about living so abundantly, so quickenedly and so freshly, he must stimulate himself to such an increased activity that the intolerablenesses and the vacancies do not protrude themselves.

Here it becomes imperative to define, as far as is conveniently possible, what in this book is meant by a drug and by a stimulant.

CHAPTER VIII

Drugs and Stimuli

How to define a drug? It is probably futile to look for a tight and absolute definition. It is easiest, perhaps, to describe a drug in terms of its effects. Thus, vaguely, and for a start: A drug may be said to imply a passive state of mind; a stimulus to imply an active one. Further, a drug may be said to suspend activity (or "the business of living"); a stimulus to increase activity (or "the business of living"). The "business of living". . . Already we are effectually bogged. Manifestly the prime cause of the difficulty which we experience in trying to elucidate our definition of a drug as something which tends to suspend the business of living is the probable impossibility of being able to put our finger on a set of activities which we can justly call "life" or "the business of living."

What, ideally, to the twentieth-century agnostic, who is subject to the twin influences of the decline of institutional religion and the advent of the age of productive abundance, may be taken as representing the "business of living"?

We can amuse ourselves by attempting to draw up the credo of a representative twentieth-century agnostic somewhat as follows:—

(a) I believe that the business of life is to live.

- (b) I believe that the fullest (not anti-social) life is the most desirable.
- (c) I believe therefore that experience is worth while in itself. (This aspect of the attitude in question is well illustrated by a passage from Mr. Michael Roberts' preface to *New Signatures*. "The writers in this book," says Mr. Roberts, "have learned to accept the fact that progress is illusory, and yet to believe that the game is worth playing; to believe that the alleviation of suffering is good even though it merely makes possible new sensitiveness and therefore new suffering; to believe that their own standards are no more absolute than those of other people, and yet to be prepared to defend and to suffer for those standards.")
- (d) I believe that, while it is possible that physical extinction may be merely an incident, yet that the pre-grave period is the only convenient period on which to concentrate.
- (e) I believe, therefore, that any speculation on, or investment in, any future life, is immediately irrelevant to the business in hand.
- (f) Consequently I believe that stimulants in the above, rather vague, sense (i.e. things which increase activity) are preferable to narcotics (things which suspend activity, i.e. the business of living).
- (g) I believe, too (though probably I am not yet sure quite what I mean by this), that I am aiming

at more life qualitatively as well as quantitatively. Perhaps I am beginning to doubt whether "abundance" is a quantity so much as a quality.

- (b) I believe (if I may be permitted to anticipate a little), that by having life, as Christ recommended, more abundantly, I may happen upon "Immortality on this side of the grave," as Blake indicated; that, as Aristotle suggested, I may be immortal, as far as possible, even in this life.

The most precise, psychological, non-emotive description of the representative attitude is given in the chapter of Mr. I. A. Richards' *Science and Poetry* called "What is valuable."

"We can then perhaps agree," says Mr. Richards, "though here more resistance from preconceived ideas may be encountered, that the best choice (of ways of living) would be the opposite of torpor, that is to say, the fullest, keenest, most active and completest kind of life."

We shall return to this chapter later, but meanwhile it is interesting to note that "torpor" is an apt word to describe the state of mind induced by drugs.

Mr. Mansfield Forbes has put almost the same thing in different terms when he draws a distinction between recreational and RE-creational literature. A drug cannot RE-create, a stimulus can. After the application of a stimulus one cannot remain unchanged. After the application of a drug one cannot be other than unchanged. A reference to literature makes the point clearer. The literature of escape not only leaves one unchanged, but even less than unchanged;

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not only not added to, but, by a process of attrition, perhaps actually subtracted from.

To change the metaphor: our overhead costs have been increased because our plant, while not precisely standing motionless, has yet been running on non-productive work.

So much for the attempt to formulate a tight definition of a drug. It has, perhaps, served, at least, to show that, ultimately, the detection of the narcotic quality must be left to the personal intuition, and the elucidation of that quality to the individual analysis.

Here we must examine more closely the substitutes for religion and define what we mean by drugs and stimulants.

It appears that even after the decline of orthodox Christianity it is extremely easy to drug oneself. It will presently have to be investigated in what way it is possible on the other hand to stimulate oneself. In what way it is possible to live the fullest life; to attain more life qualitatively as well as quantitatively; to attain what Blake calls Eternal Life on this side of the grave; to be immortal as far as possible, even in this life, as Aristotle recommended; to have life, as Christ suggested, more abundantly.

In view of the fact that Christ must have been one of the most stimulating people that have ever lived, it is ironical that so many of His followers should have allowed orthodox Christianity to evolve into one of the most elaborate drugs which have ever been.

It is the latter-day Christian religion which has tended to throw even more emphasis on a future life

than on this. On the other hand it was Christ who said: "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you."

How, in the twentieth century, can this idea of the Kingdom of Heaven within us, in the sense of Eternal Life on this side of the grave, be attained?

How in fact can the fullest, most stimulating, life be lived?

At the time when Christianity began to decline, another belief began to arise. This belief, fostered by Rousseau and Blake and Bergson, was a resuscitated belief in the inherent goodness of the senses. The idea that certain sensations were good in themselves; that certain individual sensations, provided they were not socially inconvenient, were desirable and worthwhile, and of value in themselves. Obviously this idea is contrary to much orthodox Christian doctrine. "At the end of nineteen centuries of Christianity it remains," as Mr. Mencken has put it, "an unshakable assumption of the law in all Christian countries and of the moral judgment of Christians everywhere, that if a man and a woman, entering a room together, close the door behind them, the man will come out sadder and the woman wiser."

What ways are there of living as fully stimulated a life as possible? How, when life threatens to be vacant or intolerable, can we induce such an activity and fullness in ourselves as will enable us to dispose of the impending intolerableness?

The need for such increased activity is liable to arise at those times when we feel most inclined to use one or other of the forms of drug nearest to hand, in order to tide over the intolerable hour. Obviously the

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first thing that is required is to objectify the particular intolerableness with which we are confronted. One of the prime achievements of the present century, says Mr. Forbes, has been the secularisation of confession.

The first of these things—the objectivation of the trouble—was done perfectly by Mr. T. S. Eliot in 1925 in his poem called “The Waste Land.” That poem incidentally admirably objectified the malaise, the accidie and the neurosis of the post-war years. It implied an attitude completely independent of any beliefs, any creeds, or any drugs. It involved in the reader a getting of the poisonous facts out of his system, of facing them, and then of continuing to stand on his own feet.

Mr. Eliot had got the facts out of his own system, and out of the systems of his generation as well; for three years he faced them without any apparent tendency to drug himself because the facts were so unpleasant. Suddenly in 1930 he wilted, and not strong enough, apparently, to stand permanently on his own feet, went and leant up against a church system, and did “a kind of sleep-walking totter into the Anglo-Catholic family pew.” In this his development appears to be the exact opposite to the development of another poet, Keats.

Keats, who was fated to be, in early life, a chemist's assistant, indulged in frequent escapes from the intolerableness of the chemist's life by way of poetic trances in which he lived in a fairy land of his own imagination. It was only shortly before he died that he began to cope with the nausea of chemist's life, not

by escaping from it, but by using it defiantly as a stimulation.

We have seen that Christianity has been allowed to evolve into the supreme drug. We have yet to see that the supreme stimulant is available in the essential religious experience, the experience which is common to all religions, but which has been abused by the orthodox Christian religion. And this experience depends entirely upon the individual. The psychologist, the poet, the doctor and the lawyer, the new secular confessors, can all help in removing the poisonous facts from the individual's system, but after that it is the individual who must stand on his own feet, unsupported.

At this point we may start upon our investigation of various current drugs and stimuli, beginning with the narcotic and stimulating types of literature.

CHAPTER IX

The Drug in Literature

THE LITERATURE OF RELEVANCE AND OF ESCAPE

IN the past fifty years the very highest claims have been made on behalf of literature, and especially on behalf of poetry. So Matthew Arnold, in a much-quoted passage:—

The future of poetry is immense, because in poetry where it is worthy of its high destinies, our race, as time goes on, will find an ever surer and surer stay. There is not a creed which is not shaken, not an accredited dogma which is not shown to be questionable, not a received tradition which does not threaten to dissolve. Our religion has materialised itself in the fact, in the supposed fact; it has attached its emotion to the fact, and now the fact is failing it. But for poetry the idea is everything.

So Mr. I. A. Richards: "The reading of poetry could and should replace for us the holding of religious and other fundamental beliefs."

So Mr. Michael Roberts (writing of the especial contemporary problems) in the preface to *New Signatures*:—

These are not really logical problems at all; they are aspects of an emotional discord which can be resolved neither by reasoning nor by action, but only by a new harmonisation such as that which may be brought about by a work of art. The fact that each of the writers in this book has solved this problem in his own way without recourse to any external system of religious belief therefore opens up new poetic possibilities.

In view of the recent disintegration of institutional Christian belief it seems of the highest importance to decide, firstly, what the kind of poetry is to which the first two of these quotations refer; and secondly, what is the precise function of that kind of poetry. What exactly is the need, formerly met by a set of religious beliefs, which can now be met by poetry? Is it merely the need of a support, a refuge?

Something else to lean up against or escape to when life is vacant or intolerable? Another more "modern" kind of narcotic—is that what is meant? "Poetry," said Cardinal Newman, "is the refuge of those who have not the Catholic Church to flee to." Is that the kind of poetry and is that the kind of function which is meant by the authors of the first two quotations? The third passage quoted gives us, I think, a fair indication that it is not. "The fact that each of the writers in this book has solved this problem in his own way *without recourse to any external system of religious beliefs. . .*"

Clearly this "new" function of poetry is not that of a drug, or of a crutch or of a refuge. It is not something which will readily enable us to ignore the facts which we find less pleasant; but something whereby, accepting the existence of the whole range of the facts, we shall be able to *resolve* them again and again into a new harmony. The contemporary function of poetry and, in a less compact way, of literature as a whole, is not to give us a convenient means of escape from life, but rather to give us a means of living so abundantly that our urge to escape, or to lean, or to drug, vanishes in a fuller life.

On the one hand, therefore, there seems reason to believe that the reading of poetry *can* be a function of the highest contemporary relevance, especially in this year of grace, 1933, when the process of the disintegration of religious beliefs is still going on. On the other hand "Poetry," said Cardinal Newman, "is the refuge of those who have not the Catholic Church to flee to." And it is clear that many dons, schoolmasters and reviewers have no doubts about the ultimate truth of this statement. Consequently, later on in this chapter an attempt will be made to begin to distinguish between Cardinal Newman's refuge poetry and Matthew Arnold's "relevant" poetry, between the literature which escapes from things and the literature which "faces up to" things, between the literature which ignores the inconvenient facts and the literature which, embracing the whole range of the facts, resolves them into a new harmony.

As regards the novel, to the *Criterion* for April-June, 1932, Mr. Orlo Williams contributed an article on the relation between the novel and life; to this he had been stimulated by one of the essays in Mr. Montgomery Belgion's *The Human Parrot*, an essay which "aimed at destroying the belief that the novel and the play are vehicles of instruction about life." Mr. Williams is subsequently concerned to find an adequate definition of the word "life," as occurring in phrases like "a theory of life," "an attitude of life." Is "life," he cogitates, "most conveniently conceived of as the equivalent of 'general forms of behaviour, objectively regarded,' or as 'the interior reflection of events accompanied

by emotions that ensues at every moment of human consciousness'; or 'as the system of the universe,' or 'the spectacle of civilised society'."

Although he is not successful in finding a satisfactory periphrasis for "life," Mr. Williams does succeed in giving a refreshing emotive and metaphorical account of the function of poetry and hence, by implication, of the novel.

The contribution of poetry to its percipient, he says, is twofold—stimulus and vision.

It is a matter of experience that, just as great saints and greater leaders, even in moments of complete tranquillity, can radiate energy, so the artist, to whom power is simply a gift, can infuse it into an arrangement of matter—into the proportions of a building, the planes of a sculpture, the signs that stand for words—so that the work of art has an activity that penetrates the outer integuments of the mind to reach and energise its core. This is a matter of experience; it is no more and no less a mystery than electricity, its physical counterpart. . . .

My view, at all events, is that works of art, in proportion to their greatness, are comparable to condensers or batteries perpetually charged with a high potential, contact with which, in proportion to receptivity, results in the energising of the receiver. . . . Our everyday life is lived at low potential. Few mortals can live continuously at high potential, as Aristotle himself perceived. . . . One may regard the body of great novels now existing and to come as a very valuable and easily accessible accumulator of spiritual energy for a very much larger number of persons than will ever make good contacts with great poetry.

The reader will recognise in the metaphor of the accumulators an emotive account of that increased,

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activity which we have been positing as the desirable way of living.

Just as the tonic high potential energy is more concentrated in poetry than in even a great novel, so the energy in most modern novels, as compared with the body of great novels, is diluted and diluted till it is almost incapable of any positive energising effects at all.

A provocative indictment of the majority of present day novelists, incidentally as failing in their duty of providing high potential for their readers, is to be found in Mrs. Q. D. Leavis' *Fiction and the Reading Public*.

The following passage is a quotation from a review of Mrs. Leavis' book by Miss Storm Jameson, appearing in *The New English Weekly*.

Mrs. Leavis brings a number of witnesses, living and dead, in support of her belief that the novelists most read to-day have neither the will nor the capacity to fulfil their dual function; to criticise false and decaying values and to create or induce states of mind in which more adequate values become acceptable. . . . Examine any best-seller, from Mr. Priestley down. Against what hard prejudice does it offend? What emotion disturbing to our complacency does it arouse?

And again:—

They don't stimulate us to a finer control of our lives: at worst they encourage us to believe that God's in His machine; at best they offer us an hour's escape.

The words "stimulate," "control," "escape," point the connection with the theme of this book.

The charge, in fact, is: that novels, which properly should act as stimuli, the agents of increased and

more harmonious activity, are tending now to become, and to be used pre-eminently, as drugs, the agents of disintegration and escape.

