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PART II

THE CURVE OF HISTORY

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INTRODUCTION

THOUGH the tendency is to pronounce the title of this book with the accent on history, so far as meaning goes the accent should be on attitudes. And by "history" is meant primarily man's life in political communities. The book, then, deals with characteristic responses of people in their forming and reforming of congregations. You might call it "Attitudes Toward the Incessant Intermingling of Conservatism and Progress." Or, translating into expressions now often encountered, we could entitle it "Statements of Policy on Problems of Organizational Behavior." Or, one more try: "Manual of Terms for a Public Relations Counsel with a Heart" (we shouldn't overlook the cardiac touch).

It operates on the miso-philanthropic assumption that getting along with people is one devil of a difficult task, but that, in the last analysis, we should all want to get along with people (and do want to).

To this end, the book makes three main inroads into its material, and then proceeds to a summary that, in discussing the terminology we had developed as analytic instruments for the first three inroads, becomes in effect a fourth (and longest) inroad.

The first section, on "Acceptance and Rejection," deals with those most basic of attitudes: Yes, No, and the intermediate realm of Maybe. To consider, as succinctly as possible without loss of depth, the various typical ways in which these attitudes are both subtly and grandly symbolized, this section inquires into the spirit of such literary genres as
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tragedy, satire, fantasy, comedy. For such expressive forms are viewed as recordings on the dial—and we aim to get our accuracy by the inspecting and charting of their accuracy.

Our second section, “The Curve of History,” seeks to chart the over-all problems of merger and division (with corresponding confusion and profusion of orthodoxy, heresy, sect, and schism) that marked our particular Western culture. Dramatistically inclined, we conceive of these developmental stages after the analogy of a five-act play, thus:

Act I. Evangelical Christianity emerging out of dying, pagan Rome.
Act II. Mediaeval Synthesis.
Act III. Protestantism.
Act IV. Early Capitalism.
Act V. Collectivism, as imposed in some form or other by the conditions of modern technology and accountancy, encompassing such a variety of polities as Fascism, “Police States,” socialism, communism, the “Welfare State,” and the giant industrial corporations which are typical of our own nation at the present time (and which have aptly been called “business governments,” as distinct from strictly “political governments”).

The third section, on “The General Nature of Ritual,” is necessary because of the ironies whereby a group’s routines can become its rituals, while on the other hand its rituals become routines. Or, otherwise put: poetic image and rhetorical idea can become subtly fused—a fusion to which the very nature of poetry and rhetoric makes us prone. For the practised rhetorician relies greatly upon images to affect men’s ideation (as with current terms like “power vacuum” and “iron curtain”), and a poet’s images differ from sheerly sensory images precisely by reason of the fact that a poet’s images are saturated precisely with ideas.

Throughout these three sections we have gradually worked up a terminology, some terms of which recur quite frequently. These are our “attitudinal” terms for confronting kinds of quandary that mutatis mutandis recur under various historical conditions. That is, though every historical period is unique as regards its particular set of circumstances and persons, the tenor of men’s policies for confronting such manifold conditions has a synthesizing function. For instance, if we feel happy on three different occasions, these three occasions are in a sense attitudinally united; they are one in spirit, regardless of how different they may have been in their particulars. And in this sense, history “constantly repeats itself.”

One now sees the importance of our stress upon the term attitudes in our title. For all the terms which we consider alphabetically in our fourth section are of a strongly attitudinal sort. Even when they name a process or a condition, they name it from a meditative, or moralizing, or even hortatory point of view. And saturating the lot is the attitude of attitudes which we call the “comic frame,” the methodic view of human antics as a comedy, albeit as a comedy ever on the verge of the most disastrous tragedy.

If “comedy” is our attitude of attitudes, then the process of processes which this comedy meditates upon is what we call the “bureaucratization of the imaginative.” This formula is designed to name the vexing things that happen when men try to translate some pure aim or vision into terms of its corresponding material embodiment, thus necessarily involving elements alien to the original, “spiritual” (“imaginative”) motive.
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We could best sum up this view of history by a story, an anecdote presumably invented by the late Lincoln Steffens. It is so basic, if there were such a thing as a Comic Book of Genesis surely this story would be there:

Steffens, as the story goes, was entering the New York Public Library when a friend of his came stumbling out. The man was obviously in great agitation. "I've found it!" he shouted. And he clamorously called for Steffens to go with him and listen while he told of his discovery.

Steffens obliged. The two bumped along Forty-Second Street and turned down Fifth Avenue while the friend somewhat incoherently explained.

Gradually, despite his excitement, his words began to make sense—and Steffens realized that his friend had found a plan for saving the world. And the more the outlines of the plan began to emerge, the better the scheme sounded.

Then Steffens became aware that someone was walking along beside them, listening to the account. And finally, turning, he saw a very distinguished-looking gentleman—then, looking again, he realized that it was the devil.

Steffens: "You seem to be interested in my friend's plan."
The Devil: "Decidedly!"
Steffens: "What do you think of it?"
The Devil: "I think it's an excellent plan."
Steffens: "You mean to say you think it would work?"
The Devil: "Oh, yes. It would certainly work."
Steffens: "But in that case, how about you? Wouldn't it put you out of a job?"
The Devil: "Not in the least. I'll organize it."

