MODERN ART AND REVOLUTION

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1

THE subject which I wish to discuss with the readers of this pamphlet is whether the temper of mind and trend of feeling disclosed by the work of many modern artists portend economic and social revolution.

Good as they may be, achievements of genius as I for one think that many of them are, these paintings and sculptures of the Left are defiant and unsweetened. Many of the young find them instantly congenial. But the first instinctive reaction of most elderly people towards a good deal of this recent sculpture and painting is a feeling of repugnance, anger and alarm. Something in Epstein, Dobson, Skeaping and Henry Moore, something in Matisse, Picasso and Braque, disturbs them deeply and seems to convey a hint of menace. Voltaire (at first) and John Wesley had the same feeling about Jean Jacques Rousseau.

But these emotions of apprehension and resentment are not excited in the breasts of the elderly by modernist patterns in textiles, though there is a strong dose of cubism and of " savage " design in much that is woven on French and English looms. And outstanding examples of modernist architecture—the Chile Haus at Hamburg, for example, or Le Corbusier's buildings in the suburbs of Paris—may seem bizarre to the older generation, but do not arouse, as pictures and sculpture do, a feeling of indignation in their minds. One hears such people admire enormously the inside of the new memorial theatre at Stratford-on-Avon, though they speak coldly of Miss

Scott's treatment of the façade and sides. Yet no one denounces the design of the factory in René Claire's film *À nous la liberté*. By old and young alike, the new lines in motor-car design are accepted placidly or with pleasure. The big horn of a gramophone is so like the calyx of a flower that people quickly get accustomed to its form. And the pylons which carry the cables of the Central Electricity Board across the counties of England are coming into the favour they deserve, although there are still some people who (mostly in anticipation) talk of them as Ruskin used to talk about the ugliness of railways. Modernism in music, it is true, many of the older generation resent, even to the point of leaving the concert room when certain modern pieces are about to be played. But modernism in advertisement—Mr. McKnight Kauffer's designs for example—though many of them are brilliantly cubistic, the public evidently likes. And one does not hear of people refusing to take a ticket to " beauty spots " near London because they are affronted by the modernism of some of the placards in tube stations.

In European art during the last twenty years there has been a growing excitement, an acceleration of change. At the beginning of the century, Julius Meier-Graefe, a critic with a good deal of sensibility, surveyed the artistic scene. He found in all countries " an element of English influence and a dash of French." He would write differently in 1932. It is evident from the record of the impressions which he formed during his travels thirty years ago that, in discussion about the fundamental problems of painting, sculpture and architecture, the temperature was much lower then than it is to-day. During the last two decades, much of European art has been moving rather quickly to the Left. How quickly it has been so moving one can see (thanks largely to Mr. S. Courtauld's generosity and insight) by a visit to the Tate. But an even more convincing experience is to go to the Jeu de Paume in the Tuileries. Here, for the past two years, in one of the most central and

conspicuous public galleries in the world, the authorities of the Luxembourg have filled the rooms with an exhibition of modern paintings other than French. Either because the resources of the Luxembourg are limited, or because the conservateur has conservative views, the exhibition is almost comically unrepresentative of what is most vital in modern European art. It is like a Wimbledon tournament with almost all the seeded players left out. Among the painters whose works have been chosen for display there are a few distinguished names: and a few of the pictures and drawings are of high merit. But, taken as a whole, the show is massively commonplace. Yet thirty years ago it would have seemed courageous. So quickly does the current move. Is it "towards Niagara"?

There cannot but be some pregnant significance in the rising tide of modernism in European art. Does it mean merely that gifted artists (and never, I believe, was the number of artists of high endowment greater than it is to-day) have got tired of some of the old idioms, as Constable got tired of the brown tree, and are bent on giving vent to their genius through unhackneyed and experimental forms of expression? As far back as the eye can travel, it sees these changes in taste coming at irregular intervals in the calendar of European art. In every case, I think, the change in taste has coincided with some deep change in the mental outlook and economic fortune of the nation to which the artists and their clients belonged. Yet, except in the case of Delacroix, it is hazardous to attempt an answer to the question whether, in these earlier transmutations of taste, the artist was adjusting himself to new conditions already in being or was a harbinger of startling changes still to come. Speaking of the sixty years which are still within living memory, we may have to content ourselves with saying that the waves of artistic change—Japonaiserie, Impressionism, Symbolism, Pointillism—have been contemporary with great changes in

social habit and intellectual unrest. But am I wrong in thinking that in the aggressive modernism of much of the art of our own day there is something minatory, something that frightens those who are timid about the future? Do these new developments of art actually portend a drastic change in the way we now live and in the faiths which have power over our wills? Were it not for one thing, it would be difficult, I think, to refuse to say Yes to this question. But one doubt holds me back from being sure that, in its most highly vitalised developments, modern art prophesies a colossal revolution. The left-wing movements in modern art are so various and disparate that they may point only to a future of confusion.