It is unfortunately difficult to make a catalogue of the books from which the stuff of week-end reading is drawn. But we can hardly be wrong in assuming that the writings of Mr. Edgar Wallace, Miss Ethel M. Dell, Mr. J. B. Priestley, Mr. P. C. Wren, Mr. Edgar Rice Burroughs and Miss Elinor Glyn play a prominent part therein. It would take a great many pages to demonstrate with any hope of actual conclusiveness why the novels of five out of these six authors belong essentially to the escape, as opposed to the relevant, species of literature. It is impossible here to do more than to suggest to the reader that, with the exception of Mr. Priestley, the works of the writers mentioned have hardly any bearing on "life" at all. A school-master of the present writer's acquaintance, when asked why he did not enjoy the works of Mr. Edgar Wallace, answered: "Because nothing ever happens in his books." It is suggested that that is a just answer. Nothing of significance, of relevance, does happen. The people in Mr. Edgar Wallace's books, and in the books of most of the other four authors, do not really behave in the same *kind* of way as people behave in "life." And that precisely is why these books offer such a sure prospect of relief to people who are only too anxious to escape, for an hour or two, from "life."

The case of Mr. Priestley is different. Few people would imagine that the people in Mr. Priestley's books do not behave in the same *kind* of way as ●

people in "life." The cause of complaint here is more legitimately that they (Mr. Priestley's characters) behave too much like actual (as opposed to real) people. That, untouched by the kindling power of the imagination, the "middling" people of Mr. Priestley's novels affect the reader merely as do the "middling" people of actual life. That, even admitting that *The Good Companions* is a "good" book, the average twentieth-century individual has time to read only the best books. That, accordingly, the economic reader will not begin a novel by Mr. Priestley until he has read every single book that Dickens ever wrote, on the assumption that beside the crammed, rich stimulating fullness of a Dickens novel *The Good Companions* is impoverished and diluted.

Against the proposition that one ought to have read all the "classics" before opening one of the masterpieces acclaimed weekly in the Sunday papers, it may be argued that certain contemporary writings, though of less *absolute* value than the classics, may have a greater *ad hoc* relevance for the twentieth-century individual, than have the classics themselves.

But with this point it will be more convenient to deal after we have examined the question of relevance and irrelevance in poetry.

THE POETRY OF RELEVANCE AND OF ESCAPE

In his book *Deucalion*, Mr. Geoffrey West traces two main currents in the stream of English literary criticism; the currents with which Mr. Middleton Murry and Mr. I. A. Richards respectively are concerned.

According to Mr. West's view the function of poetry is, in the eyes of the Mr. Murry kind of critic, to provide a series of implicit values, which the critic must make explicit and accept as the completest expression of personal experience; while in the eyes of the Mr. Richards kind of critic poetry may be regarded as a series of organisations, which the critic may detect and recognise.

The interpretative (Mr. Murry) critic is not concerned only with the discerning of qualities in literature, but he must tend also to claim that one quality is of more value than another. The Mr. Richards kind of critic denies that such eliciting of values is possible and makes quantity the only criterion of value. To us the interpretative critic, whose function it is to make explicit the implicit values of literature and to endorse and incorporate those values, seems to be in danger of putting all his eggs into one basket. (As, at one time, Mr. Murry seemed to have put all his then eggs into the Keats basket.) The Richards critic, on the other hand, does not endorse and incorporate the Keats life-experience. He uses it merely as one set of impulses in the totality of his organisation.

"The nature of poetry for Mr. Murry," says W. G. A. in a review of *Deucalion* in *The Granta*, "is such that he is able to elucidate intellectually the values contained in a poem. The nature of poetry for Mr. Richards, on the other hand, is such that all he can say is either 'this organises me' or 'this does not organise me,' and the value lies in being organised rather than in being freshly orientated by the conveyance of a new attitude."

The bearing of all this upon the matter of relevant and escape poetry is that it is soon proposed to examine some six types of "drug" or "escape" poetry; and, in the view of the present writer, the drug element is best explained in three of the types by the presence of what may be called a "drug *organisation*," and in the remaining three of the types by the presence of a "drug *quality*."

But first it is probably desirable to illustrate a little more fully what is meant by an "organisation" in Mr. Richards' sense.

"It is not enough that many interests should be stirred. There is a more important point to be noted. . . . The interests must come into play with as little conflict as possible. In other words, the experience must be organised so as to give all the impulses of which it is composed the greatest possible degree of freedom."

(It may be noted that it is at this point that the idea of *integration* is first introduced. An idea which will have to form the vital link between the simply full life which has been one of the main themes of this book so far and the idea of "Here-now Immortality" which will be one of the themes of the last section of the book.)

"There are two ways in which conflict can be avoided or overcome. By conquest and by conciliation. When it (one or other of the contesting impulses) seems to be suppressed it is often found to be really as active as ever, but in some other form, generally a troublesome one.

"We are in need of something to take the place of the old order . . . a new order based on conciliation not on attempted suppression."¹

It is proposed to try and assemble several different kinds of "drugs" or "escape" poetry. There are two main ways of starting on this attempt. We may adopt the, presumably, Mr. Richards approach and try to make degrees of relevance and irrelevance in poetry a purely *quantitative* matter, i.e. we can say that poetry is more or less relevant according as it takes implicit account of a greater or smaller range of "facts." We can say, in fact: "This is 'escape,' or 'withdrawal,' or 'sheltered' poetry, because it involves a relatively *narrow* organisation." Or, adopting the Murry approach, and trying to make explicit the implicit qualities of poetry, we may attempt to decide that certain qualities are more relevant than others; that poetry may have qualities, which we can call intrinsically escape qualities.

Provisionally, therefore, and for convenience it is proposed to divide "escape" poetry into that which involves a "drug organisation" and that which involves a "drug quality."

Let us begin with the "drug organisation" kind of poetry. We take first what we may call "geographically sheltered" poetry—poetry which specifically concerns itself *exclusively* with a particular locality, fitted with carefully chosen amenities.

The narcotic effect of localised poetry—the poetry of a half-consciousness—is comparable to the effect

¹ *Science and Poetry*, by I. A. Richards.

on an individual who goes to live on the Cornish coast or in a Shropshire parkland or at Cambridge—and so becomes completely unconscious of the existence of the Black Country and the Tyneside and the slums. We have dealt with this kind of poetry in the section "On a Week-end in the Country," with particular reference to Rupert Brooke's "Grantchester." (see p. 86). Obvious examples of this kind of poetry are provided by a very few of the poems in *The Shropshire Lad*, by some of Mr. Yeats' *Celtic Twilight* poems (e.g. "The Collar Bone of a Hare"), and by many of Mr. de la Mare's later poems. "To write, in an industrial age, rural poetry which shall be fully adequate to the age does not seem to be the forte of contemporary poets."

Emotional, as opposed to geographical, shelteredness provides another instance of what I have called "drug organisation" poetry. Poetry, that is, which concerns itself with a narrow range of emotions and impulses, comparable, in its narcotic effect on the individual, to the effect of living only among parlour or parish emotions.

Apropos of this, "There are two ways," says Mr. Richards, "in which impulses may be organised, by synthesis and by elimination. Although every coherent state of mind depends upon both, it is permissible to contrast experiences which win stability and order through a narrowing of the response with those which widen it." And Mr. Richards quotes as examples of the narrowed response poems, "Coronach," "Rose Aylmer," and "Love's Philosophy," "which, he says, are clearly "limited and exclusive."

Another instance of this tendency of certain types of poetry to retire into a sheltered emotional area fitted with agreeable personal amenities is Mr. W. Empson's theory of the Romantic poet's "tap-root into the world of childhood."

"For a variety of reasons," says Mr. Empson, "they found themselves living in an intellectual framework with which it was very difficult to write poetry, in which poetry was rather improper, or was irrelevant to business, especially the business of becoming "Fit to Survive," or was an indulgence of one's lower nature in beliefs that scientists knew were untrue. On the other hand, they had a large public which was as anxious to escape from this intellectual framework, on holiday, as they were themselves. Almost all of them, therefore, exploited a sort of tap-root into the world of their childhood, where they were able to conceive things poetically, and whatever they might be writing about they would suck up from this limited and perverted ground an unvarying sap which was their poetical inspiration."

According to this view the escape motif in Romantic poetry was almost explicit.

Affiliated to this kind of sheltered poetry is the nostalgic poetry involving a desire to return to the narcotically simplified world of childhood. This nostalgic quality has been analysed by D. W. Harding in the first number of *Scrutiny*, the feeling of distress for no localised isolated cause, together with a feeling that one's environment is strange, and vaguely wrong and unacceptable.

The mention of nostalgia in poetry finds us

convenient transition from the discussion of "drug organisation" to the discussion of "drug quality" poetry. For whereas nostalgic poetry involves a desire for a situation in which the necessary harmony of conflicting impulses may be childishly simplified, the very fact of the desire being necessary implies a, at present, fully complicated set of impulses. Hence in nostalgic poetry there is implicit "drug quality" which involves a yearning after a "drug organisation." In order to try explicitly to elucidate the drug quality in much of the "poetry of escape" we must endeavour to follow in something like Mr. Murry's footsteps.

A "drug organisation" poem is therefore one in which the poet has had only sheltered impulses to harmonise; a "drug quality" poem is one in which the poet, finding himself, in fact, in a situation which is open to the full impact of all the impulses in the world, implicitly yearns for a sheltered situation.

The drug quality in poetry is therefore the result of that characteristic which is an inability or an unwillingness to "face up to" the totality of existence; a desire to withdraw, to retreat, to edge away from the full blast of circumstances; a retreating attitude which itself affords a certain melancholy pleasure to the retreaters. An extension of this attitude is found in the impulse to derive a bitter-sweet enjoyment out of painful circumstances. "In those who pursue unhappiness," says Rebecca West, "there is a profound Don Juanism; there is an incapacity to live monogamously with one tragedy; one must go on seducing events and getting them with fresh births of agony."

The "drug quality" in poetry is therefore the literary manifestation of *the impulse to escape from life*, which is one of the themes of this book. It is consequently not to be wondered at that much "drug quality" poetry not only tends to try and escape from life, but also actually embraces the idea of death. There is a strain of this "drug quality" running through English poetry from the Romantic Revival up to the imitators of the Georgians. And in the modern phenomenon of jazz we see perhaps its latest offspring.

But we find it, almost explicit, in Keats:—

Ay, in the very temple of Delight
 Veil'd Melancholy has h^{er} sovran shrine,
 Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue
 Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine;
 His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,
 And be among her cloudy trophies hung.

We find it, a residue over and above the explicitly dramatic sentiments of the "Lotus-Eaters," in Tennyson:—

The Gods are hard to reconcile:
 'Tis hard to settle order once again.
 There *is* confusion worse than death,
 Trouble on trouble, pain on pain,
 Long labour unto aged breath,
 Sore task to hearts worn out with many wars,
 And eyes grown dim with gazing at the pilot stars.

We find it, carefully nurtured, and elevated into a cult, in Swinburne:—

I will go back to the great sweet mother,
 Mother and lover of men, the sea.
 I will go down to her, I and none other,
 Close with her, kiss her and mix her with me.

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We find it, not as a cult, but almost as a life-mode, in Mr. Housman's poetry:—

Comrade look not on the west,
T'will have the heart out of your breast;
T'will take your thoughts and sink them far,
Leagues beyond the sunset bar.

Where the hankering for death far transcends, for the reader, the intellectual Stoic determination to cope with life as it comes.

Even when Mr. Housman's poetry seems most determined to stand four-square to the gale of life there still remains a hint of a narcotic, semi-pleasurable melancholy.

The troubles of our proud and angry dust
Are from eternity and will not fail.
Bear them we can, and if we can, we must
Shoulder the sky, my lad, and drink your ale.

It must be noted that this kind of drug poetry will only infectively affect the reader if he tries to explicate its implicit ideas and attempts to endorse or incorporate them. It will not infect him and render him a drug addict if he merely uses the impulses released by this poetry as one set of impulses in the totality of his organisation.

For instance, a person who explicates the idea in

Therefore, since the world has still
Much good, but much less good than ill,
I'd face it as a wise man should
And train for ill and not for good.

—the person who takes this idea as ultimate gospel and proceeds to graft it into his own personality will be well on the way to becoming a particularly

insidious drug fiend. A person, on the other hand, who accepts it for the impulses which it releases, will have advanced to a more complex and worth-while integration of personality.

Finally, mention may be made of a kind of poetry, which is, properly speaking, hardly poetry at all, but which, being widely and explicitly read for purposes of consolation, must not escape comment. The ancestor of all this kind of drug poetry is the literary conceit just as the ancestor of all entirely relevant poetry is the metaphor. The conceit is solely the progeny of a relationship of literature; the metaphor mainly of a relationship of life. The conceit permits of a novel arrangement of literature; the metaphor springs from a fresh view of, and provides a new slant on, life.

"Literary" poetry (Keats of the first version of "Hyperion," Tennyson's "Now sleeps the crimson petal, now the white," "Heracleitus," Bulwer Lytton's "A Night in Italy") invites use as a narcotic because it has no roots in life, only in literature. It is, veritably, in the Platonic sense, twice removed from life.

The tendency of all these kinds of "drug" or "escape" or "irrelevant" poetry has been, as we have seen, to facilitate the impulse to edge away from the full impact of life.

The antithesis between a supremely relevant and a supremely narcotic poet is partly analagous to the antithesis between a dreamer and a visionary. An enormous amount of romantic poetry (first version of "Hyperion"; the later "Locksley Hall"; "Queen

Mab,") is just dream poetry posing as vision poetry.

We are the music makers ;
We are the dreamers of dreams.

And Dr. Freud has lately thrown considerable light on the nature of dreams. Hence the spectacle of Tennyson's wish-fulfilments masquerading as light on ultimate reality. Hence, too, the spectacle of hundreds of dreamers strolling about on the earth, fondly imagining themselves to be visionaries. Other poets, such as Swinburne, have been more honest about their wish-fulfilments.

"Every advance to more 'complex integrations of behaviour involves," says Mr. Harding, "effort, and the tendency is always present to throw up the sponge and take things easily—to regress to the earlier and simpler organisations of impulses."

Swinburne is continually throwing up the sponge, and falling back into a world of soundful words.

Drug poetry caters for the desire to go and seek shelter from the unpleasant side of the world, or else for the desire to gaze at the world through thick, rose-coloured lenses. We conclude that a drug of the literary variety is something which *either* produces an effect such that a part of the mind only is working on the whole range of the facts and materials, so that (as often is the state of alcoholic intoxication) they *all* are seen through a rosy, musical-comedy haze, *or* produces an effect such that the whole mind is working on an arbitrarily and amenity-chosen *selection* of the facts.

We conclude further that, even in literature, it is

better to do without drugs, and to live in the whole mind, not to lie about in parts of the mind. It is most desirable of all to survey, and try to reconcile, the *whole* range of facts with the *whole* mind. As Thomas Hardy was prepared to do, and as Shakespeare triumphantly succeeded in doing.

