

COUNTER ATTACK FROM THE EAST

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by C. E. M. Joad

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COUNTER ATTACK FROM
THE EAST

THE PHILOSOPHY OF
RADHAKRISHNAN

by

C. E. M. JOAD

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NOTE

All books referred to without the name of the author in either text or footnotes are by Radhakrishnan.

PROLOGUE

WEST AND EAST

CURRENT INDICTMENTS OF MODERN CIVILIZATION

That something is seriously amiss with the civilization of the West has been apparent for some time. The sense of dissatisfaction finds expression in a continuous series of books and articles; pulpits thunder denunciation on the frivolity of the age; economists and politicians warn us of impending collapse, while our great 'dailies' rumble with alarm as if they were the national bowels.

Our literature is clever and realistic, but it is uninspired; when it does acknowledge the draught of inspiration, it is so frankly animal that it would seem to blow from the stomach or the loins. Our social philosophy lacks definiteness of aim and purpose. We are apparently outgrowing democracy; certainly, it seems to serve our purposes with ever-diminishing success, yet our best minds shrink in dismay from the alternatives of Fascism and Communism, which are the only substitutes the age has as yet been able to evolve. Our art is decadent or sterile. Neither in music nor in painting has our age produced any figures comparable in stature with the great men of the past, and the flowing river of inspiration seems to have trickled away into the backwaters of formlessness, discord and experimentation for its own sake. Our poets write, not because

they have something to say, but because it seems right to say something, and are so manifestly beating the air that Spengler boldly announces the approaching demise of art and advises young men to devote themselves "to technics rather than to lyrics."

Spengler, indeed, assuring us that our period of cultural growth is over and that there is nothing left for us but the stagnation of a rigid mechanical civilization, is our typical philosopher, at once the prop and mirror of the age, reflecting the tendencies which he has helped to form.

Our morals, if we are to believe the publicists, are shocking; young people, indulging their fancies and their instincts whenever they are pleased to feel them, do not hesitate to justify such indulgence in the name of self-expression and openly avow that the best way of getting rid of a temptation is to yield to it. Our conception of the good life is so debased that our rich men retiring from business can find no occupation for their leisure but striking little round pieces of matter with long thin ones in the shape of bats, mallets, cues, racquets and clubs, and introducing pieces of metal from a distance into the bodies of defenceless birds and animals; pursuits which prove so boring when adopted as staple occupations week in and week out, instead of as diversions for the week-end, that they return in dudgeon to their desks and continue to make money which they do not want in despair of finding life tolerable without the hard labour to

which they have been accustomed. And so on, and so on. . . .

The indictment is a formidable one and ranges over the whole field of contemporary life. Much of it, no doubt, is beside the point; much may be written off as an expression of the inevitable resentment felt by elderly authors at the movement of evolution for having passed them by; much again could be and has been brought with equal justice against any civilization in any age and is not specially applicable to our own.

NATURE OF BOOK

But, when all allowance is made for these factors, a formidable sense of dissatisfaction remains which is not new but increasing. Something, I repeat, is clearly amiss.

What? This book, in form an account of Radhakrishnan's philosophy, is in substance an attempt to answer the question, for it is an answer to precisely this question that Radhakrishnan's philosophy purports to provide. Before I come to it, let me try to bring a little more clearly into focus this feeling of dissatisfaction which is so characteristic of our civilization.

STATUS AND USES OF MODERN SCIENCE

The distinguishing achievement of the West is science. Science has endowed Western man with power over the forces of nature beyond the wildest dreams of any previous civilization. It has unlocked

the secrets of the physical world; it has given man speed and dowered him with goods; it has shed light upon the dark places of his origin and past; it has charted the workings of his body and aspires not, without show of justification, to probe the mystery of his life. Unlike most of man's so-called knowledge it has practical uses. It has it in its power to rid the lives of human beings of dull and drudging work and their minds of superstitious fears. It has eased the grim burden of man's pain, and, what is scarcely less important, removed the overshadowing fear of pain. In a hundred ways it has brightened and cleansed human existence, and because of it the Western world is to-day a franker, a saner and in some ways a happier place than it has ever been in the past.