In the meantime, much of modern art, having been conceived in revolution, seems prophetic of revolutions still to come. But we who live in a revolutionary age know how quickly we get acclimatised to change. Political conditions which would have seemed incredible twenty years ago are now prevalent in half Europe. Old and young, we adjust ourselves to the *fait accompli*. The old shoes, which fitted us on the whole so comfortably, are irrevocably lost. The new shoes, after all, have merits of their own. Though they pinch our feet, it is in a different place. Instinctively, we do not let our thoughts dwell on vain regrets. Use and wont break us in to the requirements and fashions of a new régime. Therefore, in the sphere of art, public acceptance is first given to those new things which are seen oftenest and in unpremeditated ways. Hence it is that cubism in textiles wins popular approval long before the same goodwill is shown towards cubism in painting. A non-representational picture by Braque or Picasso we rarely see: but similar designs in woollen weaves or silk scarves stealthily become familiar to us. Architecture we see oftener than sculpture. Motor cars as often as architecture. Thus modernism seeps into general taste. But it is significant that taste should, by instalments, find modernism tolerable. For this to have

happened, there must have been some deep change in the life and thoughts of man.

For us to-day, art boils with controversy. Yet in a sanguine moment, Turgeniev said, or rather made another say for him, that art is one of the four things which unite men. But that was before the great gale of artistic controversy had swept over Europe, and was still not more than a dust-storm in Paris with eddies in London. If those halcyon days return, they will be a sign, like the "sudden summer" in William Morris's *News from Nowhere*, that we have waked up on the morrow of revolution.

II

In the brewing of the change which is now conspicuous in modern art, three ferments have been at work.

One is nationalism. In this connexion the word nationalism is used, without any implication of national egoism in the domain of politics and economics, and as signifying the love which a painter or craftsman may feel for the life and look of his native land. Of this kind of nationalism in painting, Constable by natural disposition was one of the English pioneers. He loved England and spent his life in trying to paint the moods of English landscape. He had no theory of nationalism, but a deep instinctive attachment to the English scene. Crome and Barker of Bath, Girtin and (especially in his younger days) J. M. W. Turner; J. S. Cotman and Constable; Walter Scott, S. T. Coleridge with William and Dorothy Wordsworth, heightened in the minds of their fellow countrymen appreciation of the beauty and artistic treasures which are part of every national inheritance. This deepening regard for indigenous beauty, which became one of the distinctive characteristics of nineteenth-century feeling, showed itself first in Britain. To this

feeling, Ruskin among writers on art and economics gave most poignant utterance. He looked forward and backward: backward to the Gothic tradition, forward to fundamental changes in society. He was as certain as Karl Marx of the inevitableness of the breakdown of Victorian economics and of the industrial order of the Victorian Age. He foretold revolutionary changes in the economic structure of modern life. By him, art and revolution were brought into even more explosive contact than they had been brought by Courbet under the Commune of 1871, or by Daumier in the revolution of 1848, or by Delacroix in the revolution of 1830, or indeed by any one since Jean Jacques Rousseau. The nearest thing in our own day to Ruskin's insistence upon the root-connexion between art and social economics is the Soviet doctrine of proletarian architecture and art. It is hard indeed to escape the impression that, in the four central revolutionary paragraphs of Ruskin's chapter on The Nature of Gothic, which was published in 1853 in the second volume of *The Stones of Venice*, there are signs of the influence of the Communist Manifesto written by Karl Marx and Engels in 1847. Within twelve months of its appearance, Ruskin's prophecy had become part of the canon of English socialism. Forty years later, in retrospect, William Morris called it " one of the very few inevitable utterances of the century," an utterance which " pointed out a new road along which the world should travel."

The second ferment which has been at work in European art may, for short, be called functionalism. Art is an ancient word. Its root signifies " something that fits." Function is bone of the bone of art. For modern minds, its significance has been reinforced by the study of science. Biology, botany aided by the microscope, and photography, have pushed the idea of function harder than ever into our conception of art. But not less than by the influence of science, functionalism in art has been furthered by mechanical invention and by our perception of

the beauty of tools and of many machines. The singular charm of much non-representational painting in our own day is a sign of this influence in modern art. In architecture, functionalism has fathered some of the most impressive of modern buildings. The artists who contributed to the French magazine *L'Effort Moderne* diffused widely over Europe a perception of the fact that the work of the civil and mechanical engineer, the design of factories, ships, automobile engines and the like, are akin to the work of the artist; that art and modern industry are natural allies.