RELEVANCE AND MODERNITY IN POETRY

What, then, we may now enquire, constitutes relevant poetry? We have seen that "escape" or "drug" poetry has almost always involved a greater or lesser degree of "sheltering." We deduce, therefore, that the most intensively relevant poetry is that which is most unsheltered. In one idiom the poetry which takes upon itself to reconcile the maximum number of impulses; in another idiom, the poetry which has the quality of least wanting to forget or ignore any of the total number of facts.

Hardy's poetry was of this *kind*. Shakespeare's poetry was the apotheosis of this kind of poetry. Hardy's perhaps pre-eminent quality was his facing-up to every agreeable or disagreeable fact and idea. The supreme catharsis of one of Shakespeare's Tragedies, particularly of "Lear," or "Hamlet," is due to the fact that at the back of those tragedies every impulse in the universe is implied and, finally, reconciled.

The most relevant poetry, then, must be the most unsheltered. But there is a complication.

"We may appreciate," says Mr. Michael Roberts in the Preface to *New Signatures*, "the elegance of

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poetry written by men whose whole experience was different from ours, but we cannot accept it as a resolution of our problems." An interesting remark in view of the common feeling that though "the Classics" may be intrinsically more valuable than the work of any modern writer, yet that the work of an absolutely inferior modern writer may be, relatively, more relevant to us of 1933.

The most relevant poetry, according to this view, must not only be the most unsheltered poetry, but it must also implicitly take full account of the contemporary situation if it is to be fully adequate to the requirements of us, who are participators in that situation. Therefore, Mr. Eliot's "The Waste Land" may be considered to have at present a kind of *pro. tem.* boom value, which will evaporate with the evaporation of the post-war situation; and the only poetry which will be fully adequate to us in a few years' time will be poetry which will have taken full implicit account of the mortal sickness of capitalism. "Time and place," said W. G. A. in *The Granta*, "do not affect literary values, but do affect life values." It appears, therefore, that in a different way to that suggested by Mr. Eliot, can the past of poetry be affected by the present, if "The Waste Land" is to become less valuable as the particular, almost topical, need that it fulfilled is superseded.

There are, of course, some pieces of poetry in which not even the life values are affected by time and place. The poetry of "Hamlet" is of this kind, being permanently modern, and, in the early twentieth century, actually almost topical poetry.

Much of Donne is of topical relevance; some of Blake has a permanently modern relevance. Keats is modern in the second version of "Hyperion" and (surprisingly perhaps) in the "Ode to the Nightingale," but he is not modern, he is mostly only a period-piece, in the first version of "Hyperion." Wordsworth, when he was not topical, was often modern. Shelley, because he was so pervaded in topicality, was seldom modern. Eliot is almost topically modern. Hardy is immanently modern.

"I wish," said Emerson, "only to read that which it would be a serious disaster to have missed."

It seems as though the economical reader should choose his reading on a balance of conflicting considerations, and consider very carefully whether Mr. Priestley, plus his bonus for having been born in this century, is, even so, of as great relevance as Dickens. And it remains for the individual economic playgoer to decide whether "Musical Chairs," plus bonus, is more relevant to him than "Hamlet"; though the economic playgoer, at any rate, should have time to absorb the relevance of both.

CHAPTER X

The Drug in the Theatre

It becomes necessary again to attempt a definition of "life" or "living." Does "life" or "living" consist in the daily eight hours of ignominious scuffling for the few pennies of which the country has not as yet been deprived? Or is "life" or "living" something which happens, something which we do, after scuffle hours?

"Unless one is unusually lucky," says Mr. F. R. Leavis, "one saves up living for after working hours."

But a great number of people behave as if they regarded working hours as in themselves "life" or "living," and the period of un-business after working hours as something vaguely immoral which must somehow be got through.

We go to work to earn the cash to buy the food to get the strength to go to work to earn the cash to buy the food to get the strength to go to work. . .

The activity known as "living" is marked with a cross.

The point is a vital one.

Is the scuffle itself the only good life? Or is the good life only possible after the scuffle is over?

Surely Adam, who was *cursed* with an eleven-hour working day, had not a fair chance of "life."

He *could* only have "lived" for one hour in the twelve. But we, who live in an age of machines whose function and express purpose it is to provide goods for us without our effort, can, if we want, live for a good six hours in the twelve. The curse is removed. Adam is unemployed.

Unfortunately, we don't want. Most of us vaguely dread leisure as a period during which we are in danger of awaking to the fact that we are alive, and therefore presumably intended to live, as opposed to trying to suspend continually this tiresome business of living.

Saturday morning, 12 o'clock. Adam used to work his eleven hours even on Saturdays. But we are freed each Saturday punctually at noon. O triumphant progress of civilisation! For a day and a half we are "free."

What shall we do with this day and a half, this blessed day and a half which is the measure of our progress since the time of Adam? Shall we live? Or shall we suspend the business of living? To live is such an effort. Anaesthetics? Quick!

Listen, you novelists, theatre managers, film directors, newspaper proprietors, we want anaesthetics, and we want 'em potent.

What can you do for us all you theatre managers? If you please, kind sir, we have a fine line in musical comedies with soporific songs about maybe and baby and love and dove, and real roses and real balloons gratis which will make you forget all about that ugly outside world; and then we have a very pretty line in farce, with an anaesthetic snigger on

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every page. We guarantee, absolutely guarantee, not to make you think, kind sir; and after your good dinner at your comfortable club and in view of the tiring week which you have had (and in view of your kind pennies, sweet, sweet sir) there shall nothing be seen in our theatre which might by any conceivable chance disturb your complacency.

And what can you do for us all you film directors?

Say, you'll be O.K. with us. It takes money to make the strongest drugs, and, boy, don't we make them!

We've wish-fulfilment films for every man, woman and child, narcotic romances for the fattest banker and anaesthetic pulsing pornography to meet the most advanced taste. Boy, it's opium!

And what about you novelists? Yes, indeed, sir and madam, we can do you a very palatable drug. Oh no, it's no trouble to us. We don't write about anything, you see; we just write. Because we like it? No! not precisely. Because we have to earn our bread and butter. Yes, it is rather an obscene subject, isn't it, bread and butter. But it's all right, we won't mention it in our books. We'll take it for granted. We always think that's one of the most delightful things about books, don't you, that one can take bread and butter for granted in them. Very well, then, we will turn you out 4,000 novels a year; not because we really want to, or because they are in any sense good books. But we have need of your pennies and you have need of being made to forget, of being "taken out of yourselves?" Have we, therefore, struck a bargain?

ASSOCIATED OPIUM MANUFACTURERS, LTD.,
WILL HELP YOU TO FORGET

- (1) The artist, writer or theatre manager has, in order to procure his bread and butter, to give the public what it wants.
- (2) The public, because it cannot bear, after office hours, to contemplate anything remotely relevant to this grotesque parody of a civilisation, wants something to make it forget.
- (3) *Final Result of the above two.*—The artist, writer, and theatre manager become, through economic compulsion, the dispensers in a gigantic drug-racket.

The blame for this perverse state of affairs, it must be noticed, is attributed not to any individual or group of individuals, but to a fraudulent system of distribution which, by imposing destitution on a country bursting with plenty, makes the artist economically dependent on the public and the public ultimately dependent on drugs. The efficient viciousness of this circle is only paralleled by the efficiency of money as a device for causing starvation in an age of abundance. Money conclusively strangles the material abundance; the non-material abundance is effectively choked by the penniless artist—drug addict public circle. Let us take first the paucity, the non-abundance of the contemporary theatre.

Three facts:—

- (1) When the Greeks of the fifth century B.C. ~~invented~~

to the theatre, they did not shy away from the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides.

- (2) The Elizabethans were quite equal to sitting through "Hamlet," "Macbeth" and "Othello."
- (3) The average twentieth-century Georgian is usually divided between a musical comedy and a tattoo-like "show."

"Bless me," says the tired business man, "when I go to the play after a good dinner, I like a good laugh," says he. "I don't want to-see anything melancholy."

Perhaps what he means is that he does not want to see anything which disturbs his complacency. He wants to see a nice sheltered show, as far divorced from life as possible. Who's going to blame him for wanting something divorced from life? Why, no one. Even though someone is, perhaps, going to think how curious it was of the Greek audience always to be wanting more life, more life even on the stage. Perhaps that was the key to the difference between their brimming, and our thwarted, civilisation. The pagan Greeks wanted life more abundantly, and we, the tail end of a "Christian" civilisation, spend our time continually trying to avoid living, trying to escape from life.

"I have come that you may have life, and that you may have it more abundantly!"

Perhaps of all forms of drama the typical Musical Comedy has least, and the typical Tragedy most, to "do with" life. The Musical Comedy suppresses all of the painful, and most of the pleasurable, ~~impulses~~ impulses of life. In the full tragic experience, as

Mr. I. A. Richards says, "there is no suppression. The mind does not shy away from anything, it does not protect itself with any illusion, it stands uncomforted, un-intimidated, alone and self-reliant."

In other words, there is no tendency to go and "lean up against" anything, or to seek to forget the less agreeable facts. No attempt to drug or crutch oneself. Musical Comedy is the apotheosis of drugging and crutching: a forgetting of all the facts except a sickly rose-garden fragrance; and a leaning up against the idea that all the world's a rose garden and we've all got a thousand a year. Whereas, as Mr. Richards says, "the least touch of any theology which has a compensatory Heaven to offer the tragic hero is fatal." In Tragedy there are no compensations, no evasions. Musical Comedy is one gigantic compensation and evasion. Tragedy takes account of all the facts, accepts them, reduces them to order, "masters" them. Tragedy faces up to hunger, poverty, envy, jealousy, malice, etc. Musical Comedy fragrantly averts its face.

We are a generation of face-averters; but the present prospect being what it is, we can perhaps hardly be blamed for that. But we ~~can~~ be blamed for not making any effort to change that prospect, and, for a start, an effort to distribute the material abundance.

Meanwhile, the drift from Tragedy continues. From Tragedy to Musical Comedy. From Musical Comedy to Non-Stop Variety. From Non-Stop Variety to the popular Cinema.

At each stage of this retrogression the ~~exaction~~ exertion, the effort demanded of the audience seems to be less.

There is an obligation upon a theatre audience to be prepared to be reciprocal to the players and the play. The acting of a play entails an act of collective co-operation. The relation between the stage and the audience is, as Mr. Tyrone Guthrie points out, "mutually creative." Something is demanded of the audience; and that something, as it proceeds from the audience, modifies the play in the very act of formation, subtly affects the timing and "meaning" of every single line. The theatre is collectively sociable. If the cinema is sociable it is so only accidentally. The most sociable attribute of the cinema is manifested in the huddled sociable pairs observable along the wall seats of the majority of cinemas. It is noticeable that in the theatre far fewer people have leisure to sit "quietly sweating palm to palm." They are participating in the play, actually and in fact affecting the play. No audience, however zealous, can actually affect a film. The film continues, constant, unget-at-able, unmodifiable. The audience lolls back impotent, each in his several vacuum.

We have said that the "long-period" trend in the contemporary theatre is away from tragedy. This is, under the present system of distribution, inevitable. Tragedy implies a yea-saying to the sum of things. But at present the sum of things (as manifested by people progressively starving and being starved in a world bursting with plenty) is so unattractive, that the impulse is to narrow the range of theatre subjects, and to cause a demand for plays which "look on the bright side of things!"

This accounts for the streaming popularity of

"wish-fulfilment" plays and films such as "Service," which is so flavoured with the condiment called "warm humanity," that it must make a great many of the tired and defrauded people who go to see it think, for an hour or two, that even this thing which is variously named the slump, the economic crisis, the mortal sickness of capitalism, and the triumph of the machine, has after all a sunny, rainbow side to it.

This accounts also for the success of "fragrant" plays such as "Autumn Crocus" and "Tobias and the Angel." The property of these plays is that among the unindustrialised faerylands of the Tyrol and Babylon (was it?) the playgoer can find a three-hours relief from the world of machinery and over-production and scuffles for money and long hours on office stools.

This accounts also for all our roaring farces, our musical comedies, our funniest shows in London. The property of the farces is to induce laughter, and whatever the function of laughter may have been in the past, it's function now in the contemporary laughter-theatre is simply and solely to drug.

Wish-fulfilment plays, "charming" plays, "fragrant" plays, musical comedies, farces—one and all they have a common quality; namely the quality of *not facing up to the present situation*. One and all they regress and escape, compensate and evade. Which brings us to a point of some importance.

No play or other work of art (unless it be the work of a genius) can be fully adequate to the needs of people at the present time unless it has taken full implicit account of the one vital contemporary situation. What is the one vital contemporary

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situation? It is that created by the simple fact that the world is bursting with plenty, plenty of everything except monetary tickets of admission to the feast. No present-day playwright can write a play which has a chance of being fully adequate to this generation unless he has already incorporated this fact into his imaginative system *not merely as a fact but as a living truth.*

This, of course, does not mean that no play is fully relevant unless it deals specifically with under-consumption, or over-production. But it does mean that any fully alive person who is also a playwright will inevitably have been infected by the significance of this problem, and that all he writes will be tinged by that infection.

How many of our present-day playwrights can be said, by this criterion, to be fully relevant to their contemporary audiences? Do we catch a single hint from any one of the plays of Messrs. John Van Druten, Ivor Novello, Walter Hackett, Benn Levy, Frederick Lonsdale, that these authors are even aware, let alone infected by, the one vital problem of the age?

O generation of face-averters, who hath warned you?

There is, however, one living playwright who cannot be said to avert his face from any of the contemporary facts, however unconsoling. Playgoers who go to the theatre for shelter should not go to see Mr. Somerset Maugham's "For Services Rendered." In point of fact, of course, they don't go to see it. The great British public, which had so

long looked to its theatre for an opportunity of evasion and wish-fulfilment, escape and compensation, found itself confronted with a play in which there was no suppression of the less agreeable facts, no attempt to evade, no compensation. The great British public dubbed the play "morbid," and allowed it to come off after a run of only seven weeks.

The attitude of the theatre-going public, put in its simplest terms, seems to be as follows:—They regard happiness as the true end of living, and, not finding that happiness in "real" life, for their theatre they like slices of life out of which all the "unhappy" ingredients are removed, thus leaving a residue of "happiness" which they would like to identify with their own "life." An alternative view of the true end of living is "completion", "wholeness," "integration." The small public that believes in this should like, for its theatre, plays in which no unhappy ingredients are removed, but in which all the ingredients are put in order, "reconciled," made, in fact, into a work of art.

