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The Direct Beam

by H. E.

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An individual is part of the universe; yet that which makes him an individual is his separation from it. It is a part of his constitution to view the outside world from this point of view or that; and however sound the basis of ideas may be they will represent some aspect of the unity of which he is a part; not more. The validity of ideas varies as does the correspondence with real things; but thought, in contrast to the words which may define it, is at least of the original stuff of man's existence. For reality, deflected if not distorted by the screen of ideas, comes to definition in words. The attempt to write down the vivid experience of a dream illustrates the difficulty encountered; words cannot be found to fit. To say that language is inadequate for the precise description and identification of ideas is an understatement; it buckles and bends like a plough made of tin. Nevertheless definition is imperative: thought, knowledge and understanding, cannot be used without it; but words are and remain arbitrary symbols and unless delivered and received as such will fail of their purpose. Emphasis lies upon these reservations, "for the mind of man is far from clear and equal glass, wherein the beams of things should reflect according to their true incidence; nay, it is rather like an enchanted glass, full of superstition and imposture, if it be not delivered and reduced." Definition—to make clear—is part of this reduction.

"*The truth of being and the truth of knowing are one, differing no more than the direct beam and the beam reflected.*" This was written by Francis Bacon in 1605 and appears as an appendix to certain observations regarding deceit; but in these words is an epitome of realism, giving expression to the flow of life in which action and its objective are implicit. Such words will bear examination.

Action is "to exert force or influence to produce an effect." The range is comprehensive, for nothing done but has its effect. Digging gives turned soil if nothing else; talking produces sound though it be not heard, and writing, lines which may move others or may never be read. Whether with arms, lips or hands, these are physical acts which do produce effects; which may or may not be those intended. The connection between thought and action requires distinction. One may watch the procession of clouds across the mountains, fancy playing with majestic outlines; meditation but no action; meditation, which in some sort is the seed ground of projects that may come to life in action; but if not, it is without avail, "for

contemplation which should be finished in itself, without casting beams upon society, assuredly divinity knoweth it not." Again, for centuries men pondered the mechanism whereby the celestial bodies move in perfect circles; they must, it was agreed, because the circle is the symbol of perfection. Much action in evolving theories, but ineffective, no answer; for nature will not reply to questions which are not to her point. Which is primary, thought or action? No answer, for the truth of being and the truth of knowing are one.

The focus of thought and action is its objective; and the useful enquiries are, "To what end?" "Is it effective towards that end?"

The truth of KNOWING. To the uninstructed, unknowledgeable eye the universe is a succession of unrelated images. The ruminative cow experiences the sunlight, the rain and the sweet grass, but for her, one may assume, there is no connecting link between them. To our more distant ancestors all stones were merely stones, and then they were different, some still just stones and others flint. The change was a product of action towards an objective, in this case towards a flint axe. And so the axe head which had lain unfound and non-existent in the flint, became a fact. Is man making or discovering reality, his universe? Perhaps both. But this is probably another unprofitable question; the suitable enquiry being how man, in an apparently incoherent universe may best order his exploration "for the glory of the Creator and the relief of man's estate." And as the exploration advances a certain grain or disposition of reality is uncovered, which for success, must be observed. The end of those who work on flint as though it were malleable as lead, and of those who endeavour to order man's affairs in opposition to the will of man must be the same; weeping and gnashing of teeth.

KNOWLEDGE consists of observed facts, and it is always an objective which is the precipitant of *understanding*; this being defined as the ability to focus knowledge towards an end—to recognise the axe within the nodule of flint. Bacon included both these aspects in the phrase "the truth of knowing."

BEING is a continuous adjustment of the individual to his environment; it is the flow of action which is life, and is undertaken with such understanding as each may possess.

(Continued on page 4.)