The third ferment has come from the comparison of cultures. This has brought fever germs into modern art, but has also excited its power of observation. Exploration and easier modes of travel have made possible the collection of masterpieces of remote or primitive art. The issue of photographic reproductions, notably in Germany and in France, has made many of these masterpieces familiar to artists and students in all countries. Ethnology has given distinction to the study of origins. Anthropology has disclosed the religious and social significance of the arts of primitive man. The influence of this discovery of the beauty of much indigenous art upon the imagination of many great living artists may be compared with the influence of the rediscovery of Roman-Greek sculpture on Winckelmann and his contemporaries. In both cases the valid outcome is not eclecticism, but a new insight into the canons of art. In Winckelmann's studies the effect was the vivifying of culture. In the modern sculptor's work it is an intensified sensibility to mass and plane.

Immigrant design has in all ages left an impress on indigenous art. But never have the stages of this infection been so plain as in Western European art during the last seventy years. The colour prints of Hokusai and Hiroshige, which excited the interest and admiration of the Goncourts and their circle in Paris in the eighteen-sixties, had an instant effect upon the painting of Monet

and, in a less degree, upon that of Manet. Whistler would not have been Whistler without them. A good deal more important were the influences of seventeenth-century Chinese colour prints of flowers and landscape upon the technique of Cézanne. And in European art Chinese sculpture has had an influence at least as penetrating as that of Chinese painting. Khmer sculpture from Angkor, and the funerary wooden sculpture of Annam, have hardly yet had time to imprint their influence, as eventually they will, upon European minds. But the rhythm of Indian sculpture has told on us, as have the frescoes of Ajanta and of Bagh. The limestone head of Modigliani, which is in the Victoria and Albert Museum, shows how profoundly the sculptor was moved by the sharp-featured masks made on the Ivory Coast for ritual in the dance. And works of genius by many living sculptors show how exciting and salutary has been the study of masterpieces from Polynesia, Mexico and the Congo.

III

Is not (the reader may interject) this *tourbillon* of nationality, mechanical invention, science and anthropology enough to explain the excitement in modern art? The effect upon the authority of previously-established tradition is manifest. Does the new movement which has spread like a rash over Western Europe mean anything more than artistic indigestion producing nightmare?

I am disposed to think that there is more to it than this. The most characteristic works of the painters and sculptors of the left wing have, from the moment of their appearance, aroused intense admiration or angry resentment. There is something in their technique that cuts deep. They raise questions which lie beyond the sphere of taste. It is not only in the realm of art that they challenge current convention. They forebode change. They seem to prophesy

that something very serious is coming. For this reason, certain outstanding modern pictures have met with ups and downs of fortune down to the present day.

For Germany, Herr von Tschudi did a great work, which was the counterpart of what Mr. Roger Fry has done for England. Tschudi, indeed, had not Mr. Fry's genius for writing and design. But, like the latter, he "enabled the dullness of blinded sight." He was a brave man who stood by his convictions. Indeed he was worried into his grave by sticking up for what he believed to be true. When he died in 1911, *The Times* said truly that he had rendered services of the very greatest value to art in Germany. For twenty-five years he was on the staff of the National Gallery in Berlin, and from 1896 to 1909 its Director. Then came unhappy disputes in which the then Kaiser was concerned. Tschudi had acquired for the National Gallery in Berlin French pictures—among others, paintings by Manet, Monet and Cézanne. "A strong opposition" (*The Times* wrote in its obituary notice) "was organised against his unorthodoxy. It culminated in the refusal of the Prussian Government to confirm the purchase of some French pictures which Tschudi had ordered in England."

Bavaria likes to take a rise out of Prussia. Tschudi, on leaving Berlin, was appointed director of the New Picture Gallery at Munich. Like Sir Hugh Lane, he had a quick eye for a good picture. He devised a way of getting for the gallery at Munich some masterpieces of modern painting before it was too late. He persuaded groups of friends to buy pictures on his advice and to offer them as gifts to the State. It became widely known that the Munich Gallery possessed these treasures and that they were hung in a place of honour. The year after Tschudi's death in 1911, I went to Munich to see them. On my way, I saw clear signs of Tschudi's influence in the collections of pictures lent by local industrialists to the public galleries, not only at Düsseldorf and Mannheim, but in Hagen and Elberfeld

which correspond, say, to Oldham and Mirfield. At Munich, however, I found that, since Tschudi's recent death, the modern pictures which he had secured for the gallery had been withdrawn from the public eye. Some one hinted to me that they were still in the building and that for a consideration one of the gallery attendants might take me down to see them. Wondering whether I might find myself in a police court for tampering with the integrity of an official, I made an offer to a splendid creature who, finger on his lips, led me furtively down a long staircase into the basement, where he unlocked a door and bade me go in alone. Stacked in the shadow were rows of frames. One by one, I brought the pictures to the light. This a gorgeous Gauguin, this a thrilling Vincent van Gogh, the next a superb Cézanne. Aladdin was happy in his cave.

After the war, when the wind had got round into the opposite quarter, Tschudi's buried treasures were disinterred, and hung, a brilliant assemblage, in a place of even higher honour than when first acquired. The new political régime, having a more or less revolutionary reputation to live up to, paid its tribute to Tschudi's taste. But what may happen next, who knows?