"I tell you," says Captain Shotover in "Heartbreak House," "happiness is no good. You can be happy when you are only half-alive. I am happier now I am half-dead than ever I was in my prime. But there is no blessing on my happiness."

I take Mr. Hackett's and Mr. Lonsdale's and Mr. Novello's plays as instances of "happy" slices of life in which all the genuinely unconsoling ingredients are suppressed; and I take Mr. Maugham's "For Services Rendered" as an instance of a "wholeness" in which there is no suppression of any ingredients whatever,

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but a "reconciliation" of the total number of ingredients, into a genuine work of art.

I take Mr. Maugham's play to be "better" than the plays of those others because it is more fully alive than they; and because it seems better to live in the whole mind rather than to lie about in parts of the mind. Conversely, a fully adequate play should imply a world in microcosm, whereas most West End productions nowadays imply a drawing-room or bedroom *in extenso*.

But a "slice of life" is not, except by a fluke, a work of art. The extreme realistic naturalism of the West End stage is, amongst other things, very convenient for the theatrical drug addict; it makes it as smoothly easy for him to compensate by identifying himself with his wish-fulfilment as manifested in the hero of the play, as for the cinema drug-addict to compensate in identifying himself with the young man playing opposite Miss Greta Garbo.

Mr. Terence Gray, at the Festival Theatre at Cambridge, and Mr. Peter Godfrey, at the Gate Theatre, have made notable efforts to resist this anaesthetic "realism"; and to get the audience to exert itself and participate in the performance before it is too late, and before the theatre audience resigns itself permanently to the separated vacuum permanently inhabited by the cinema audience.

But here again the economic limitation makes itself felt. The present demand is for plays which "copy life." (By which is meant a special drug-selection out of life.) Managers and playwrights must supply plays which "copy life" or they must

starve. One of the things for which, incidentally, we should be grateful to Mr. Bernard Shaw is that his plays are an implicit protest against the "copying life" tradition; his plays make no attempt to be realistic, to make the audience think that they are "real life," to attain a maximum of illusion. The audience cannot lapse into a lolling coma confident that everything will happen exactly as it happens in real life. There is always the ever-present possibility of an imaginative shock.

Otherwise, the English theatre seems condemned to wriggle in the drawing-room among the oh-so-real cups and saucers. •

Photography replaces portraiture. Accurate reporting ousts the kindling influence of the imagination. "Strange Orchestra"—photography and reporting—lodges claims to be in the same class as "Musical Chairs,"—portraiture and imagination. Our imaginative consciousness becomes atrophied for want of exercise. We are content to lie about in parts of the mind. Living in the whole mind—it's too tiring. We have no time for it, anyhow; we have to earn our living.

All of which can be reduced to one interesting fact: Because we have to earn our "living" we have no time to "live."

CHAPTER XI

Other Week-End Drugs

ALCOHOL

ALCOHOL, a stock concomitant of week-end man; drug or stimulus? If we find it to be a net stimulus, then surely, if we are free of inhibitions, we must declare alcoholism, adroitly manipulated, to be a more desirable way of spending the week-end than going to Blackpool, and *escaping* into the country, or going to an American film, or to a musical comedy, or to reading the weekly reviews. Is it, then, a stimulus? Our own apparent experience may tend towards the conclusion that it is a very precious and precise stimulus.

"For my part," he said, "I've never been able to see why the art of the toper should be held in any less esteem than that of the poet or the musician. The same mixture of sensuous and intellectual pleasure which one gains by, say, reading the *Inferno* or hearing the "Overture to Tristan," can be obtained—not by getting drunk; that's mere bad generalship—but by reaching the borderline, the crest of the wave, and staying there. One gets the same vertiginous sensation of new vistas opening all around one, of the beastly gross, material universe becoming radiant, informed with personality and purpose. . . ." William James was right. There must exist in the brain some special region, exquisitely sensitive to the

carcasses of metaphysical truth, which only function under the stimulus of alcohol. The Absolute is at the bottom of the second bottle."¹

In this account, "getting drunk" is plainly the equivalent of our metaphorical drug; and the "reaching the borderline and staying on it" is an attempt at sustained stimulus. Whether this stimulus is, in practice, feasible, it is difficult to be certain. It is difficult also, to know whether, after the effect of the stimulus has worn off, the organism does or does not relapse into a condition actually inferior to the original condition.

If alcohol can, in fact, be used as a *net* stimulus, it does not seem illegitimate so to use it. McDougall, however, quoting a booklet published by the British Liquor Control Board during the war, maintains that the effect of alcohol is solely narcotic.

"Later work," he says, "supports the conclusion that direct effect of alcohol upon all parts of the system is to depress or suspend its function; that alcohol is, in short, from first to last a narcotic drug."

An interesting, if unlikely-looking, conclusion. Finally, in the absence of scientific certainty, perhaps the most enlightening comment on the position has been made by Doctor Johnson: "Sir, I do not say it is wrong to produce self-complacency by drinking; I only deny that it improves the mind."

SEXUALITY

In dealing with literature we have posited as desirable a new order founded on conciliation instead

¹ *Desirable Young Men*, by Patrick Carleton.

of suppression. The propagandists of organised Christianity felt impelled to preach the separation of mind and body and to teach the suppression of the body's impulses. It was inevitable that this doctrine and this practice should impoverish life. Clearly now, now that the decline of organised Christianity is coinciding with the transition from an age of suppression to an age of reconciliation and coinciding also with a significant advance in contraceptive science, the primary reconciliation to be effected should be that between spirit and flesh.

The inhibitions which obstructed that reconciliation and the lack of devices to facilitate it having now been amended, how, we must enquire, do the majority of people avail themselves of this opportunity for a new kind of integration. As a stimulus? Or as a drug?

The week-end scurrings of stockbrokers and army officers to Blackpool and Piccadilly and Brighton—are they the outward and visible sign of a new stimulus—or of a new drug-vogue?

In "The Fire-Sermon" section of "The Waste Land," Mr. T. S. Eliot has twice suggested the drearily narcotic quality of the week-end sexuality now so fashionable, we are given to understand, among soldiers and tired business men, particularly in the account of the relations between the typist and the small house-agent's clerk.

The time is now propitious, as he guesses,
 The meal is ended, she is bored and tired,
~~He~~ He endeavours to engage her in caresses
 Which still are unreprieved, if undesired.

Flushed and decided, he assaults at once;
Exploring hands encounter no defence,
His vanity requires no response,
And makes a welcome of indifference.

Allied to this attitude are all the Casanovan, Don Juan attitudes which regard sex as an end in itself. This group of attitudes has been well described by Mr. Walter Lippmann.

There is the art of love as Casanova, for example, practised it. It is the art of seduction, courtship and sexual gratification: it is an art which culminates in the sexual act. It can be repeated with the same lover and with other lovers, but it exhausts itself in the moment of ecstasy. When that moment is reached, the work of art is done, and the lover as artist "after an interval, perhaps of stupor and vital recuperation," must start all over again, until at last the rhythm is so stale it is a weariness to start at all; or the lover must find new lovers and new resistances to conquer.

A fair descriptive account of contemporary sexuality, the drug.

Hear, on the other hand, the words of D. H. Lawrence, who has, implicitly in his novels, done more than any other contemporary person towards "rescuing the passions from hell."

But no man ever had a wife unless he sewed a great predominant purpose. Otherwise, he has a lover, a mistress. No matter how much she may be married to him, unless his days have a living purpose, constructive or destructive, but a purpose beyond her and all she stands for; unless his days have this purpose, and his soul is really committed to his purpose, she will not be a wife, she will only be a mistress and he will be her lover.

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If the man has no purpose for his days, then to the woman alone remains the goal of her nights, the great sex goal. And this goal is no goal but always cries for the something beyond: for the rising, the morning and the going forth beyond, the man disappearing ahead into the distance of futurity, that which his purpose stands for, the future. The sex goal needs, absolutely needs, this further departure. And if there *be* no further departure, no great way of belief on ahead, and if sex is the starting point and the goal as well: then sex becomes like the bottomless pit, insatiable.

A superb emotive account of sex, the supreme stimulus of a purposeful life.

Sexuality: drug or stimulus?

Statistics are not at present available.

But we have our suspicions.

MUSIC

Music, an almost invariable condiment for the family week-end: drug or stimulus?

"A musical education," says Mr. Santayana, "is necessary for musical judgment. What most people relish is hardly music; it is rather a drowsy reverie relieved by nervous thrills."

It looks as though, for the musically uneducated, music is invariably a drug. Plainly, for the musically educated, music is capable of being a supreme stimulus; a stimulus more effective than the most effective verbal metaphor, but essentially a stimulus of the same kind. The essential of the "great" verbal metaphor is that it breaks new ground; it pushes forward the borders of our imaginative consciousness. By a new use of words it achieves a response which words, used in the old way, have never yet been able

to evoke. Pre-eminently, great music has this same kind of effect. Being unhampered by the constricting medium of words it can reach regions of our imaginative consciousness which are inaccessible to words. It can break new ground, and achieve a stimulus which is "beyond description," simply because it has advanced beyond the borders of language.

Music is capable of being the supreme metaphor; it is capable, also, of behaving like the worst cliché.

If great music is capable of thrillingly breaking new ground, a great deal of modern dance and week-end music is capable of going over old ground in a most sickly, sagging and studiedly narcotic way.

Everyone who has listened to week-end gramophone records or Saturday night wireless music is familiar with the faintly-detonating clichés of song and melody which constitute modern dance music. The cliché-character of the words of dance songs is more easily analysable than the cliché-character of the tunes. The formula is to bundle together words well-equipped with stock associations, and then to allow them to detonate against each other: flowers, hours, baby, maybe, morn, corn, blue, you, roses, reposes. The principle is readily visible in some of the negro songs, e.g. "Carry me back to Old Virginny," where each word is loaded with fragrant associations.

Carry: associations of languishing proneness.

Me: the receptive, inviting, introversion.

Back to: nostalgic, lost-content, yearning.

Old: nostalgia again, land of my childhood, etc.

Virginny: cross between orange blossom Virginia and lily-like Virgins.

Or again, the words of some of the more "intellectual" dance songs may serve as a popular edition of the themes of the English poets. In this way we perceive "Old Man River" as the popular, dance-hall version of the theme of Hardy's Wessex Novels, and Noel Coward's "Dance Little Lady" as a contemporary version of Herrick's "Gather Ye Rosebuds."

Or again, the words of dance songs may unconsciously be designed as a convenient substitute: "Through the smoke an' flame, I gotta go where you are." Though the traditional self-possessed Englishman would never perhaps make this remark off his own bat, he may be considered to be not above endorsing it, as proceeding from the mouth of a nigger vocalist, by means of a casual hand-press, or a passing manly smile.

On the whole, the tunes of jazz songs form a fitting and organic counterpart of the words. On to the tune, as on to the words, it is only too easy for the listener to "get up" and ride along in the saddle of a dual cliché, in a pleasurable melancholy coma. "Jazz, in fact," says Constant Lambert, "is just that sort of bastard product of art and life that provides so acceptable a drug to those incapable of really coping with either. As with all drug habits, one dare not stop for fear of the reaction, and it is no rare experience to meet people whose lives are so surrounded, bolstered up and inflated by jazz that they can hardly get through an hour without its collaboration."

So much for jazz, the cliché-drug. One astonishing exception must, however, be recorded.

Occasionally, from a jazz soloist of genius, a really effectual metaphor will emanate. Once or twice in the records of Bix Beiderbeck, Bix himself, in an improvised solo seizes into sound an intensely individual *pro tem.* state of mind. And the result is a metaphor which, in an uniquely stimulating way, breaks new ground, and pushes forward the borders of our imaginative consciousness.

A WEEK-END IN THE COUNTRY

As opposed to, and with completely different implications to, a week-end at Blackpool. Quite literally, a week-end in the country: a cottage, walks in the woods, cooking, conversation, the week-end book, etc., drug or stimulus?

There are two ways of going into the country. There is the attempt to go and permanently hide one's ostrich head in the clotted atmosphere of a country parish; to live among church bells and moss, specifically in order to forget the ugly existence of Birmingham and the Black Country and Wigan and the Tyneside and the slums of London, which is to do rather what Oscar Wilde called: "Living only on the sunny side of the garden." The cult of the backwater.

On the other hand, one can go, with complete awareness of Birmingham, Wigan and the slums, into the country and thence derive an unique relevant stimulus.

The first way is purely a drug—a seeking to live a sheltered life, oblivious of smoke and dirt.

The second way is a preliminary to the facing up to

a completely unsheltered life, and a tonic before turning one's attention to the smoke and the dirt. This second attitude is, I think, a recent one; it is essentially a reflex product of the new industrial civilisation.

There is all the difference between an old and new civilisation between Rupert Brooke's sheltered country drug poetry:—

But Grantchester! Ah, Grantchester!
 There's peace and holy quiet there,
 Great clouds along pacific skies,
 And men and women with straight eyes,
 Lithe children lovelier than a dream,
 A bosky wood, a slumbrous stream,
 And little kindly winds that creep
 Round twilight corners, half asleep.

and Mr. Day Lewis's unsheltered and stimulating:

Charabancs shout along the lane,
 And summer gales bay in the wood
 No less superbly because I can't explain
 What I have understood.

In the world of the first of these poems, Wigan and the slums have no place. In the world of the second, Wigan has, implicitly, a very prominent place. Which indicates why Rupert Brooke is not, on the whole, relevant to us of 1932. And why Mr. Day Lewis is.

There is another thing to be noticed. This pedalling into the country at the week-end, this striding of released schoolmasters and dons into the mountains is, from another point of view, an essentially modern characteristic. It is reported that Petrarch was the first man to climb a mountain for the view. At any rate the merging of self in spaciousness, either

architectural, literary, rural, or ideal, seems to afford the modern human being a particularly satisfying indefiniteness of individuality; as witness the phenomena of sky-scrapers, Virginia Woolf's novels, hiking and communism. The stimulating or narcotic nature of that "relief" depends as usual, on the individual.

In point of fact, the ability to find, or to elude, life, either in town or country seems so to depend.

Where then, in general, is "life" to be found?

Is "where" indeed a relevant question? Should it not rather be "How"? Does locality enter into it at all?