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Reform, Reformers and Reformists

There is little need to add to, or subtract from, our editorial for September 27, 1941, which follows:

Wasn't it Fitzgerald who, when asked at the luncheon table by someone unfamiliar with the menu whether *réforme* had a mute 'e' at the end of it, answered, "Reform in France is always followed by an *émeute*"?

Whether reforms, in France or elsewhere, are designed to produce riots, or merely produce riots as a bye-product is a matter for historians freer from the defects induced by mass-suggestion than most of those who know. In regard to reform, as in regard to so many other matters, touch with politics and society seem to turn everything upside-down. A tailor, who is a converter of mere cloth into clothing, is honoured as a worthy and useful citizen above mere menders, patchers and converters of once-smart overcoats into boys' breeches. He is not a mere re-former of cast-offs. And compare the humble mender of pots, useful and ornamental as he was, before Woolworth, with Benvenuto, all 'fine' art and cupids and acanthus leaves. Also there is your rag-and-bone man, trailing his worn sack-cloth, but a stage nearer than the mender and the tinker to the dustman, seeking out what can be saved from the destructor to make paper and glue out of what was meant to be fine wear inside paper parcels and fine soups to nourish wearers.

But, lo and behold, when it comes to the body politic your builders of state are unceremoniously pushed aside and your re-former jumps into first place, with a capital letter and, if he does enough smashing and tearing of good things, he is stuck on a monument with his chin in the air, his knee bent and a hand stuck in his coat collar, the whole labelled 'Great Reformer' when (in France, and if Fitzgerald—if it was Fitzgerald—is to be believed) he should have been executed for a breaker of the King's peace and a manufacturer of riots.

The trouble about Reformers is chiefly, perhaps, the things they seize upon to reform. So Cobden re-formed

the Whigs when all the people who didn't really know thought he was refashioning an adequate meal for the labourer, Wilberforce re-formed wage-slavery on the pretext that he was abolishing slavery altogether. And what that Last of the Great Reformers, Lord Beaverbrook, is up to few people seem to know, though, doubtless, the Great Accomplishment will appear for what it is in time—if not in due time. Stanley Baldwin was never dubbed a reformer. He was called 'honest.'

It may be noticed that the situations provided for the Great Reformers to exercise their wits upon, your social weavers, tailors, metal-workers and breeders of fine animals with skeletons tucked away inside them, were never considered as re-formers of anything significant, although the expansion of life has depended more upon them and people like them than upon anyone else. It is as though the world had to see a good suit ripped to bits and made up into another and an inferior suit, an operation accompanied by much gesticulation and agony of expression, before it could believe there was such a thing as a suit.

Which brings us to the question whether what Reformers—or at least those upon whom they practise their profession—suffer from is not, more than anything else, sheer poverty of imagination? Why doesn't our human society get on with the job, and send its mistakes as well as its cast-offs straight to the destructor, instead of making a virtue of making them over again? A belief is current that no one knows how to get on with the job. This has arisen in flat contradiction to the evidence, chiefly because it is a favourite trick of your reformer (who certainly doesn't know how to get on with another job) to dwell exclusively upon something he thinks he knows, namely what is good for other people. The world of the reformer is a reformatory.

For this reason it is less strange than it might be that so many of its inhabitants have come to accept the idea that the only choice open to them is between reforming other people and being reformed by other people. And naturally, as the young denizen grows up he seeks to change places with his tormentors, and, if he cannot put them under instruction, at least he must try to carry on the good work by tormenting someone else. The opportunities for doing so on anything like a scale satisfactory to the experimenter are greatly restricted; and so it comes about that most people are driven to discharge their presumed function in a land of dreams. Not Reformers, these; but Reformists.

The world has no further use for Reformers, and still less, if that were possible, for Reformists. The world has use for builders and constructors, for accomplished social engineers. What they contrive to bring forth that satisfies no need of human life should be 'cast into the fire.' It should not be left lying about for Reformers to exercise their irrelevant ingenuity upon.

—T.J.