Lest (what is very unlikely) any reader should suspect the French Impressionist painters, or Cézanne, Gauguin or Vincent van Gogh, or Signac, Seurat or Matisse, of being dangerously Red, may I recall what Mr. Robert Byron found this spring in Moscow? In that city, he tells us in *The Architectural Review* for May 1932, there is " one of the finest and most representative collections of modern French pictures that has ever been assembled. Over the entrance of each room are printed notices which are designed to assist the appreciation of less sophisticated visitors.

" MONET: Age of transition from capitalism to imperialism. Taste of the industrial bourgeoisie.

" CÉZANNE :	Age of the preliminary period of imperialism. Taste of the industrial bourgeoisie.
" GAUGUIN :	Taste of the rentier.
" VAN GOGH :	Taste of the small bourgeoisie.
" SIGNAC :	Taste of the lower and middle bourgeoisie under the influence of the larger industrial bourgeoisie.
" MATISSE :	Age of distorted imperialism. Taste of the rentier."

I suspect that some intelligent curator, anxious to keep these French pictures for his gallery, has devised this ingenious plan which shields him from puritanical attack. But the opportunity enjoyed by the official critic in Moscow of saying rude things about these painters must excite the envy of Monsieur Dimier, the French art critic and champion of the Académie de Rome, who published in 1914 a history of French painting in the nineteenth century. The substance of Monsieur Dimier's divigations on the painters of the left wing is : " Vincent van Gogh's extraordinary productions : Cézanne's chaos of crude, coarse colour : Gauguin's childish drawing, foisted on to the public by dealers." This is all he can manage to say, though evidently he would like to say much more if only Billingsgate were not beneath his dignity. The conservative Frenchman was at a disadvantage in not having Marxian ideology at command. But Mr. Fry says that, at the post-Impressionist exhibition in London in 1910, really violent words were used by " some well-known critics " who, he adds charitably : " have since recognised how far their first reactions were at fault." And, some years earlier, when the Caillebotte collection of Impressionist pictures was bequeathed to the Luxembourg, the French Government of the day insisted that " Cézanne's works should never be exposed in a public gallery."

Cézanne himself did no waving of the red flag. He grew

into a shy, very retiring, though occasionally irascible, old gentleman, who kept himself out of politics and took his views on social and economic questions from the Pope. But in his own line of work he knew his mind and was as obstinate as Wordsworth. And his line in art was more profoundly revolutionary and immeasurably more original than that of Gauguin, who said that a painter must be either a revolutionary or a plagiarist. In putting this as a dilemma, Gauguin, I think, was wrong. An artist can be greater than either a copy-cat or a mere votary of change. If he has the rare genius and disinterested persistency needed for the task, and if he happens to live in an age which needs the welding of very bold progressive ideas with the sound metal of tradition, he can become a pioneering peacemaker. This is what Cézanne, without himself realising how far he had fulfilled his function, is proving to have been. His aim, as he said more than once and emphatically, was " to do Poussin again after nature." By that he meant that he wanted to combine subtle Impressionist observation—observation of the weft of glancing colour which is on the surface of all objects under light—with integration of the underlying structure which may correspond to the reality of things. Thus Cézanne, revolutionary as his influence has been, will in the course of time stand out in high eminence not as a divider, but as a reconciler ; as one of those mediatory spirits who weave out of disparate strands a strong cord to serve as guard and guide. This was the greatest greatness of Cézanne. In temper, Gauguin was revolutionary, but more in impetuous personal adventure rather than in intellectual power and was less revolutionary than he thought himself to be. Vincent van Gogh was revolutionary too, with the single-mindedness of a missionary saint. He had a blazing vision of colour, but was intellectually unanalytic. Cézanne stands as Ingres stands, not as David or even Seurat : not like Voltaire or Diderot or Winckelmann, but like Goethe, Blake and Keats.

IV

When Goethe wrote his little book upon Dilettantism, he added what he called "particular applications" to various branches of art. From his list he left out sculpture —an odd omission after what he had written about the Laocoon, the baroque Laocoon, but he mentions Painting, Design, Poetry, Music, Dancing, Drama, Architecture and Gardening. Under the head of Design, Goethe would, I think, have been glad to include Mechanical Invention. In Europe and America all these arts have shown vitality during the last few decades; in all cases, vitality for diffusion and, in the case of design, of painting, of sculpture, of music, of dancing, of engineering and of architecture, vivid creative energy and courage in revolutionary experiment. The claim that the modern world has been and is one of the great eras in the history of art becomes even more cogent if, following Diderot's lead, we bracket the mechanic with the liberal arts, as he did when he wrote his essay on Art for the French Encylopædia. Since the modern period began about 1750, genius has disclosed itself in the artistic creation of the machine. We are living in a time when the energy of man is flowering in functional as well as scientific artistry and achievement. And through mechanical invention, art has accelerated revolutionary change. So Mr. H. G. Wells has lately written in *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind*: "As man conquers the three major problems which at present confront him, as he escapes from the suicidal obsession of warfare, the plain danger of over-population, and the perplexities of economic strangulation, his released energy, his ever-increasing free energy, will find its satisfaction very largely in immense artistic undertakings. . . . If we are not on the verge of a phase of disaster, we must be on the verge of an age of mighty art, and particularly of architecture and musical spectacle. . . . There may be a great rehabilitation of poetry and fine prose composition