It is customary to talk of the academic scholar or the country parson as being "withdrawn from life." Withdrawn from what? From city life? From London? Is life genuinely most prevalent in London? In the ant-heaps of Pimlico and Battersea? In Whitehall and Downing Street? In the service flats of Mayfair? On London Bridge at noon? In Threadneedle Street at lunch-time? In the Houses of Parliament? Who is daring enough to assert confidently that the Prime Minister is in any way "nearer to life" than a parson in a Dorset village? Was Arnold Bennett really closer to reality than Mary Webb?

Can it even be that life is no respecter of localities; and that the important persons who go by aeroplane from capital to capital, in a frenzy of ambition to keep their fingers on the "pulse of world events," are really more stuffed, more hollow, more essentially lifeless than the lusty villagers of, say, Mrs. T. F. Powys' novels?

CHAPTER XII

Summary

WE decided to follow up the theme of the decline of religion and its consequences.

We started then from the fundamental, essential religious idea which we decided to take as the idea of communication with all the mysterious, majestic, tremendous otherness of the universe.

Secondly, we noticed that for the past 2,000 years this essential religious idea has been linked to the idea of a Christian God, often conveniently imagined as a *person* who received these communications and answers them. We tried to show how organised Christians had been apt to deflect the essential idea of religion, which is the idea of stimulating communion, by using their communion time or "prayer time," as they called it, for the purposes on the one hand of beseeching and petitioning this supposed person at the other end of the telephone wire, and on the other hand for the purposes of otiose speculations on an irrelevant future life. We suggested that Christians have been especially prone to do this when life has seemed trying or difficult.

Thirdly, we went on to indicate the way in which the growth of rational thought and the popularisation of scientific knowledge threw doubt on the idea of a personal God who would call off the particular affliction or tribulation if requested to do so in the appropriate manner.

Fourthly, we suggested that with the idea of a personal, supernatural God abandoned, people had to begin to face the fact that life was often, for some reason or other, vacant and intolerable. They had to begin to face this fact for themselves, and without running off to tell God all about it and without asking Him please to make it better.

Fifthly, that people's realisation of the facts as they were, caused them to act in one of two ways. To drug themselves into an unconsciousness of that distasteful knowledge, or to stimulate themselves into such a quickened activity that they were able to over-ride the vacancy and the intolerableness.

Sixthly, we went on to indicate what we considered to be the main drugs and the main stimulants in use to-day. We suggested that though organised Christianity had become in many quarters an elaborate drug, yet that both the essential religious experience and the essential points of Christ's own teaching were still among the supreme present-day stimulants.

With the object of obtaining some idea as to how far the twentieth-century agnostic's week-end activities were stimulating, how far narcotic, we glanced at the habits of reading, the cinema, the theatre, jazz music, going into the country, etc.

It is now time to revert to the twin idea of material abundance.

CHAPTER XIII

The Points Where the Consciousness of the Age Shows Itself

WE have now made a preliminary survey of the implications of the Age of Plenty (the "obligation to communism," and the choice between "Sisyphism," and the acceptance of leisure as moral); and also of the implications of a post-institutionally-religious age (the choice between drug and stimulus, between wider or narrower consciousness, more or less life). In this chapter it is proposed to examine the conjoint impact of these implications on the most sensitively conscious organisms of the age; on the representative poets ("the points where the consciousness of the age shows itself"), and on three representative and adequately conscious periodicals.

In the representative poets there is a fairly clear line between aggression and regression. Compare

All you that have a cool head and safe hands
Awaken early, there is much to do:
Hedges to raze, channels to clear, a true
Reckoning to find. The other side commands
Eternity. We have an hour or two.

of C. Day Lewis, with this from Mr. Eliot.

Teach us to care and not to care;
Teach us to sit still.

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These lines were published some eight years after "The Waste Land," a poem which according to Mr. I. A. Richards is entirely without beliefs. It may be noticed that in both the two above quotations, reactions to both the two sets of implications that we are examining are involved. In Mr. Eliot, the non-aggressive tone is bound up with a more or less explicit resort to a Church system; in Mr. Day Lewis, the refusal to be drugged, the aggressive tone is bound up with an almost explicitly *political* forward-lookingness. (Exercise: view the entire Conservative Party in the light of a group of dope fiends, assiduously averting their faces.) Day Lewis is moving outwards to the future; Eliot has recently affixed himself to the past.

Even in "The Waste Land" the nexus with the past was detectable.

The boat responded

Gaily, to the hand expert with sail and oar,
The sea was calm, your heart would have responded
Gaily, when invited, beauty obedient
To controlling hands.

It begins to come apparent how a refusal to admit the "obligation to communism," a shying away from the jump forward, involves the use of a crutch or drug, and an edging back into the past. The individual's reaction to the Age of Plenty governs something more than his political creed; it affects the entire direction of his leisure life. In the brief intervals between "work" or "business," a responsibility, a necessity of choice fastens upon him; he must do one of two things; he must move forward or back,

aggress or regress. To stand still will have the effect of regression, because the scenery will begin to move past and leave him standing.

In the work of Auden, Spender, and Day Lewis, the aggression is unmistakable; critics may even find it too protrusive, too difficult to mistake. In Eliot the turn into non-aggression is equally unmistakable. (One hesitates actually to say "regression" because his allegiance to a Church "system" seems to involve, astonishingly, in his poetry, a minimum of leaning.)

It would be immediately irrelevant to advert to the political creeds of these poets. We may pass on to the examination of three periodicals: *The Adelphi*, *The New Statesman*, and *Scrutiny*.

The New Statesman and Nation is primarily concerned with all that is implied in planning, *economic* revolution (if revolution is not, indeed, too abrupt a word).

It is interested in the application of technology, in a change of system; there is no emphasis (or only an incidental one, e.g. in Critic's column or MacFlecknoe's verses) on a re-orientation of attitude. Somewhere at the back of it Mr. Keynes appears to move on the lines of purely economic manipulation in the direction, not so much of socialism as of a planned world capitalism. Its obligation to make a readjustment to the Age of Plenty situation takes pre-eminently a technical form; and a certain aridity sometimes noticeable in its pages is not improbably connected with this lack of humane emphasis.

Over against *The New Statesman* set *The Adelphi*, back of which Mr. Middleton Murry, who combines an individuality of theoretical interpretation with a

precise sense of what is politically possible, posits a pronounced extra-economic emphasis. Mr. Murry's intuitive interpretation is not without a certain difficulty of apprehension, although there are things which are plain enough. The following quotation, from *The Adelphi*, for instance, seems, in isolation, to represent simply a *New Statesman* attitude:—

He and only he really belongs to the revolutionary Socialist Party who has decided, once for all, that a radical change in the economic basis of society towards economic equality is urgently necessary, and that his own economic individualism shall not stand in the way.

But by far the greatest emphasis is that placed upon the conception of the "annihilation of self."

"There are many ways to revolution, but everyone of them demands of the man who will follow it to the end the annihilation of the self."

It is difficult for the ordinary man to apprehend precisely what this annihilation implies.

Start humbly by saying that it implies the necessity of pre-occupation with the economic situation of the world; but not with the economic situation only. Further, that it implies the necessity of allowing the self to be wholly a vehicle for the effecting of the new order.

But after the new order is achieved, how does the self stand to the Community? What is the relation between the individual and the State? What is the relation between individuality and Communism? The question is crucial; and crucial not only for purposes of propaganda, nor because there is a certain type of self-conscious "professional" artist

who is afraid that when communism comes he will be brutally deprived of his individuality. The question is crucial; and we cannot, so far as I know, do better than follow Mr. Murry's answer. (*The Adelpbi*, January, 1933.)

Individuality is a paradoxical thing; it comes to those who have lost all concern with it. But the artist, precisely, in so far as he is an artist, is one of these. He is, while he is the medium of art, selfless.

Art is essentially a perfection of living. To specialise it, to make of it a "profession," is to degrade it.

(At this point we are reminded of Blake's saying:

Christ and His disciples were all artists.)

And finally:—

Art is essentially a new mode of contact, first in the man himself, whereby the profound sources of his being are brought to utterance, and a new dynamic and creative unity born within him; and second, between him and the outward world, which, by virtue of this new creative unity within him is brought into new and direct relation with the renewed and now living man.

Here again we come back to the reaching-out for contact, for at-one-ness. We recall the two types of dart-players in the "pub," and the protagonist of the Auden "Song." We remember also the futility of conscious effort. What we appear to need—and Murry has enabled us to see it more clearly—is a great magnetic objective external to ourselves, which shall draw us out of ourselves and in the pursuit of which we shall, incidentally, happen to find ourselves in a new relationship with each other. In the course of which we shall regain "touch."

But this selflessness, this capacity for disinterested activity, seems still to be a little miraculous, a little accidental. It cannot be forced or cultivated.

"Such communism," says Murry, "it need hardly be said, can only be learned by experience."

Such experience can surely only come about by a happy chance. It is in the nature of a fluke. It certainly cannot be reckoned upon as likely ever to become a universal thing.

Right over against those who proclaim that the Age of Plenty situation must be the primary pre-occupation, and that consequently there must be revolution—whether total or purely economic—right over against *The New Statesman* and *The Adelphi* stand those, such as the *Scrutiny* school, whose attitude implies either: "The economic situation has no justification in demanding prime attention," or else "Even if it had, nothing can be done."

"And those who, the plight of the world being what it is, are impatient of any pre-occupation with other than economic issues, would do well to ponder this: 'Don't think of me as a raving, impractical, vain individual. To be material at this juncture is hopeless, hopeless—or worse than impractical.'"

The inner quotation is from D. H. Lawrence—an isolated example of a highly aware man who stood out for a non-economic revolution—the restoration of "touch"—without reference to an economic revolution.

It is possible to hold that the special aptitudes of *Scrutiny*, like the special aptitudes of D. H. Lawrence,

absolve them from the urgent necessity of pre-occupation with the economic situation. The attitude of *Scrutiny* indicates that its authors suspect the devotees of the "obligation to communism" of basing their assertion upon the values of "the man who does things."

The special aptitude of *Scrutiny* is declared thus:—

The problem is, rather, not merely to save these essential elements (of the culture which already exists) from a swift and final destruction in the process that makes communism possible, but to develop them into an autonomous culture, a culture independent of any economic, technical or social system as none has been before. Whether such a rootless culture (the metaphor will bear pondering, in view of the contrast between the postulated communist society—in constant "dynamic" development—and any that has produced a culture in the past) can be achieved and maintained may be doubtful . . . if it can it will be by a concern for the tradition of human culture, here and now, intenser than Trotsky's (the Marxist excommunicate); a concerted and sustained effort to perpetuate it, in spite of the economic process, the triumphs of engineering and the Conquest of Happiness, as something with its own momentum and life, more and more autonomous and self-subsistent. And in its pre-occupation with this effort *Scrutiny* does not find itself largely compared.

Now it is plain from other examples of *Scrutiny* literature that the immediate unconcern for the economic situation on the part of the *Scrutiny* school does not in their case arise from a habit of shutting their eyes to the less attractive facts. There is no question of a shirking of a responsibility. As two of the editors of *Scrutiny* have written elsewhere: "A

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habit of cheerfulness based on a refusal (which amounts in the long run to inability) to see things as they are is, it might be pointed out, a habit of cowardice and irresponsibility taking itself for virtue, and so more insidiously corrupting and debilitating."

The situation seems to be as follows:—Willingness to accept the totality of facts presupposes *realisation* of them; which probably implies a willingness or preparedness to "do something" about them: more specifically, about such of them as seem salient *or* about those to which the observer seems specially adapted.

In other words, all those who have no specialised aptitude must parade to cope with the salient, i.e. economic situation.

CHAPTER XIV

What is Desirable

WE have now completed our analysis of the two main sets of reaction to the Age of Plenty, and to the decline of supernatural religion. The Age of Plenty, we have seen, evokes two opposing modes of thought. The one holds that "to be material at this moment is hopeless, hopeless," and proclaims the need of "education against civilisation." The other holds that, as civilisation in the material sense is now possible to everyone, the economic problem is the only one worthy of prime consideration. This school is again divisible into those who declare that an economic adjustment only is necessary, and those who believe that a more than economic, a total, revolution is absolutely entailed.

The decline of institutional religion in its turn produces two main opposing codes of behaviour. There are those people who, deprived of the support of religion, make an effort to stand upon their own feet, self-supporting; ready to make a "yea-saying to the sum of things." There is, alternatively, that vast mass of people who, deprived of the support of religion, have settled down to a wholesale use of drugs of one kind and another. Between these two opposing modes of life there is a third which, while professing an allegiance to something extra-human,

claims not to make use of any buttress or drug; claims, in fact, a willingness to support itself.

Of the two sets of tendencies the concern for efficient drugs and the unconcern for an efficient economic system are infinitely the most common. Almost invariably they go together. It is not pure coincidence that it is so completely impossible to interest the film-going public in economics, any more than, conversely, it is coincidence that those most averse to drug addiction should be those who are most violently concerned for some sort of revolution. A man's reaction to the decline of religion situation cannot but govern his political direction, and vice versa. It is at this point that the two sets of influences become inextricable.

The ebb of religious belief brings man face to face with his environment; but it also brings him face to face with the necessity of re-modelling his environment. For unmodified by man the world is intolerable. It must be recreated, if not in fancy by the comforts of religion, then in fact by the hand of man himself. Fortunately, by the inevitable intertwinings of cause and effect, that very growth of knowledge which has robbed man of his protective cloak of religious illusion, gives him in compensation the power to refashion the earth. It is precisely because man is at last in sight of being able to control nature himself that he now can neither maintain, nor should he need, the illusion that nature is controlled by God.¹

Unfortunately, the majority of people in England and the world have selected for themselves the meagre, negative pair of alternatives—drugs, and vicious apathy to their surroundings and to the condition of

¹ John Strachey, *The Coming Struggle for Power*.

their fellow men. Unprecedented opportunities for abundance, material and non-material, have been offered to them; but they have assiduously elected to be poor. What will future historians find to say of a generation which looked on blandly while poverty was perpetuated for long after the physical need for it had vanished? And what will future psychologists have to say adequate to an age to which every chance of a full and abundant life was given, but which preferred to spend its time inventing means whereby the tiresome business of living might continually be suspended?

From these two pivotal points, the Age of Plenty and the Decline of Religion, the world, and England in particular, has taken the wrong, because the poorer, turning. What now is desirable?