CONTRASTED WITH MODERN WISDOM

Unfortunately, however, man's wisdom has not developed commensurately with his powers. Science, as Bertrand Russell has pointed out, does not change man's desires; it merely increases his power of satisfying them. If the desires are good, this added power of satisfaction is itself a good; if evil, it is proportionately an evil. Now while human desires individually are neither good nor evil but mixed, owing to the fact that we still live in a state of international brigandage, they are in their social and collective expression mainly harmful. For this reason science, which has endowed civilized man with such prodigious powers, has endowed him to

his peril; so much so, that he is within measurable distance of exterminating himself in the next war and mechanizing himself into a mere unit of production, if he avoids extermination. Hence, it is not enough for civilized man to be no worse than he ever was, if he is to avoid shipwreck; he has a need to be very much better, since, unless he can control the forces which science has unloosed, they will assuredly destroy him.

In obtaining such control the scientists themselves, with occasional rare exceptions,¹ show no disposition to participate. With impressive unanimity they disclaim responsibility for the uses to which society puts their results. Laboriously they explain that science is ethically and socially neutral; they are laboratory workers whose business it is to discover the operations of nature; what citizens choose to do with their discoveries is not their concern. It does not seem to occur to them that they too are citizens, and that it is their duty either to take a hand in administering the fruits of their work or to withhold their results until society shows itself fit to be entrusted with them. At the moment they are like men presenting babies with boxes of matches and schoolboys with high explosives without troubling to enquire whether the babies are likely to set fire to themselves with the probable result of consuming the scientists in the conflagration, or recognizing the

¹ A series of Leaders and Letters in *The New Statesman and Nation*, which have appeared since this Prologue was written, has extracted this qualification.

duty of instructing the schoolboys in the properties of T.N.T.

SCIENTISTS REFUSE TO TAKE A HAND

By this refusal of the scientists to assume social responsibilities society is deprived of the assistance of the brains of its most intelligent citizens, at a moment when it is more than usually embarrassed with their fruits. For this attitude of non-co-operation the scientist's traditional disinclination to come to conclusions without sufficient data is in part responsible. This disinclination, defensible and even necessary in the realms of physics and chemistry, argues a certain lack of realistic comprehension on the part of those who seek to extend it outside them. In spheres where the truth can be established it is right not to announce conclusions until they have been verified. But in philosophy, ethics and politics, no such verification is possible.

Yet human beings must live; they must also live in societies. Now living from its very nature involves the adoption of conclusions before they have been established; it also involves the need to act as if a certain course of conduct were right before one knows that it is right. In a word, to live is to take risks; so is to govern, to administer and to believe. Hence the attitude of strict agnosticism in the absence of necessary data which the scientist adopts in his own sphere is inappropriately extended beyond it. To insist that it must be so extended, to refuse, that is to say, to make up one's mind without

adequate evidence in politics, ethics, theology, involves, indeed, in itself the adoption of a conclusion; for, as William James pointed out, to refuse to have faith merely because we have no conclusive evidence upon a particular issue, involves precisely the risk which it is sought to avoid. "Scepticism, then, is not avoidance of option. It is option of a certain particular kind of risk. *Better risk loss of truth than chance of error*—that is your faith vetoer's exact position. He is actively playing his stake as much as a believer is; he is backing the field against the religious hypothesis, just as the believer is backing the religious hypothesis against the field. . . . Dupery for dupery, what proof is there that dupery through hope is so much worse than dupery through fear?" So William James. . . . Nevertheless the Western world gets, and is likely to get, little help from the scientist when it approaches him for guidance in practical affairs. That his are the brains of our world most would agree; but in spite of his brains he seems incapable of telling us either what to believe or how to act. He can throw no light either upon the purpose of life as a whole or upon the immediate problems of how we are to live here and now.