under the influence of radio. For two or three generations we have read our poetry in books: we may return again to hearing it."

In plain fact, the artist—using the word in its wider sense—uncovers truth for us. In his hour of insight he holds the divining rod. He is the revealer. At his word, at his touch, something is drawn back from our eyes. Like the man from the pool at Siloam, we " come seeing."

And because the artist has this power, he is a formidable person, at least when his hour is on him. We stand not a little in awe of his gift, and instinctively feel alarmed when we see him possessed by it. Therefore, when (as at present) a great multitude of people endued with this artistic power is exerting it with determination and in unexpected ways, we cannot help, in our first reaction, resenting the new turn of their activity and showing how much we disapprove its revolutionary trend. If we are too well-mannered openly to use the bad language which Mr. Fry was shocked to overhear at his Post-Impressionist exhibition, we find other ways of visiting the innovating artist with displeasure.

It must have been so from the beginning, or man would not have taken a million years to get as far as he has got. When we feel, as we all feel after we have reached years of discretion, wrath at first sight for an artist who innovates, what pushes us is the colossal pressure of accumulated social instinct. If we can think of ourselves as very primitive Kolub Bushmen, returning from a hunting raid to our cave on the top of a hill in the Orange Free State or Western Transvaal, the first thing we should say when we saw new marks on the wall is " Well, the wet has got in again." But as soon as we realised that on that smooth bit of the rock-face some one had scratched or sketched an antelope, we should smell a witch or a wizard, and wonder what harm this magic would do us before we could get it safely under the thumb of the soviet community of our cave. In Christmas week, eight months before the out-

break of the Great War, the Russian artist, Wassily Kandinsky, who was then living near Munich, sent me an unexpected gift. From the packing case the staff extracted a large picture which, when the paper had been torn off, was greeted with the bushman's instinctive exclamations. It was a non-representational picture, a free pattern of coloured arabesque, explosive and ballistic in its design. We gave it the title of " War in the air." A year later, by which time we had got only too familiar with bombs and fighting planes, I wrote to Kandinsky in Sweden to ask whether, when he painted the picture, he had foreboded war. " Not this war," he replied, " I had no premonition of that. But I knew that a terrible struggle was going on in the spiritual sphere, and that made me paint the picture I sent to you."

This " ahnung " of Kandinsky, mystically expressed, made me aware of the sensibility of an artist of genius, shown at times in a flair of anticipation of what is coming, indistinct and fluctuating, but insistent in his mind and premonitory. You feel the same hyper-sensibility in Meryon's Paris etching, the Ministry of Marine, which dates from 1866. It was almost the last plate he etched before he died. In silhouette against storm-clouds which are bright with dawn or sunset, enemy aircraft fly to the attack. Some of the planes are shaped like fish or birds or horses, but others might pass for what we see to-day. And you will remember that, when the great trench systems had been dug on the Western Front, photographs taken of them from the air bore a singular resemblance to the rather geometrical drawings with which some Cubist painters had surprised us in the years before the war.

The artist of course is near of kin to the inventor. He anticipates, though with no detailed exactitude of construction, some of the mechanical devices which later ingenuity independently designs. At times of inventive excitement like the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the power of mechanical improvisation runs fluid out of

and into poetry. Edmund Cartwright, Fellow of an Oxford College and something of a poet and projector, went in 1784 for a holiday visit to Matlock so as to be near Richard Arkwright at Cromford. In a talk with his friend, he said it ought not to be more difficult to invent a "weaving mill" than to construct the automatic chess-player. He went home to his country parsonage and straightway invented the power-loom.

V

The revolutionary trend in modern art—a thrust which is met and balanced by a vast resistance from habit and half-good tradition—is unintelligible apart from its context. Its contemporary context is the shrinkage of the conventional authority of older formulations of religious belief and the general heightening of aspiration towards greater range of individual experience. With its historical context are intertwined the long roots by which we are attached to ideas fixed in expression long ago, and to material objects (buildings and other works of art), which have survived from a rather distant past.