Ideally: a total revolution. Ideally, a fundamental adjustment, economic and also humane, to the Age of Plenty. An economic adjustment, because it is only sensible to use the plenty which has at last been made accessible. A humane adjustment, because with the end of the age of scarcity there must logically evaporate the conception of civilisation as a "slavery of the many designed to set the minds of the few free for the nobler works of leisure."

Ideally: a total revolution. A fundamental technical change in the working of the system, and a re-orientation of attitude; a new relationship between human beings. But we have already seen the difficulty of this new relationship, this "revolution of the self." The more conscious one becomes of the need for it, the greater effort one makes, the more fatally inhibited

one grows. People can attain this new relationship incidentally, almost accidentally; at present, however, it is a rare accident. It may be many years before the capitalist climate ceases to have this inhibiting effect. In the majority of cases probably only a slow apocalyptic education will ever achieve the result. But there is no sensible reason why the technical revolution should wait until such a time.

Ideally: a total revolution.

Practically: an immediate technical revolution, followed up by a gradual education towards community.

Practically: Abolish material poverty now. There is no obligation to wait until sufficient people are revolutionised in themselves, or until the workers are in a position to take over the ownership of the means of production. Poverty by a simple technical device could be abolished to-morrow, if enough people were sufficiently interested. It might take years in England before the ownership of the means of production could be reshuffled; poverty can be abolished in a month. The revolution of the individual in his attitude to his fellows must needs take place over generations; the technical revolution is capable of instantaneous application.

Man's struggle with nature is over. The *primary* implication of an Age of Plenty is not a total revolution but the necessity for some law which shall arrange for the distribution of a crop, kill or other production among *all* the members of a tribe or other community, when only a few of *them* can take part in the harvest, hunt, or whatever it is.

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The technique for that distributive reform is known—has been known for ten years or more. The technical revolution can be accomplished to-morrow, if enough people are sufficiently interested.

If enough people are sufficiently interested, or, alternatively, if enough people are sufficiently disinterested. For it is probably true that, as Mr. Ezra Pound observes: "Not one man in a thousand can be aroused to an interest in economics until he definitely suffers from the effects of an evil system."

CHAPTER XV

How Poverty can be Abolished

- (1) "Production is done by machines, but consumption is still performed by human beings."

Mussolini.

- (2) "Master," says the Robot of the *Punch* cartoon, "Master, I can do the work of fifty men." "Yes," replies the Master, "But who is to support those fifty men?"

- (3) "Is there no one now in the State to regulate its bits of paper and metal so that people who can and do make things can buy them?"

Professor Soddy.

To all but those with vested interests or those finally saturated in the idea of scarcity, the solution should be already blatantly obvious. Production is now done by machines. It used to be done by men. Men used to "earn" wages in return for what they helped to produce. These wages were spent by them on consumption goods. They do not spend wages now. Because they have no wages to spend. Because they take, many of them, no share in production. Because production is done by machines. *And the wages of the machines are not distributed.*

Result: *Production unlimited; consumption limited.*

Production unlimited: The difficulties of making people realise this fact to the full seem, at any rate for this generation, to be almost insuperable.

The world in general, and Englishmen in particular, are still hopelessly tied to the hypotheses of the Age of Scarcity. What seems to be needed for every adult Englishman and woman is an hour a day's compulsory meditation on the idea of Plenty.

Production unlimited: Those who took part in the war should not find this meditation very difficult.

Consumption limited: Those who live in London should not find this twin idea very difficult either. Almost every street in almost every town supports its little detachment of ex-soldiers trailing along in the gutter, ill-shod, ill-clothed and underfed, begging for pennies while time drains itself away from them. It is not thought worth-while, or even possible ("the country is so poor") now to see that these men are properly clothed or fed, not worth-while even to let them produce the almost unlimited wealth of which they are capable. In the war, the case was altered. In the war it *was* thought both worth-while and possible. Worth-while and possible to feed and clothe them up to the high military standards, and simultaneously to keep them supplied with the most elaborate shells in the most colossal numbers. Production manifestly unlimited. Production unlimited, even though it was carried on solely by the women and girls and physically unfit men who were left at home.

The authorities saw fit to find the money tokens to evoke this prodigious production for destruction; but production for consumption was another story. "The grim goddess of finance exercised, as she

always must, an inexorable power." After the war it was found to be more convenient to restrict production than to print the necessary money tokens; tokens which had been printed with such liberality during the war years. Two and a half million acres fell out of cultivation; the streets of the towns echoed to the tramp of three million unemployed men; and we had once more slipped back a little further from learning to adjust the money supply to the market instead of adjusting the market to the money supply.

"Is there no one now in the State to regulate its bits of paper and metal so that people who can and do make things can buy them?"

Production unlimited: Consumption tragically limited. If anyone wants further proof of this latter let them go for a walk in Lancashire; or, should that savour too much of crude realism, let them read by their own fireside Mr. Fenner Brockway's *Hungry England*.

Item: Why is consumption limited? It is limited not, curiously enough, because people don't want to consume more, but because they haven't the stuff to back their want.

It is the lack of effective demand which makes production and consumption so grotesquely unequated.

There are only two ways of equating production and consumption.

- (1) By cutting down production.
- (2) By raising consumption.

Number 1 is the present lunatic way, leading logically to unemployment, hunger, war, starvation, etc. etc.

Number 2 is the Social Credit way; the way originally advocated by Major C. H. Douglas, the first economist to look at the situation from the consumer's point of view.

We are out, then, to raise consumption; to make demand fully effective. The only way to raise consumption is to finance consumption. Inflation (the financing of production) will not help. Deflation (the cutting down of consumption) will not help either. The only way to raise consumption is to raise consumption (*vide* the brilliant *New English Weekly*).

The only way to raise consumption is to put into the pockets of consumers enough money tickets, i.e. enough coupons, to buy the whole product of industry.

There is plenty of everything except pennies. Ergo: there must be more pennies.

("Is there no one now in the State, etc. . . .?")

Item: Why is there too little money? For three main reasons.

- (1) Since 1920 the Banks have been pursuing a deflationary policy. All attempts to improve the situation have been efforts to re-shuffle the quantity of money inside the ever-diminishing circle.
- (2) Labour-saving machinery is meant to displace labour; and it does so. But the men who are

displaced get no wages. The machine that displaces them can't spend wages. Therefore the total spending power in the country is reduced.

- (3) Because of the defect embodied in the *A* and *B* theorem of Major C. H. Douglas, whereby, through an inherent flaw in the present system, there is a *chronic* deficiency of purchasing power.

This latter needs some further explanation. Major Douglas divides the payments made by a firm into two groups—the *A* payments consisting of wages, salaries, and dividends.

B payments for other charges, raw materials, bank charges, depreciation, reserves. Both *A* and *B* go into the cost of the article, but *A* is the only payment which creates purchasing power with which to buy the whole of *A* and *B*. Here is the root cause of the chronic deficiency of purchasing power.

Orthodox economists and bankers have wrangled and boggled over this theorem in attempts to prove that the purchasing power generated by industry is automatically sufficient to meet the price-values created. They have attempted to show, for example, that bank charges and charges for raw materials do in fact eventually create purchasing power. But no one, so far as I know, ever has proved or ever will, that the sum which goes into cost to cover depreciation ever appears as equivalent purchasing power.

"This amount (depreciation)," says Major Douglas, "which is added to the cost of the article represents overhead charges in their simplest form and in many

modern productions overhead charges are between 200 and 300 per cent. of the direct cost of the product. It is not profit."

And again: "The simple and vital fact remains that the wages paid during the production of the article are less than the price of the article by an amount large or small, which is added to the cost of the article before the article is sold, representing, at least, 'depreciation'."

Thus the deficiency of purchasing power to buy the total amount of consumable goods is chronic.

There is one exception to this rule. In times of considerable capital expansion (such as the railway-building period of the Victorian era) the money generated by wages and salaries for work done on non-consumable goods implemented the deficient purchasing power generated by the production of consumable goods alone. The war is an example of another type of period of which this is true. And the present outcry for the "creating of work" on Public Works is probably largely due to this sense of a deficiency of purchasing power. Only, as these Public Works would at present be financed, the consequent burden of debt to the Banks freshly riveted upon industry would be intolerable.

Production unlimited. Consumption limited. Consumption limited because of a lack of effective demand; because of a deficiency of "money" in the pockets of consumers.

Item: What is this "money"?

Who makes it?

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How does it get its value ?

Where does it go ?

What is it ? It is the sole means of distributing the wealth which the nation produces.

In England it exists in the following proportions:

Paper note issue, in round figures	£400,000,000
Gold	£166,000,000
Bank money	£2,000,000,000

Who makes it ? By far the largest proportion of money in this country is therefore Bank money. Money *created* by the Bank of England and the "Big Five." It is simply inaccurate to go on pretending that the Banks can only lend the money placed with them by their clients. *The Banks create and destroy money as they please.* "Every loan creates a deposit, and every withdrawal of a loan destroys a deposit," says Banker McKenna in his *Post-War Banking Policy*.

The Banks create and destroy money. The Bank "of England," curiously enough, is not responsible to England, not even to Parliament. It can and does create money with no regard to the production of goods.

Undoubtedly the most insane feature of this present lunatic age is that it allows the sovereign power of coining money to rest in the hands of an irresponsible private company.

How does money get its value ? Money is of no value in itself ; it is only of value for the goods which it will buy. There is a certain relation beloved of "orthodox" economists between goods and money, *i.e. other things being equal* the value of a unit of money

moves in inverse ratio to the quantity of units in existence, e.g. if there are a hundred goods in existence and a hundred units of money, each unit of money will buy one good. But if there are a hundred goods in existence and only fifty units of money, each unit of money will "be worth" two goods.

Where does money go? By far the major percentage of money comes from the Banks. It is created by them at practically no trouble, saving or sacrifice to themselves. It is sent out on loan at a healthy interest. Eventually to the Banks it returns. The major percentage of money in the country is being continually pushed out by the Banks and returning to them again, with interest. A classic example, one might imagine, of "easy money."

Production unlimited: Consumption limited. Before redescribing the means for the raising of consumption there is one important idea to be grasped.

Man's struggle with nature is over. It is consequently impossible any longer to found an economic system on a basis of rewards and punishments. It is no longer sensible to say "Work or starve," because for a huge and ever-increasing percentage of the working population there is now permanently no necessary work to do.

Leisure can no longer be considered immoral, therefore. *And there must, in a machine age—where the machines do the major part of the necessary work—be remuneration otherwise than in return for work.*

"In an age of ample production and cheap supply," writes Sig Hagold Bowden in a letter to *The Times*, "thousands are deprived of purchasing power; not

through any fault of their own, but because our statesmen, politicians and financiers cannot find any pretext for giving it to them, except in return for work. And their work is not needed."

There *must* be remuneration other than in return for work.

Otherwise, "supposing," in the words of the Marquis of Tavistock, "we can perfect machinery until 100 persons working an hour a day can do all the work for the whole country, only those hundred—through wages and salaries—will be entitled to purchasing power, and the rest of the world must starve while the remainder of the goods must rot."

With this principle in mind we proceed to the Social Credit (Major C. H. Douglas') solution.

It consists of three main propositions.

- (a) That the Nation, through its lawfully appointed representatives, i.e. Parliament, take command of the means to buy all that it can produce. That is to say, that the Treasury dictate to the Bank of England with regard to the coining and destruction of money, and not, as hitherto, vice versa.

To allow the Bank "of England," a private firm, to coin and destroy the Nation's money, for its own private profit, is to usurp the King's prerogative; it is to put into the hands of moneylenders; irresponsible to the Nation or to Parliament, a licence to starve the entire community. And indeed one does not have to look very far to see how the money system, as

at present administered, has proved itself, as a device for creating a nation of half-starved C₃ men in a world bursting with plenty, a thing of A₁ efficiency.

- (b) It is proposed that, as there is at present *chronically* too little purchasing power to purchase the whole product of industry, goods should be sold at their real cost of production, i.e. at the just price. The real cost of production is suggested by Major Douglas to be consumption, i.e. the cost of goods actually used up (consumed) during the process of production.

It is proposed that the retailer should sell to the public at the just price, i.e. below financial cost; and that the remainder of the sum owing to the retailer be refunded to him in new money by the Government. In this way the purchasing power of the public will go much further towards buying the whole product of industry; and at the same time the manufacturer and retailer will be assured of their profit, a state of affairs impossible under the present system. Major Douglas: "As one might say, the industrial process provides 100 penny buns, but only 50 pennies with which to buy them. The remedy is clear, and that is to sell the 100 buns for 50 pennies, that is to say, one half-penny each instead of one penny, and to make up the capital charges at the point at which they are allocated, by issuing to the allocator of capital charges the other fifty pennies."

(c) It is proposed finally that the National Industrial Dividend be accorded to every man, woman and child in the country. In Major Douglas' words, that financial credit be made to reflect real credit; real credit to be based on a *correct* estimate of the community's ability to deliver goods and services as, when and where required.

Briefly, that the amount of money in the pockets of consumers be equated to the amount of goods coming on to the market; that, to this end, as much money be put into the pockets of every man and woman each week as is calculated to evoke the maximum desirable production.

Along these lines, and only along these lines, can consumption be raised to meet the vast potential production.

By these means material poverty could be abolished to-morrow.

If enough people were sufficiently interested. "No economic system," says Mr. Ezra Pound, "can be effective until a reasonable number of people are *interested* in economics; interested, I should say, in economics as part of the problem: what does and what does not hurt others."

To the plain man the system of National Dividends would appear to provide an adequate answer to the Master of the Robot in the *Punch* cartoon.

The Robot: "Master, I can do the work of fifty men."

The Master: "Yes; but who is to provide for those fifty?"

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“Pontifex” of *The New English Weekly*: “A dividend equal to the selling-price of the product, besides effecting the sale of the product, would have the additional advantage of substituting fifty specimens of man the gentleman of leisure for fifty specimens of man the beast of burden; a transaction which should give offence to no one, with the possible exception of a few dog-in-the-manger hereditary rentiers, whose daily nightmare is a shortage of lackeys.”

CHAPTER XVI

The Futility of Politicians

PRODUCTION unlimited: Consumption limited. What is vitally needed is to raise consumption. To raise consumption there must be greater purchasing power in the possession of consumers. More money in our pockets.

How do our politicians respond to this one vital need?

They respond, we may say, most characteristically: by taking more and more of our purchasing power *away* from us.

The logic of this remedy is not immediately apparent to the plain man.

The irrelevance of Parliamentary activities appears, accordingly, grotesque.