IMPOTENCE OF PHILOSOPHY IN THE WEST

If he goes to the philosopher, the modern Westerner is in no better case. Philosophy began to be effective when Socrates asked the Athenians inconvenient questions in the market-place; it began, that is to

say, with the interest which a man with an original mind took in the behaviour of his contemporaries and with his commentary upon and criticism of their behaviour. Throughout its history philosophy has alternated between maintaining this living contact with contemporary life and losing it; but the times when it has lost it have been the times when it has been least fruitful as philosophy. Our age must, assuredly, be reckoned one of these times. Philosophy, no doubt, must be different from life, but it should not be indifferent. Yet divorced from the flow of contemporary events philosophers make a merit of their aloofness, and, preoccupied with a barren controversy over epistemology, devote themselves to the elaboration of a logical technique whose remoteness from practical issues gives point to the gibe that the problems of philosophy are less a substitute than an escape from those of life.

Recently there have been symptoms of a revival of interest in contemporary problems. Professor Whitehead's writings on religion, Bertrand Russell's excursions into sociology and politics, and Professor Macmurray's broadcast talks on problems of freedom and personality are symptoms of that interest. But the indifference of professional philosophers to these incursions by their contemporaries into the human field of hopes and wishes, problems and policies, is a measure of the depth of the academic shades by which their subject is shrouded.

TWILIGHT OF RELIGION

Our religion is one which many profess but few believe, and, the more educated, the fewer. A number of causes contribute to this result. In the first place, the spiritual truths of Christianity are presented in a context of dogmatic assertions in regard to scientific historical and geographical facts which observation and experiment have shown to be untrue. It is not true, for example, that the world was created in the way which our Scriptures assert, that the earth is immobile and the centre of the firmament, that there is a substance called the soul which leaves the body at death, that there is a geographical place called hell and another place called heaven, or that chemical substances such as bread and wine can be changed into substances of a different order by the use of certain forms of words.

The fact that these things are not so has no bearing upon the spiritual truth of the Christian religion; nevertheless, official Christianity as organized in the Churches insists on burdening itself with the lumber of its past, with the result that, when a choice is forced between the requirements of a faith based on authority on the one hand, and the facts of which his education supported by a plain reading of his personal experience has assured him on the other, the modern educated Westerner has little difficulty in making a decision. Inevitably, having made it, he is inclined to throw out the baby with the bath water, and to regard religion as

nonsense because he finds that the world was not created in six days.

He is confirmed in this view by the manifest incapacity of his Church to cope with the problems of the time. In the recent war professed exponents of the religion of Christ flatly contradicted every principle of the teaching they were paid to profess. Any attempt to draw attention to this teaching was hushed into silence, and those who ventured to act in accordance with it were imprisoned with the ready concurrence of the Church. To-day the Churches present the appearance of bodies too preoccupied with professional disputations over points of dogma and ritual to spare the time to attend to the problems of contemporary life. When they do intervene, their contribution is so patently at variance with the spirit of Christ that the exasperated epigram, "For God's sake don't touch the Church of England; it's the only thing that stands between us and Christianity," which went the unofficial rounds in the House of Commons at the time of the debate on the Revised Prayer Book, is not so wide of the mark as those who were ready to be shocked by it supposed.

In general, the spirit of the West is markedly hostile to religion in at least two senses of that ambiguous word. It distrusts supernaturalism and is sceptical of any transcendental account of the nature of the universe; and it knows enough comparative religion to distrust the claim to exclusive and exhaustive truth historically made by most of

the great religions and by none more eagerly than by its own Christianity. Nevertheless the Westerner badly needs a faith. Ill at ease in the spiritual vacuum left by the decay of traditional beliefs, he expresses his loneliness by a feverish clutching at any straw that seems likely to lend him support. The fact is that he dislikes facing the infinite single-handed as much as he dislikes facing the problem of conduct with nothing better than his own good sense to guide him.

THE CASE OF ETHICS

Guidance has traditionally been provided by codes of ethics; but ethics in the contemporary West is in no better case than religion. Inevitably, since it is to a large extent derivative from religion. The Christian religion has historically backed the contemporary code of morals, whatever the conduct which at any given moment it may have enjoined, by the promise of rewards and the threat of punishment, with the result that it is difficult to say how much of what has been accounted good behaviour in the past has been prompted by the desire to achieve an eternity of celestial bliss and to avoid an eternity of infernal torment. This, of course, is to turn ethics into a system of post-dated Hedonism—one eschews the more obvious pleasures now in order to make sure of enjoying more quintessential pleasures in perpetuity hereafter—nor do I wish to suggest that these purely prudential considerations have ever been the *sole* motive for right conduct.