The art-experience of our own day is but a section of a still unfinished chapter. For Western Europe this began—so far as history allows any such division—round about 1750. Handel was then writing his last oratorio. Sir Joshua was near the end of his study-time in Rome. Gainsborough was finding his feet at Ipswich. Richard Wilson was painting landscape in Italy. William Gilpin was noting the picturesque scenery of Britain. In a narrow street in Paris, Chardin was showing the significance of still-life, and the beauty of the dwelling-rooms of the rising middle-class. Two men, Diderot and Jean Jacques Rousseau, were making what Goethe called "a quiet introduction to those monstrous changes of the world by which everything permanent appeared to sink." The

former was finishing the first volume of the Encyclopædia, the latter had just won the prize at Dijon for a Discourse on Arts and Science and in three years' time was to publish his book *On the Origin of Inequality*. Six years later, Mozart was to be born: fourteen years after that, Beethoven.

And ever since then, down to this hour, through six revolutions and through many wars; with a background of great poetry, great music, the rising and setting of philosophies, and vast new controls of energy; through the flush, the fading and the fresh dawn of many hopes, great artists have disclosed to us some new aspect of reality.

And as our eyes travel along the procession of these men, we see them in chequered light and shade, in fame or in obscurity, according to whether there was contemporary need for the message which their genius could give. We see David in glory when France craved for authority and rhetoric: Delacroix, when her mood was for the outpouring of individual emotion in romance: Corot, when she was homesick for the country: Courbet, when she had zest for what is real: Manet, when she had to be shocked out of conventions: the Impressionists when, intrigued by the new science of optics, she wished to be shown that every shadow has colour: Gauguin, when she was ready to be told that her civilisation is a disease: Cézanne, when she once more longed for solidity and to probe the mystery of form. But each of these successive leaders, except the turncoat David, was howled at furiously when he first appeared. Each, whether he stood for the discipline of classical authority or for individualism in emotional experience, insisted at all costs on being free to paint what he liked and as he liked, and was intolerant of imposed regulation and of official restraint. But as a counterpart to each successive leader of prevailing opinion, we find some one, in the shadow but influential, who stood for the temporarily unpopular mood and was representative of

the opposite truth: Georges Michel, for example, painting romantic landscapes for a pittance on the northern slopes of Montmartre, while David had the limelight, and so right along the chain down to these days of Matisse and Bonnard in one tradition, Ségonzac and Frélaut in another.

We could make the same procession out of the English painters: Reynolds, with Blake obscure: Wilkie prosperous, Benjamin Haydon in despair: the classic and the romantic always coexisting, but now the one uppermost through some inner national need, now the other. The intellectual reactions are more explicit in French painting than in English. But the two countries between them, with the Netherlands, have done more than any others for modern art. In painting, however, during the nineteenth century, France won the palm.

VI

Whether things are working up to some crisis and to a new beginning, who shall say, be it about art he speaks or of some other aspect of man's life, whether solitary or interwoven with the lives of others. Much depends, of course, on the profits of trade and manufacture. Art, like a university, is in great part an appendage to a prevailing economic order. But both of them (the university in essence though not in constitution) are connected by hidden channels with deep unseen forces, far older than our economic order and more permanent. Yet, unless they are exceptionally favoured or prosperous, dons and artists alike depend for part of their daily bread on other people's savings. Even if the whole world goes communist, the painters who will first serve the soviets will have been bred on the capital of the bourgeoisie. And for the wonderful efflorescence of artistic talent now visible in England, we have partly to thank the inherited savings made under the régime which Moscow says is doomed. Genius is

incalculable. Neither it nor talent comes to order. We are thankful, therefore, that England to-day has so much of it in the field of art. But a painter must have his breakfast and his dinner, and, if dinners and breakfasts get harder to come by, there will be fewer painters, and some who might become eminent in art will drop out early or from the first enrol themselves in other callings.

There is an instinctive power of self-adjustment in every human society which enjoys a decent measure of good sense. For this reason, we may reasonably doubt the advent of a catastrophe which will for good and all obliterate the whole of our existing economic order, even if we were to fall for a time under the stroke of some colossal misfortune. There is a passage in the Communist Manifesto which is apocalyptic in menace. But the Manifesto was written nearly ninety years ago and though things have moved fast since then, five out of the ten measures which Marx and Engels predicted have not yet been achieved. The fact is that Karl Marx, though a deep and industrious student of one side of the organisation of English society, overlooked a good deal which has to be reckoned with in our complex national life. The forecast which he made in 1847, and a wonderful half-forecast it was, has been vitiated by his omission of some factors which he was too *parti pris* to be bothered with.