The only thing that is immediately imperative is to raise consumption. But Parliament has no time for that. It has to procure for itself a "favourable balance of trade"; it has to "balance its Budget." Its statesmen, the slaves of a flimsy internationalism, almost invariably find themselves obliged, at the crucial moments, to go and seek an obscure entente at the house of some foreign personage or other. When they do have a moment to consider the present plight of Hungry England, they are incapable of anything more original than the pitiful, gragnophonic slogans: "Inflate" or "Deflate," "Balance the Budget"

or "Let's have a favourable Trade Balance," "A Ten per cent. Wage Cut," or "Public Works."

It is worth-while to examine the irrelevance of these stock proposals in the light of what we have decided to be the one vital need.

What is needed: More money at the consumer's end.

What politicians propose: Inflation.

Inflation consists, as has been pointed out above, in pumping more money in at the producer's end. This manoeuvre would in any case be irrelevant to the need for more money at the consumer's end. But the fact that the money has to be borrowed from a bank, and repaid at interest, and that this cost has got to be recovered from the consumer in prices, not only does not alleviate, but actually considerably aggravates the situation.

What is needed: More money in the pockets of consumers.

What politicians propose: Deflation.

Deflation consists of a reduction in the quantity of purchasing power in circulation. Provided that the stock of goods remains constant, prices will fall, and those consumers who are still fortunate enough to have any purchasing power will find that it will "go further." In a very short time, however, manufacturers will find that they cannot recover their costs from the fallen prices; they will discontinue production, and wages and salaries will become non-existent. In this way the quantity of purchasing power will be further decreased. Deflation, we conclude, is no cure for a situation in which the one vital need is greater purchasing power.

What is needed: More money in the pockets of consumers.

What politicians propose: The procuring of a "favourable balance of trade."

The irrelevance of this proposal has in it an element of the tragic. It is a fact that we produce more than we can, under the financial limitations of the present system, consume at home. We cannot consume more at home, because we have not more purchasing power. The plain man would think that the solution was to distribute "credits", i.e. more purchasing power at home. Our politicians think differently. They prefer to distribute their credits *abroad*. There is a surplus of goods. Some of this surplus is exported to pay for imports. But very often there is a considerable amount of this surplus left over. Present political opinion holds that it would be immoral to distribute this surplus "on credit" at home, where some eight millions of English people are in bitter need of it, but it holds that it is very excellent business to distribute that surplus "on credit" abroad. It is this latter manoeuvre which produces what is mysteriously known as "a favourable balance of trade."

Note well that this extraordinary antic is not in the least exaggerated. There is a choice between distributing a net surplus of goods abroad or at home. In whichever place it is distributed it will be necessary for the exporting body to provide the receiving body not only with the goods, *but also with the money to pay for the goods*. England cannot have an excess of exports over imports unless she also provides the

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importing country with the money to pay for the balance of her own exports. Whether the surplus is distributed abroad or at home the owners of the surplus have got to provide both the goods *and* the wherewithal for the other party to purchase them. England has preferred to distribute her surplus abroad and provide the foreigner with the money to pay.

It will be noticed that this "favourable balance of trade" fallacy has made the lives of some eight millions of Englishmen a great deal less pleasant than they need have been.

The "favourableness" of giving away more than you receive is not, again, obvious to the plain man.

What was needed: greater ability on the part of British consumers to buy. This need is not met by the fashionable habit of increasing the ability of the foreigner to buy the British goods of which the British consumer has been defrauded.

Of course, there is a reason for the preservation of this balance of trade superstition. England has to supply not only the goods but the money to pay for them. This latter, which goes by the name of foreign "investment" is supplied by "the City." And on this latter the City procures to itself, with no great sweat or sacrifice, a fat yearly interest.

Which is, of course, all very jolly for the City. But the impartial observer might doubt whether it was worth the price of the starvation of eight millions or so of English people.

What is needed: greater purchasing power in the pockets of consumers.

What is proposed: a 10 per cent. wage cut, and an increase in direct taxation.

Comment on this proposal should be, even for the benefit of politicians, superfluous.

What is needed: greater purchasing power in the pockets of consumers.

What is proposed: a balanced Budget !!

A balanced Budget: one of the most fundamental and probably the most insidious of the canons of "sound finance."

The present system of budgeting rests on the implicit assumption that there is no way of paying for State Services otherwise than out of the pockets of individual citizens. Taxation of the individual citizen has proceeded at such a splendid pace that the very source of taxation is now seen to be dwindling. If, therefore, there is no other source of payment for State Services than the pockets of individuals, it is obvious that from now on the State Services must be progressively and intensively cut down to keep pace with the dwindling capital resources of individual citizens. Woe betide the salaries of State paid officials, teachers, civil servants, soldiers, sailors, policemen, in the next few years; woe betide all schemes of public health and education, if there is no other source of payment than the pockets of private citizens.

Is there no other source? Chancellors and Bankers join in the parrot chorus of denial. They are wrong. There *is* another source out of which the State Services can be paid.

The Government has only to draw up a National Credit Account, based upon an estimate of the

Nation's *ability to produce during the coming year* (to produce that is, unhampered by a financially restricted market), and then to translate that National Real Credit Account into terms of a Financial Credit Account, to find itself in possession of an almost unlimited fund out of which to pay State Services.

Procedure, therefore:—

- (1) Call a meeting of industrialists and draw up an estimate of the country's ability to produce goods when working to capacity in the coming year.
- (2) Point out that a National Dividend is about to be declared, and that the whole product of industry will be assured of a sale.
- (3) Decide in what precise relation Financial Credit is to be made to reflect Real Credit.
- (4) Declare a National Dividend, i.e. a sum sufficient to provide effective demand, at the desired price, for the amount of goods which the industrialists are bringing on to the market.

There is one thing more. Hunger in the midst of plenty, anxiety and attrition in an age of leisure, are not the sole components of the alternative to the raising of home consumption. There is another, more final item.

If a nation's "surplus" produce cannot be distributed at home, then it must be distributed abroad. A foreign market must be obtained and assured to it. If the surplus produce of all the industrialised nations cannot be distributed at home, it must likewise be

distributed abroad. Foreign markets must be assured to each and every one of these industrialised nations which are tumbling over each other to give away more than they receive (the phenomenon known as "living on one's exports").

With the spread of industrialisation and the export of machinery from England and America, such foreign markets become increasingly rare. The logical end of the struggle for the few foreign markets which remain is war.

Politicians go scurrying to foreign capitals, making solemn and verbose pacts against war and drafting sketches for proposals for schemes for reducing armaments; with comic irrelevance, since the causes of war are to be found at home, in their own domestic system.

So much for the general futility of politicians; it is necessary now to make one or two comments upon their particular impotence.

We may pass over the basic principle whereby an admirable manufacturer or landowner is liable at any moment to be promoted, and to be expected to become instantaneously an equally admirable Chancellor of the Exchequer or First Lord of the Admiralty. We may pass over the fact that, as Sir Oswald Mosley observes, when a man is adopted for a constituency, the question asked is not "Will he be a good member?" but "Will he be a good candidate?" We must necessarily ignore the almost perpetual irrelevance of Parliamentary debates. (Cf. the April, 1933, debate on the new Indian Constitution. After Mr. Churchill had said his customary say, and a Conservative

member had retaliated with the aid of shrewd selections from Mr. Churchill's personal history, an exasperated member enquired of the Speaker: "Are we debating the future of India or the past of Mr. Churchill?" To which, according to the *Daily Express*, the Speaker replied: "I thought we were having a debate.")

But we cannot pass over and we must emphasise again and again the fact that our real rulers are not the 600 or 650 persons periodically elected by the people of this country as their appointed and responsible representatives.

In the vital matter of financial policy the final word is not with the Treasury, the instrument of Parliament, but with those who control the Bank "of England." At least since the war, the obscure but potent Governor of the private company to whom the sovereign right of creating money has been pawned, has virtually directed the national and international policy of England. What chance has an ordinary unprofessional Englishman, however admirable he may have been as a manufacturer or as a landowner, against the professional banker Mr. Montagu Norman? The professional manufacturer or the professional landowner, embarrassingly promoted for a term of one to five years to the post of amateur Chancellor of the Exchequer, will naturally only be too glad to "take the advice" of the experienced and professional Governor of the Bank of England. The Chancellor has, of course, the advice and support of his Treasury "experts." But that it is the Bank which dictates a single quotation will show.

In 1925, before our return to the Gold Standard, and on the occasion of one of the changes in the Bank rate which were arranged prior to that event, an interesting conversation took place between Mr. Snowden and Mr. Winston Churchill (then Chancellor of the Exchequer).

Mr. Snowden: "With reference to the proposed change in the Bank rate, will the hon. member tell the House whether the Treasury has taken into consideration the possible effect of the proposed alteration on trade?"

Mr. Churchill: "That is a matter for the Bank of England."

Mr. Snowden: "While agreeing that this is immediately a matter for the Bank of England, I should like to know whether the Treasury has been consulted with regard to it."

Mr. Churchill: "As the hon. member knows perfectly well, it is not the habit of the Treasury to be formally consulted on these matters."

This conversation should destroy the last vestige of the illusion that we are ruled by our appointed representatives—the Members of Parliament.

Dictatorship could hardly wish for more absolute power.

CHAPTER XVII

On the Abrogation of Sisypism

WE set out to analyse the existing reactions to the Age of Plenty and Decline of Religion situations, and to find the right means of adjustment to these situations. In Social Credit we claim to have found some sort of preliminary adjustment.

Social Credit makes full immediate provision for an Age of Plenty, i.e. it arranges, immediately, for the distribution of the whole of a community's industrial product among *all* its members when only an increasingly few members of the community are being required to take part in the production thereof.

Does Social Credit meet the implications of the decline of religion and the danger of a consequent drug era?

We have observed how the universal drug trade has been called into being from both the supply and the demand ends.

There was a spontaneous *demand* for drug products (wish-fulfilment films, novels, plays, music) because the material conditions of the world were so ugly that people could not bear to contemplate it for longer than necessary. They therefore demanded cheap and plentiful dope.

There was also seen to be a spontaneous and independent *supply* of drug products. "Find work or

starve?" is the commandment; and as the essential work is already being done (i.e. the work necessary to give everyone a high standard of plain living), inessential work must be found; and what more convenient and inessential than the various branches of the new drug industry?

"Work or starve!" So much, under the present system, for the man in the street.

"Prostitute yourself or starve!" So much for the woman in the street; and precisely so much, also, for the artist.

The flaw in the present system makes it necessary to produce new inessential goods and distribute purchasing power in respect of wages for those goods, in order that the existing essential goods may be bought at all.

"I do not regard it as being a sane system," says Major Douglas, "that before you can buy a cabbage it is absolutely necessary to make a machine-gun, whether or no you want a machine-gun."

In this way has evolved the current mass prejudice to the effect that it is much better, i.e. more moral, to "do" something, however futile, to make something (however destructive), than to do nothing at all. Only work is moral. Practically only leisure is immoral. And so the man of leisure, whether voluntary or forced, comes to be considered as indubitably more despicable and disreputable than the man engaged on futile, irrelevant, or actually destructive work, i.e. than the life insurance agent, the advertisement man, or the manufacturer of machine-guns.

Only work is moral. O wicked, wicked scientists and inventors, whose time and labour throughout history has been devoted to the abolition of the sole moral thing!

Social Credit, involving the abrogation of Sisyphism, is likely to kill the drug industry at both its roots. People will no longer be forced to *demand* drugs, because the material condition of the world will no longer be intolerable to contemplate or endure. Moreover, there will no longer be a spontaneous urge to *supply* drug products, since the necessity to "Find work or starve" will have been abolished by the National Dividend. No one will be obliged, as now, through sheer economic pressure, to make anything which he knows to be inferior or tawdry. The writer will be able to afford *not* to write anything, unless he happens to have something to say. A wide return to a plainer and simpler standard of living (of food and clothing and behaviour) will almost certainly accompany the removal of the motive to make masses of tawdry, superfluous goods.

Consider the revolution in, for example, the theatre which Social Credit, involving the destruction of both the drug supply and drug demand, would effect.

Those few people who still patronise the contemporary theatre do so for purposes of "shelter"—somewhere to come in out of the rain. These few people, although they have extraordinarily few pennies, yet have more pennies than have the playwright or the company. Demand therefore governs and determines supply; and the playwright and the company

are forced, by economic siege, to supply "sheltered" plays. Consider the revolution in this sphere which would be brought about by the institution of Social Credit, and the distribution of the weekly National Dividend. The playwright and the management would no longer be dependent on the public for their bread and butter. Supply could govern demand. The playwright could give the public what *he* wanted; and, if he was a good and alive playwright, he would presumably produce plays as much alive as possible—unsheltered plays, and plays which would take account of the maximum number of impulses. On the audience, or demand, side, the National Dividend, bringing with it leisure and a subsistence income, would remove much of the motive for wanting to escape, shelter, forget. From the audience's side would come the demand to be not drugged any more, but actually stimulated; to have the scope of its imaginative consciousness not narrowed but actually extended. A desire, that is, even on the demand side, for life, more and more abundant life, instead of the present desire for the suspension of living.

We have now described the means to the technical revolution which will cause an immediate expansion in the material lives of people, while simultaneously removing the present causes of the paucity of their non-material lives.

Ideally, we decided above, a total revolution; a revolution of the whole man.

Practically, an immediate technical revolution, followed up by a gradual apocalyptic education-for-plenty.

The technical revolution has already been described ; it remains to indicate the direction of the gradual education. No better suggestion of the dangers of a "higher standard" civilisation exists than that contained in *Culture and Environment*, by F. R. Leavis and Denys Thompson. But that the placing of material civilisation within the reach of everyone brings with it various dangers of irresponsibility and exploitation, cannot be held a valid reason for withholding that material plenty.

"The rise of large-scale advertising, popular magazines, 'movies', radio and other channels of increased cultural diffusion from without, are rapidly changing habits of thought as to what things are essential to living and multiplying optional occasions for spending money."

But the important point is that this vast trade in advertising and selling inessentials is not an attribute of a plain "higher standard" situation, but of a higher standard situation created by the Sisyphean commandment: "Find some work (however inessential) or starve."