The fact remains, however, that religion in the West has taken good care to present both the rewards and the punishments in the liveliest colours, so that the relaxation of ethical restraints which has accompanied the decay of religious belief need cause no surprise. The tendency has been reinforced by the reaction from the purely inhibitory morality of our Victorian ancestors, who never called a pleasure a pleasure when they could call it a sin, and by the object lesson of the war as a collective practical repudiation of all the ethical principles officially accepted by the West as forming the essential message of Christ.

In the absence of any code of conduct which it could accept the post-war generation adopted the gospel of self-expression. This, whatever it may mean for a mature sage, found its chief application in a contemptuous repudiation of all the preferences and prejudices which the Victorians pretentiously called their morals as a preliminary to the adoption of a frankly avowed Hedonism.

The defect of Hedonism as a rule of life is that, if you persistently make pleasure your aim, you find after a short experience that nothing pleases. Unfortunately this is a truth which nobody accepts until he has discovered it for himself, with the result that the phase of post-war licence has been succeeded by a post-post-war phase of disillusionment. Two aspects of this phase may be noted.

NEED FOR A CREED AND A CODE

(i) First, as regards conduct, ordinary men and women find themselves for the first time in modern civilization without any accepted code of right and wrong. The lack would not seriously embarrass the original moral genius or the constitutional moral rebel. The ordinary man, however, being neither a moral genius nor a moral rebel, is accustomed to get his code of beliefs and morals as he gets his clothes and his boots ready made from the social shop, believing in Allah and polygamy, if he happens to be born in a palace in Constantinople, as readily as he believes in the Trinity and monogamy, if he is born in a bedroom in Balham. In practice his moral needs are limited to a demand for rules of conduct which he can understand and respect, and, provided that these are definite and generally recognized, their precise content is comparatively unimportant. "Tell me what to think and what to do" is the cry of the ordinary man all through the ages, and, because they have told him, the Church and the Army have always been his two most popular institutions. To deprive such a one of the guidance to which he has been accustomed, is to lay him under the necessity of making his rules for himself and deciding each issue on merits, as an alternative to moral anarchy. Lacking the equipment for the first and the taste for the second, he is in a state of bewildered agnosticism. Endowed with a constitutional craving for authority and guidance, he is yet disabled by the

scepticism of his age from accepting any of the numerous claimants for the favour of his credulity in the field.

LACK OF SENSE OF VALUES

(ii) In the second place, he acknowledges no scale of values. That Western civilization is deplorably lacking in a sense of value is implicit in all that I have said of the marvels of our science and of the use to which we put them. Modern Western civilization is the result of endowing with the fruits of the work of a dozen men of genius a population which is emotionally at the level of savages and culturally at that of schoolboys. In this disparity between our mechanical expertness and our social and ethical lack of it lies, I have suggested, the great danger to our civilization. There was never more leisure at man's disposal for the living of the good life; there was never less knowledge of how to live it. See that mechanic mending the carburettor of his car. In his knowledge of material forces and skill in its application he is behaving rather like a superman. See the same mechanic ten minutes later driving in a little hell of noise and dust and stench, unable to appreciate the country himself and precluding the appreciation of all who come near him; he is behaving like a congenital idiot! Men of genius by the dozen, men of talent by the hundred, have laboured that wireless might be; they succeeded, and the tittle-tattle of the green-room and the racing stable is broadcast to the furthest Pacific, while

the remoter ether vibrates to the strains of negroid music.

ILLUSTRATION FROM THE 'TALKIES'