But, all the same, one has an uneasy feeling that bad weather is coming. In some of the movements—the salutary and spontaneous movements—of modern art, there are signs of trouble, or, perhaps we should say, of far-reaching change. We have to guard ourselves from being fanciful and nervy. And also we should keep in mind the big fact that the phases of modern art which to many of us seem the most significant, express the convictions only of a minority—of indeed a very small minority —of living artists. Nevertheless, it is not numbers that count in art, but an unusual quality of individual insight and technical skill. The artists whose work seems to

presage some great change are few, but they may, for all that, be the most significant. We find, of course, that art has always been sensitive to social and economic changes when these have already occurred and are patent. But, if we look back carefully, and try to examine the history of painting during the last hundred and fifty years, we find more than this. A few men of genius practising the art of painting have had premonitions. These premonitions were vague, whether gloomy or sanguine. But some men of unusual sensibility do seem to have had an inkling of what was in the air, and of what was about to spring from causes which were still hidden from common observation. Nevertheless, we must allow for the fact that these causes, having long been in unnoticed operation, may be understood by a few men who have had special reason or facilities for studying them. And it is always possible that from such a source as this the painter may have caught hints of what was coming.

I do not want to say a shade more than I feel. But can we wonder at people asking themselves with a good deal of anxiety what the tension in modern art may portend?

Revolutions have come at frequent intervals during the century and a half which we have had under review. But, except in one case, these revolutions, though none of them insignificant and all of them influential in their subsequent repercussions, have not been of supreme historical importance. Many of the signs which preceded these minor revolutions in the past are repeating themselves to-day. And there are premonitory signals (not in art alone) of social and economic changes of major importance.

Physics, the queen of contemporary science, is turning our thoughts towards the mysterious source of energy. Ours may be a creedless but not a godless age. D. H. Lawrence would not have liked to be quoted in any context associated with the idea of God. But he said something about Cézanne which it is suitable to remember here. " In Cézanne," he wrote, " modern French art makes its

first tiny step back to real substance. Van Gogh's earth was still subjective earth, himself projected into the earth. But Cézanne's apples are a real attempt to let the apple exist in its own separate entity, without transfusing it with personal emotion. Cézanne's great effort was to shove the apple away from him and let it live of itself. The moment we realise that matter is only a form of energy, whatever that may be, in the same instant matter makes us realise that it exists absolutely, since it is compact energy itself. Cézanne felt it in paint when he felt for the apple. Suddenly he felt the tyranny of mind, the white, worn-out arrogance of the spirit, the enclosed ego in its sky-blue heaven self-painted. Cézanne felt the sky-blue prison. A great conflict started within him. He wanted to express what he convulsedly knew. He wanted to be a real man: to get out of the sky-blue prison into real air. He couldn't do it, and it embittered him. Yet, with his apple, he did shove the stone from the door of the tomb."[1]

When scientists and poets and painters become concentrated on the quest for reality, anything may happen. Compared with the search for reality nothing else in the world is of much account. And when a man is sure that he has apprehended reality he does not long stay satisfied with conditions of life which seem to him to shut reality out.

What may be coming is hidden from our eyes. Whatever it may be, it will not be a cheaply-won earthly paradise. Nor will it come, as some Utopians have fondly imagined, for good and all after a short and bloody *émeute*. It is certain, if it is thoroughgoing, to make deep changes in the existing economic order and in our form of government and, therefore, in our ways of education. It may involve for some people, as Vigeland's simplified sculpture at Oslo suggests, a return to a life more primitive than we are at present wont to lead. It may bring with it a new

[1] *Introduction to Paintings, 1929.*

formula of liberal education, a liberal education designed to develop the whole man in body, mind and spirit. It may enforce a new obedience to authority, an obedience which some will willingly render. It cannot fail to grapple with the sinister tendency of full-time mass production in factories to dehumanise the craftsmen. But the root of the matter will lie in the determined search for reality. And this is becoming the central quest of science and of ethics and of art.

Friedrich Paulsen of Berlin said that what struck him among men he knew was their deep inner uncertainty about the last things: their doubt, even more than doubt, whether knowledge of ultimate things is possible. This state of mind Paulsen called "the twin brother of blind dogmatism." And he held that the intellectual independence of a thoughtful man at the end of the eighteenth century was stronger than that of his counterpart at the end of the nineteenth. Perhaps it is because the artist hopes, through his art, to get nearer to the inner reality of things, that he feels about art as many men have felt, and many still feel, about religion.

APPENDIX

[THE preceding paper was read at the Liberal Summer School, in Oxford, on July 31st, 1932. In illustration of it, nearly two hundred examples of modern art (pictures, drawings, lithographs, colour prints, sculpture, pottery and textiles) were exhibited for two days in the Hall and Library of University College. As was to be expected, they provoked a clash of opinion.

After hearing some of the comments on the pictures, the writer felt misgivings lest he should fail to make plain to his readers in what lies the connexion between the exciting development of modern art and those political and economic problems which the members of the Liberal Summer School had come to Oxford to discuss. Therefore, after hearing an address which Lord Lothian gave on the evening of July 30th, he wrote a supplementary note in order to give a clue to this connexion. This note is here printed as an appendix.]