"Language and Reality"

"I cannot convey the meaning of facts to anyone who does not appreciate and acknowledge the same purposes and values which I have in mind."

—*Language and Reality*, Wilbur M. Urban.

The North and the South

The following passages condensed from The Epic of America by James Truslow Adams describe some of the issues involved in the American Civil War, when the Southern states wished to secede from the Federation.

Now labour in the colonies was extremely scarce. So the colonists experimented with indented servants, whose service was bought for a term of years by paying their passage over. In all the colonies, New England as well as the South, Indian slavery was also tried, but proved unprofitable. Next all the colonies tried to solve their labour problem by Negro slaves and this proved effective in the South. After 1713 a flood of slaves began to be shipped to the colonies, the New Englanders eagerly seizing upon the profit in the traffic.

The type of life which then evolved in the South was in many ways the most delightful America has known. It was the period of the building of the "great houses." Living on their estates, fox hunting, dancing, visiting, playing cricket, the Southerners were closely allied in tastes to the gentry of the English county families. They were also in constant relation with the great mercantile firms of London. Their children were taught by tutors imported from England, and when older, the boys not seldom went to Oxford or Cambridge. Southern life took on a comeliness, a grace, and a charm that it can never have in a bustling town. . . .

By contrast, the impression one gets of New York in this period is of a hustling, money-grubbing, rather corrupt community, the leaders of which were anxious to get rich quickly by any means, even to allying themselves with pirates. From these conditions an overbearing, unscrupulous type of businessman was beginning to emerge. One does not find there the culture of the best families in the South. In New England the poor soil and necessity for diversified crops has precluded the use of slave labour, to which the New Englanders had not the slightest objection as an institution. One of the most profitable branches of their overseas trade was importing slaves for use in the South. They solved their own labour problem for their textile mills by seizing on the wives and children of impoverished farmers. In one Rhode Island plant in 1801, Josiah Quincy found 100 girls from six to twelve years of age, at work for from 12 to 25 cents a day, "a dull dejection in the countenance of all of them." . . . At a time when the North was being inflamed over cruelties to the Negro in the South, the Boston Marine Society, composed of the most respected shipping merchants, petitioned the government to restore the right to flog sailors to their work. . . .

From the beginning of settlement in America, soil and climate had fostered sharply defined sectionalism. The North and the South were drifting apart rapidly. The richer classes in both were exploiting labour—the Southerner in the shape of legal slavery, the Northerner in the shape of wage slavery. Neither was conscious of any moral guilt.

There was also at work the dislike of the landed proprietor for the city worker. The Southern planter looked down on the Northern businessman as an uncouth upstart. To have these Yankees, who drove their wage slaves 12 and 14 hours a day in badly ventilated mills for a few cents'

pay, and who never assumed the slightest responsibility for them when sick, old or out of work, tell the Southerner that *his* form of slavery was immoral, was galling. The Southerner was not interfering between the Northern employer and *his* exploited labour so what right had the latter to make all these threatening speeches against a legal economic system guaranteed in the Constitution?

But it was not merely a question of slavery. As the North grew in population and wealth, the South felt that it was trying more and more to exploit the rest of the nation for its own benefit. The tariff to which the South had become bitterly opposed was a case in point. It was a question whether, as in the tariff controversies, one section of the country could be made tributary to the other; whether property guaranteed by the Constitution was safe; whether the Southern planter should be forced to take his morality from the Northern businessman; whether a section of the country was to be allowed to maintain its own peculiar set of cultural values or be coerced to conform to those of a disliked section by force of numbers; the question of what would become of liberty if Union were to mean an enforced uniformity.

. . . The South was a geographic, economic and social unity. If ever there was a case for self-determination, that section had a perfect one. When the election of 1860 left the South in the absolute political power of a party which was solely Northern, it is not difficult to see why the Southern people could see nothing left but peaceable secession.

The South hoped for peaceable secession because she did not realise the force of nationalism, and she thought that, if it came to war, England and the rest of Europe would have to acknowledge her independence and come to her aid.