Of all the expressions of Western civilization the 'talkies' are the most striking and the most characteristic. Their production involves a miracle of applied science. The essential constituent involved in the production of a 'talkie' is a photo-electric cell. When light of short wavelength falls upon a clean metal surface, it is found that the surface becomes charged with positive electricity. This positive charge is due to the emission from the surface of electrons, little particles of negative electricity, which are jerked out of it by the short wavelength rays. If the inside of an evacuated glass bulb is coated with a suitable metal so as to provide an interior metal surface, and a wire be inserted into the bulb which conducts the electrons away as they are jerked out, a small electric current passes along the wire. This current varies with the strength of the light rays falling on the bulb. The bulb so prepared is known as a photo-electric cell. By the aid of this apparatus fluctuations in light are transformed into fluctuations of electric current. These in their turn can be transformed into fluctuations of sound. Now fluctuations of sound can be made to produce fluctuations of light by the use of very thin plates of metal which respond to sound. By means of these fluctuating thin plates a band of light and dark alternations which correspond to the

sounds of speech or music is printed on the side of a film. The intervals between the light and dark portions of the band represent the characteristics of and relations between different sounds. When it is desired to reproduce the original sounds, the band is run in the path of a beam of light. The beam of light then fluctuates in a manner corresponding to the sounds which produced the band. This beam in its turn is made to fall on a photo-electric cell and so to produce a fluctuating current of liberated electrons which can be translated back again into sound.

To have discovered these processes and to have perfected a device to give effect to the discovery is surely among the marvels of the human intellect. And this incredible apparatus is devoted to the representation of a series of dramas in which the warfare of battling stags for the favour of does is regarded as the only legitimate object of human interest, played by elaborately under-dressed women who titillate our senses while they debauch our taste, and men whose carefully ironed features and swelling muscles suggest that brawn has finally and completely triumphed over brain.

REPUDIATION OF OBJECTIVE VALUE

Nor is there any sign of revolt from the scale of values, or rather, of disvalues, that our most popular form of entertainment implies. On the contrary, that there are neither values nor disvalues, but only personal preferences and prejudices is one of the most

cherished convictions of the contemporary young. There are, they insist, no great men and women; there are only those whom individual historians have delighted to praise. There are no great artists and musicians; there are only those who happen to appeal to the taste of a particular generation. As I write, there comes into my mind the picture of a student attached to a pair of earphones by means of which he was listening to wireless jazz, while he was at the same time reading Hegel; and to the questions did not the one activity interfere with the other, and was it in any event advisable to mix the trivial with the noble, the froth of the day with the great thoughts of all time, replying that to say of one activity or form of enjoyment that it is *better* than another is meaningless. All that one is entitled to assert, he declared, is that it is more or less satisfying to the mood of the moment. The remark was characteristic—characteristic of a refusal to discriminate which arises from a fundamental scepticism as to the reality of those values which have been traditionally regarded as the ends of human action.

Scepticism in matters of belief, guidelessness in matters of conduct, indifference in regard to value, these are the outstanding factors in the mood of the West. The result is that nowhere in the Western world to-day is there any accepted view as to what men ought to believe, how they ought to act, or what things they ought to admire. The situation is admirably brought out in the play of Shaw's old age, *Too True to be Good*.

"TOO TRUE TO BE GOOD"

Shaw began his propagandist career forty years ago by urging the world to win free from the swathes and swaddling of Victorian sentimentality and romanticism, to learn self-knowledge, to confront itself. He succeeded, only to find that the process of stripping Western man of his illusions has left him as uncomfortable as stripping him of his clothes. Now that the blinkers are off and Western man sees, or thinks he sees, things as they are, he is confronted with a vision of himself straying naked and forlorn through an indifferent universe, a mere target for the shafts of doom, twitched into love and war, creeds and causes by a showman who, indifferent alike to his weal and woe, pulls the strings. Lacking creed, faith and purpose, he cannot endure the emptiness of his own soul, cannot be pleased by pleasures that he sees through, cannot be comforted by loyalties and ideals once absolute but riddled now with his scepticism. The characters in this latest play, the embittered atheist, the disillusioned clergyman, the disgruntled airman, the girl 'Mops' who throws convention to the winds that she may have 'a good time,' and being free, healthy and happy, is yet dissatisfied and miserable, are each and all asking in different accents the same question: What way of life shall I pursue that I may escape the dreadful humiliation of the nakedness of my soul? This question is the theme of the speech of inspired eloquence with which the play ends.

"It is clear to me that though they are dispersing quietly to do very ordinary things . . . yet they are all falling, falling, falling, endlessly and hopelessly through a void in which they can find no footing. There is something fantastic about them, something unreal and perverse, something profoundly unsatisfactory. . . . Naked bodies no longer shock us, but the horror of the naked mind is still more than we can bear.