Lord Lothian foreshadows still further encroachment upon the economic province hitherto dominated by enterprise working for profit. He implies (and I agree with him) that, in future, there will be more collectivist or semi-communist undertakings in trade, industry and exploration. These will be superintended and directed by public or quasi-public servants, organised in a hierarchy of authority.

Of the disinterestedness of the actions of these persons, we in England, as we now know it, would harbour no suspicion. We should count on their keeping themselves cleanhanded. We should take for granted the accuracy of their statistics, the exactitude of their official reports, the good intentions of their economic forecasts, the mild and temperate habit of their social prognostic. But where in this semi-paradise would reside the incentive to experiment, to hazarding bold throws-forward towards new methods of production and across the frontiers of use and wont?

In the régime of non-collectivist enterprise this incentive is

supplied, however crudely and clumsily, by the motive of private profit—profit to be enjoyed either by a company of venturers or by a single person. From what quarter could we confidently count on securing in a collectivist régime the indispensable incentive to improvement which is found by trial and error, through wager and experiment?

A certain measure of this incentive we could reckon on getting from the social convictions which would actuate individual members of the public or quasi-public services—from men like Jeremy Bentham, Edwin Chadwick, Rowland Hill, James Kay-Shuttleworth, Charles Lucas, Sidney Webb and Graham Wallas. And under the high temperature of militant communism the social convictions of great numbers of young people would glow for a time at white heat.

We should also draw another measure of incentive from that kind of *esprit de corps* which is ambitious for the honour and prestige of a branch of the public service.

And a third source of incentive would be found in the compassion for the weak and for the socially injured which inspired General Armstrong's work for the negroes at Hampton, Virginia, after the American Civil War, and which thrills one in poignant writers like Ruskin and R. H. Tawney.

But would these sources give out a current of incentive powerful enough to raise the weight which has to be lifted before we are able to find the means for undertaking, or to get leave to undertake, new enterprises entailing large risks and offering only dubious prospects of success?

But for one doubt, I should be disposed to answer this question in the affirmative, provided that it were safe to assume that industrial and commercial changes need be no more than incremental and would not call for unflinching realignment.

My doubt springs from the prevailing intellectual habit of the higher Civil Service in Great Britain (not least the Treasury), and from that of British members of the Indian Civil Service, as disclosed during the twenty normal years before the war.

These men are eminent in probity, in industry and in fidelity to duty. They are adept in criticising projects which are put up to them by innovators and subordinates. Their criticisms are penetrating and pungent. But these very men whose powers of criticism are so highly developed, seem weak in the

field of imaginative and creative suggestion—in the points, that is, which characterise original minds. If you read an official file, especially a file on a new project, you will find as a rule that the experienced official is better at telling a subordinate what NOT to do than at interesting him in ways of doing better what is already passably well done, or in encouraging him to conceive bold innovations in existing methods of administration. Hence there is a tone in these public services which is discouraging to novelty, an atmosphere of birth-control restrictive of new beginnings and of new growths.

Where does this habit of mind come from? Where are its nurseries?

Unfortunately the general temper of our higher scholastic education pays a bounty on critical skill to the discouragement of creative insight. It trains us to examine this or the other statement or theory, and rewards us for high accomplishment in well-informed and cogent criticism. This strain in our higher education came from men like Casaubon. It is Humanism with the sap dried out of it. It is instinctively suspicious of experimental science. It is prone to economise on scientific research. It prefers to deal with things in symbols or in words alone, and is not in the habit of going to see things or places or processes before it puts into words a critical judgment upon them.

This dessicated humanism is corrected by the resistance of human nature, as well as by many outside influences and also by a certain laxity in intellectual standards. But in England it has a strong ally in our steadily growing system of public examinations.

Examinations, in which the work of the candidates is mainly judged from the contents of written scripts done in answer to printed questions, intensify the bias towards putting a high value upon the power of critical judgment. And examinations are found to be a very convenient and economical way of selecting, without risk of favouritism or of social injustice, what may pass for an intellectual élite.

In our educational arrangements from beginning to end we should, I think, be more on our guard against the danger of attaching disproportionate value and reward to the propædeutic of a predominantly critical discipline.

Should not a larger place be kept in our education for

the development, to an equally high standard of excellence, of other skills than those of an accomplished scholar of the traditional Humanist pattern? Besides the rhythm of Casaubon, of Dr. Arnold of Rugby, of Matthew Arnold and of the School Certificate Examination, there are rhythms of body and of mind and of emotional experience which we should acquire under skilful and exacting discipline. And among these disciplines, which few endowments now encourage and no tests of so-called general culture adequately recognise or reward, are those imparted through physical education (allied with music), through speech training (as in France) and through the practice of the arts.

The advent of great changes in the social order are presaged by significant movements in contemporary art. To meet the needs of this new age it seems inevitable that there should be a change in the formula of a liberal education. Something that will integrate body, mind and emotions is called for.

BOOKS

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