. . . That the Southerner's hope of independence had not been fantastic is shown by the fact that, outnumbered more than three to one, they defended the Stars and Bars for four years of intense suffering and heroic effort. The war vastly increased the prosperity of the North and ruined the South. Fighting for its very existence, the South when it lost was prostrate.

Then and Now

"It is not glory, it is not riches, neither is it honour, but it is liberty alone that we fight and contend for, which no good man surrenders but with his life."

—The Freemen of Arbroath, A.D. 1305.

• • •

"If all-out war should occur, Christians should urge a cease-fire, if necessary on the enemy's terms, and resort to non-violent resistance."

—Report to the World Council of Churches, A.D. 1958.

THE DIRECT BEAM— (continued from page 1.)

The well-being of the individual is proportionate to the accuracy of this adjustment, and the major consideration which now confronts humanity is that society also must conform "enough" to reality; otherwise dissolution follows, and individuals of whom society is composed, or such of them as survive, must try again. Inasmuch as civilisation is failing the cause is the widening gap between being and knowing; the separation of action from understanding.

Between understanding and action lies the aim of action, *the objective*. Individual life is a constant flow towards and past aims which are petty and profound, instinctive or considered; which yield to the edge of personal endeavour, or are semi-automatic responses to undesired events. A society which will survive is that in which the sum (or result) of these objectives corresponds "enough" to reality; in which undesired events are reduced to those which are in the nature of things and not imposed by man; and in which desired events are increased to the limit of what is possible. A girder which cannot sustain its load breaks, it is not strong enough. The sum of action in any society must be such as will satisfy the desires of individuals "enough" or it will break—disintegrate.

Deeply inherent in conscious existence there lies this triple strand which in one phase may be labelled Understanding, Objective, Action. None can be placed first and none is operative without the others; they are lived as one and are not separated in reality. This threefold strand appears and re-appears in altered form according to the point of view which emphasises some special aspect of the entity which is at once the Universe, Life, and Living. Philosophy which neglects to focus knowledge and action on man's objective; history which fails to recount this alignment, and politics which do not provide it; these have not the validity which springs from an adequate relationship with reality. In the individual as in society, it is the working out in life of this triple strand—the fusion of these factors each in its due proportion—which is the truth of being and the truth of knowing; which are one.

Bacon is said to be the father of modern science, but that enlargement of man's sphere has been diverted to uses other than he had in mind; for "as both heaven and earth do conspire and contribute to the use and benefit of man; so the end ought to be that knowledge may be as a spouse, for generation, fruit, and comfort." Events in 1940 do not give that impression. On balance, the aim which has directed this exploration of the physical universe has been to make knowledge "as a bondwoman, to acquire and gain her master's use." Who is her master? Not humanity. A tree fallen in the storm is sufficient evidence of the wind, though no one can see it; and society crashing to destruction is equal proof of forces moving towards an objective which is not humanity's.

Knowledge and power to act exist, the deficiency lies in its direction. As and when mankind determines, these powers will be used towards the common objective which has been defined as "life more abundant." And as Bacon says: "the corrective spice, which makes knowledge so sovereign, is charity."

And in further clarification and reduction towards

practice:

The primary requisite is to obtain in the re-adjustment of the economic and political structure such control of initiative that by its exercise every individual can avail himself of the benefits of science and mechanism; that by their aid he is placed in such a position of advantage, that in common with his fellows he can choose, with increasing freedom and complete independence, whether he will or will not assist in any project which may be placed before him.

—C. H. Douglas.

These words reduce an objective which is abstract, to that firm scaffolding wherefrom men may reconstruct society, that it may fulfil their common purpose.

We regret to announce the death of Miss Muriel Fremlin—formerly Secretary of the Medical Policy Association in Australia. She was an enthusiastic and energetic Social Crediter and a supporter of the Christian Campaign for Freedom.

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