"Swear; use dirty words; drink cocktails; kiss and caress and cuddle, until girls who are like roses at eighteen are like battered demireps at twenty-two; in all these ways the bright young things of the victory have scandalized their pre-war elders, and left nobody but their bright young selves a penny the worse. But how are we to bear this dreadful new nakedness? The iron lightning of war has burnt great rents in our angelic veils of idealism, just as it has smashed great holes in our cathedral roofs and torn great gashes in our hillsides. Our souls go in rags now.

"I stand mid-way between youth and age, like a man who has missed his train: too late for the last one and too early for the next. . . . I have no Bible, no creed: the war has shot both out of my hands. . . . I am ignorant: I have lost my nerve and am intimidated; all I know is that I must find the way of life for myself and all of us, or we shall surely perish. . . ."

WHAT SHALL I DO TO BE SAVED?

The question is implied in what in America is called, at the time of writing, "the depression," which is a condition of mind even more than a condition of markets. It is implicit in the armed fear of Europe and in the defeatism which lies like a black cloud over the Western world. It expresses the fundamental need of contemporary civilization, a shorn lamb to whom God has not yet tempered the wind of truth. It is the cry of children who, having outgrown their old toys, have not yet learnt the use of new ones. The Western world, indeed, is passing through a period common enough in precocious children, in which knowledge is greater than the wisdom which should assimilate it. We are in consequence both arrogant and frightened; arrogant, when we look without and parade our achievements before the East; frightened, when we look within and gauge their effects upon ourselves. To sum up, in the words of the peasant apprised of the marvels of the age, quoted in Radhakrishnan's *Kalki*:—"We are taught to fly in the air like birds, and to swim in the water like fishes; but how to live on the earth we do not know."¹ The remark in its way is epic; it epitomizes the commentary of one civilization upon another, conveying the reaction of the traditional philosophy of the East to the contemporary achievement of the West.

¹ *Kalki*, p. 9.

CIVILIZATIONS OF THE EAST

In the East is a civilization which, whatever its other defects, has escaped the distinguishing faults of the West. It does not identify the good life with the transfer of pieces of matter from one place to another; it takes no mystic delight in the impact of oblong pieces of matter upon round ones; and it does not regard rapid motion upon the earth's surface in mechanisms propelled by petrol as the most praiseworthy human activity. It values machines, in so far as it puts up with them at all, not as ends in themselves but as means to ends beyond themselves, the lightening of human toil and the increase of human leisure. Also its members know how to employ leisure. Unlike most Westerners, they can sit still and listen; they can bear themselves by themselves, and many possess the technique of solitude and are trained in the art of meditation. The civilizations of the East are very old; their roots stretch far back into the past to a time when Europe was still a cockpit of fighting savages. "Long before Western Europe had emerged from the Stone Age, the civilizations of Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, Crete and Chaldea had reached a highly advanced stage. If we confine our attention to the last 6,000 years of our history and represent one hundred years by a minute of the clock . . . we find that Egypt and Babylon are holding the centre of the stage when the hands are at twelve . . . China, India and Media come upon the scene at twenty past twelve. . . .

At twelve forty-five we are in the beginnings of the powerful, modern European nations. Every minute of the next ten an Empire or a kingdom goes off the map and another comes on. A few seconds before one o'clock we had the Great War."¹ In short, if we reckon the span of human civilization at about five thousand years, India has been civilized more or less throughout the whole of that period, Europe during only one-sixth of it.

Now during this protracted period of five thousand years of civilization certain traditions of living have been built up. These traditions are bound up with the cultivation of certain spiritual values. Because of their preoccupation with these values, the life of action and ambition has never had quite the same hold upon men in the East as it has in the West. What do I mean by 'spiritual values'?