In America at this moment the American Relief Committees are desperately trying to keep off the market a new road-making machine that can lay down 8 miles of 6-ft. wide pavement in one day, lest it frustrate their efforts to provide work with pick and shovel for the great army of the unemployed. The British Member of Parliament, Sir William Wayland, is reported, in a recent speech, to have said: "Unemployment is due in large measure to the efficiency of machines, and it will be a very difficult

thing to avoid that. We cannot arrest the progress of efficiency, but I think some agreement might be reached at Geneva or elsewhere by England, America, France, Japan, Germany, etc., not to grant any more patents for ten years. That would tend to stop the progress of machinery."

The movement to "make work" (and, therefore, to abolish leisure) has also we have noted innumerable *unconscious* supporters. And this, moreover, although "leisure mattered much less when work was not, as it is now for so many, the antithesis of living."

We must realise that there can be no going back. We must agree not to scrap our machinery. Implicitly we agree that leisure, and not work, is our objective. We are to keep the machine; but we have to find some way to avoid becoming dedicated to it, to avoid a continuance of the "progress and the higher standard" situation, described in *Culture and Environment*. The disintegration and dissipation of this "progress and higher standard" community is there seen to manifest itself particularly in such things as the advertising industry; in the thrusting of superfluous and inessential goods and debased and corrupt standards on a servile community by a centralised caucus. The machine has made mass-production possible; it is essential, if we are to avoid death by mass-production, that both mass-producers and mass-consumers should be educated against "Progress," as described in *Culture and Environment*.

The practical Sisyphistic flaw, exposed by Major Douglas, has already been noted.

"The existing economic system distributes goods

and services through the same agency which induces goods and services, i.e. payment for work in progress. In other words, if production stops, distribution stops, and, as a consequence, a clear incentive exists to produce useless or superfluous articles in order that useful commodities already existing may be distributed."

It is unnecessary to underline the connection between this practical flaw and the growth of the advertising industry.

"The material prosperity of modern civilisation depends upon inducing people to buy what they do not want, and to want what they should not buy."

—*The Criterion*, 1932.

With which it is interesting to compare the following passage from Douglas' *Economic Democracy*, 1918.

The common factor of the whole situation lies in the simple facts that at any given period the material requirements of the individual are quite definitely limited—that any attempt to expand them artificially is an interference with the plain trend of evolution, which is to subordinate material to mental and psychological necessity; and that the impulse behind unbridled industrialism is not progressive but reactionary. . . .

"We must beware of simple solutions," say the authors of *Culture and Environment*." The abrogation of Sisyphism is not proposed as a solution. Probably only education can ever begin to solve the "industrial problem." But under the present Sisyphistic system, education can hardly be expected to make much headway. The limitations upon education arising from such progressive economic pressure are

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obvious. At both production and consumption ends, relief from Sisyphism is essential: a removal of the incentive to make, or to assist in the making and advertisement of, inessential goods, and a rendering of the consumer sufficiently independent economically to resist the rapes of the advertiser.

Theoretically, there must be an acceptance of the principle that leisure is not immoral; practically, there must, in a machine age, be remuneration other than in return for work. Otherwise the vicious circle of inessential production, fraudulent advertising, economically dependent consumers, is set up.

CHAPTER XVIII

Conclusion

We belong to a civilisation in which there is a superabundance of every single thing except money. Of money tickets there is a gross and fraudulent shortage.

Most of us have to spend nine hours of every day of our lives doing futile and attritive jobs to "earn" as many as possible of the few money tickets which still exist.

This scuffling for pennies is an exhausting business. After scuffle hours we do not want to have to exert ourselves, we want some sort of pleasant dope.

The artist, the writer, and the theatrical manager in common with the manufacturer are forced, through economic compulsion, to provide dope products. With the artist, as with many others, prostitution is the one alternative to starvation.

The present state of the contemporary theatre horribly manifests this prostitution; and provides various and subtle examples of contemporary dope.

The money monopoly, which keeps money, alone of all things, in short supply, is indirectly as responsible for the paucity of our non-material lives, as it is, directly, for the poverty of our material lives.

"I have come," said Christ, "that you may have life and that you may have it more abundantly."

But at the gate of custom, at the fatal bottle-neck between production and consumption, sits the

banking industry, battenning on the very shortage from which the world is dying.

Social Credit is not a scheme which will benefit one party at the expense of others. There is no question of taking from someone to give to someone else. In an Age of Plenty it is simply unnecessary to rob Peter to pay Paul.

Economists and politicians are never tired of protesting that if you pooled all the *money* in the country and shared it round, there wouldn't be enough for any single person to live on: about £25 per annum per head, apparently. All of which only goes to prove the gigantic nature of the fraud at present being practised on this country. Of the money in the country, if it were pooled and divided, there would not be enough.

Of the goods and services in the country, if they were pooled and divided, there would be a superabundance.

Ergo: the country is being defrauded through a shortage of money.

The amount of money which happens to be in the country at the moment does not ultimately matter one jot. It is at the mercy of the caprice of the private mint.

What ultimately matters is the country's ability to deliver goods and services, as, when, and where required.

It is on this latter, not on the former, that the National Dividend is going to be declared.

But the distribution of the Dividend is only the beginning. As Mr. R. H. Tawney says, it is necessary

to hurry towards the distribution of material wealth, "not because such wealth is the most important of man's treasures, but to prove that it is not."

With the declaration of the Dividend and the consequent abrogation of Sisypheism the jump into the leisure age will have been taken.

Douglasites as a whole seem to shy away from the idea of the distribution of work. "Let those who do work do so as engineers, or as artists, because they feel impelled to work. Let the others be completely leisured."

The present writer doubts whether this system would be preferable to one whereby anyone who felt like working for four hours a day, should be allowed an opportunity to do so. It is probably a minor and administrative question.

But, in any case, whether work is distributed over the entire community, or whether there is a new completely leisured class, there will have to be, as machine supersedes man, a progressive reduction in the hours of labour.

"It is as idiotic to expect members of a civilised twentieth-century community to go on working eight hours a day," says Mr. Ezra Pound, "as it would be to expect the shepherd to try to grow wool on his sheep by hand; the farmer to blow with his own breath on each buried seed to warm it; the poulterer to sit on his hen's eggs."

It is not claimed for Social Credit that it will be a panacea. What is claimed for it is that it will provide each human being with a decent standard of plain living and as much leisure, virtually, as each can want.

Leisure which, because it will not involve, as it does now, a perpetual anxiety, will involve no need of narcotic drugs. Social Credit will not be the *ne plus ultra* of reform. There are other monopolies beyond the Credit monopoly. Social Credit will not remove the prospect of death, nor restore the prospect of a compensating future life. By its assurance of leisure, unattended by anxiety, however, it will provide the basis for a full and integrated present life. Social Credit will not restore the chances of an immortality endlessly extended throughout time. But it will make imminently possible a here-now Immortality on this side of the grave. •

Mr. H. F. Hallett, in his book *Aeternitas*,¹ has admirably pointed the antithesis between the old idea of Immortality and the conception at which we are trying to arrive. "Nevertheless it is surely clear that no one really desires an immortal existence thought of as an infinitely extended persistence through time. . . . For us, temporal life is largely repetitive and accumulated, with but few periods of that triumphant consciousness which is our reality and our highest good. And what we really desiderate is always more reality and less of the idle repetition that belongs to mere time, and, with accumulation, is still the characteristic even of our duration."

The full leisure life, therefore, is not going to enable us to arrive at Immortality by any form of extended persistence through time. The connection between the full life and here-now Immortality is simply this: That continually in the course of our leisure life we

¹ Clarendon Press.

shall seem to tread as it were, in a secret trap-door, and *to step out of time altogether*. We shall experience that timelessness which is of the essence of "Immortality on this side of the grave." And we shall do this precisely at the moments of our most complete *integration*. To Spinoza, as Mr. Hallett has pointed out, reality and eternity are the same as completeness and individuality.

Such integration may be of two kinds—external and internal. An instance of external integration is the essential mystical experience, the integration of the individual with the external universe. The modern psychologist regards integration as primarily internal—a successful reconciliation of potentially conflicting impulses into a harmonious life. An instance of internal integration is that brought about by a response to a poem or to a work of art.

People in a state of creative integration are, as Mr. M. D. Forbes has observed, essentially unaware of time, while people suffering from disintegration feel that seconds are minutes and minutes hours, hours days, days weeks, weeks years.

The essential religious experience is the external integration or mystical experience. The essential pagan experience is the internal integration experience. As Mr. T. S. Eliot has written: "Those of us who find ourselves supporting what Mr. Murry calls Classicism believe that men cannot get on without giving allegiance to something outside themselves"; and, again, the real issue is between those who would "make man the measure of all things, and those who would find an extra-human measure."

It follows from the essential religious belief that "the visible world," in Mr. Brown's words, "is part of a more spiritual universe from which it draws its chief significance; that unison or harmonious relationship with that universe is our time end, and that inner communion with the spirit thereof—whether that spirit is called God or "law"—is a process wherein work is really done, and spiritual energy flows in and produces effects, psychological or material, within the "phenomenal world."

The mystical experience, which is the essential religious experience, divorced from all beliefs and creeds and dogmas, seems to be also the supreme stimulant.

The mystical experience which can only be approximately described by saying that it is a feeling of union with all the otherness, all the tremendous, all the mysterious, all the majestic of the universe, a union which transcends time, a union which eventually gives a feeling of having got beyond time.

It is the communion with the natural universe which is the essential part of this kind of stimulus; just as it is the feeling of isolation from nature—animate and inanimate—which is what mainly induces people to resort to drugs.

The essential characteristic of all natural stimulants in forms of mystical experience is the feeling of timelessness.

So much for external integration. The internal integration is most commonly brought about by the creation of, or, failing that by contact with, a work of art. A work of art, by its infective harmonising

and organisation of the individual, claims a response in terms of Eternity. To those who live in continual contact with works of art eternal life is veritably a present possession. The experiences derived from a work of art are not constricting experiences. They involve, in Mr. Forbes' words, an expansiveness of a "fluid and attaching type." They are experiences expanding and overlapping each other in terms of time. And the continuity of these experiences gives the sense of Eternity. The work of art becomes *pro tem.* a cosmos, and the concentration on these perfection items involves a pregnant timelessness.

"I *am* the resurrection and the Life," said Christ; and Immortality is, potentially, as a *present* possession, ours.

Education for leisure, and against drugs, must begin to operate immediately. It is more than likely that the first generation of the new age of distributed plenty will be gross; that they will spend their dividends on much beer and much food and a surfeit of material comfort. But it is possible that at any rate the succeeding generation will have been educated towards a sane use of leisure; to a full and integrated, unservile life. •

There are also some intermediate implications.

The conception of a civilisation founded upon the slavery of the many calculated to set the minds of the few free for the nobler works of leisure, will disappear. There will be an absolute shortage of domestic servants. Professor Soddy has written at some length actually suggesting this as the semi-conscious reason for which certain people are so effectively obstructing

the advent of the Age of Plenty, i.e. the fact that it will no longer be possible to say to anyone: "Do my housework or starve."

Similarly, the relations between the sexes will be fundamentally affected. It will be much more difficult than heretofore to capture a wife by process of economic siege. The incentive to make money in order to purchase a mate will be removed.

Social Credit, the communal system of distribution, is the first step to real Community. There are occasions on which Major Douglas and some of his followers profess their satisfaction with the present technical, i.e. productive system. Marxian Socialists attribute the utmost importance to the taking over of the ownership of the means of production; whereas the Social Credit view holds that the main interest of the individual should be in the apples, not in the ownership of the orchard. But the Marxian Socialist is indignant at the rent gained by the owner of the orchard. "While the sedentary Marx saw the millions of capitalism as producers robbed and wronged, the engineer Douglas saw them as defrauded consumers," writes Jack Common in *The Adelphi*.

Immediately, there can be no question but that the vital physical need of the millions is for the apples, not for the ownership of the orchard. Yet many Socialists still hold out for the ownership of the orchard or nothing.

One of the ablest exponents of this view is Mr. Fred Henderson who, in his recent *Foundations for the World's New Age of Plenty*, makes, in this connection, a specific criticism of the Douglas scheme.

"A Social Dividend," he says, "implies a Social Estate from which the dividend arises." And he ridicules the idea that the "production side of such a social (distributive) change can be ignored by the community and left to the old property methods."

The first thing to be said about this last sentence is that there is no obligation to ignore the production side. The obligation is to make an *immediate* reform in the quarter where an *immediate* reform is possible, i.e. on the distributive side. This does not obstruct the way of a subsequent (and necessarily more gradual) reform of the productive side. On the contrary, it clears the ground for it. To criticise the Douglas scheme for not breaking the productive monopoly is to criticise it for not doing something which it never set but to do. The Douglas scheme sets out to break the monopoly of credit. The institution of the Douglas scheme would immediately abolish poverty; it would not in itself reform the present modes of production; but it certainly would not preclude such reform. Certain Socialists reject the Douglas scheme because it does not happen to be a panacea. What the Socialist position boils down to is, in fact, a refusal to allow the poverty of the millions to be abolished, and the necessity of a daily suicide among unemployed men to be removed, unless and until the few thousands who possess property rights can simultaneously be deprived of them.

Nevertheless, a final caveat must be entered here. Social Credit is only the beginning. Social Credit is concerned with seeing that no one shall be poor: i.e. with money as the means to bread and butter for

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all. After the introduction of Social Credit the main concern must be to see that no one is servile: i.e. with money as power. Monopoly, privilege and the laws of property, implying as they do servility and the relish of servility, are fatal obstructions to the non-technical revolution, to the new relationship between men.

But the reshuffling of the ownership of the means of production has, in England, no chance of taking place instantaneously. The first *practicable* communal reform and the institution of a communal system of distribution is capable of immediate adoption.

Social Credit can hardly be other than the thin end of Community.

Epilogue to Politicians

POLITICIANS, honourable members of the Mother of Parliaments, custodians of this other Eden, here is something for you by way of epilogue.

It is time for you to realise that you are intimate spectators not only of treason, but also of suicide.

Of treason, because you have acquiesced in the criminal pawning away of the sovereign power of coining money to a private company.

Of suicide, because poverty and starvation is being prolonged for long after it need be ; for long after the cure for it has been discovered.

Criminal negligence is the smallest offence of which the historians of the future will convict you.

In Chapter XV you will find outlined the technique for curing poverty once and for all. The means are simple and have often been stated ; but since none of you attend, it is necessary to state them again ; and again ; and again—until you elect to pay attention.

You must either accept the scheme, or you must reject it. If you reject it, you must show a reason why.

If you accept it, you must put it through.

“Christ in His time overturned the tables of the money-changers. They have got their own back now.”



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