THEIR LONGEVITY

The question formulates itself inevitably in the Westerner's mind, apt at all times to be distrustful of what it regards as the 'woolliness' of the thought which is normally expressed in such phrases, and, after the admitted fiasco of religion in the last war, a fiasco brought about by a disparity between practice and profession so flagrant that even the Church could not avoid being struck by it, particularly distrustful of spiritual 'woolliness.' The question is one which it is Radhakrishnan's main business to answer, and, if I am successful in con-

¹ *Kalki*, pp. 49, 50.

veying the gist of his religious philosophy, by the time I have finished my readers will be able to answer it for themselves. Meanwhile, it is worth while noting that the life of the spirit, whatever one means by it, appears to confer a certain longevity upon nations who practise it. It is the energetic active peoples who are for ever going about their worldly business who are short lived. Overmuch taking thought for the morrow is apt to preclude one from being present on the morrow when it comes.

If we survey the rise and fall of civilizations in the past, we see that those which devoted their energies to politics, patriotism and aggrandizement, have either destroyed themselves by their own restlessness from within or have made themselves so intolerable to their neighbours that they have been forced to destroy them from without.

REBUKE FROM THE EAST

At the moment the Western world is within measurable distance of destroying itself through its inability to control the forces with which its science has endowed it. The next European war is likely to see the end of European civilization, while the social incidence of the unchecked powers of production is in a fair way to bring about a collapse of an economic system which seems incapable of distributing what it produces. Our nations too, no less than our individuals, might do well to take a leaf out of the book of the East and, instead of perpetually 'doing,' learn to sit back and listen.

In short, while the East knows little of machines, while the material apparatus of its civilization is of the crudest and its residents fail to move either rapidly or frequently over and above the surface of the earth, it inherits from its long line of seers and sages a traditional wisdom in the light of which men may live at peace and be content. It is by virtue of the insight of this traditional wisdom that the West stands rebuked: "A community which is almost entirely occupied with life and body, physical and economic existence, scientific and technical efficiency to the exclusion of the higher humanistic ideals of mind and spirit is not truly civilized."¹ Can the wisdom be communicated, so that we may be moved to rebuke ourselves?

It is precisely here that Radhakrishnan, whom you have just heard speaking in the wings, enters to make his bow; or rather, for I must keep him and you waiting a moment longer, here is the entrance through which, in these pages, he will most frequently take the stage. There is, however, another through which he will make his appearance, not so often, but none the less effectively.

DECADENCE OF THE EAST

In writing of the East as the guardian of a traditional way of life which the West has lost, the repository of certain values which the West has forgotten or never known, I have given only one side of the picture. To complete it I must add that

¹ *Kalki*, p. 42.

the guardian is tottering on the verge of senility, and the repository is less like a safe than a worm-eaten trunk liable to fall to pieces at any moment through lack of repairs. "But Hinduism lives so little. Listlessness reigns now where life was once like a bubbling spring. We are to-day drifting, not advancing, waiting for the future to turn up. There is a lack of vitality, a spiritual flagging. Owing to our political vicissitudes, we ignored the law of growth. In the great days of Hindu civilization it was quick with life, crossing the seas, planting colonies, teaching the world as well as learning from it. In sciences and arts, in trade and commerce it was not behind the most advanced nations of the world till the middle of this millennium. To-day we seem to be afraid of ourselves, and are therefore clinging to the shell of our religion for self-preservation. The envelope by which we try to protect life checks its expansion."¹

In this time-worn corpus of knowledge—or should it be tradition?—there are at last signs of change. "After a long winter of some centuries, we are to-day in one of the creative periods of Hinduism. We are beginning to look upon our ancient faith with fresh eyes. We feel that our society is in a condition of unstable equilibrium."² The change envisaged is said to be not a surrender of the principles of Hinduism, a faltering in allegiance to the values of which I have spoken, "but a restatement of them with special reference to the needs of a

¹ *The Hindu View of Life*, p. 128.

² *Ibid.*, p. 130.

more complex and mobile social order.”¹ It is a change which involves the reaffirmation of their validity in a new setting. So Radhakrishnan on the present state of the culture he is about to expound.

It is time to summarize the foregoing. The West has the energy and vitality of a civilization still comparatively young, yet does not know into what channels to direct them. Possessing in abundance the means to the good life, it is without knowledge of the end. The East possesses the tradition and the knowledge, but is without the vitality to make the tradition live or the knowledge spread, and is in danger of being swamped by the vigorous tides that flow from the West. Each lacks something that is essential, each has something to give. Can they, then, be brought together?

¹ *The Hindu View of Life*, p. 130.