That is: As regards our notion of the "Bureaucratization of the Imaginative," the friend's plan would be the originat-

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ing spiritual vision (the "Imaginative"); and the organizing of it, its material embodiment or reduction to utilitarian routines, would be its "Bureaucratization." Such would be the mildly Machiavellian nature of this key formula.

In the twenty some years between the first edition of this book and its present reprinting, a momentous quantitative difference has entered the world; and as the Hegelians and their offshoots might say, this particular change in quantity has produced a critical change in motivational quality. It is almost as great as the change from No to Yes that struck down the thirteenth apostle, Saul-become-Paul, on the road to Damascus.

We refer to the invention of technical devices that would make the rapid obliteration of all human life an easily available possibility. Up to now, human stupidity could go to fantastic lengths of destructiveness, yet always mankind's hopes of recovery could be born anew. Indeed, had you reduced the world's population to but one surviving adult, in time all the continents could again be teeming with populations, if that one hypothetical survivor were but fairly young, and pregnant with a male child. But now presumably a truly New Situation is with us, making it all the more imperative that we learn to cherish the mildly charitable ways of the comic discount. For by nothing less than such humanistic allowances can we hope to forestall (if it can be forestalled!) the most idiotic tragedy conceivable: the willful ultimate poisoning of this lovely planet, in conformity with a mistaken heroics of war—and each day, as the sun still rises anew upon the still surviving plenitude, let us piously give thanks to Something or Other not of man's making. Basically this book would accept the Aristophanic assumptions, which equate tragedy with war and comedy with peace.
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Also, perhaps in another respect we should invoke the charity of the comic discount. For despite some revisions in this tiny Universal History, the work still clearly reveals its origins in the conditions and temper of the thirties (both the century’s and the author’s). So, let us hope that the reader, comically inspired, will forgive the author those occasions when the author’s efforts to transcend a local situation drastically tossed him back into the very midst of it.*

K. B.

ANDOVER, NEW JERSEY
AUGUST, 1955

* When this book first appeared, one reviewer objected to the profusion of footnotes. We grant that they are a blemish. But they were necessary. For the material “radiated” in various directions, and these “radiations” could not have been traced in any other way.

Another reader, who preferred the footnotes to the text, suggested that we should try writing a book that was nearly all footnotes, with but the barest minimum of central text.

Of the two extremes (either no footnotes or all footnotes), the second would certainly be the better suited to this material. And, looking again, perhaps we might discover that the last and longest section, on the “pivotal terms,” is in effect one continuous series of footnotes alphabetized.

The problem of “radiations” forced us to consider repeatedly the labyrinthine way in which one term involves others. And after all, as you progress along a traffic-laden avenue, sometimes it’s easier to see down the side-streets than up and down the avenue. Nor should we forget that all those side routes have their ways of connecting with one another, in the labyrinthine city of a terminology.
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no Nazi ideologist happens to have grown rhapsodic in praise of the multiplication table. Presumably, if he had, the thoroughgoing anti-Nazi would feel it necessary to condemn arithmetic.

Bridging Device

The symbolic structure whereby one “transcends” a conflict in one way or another. Thus, the philosophic framework of Aquinas bridged the distinction between serfs and nobles by a theory that located and justified the status quo. Authority was grounded in custom. The distinction in status was established by custom. And this customary order was established by God in punishment for the fall of man (whereby government, property, and slavery were made inevitable by natural law). The bourgeoisie “transcended” a distinction in status by conceiving of all men in terms of bourgeois man. The Marxist proposes to recognize the conflict, which he “transcends” by a philosophy of history that is a “bridge” into a “classless society” of the future.

All “symbolic mergers” can be called “bridging devices,” as they cannot be explained with reference to their face value alone, but are a “way across” to many other ingredients (as when one man says “liberty” and means the right to retain his capitalist holdings, and another by the same word means socialism). There are also explicitly conceptual bridging devices whereby one may use an opponent’s statement by “discounting.” When objects are not in a line, and you would have them in a line without moving them, you may put them into a line by shifting your angle of vision.

Thus recently we saw an irritating example of such strategy. A man had written a book to show the corruption of newspaper advertising. The reviewer in a newspaper praised it highly. And he “bridged” the discordancy by his moral: “These facts show you conclusively that you should only believe the commercial advertising published in this newspaper.”

Bureaucratization of the Imaginative

This formula is a “perspective by incongruity” for naming a basic process of history. Perhaps it merely names the process of dying. “Bureaucratization” is an unwieldy word, perhaps even an onomatopoeia, since it sounds as bungling as the situation it would characterize. “Imaginative” suggests pliancy, liquidity, the vernal. And with it we couple the incongruously bulky and almost unpronounceable.

Gide has said somewhere that he distrusts the carrying-out of one possibility because it necessarily restricts other possibilities. Call the possibilities “imaginative.” And call the carrying-out of one possibility the bureaucratization of the imaginative. An imaginative possibility (usually at the start Utopian) is bureaucratized when it is embodied in the realities of a social texture, in all the complexity of language and habits, in the property relationships, the methods of government, production and distribution, and in the development of rituals that re-enforce the same emphasis.

It follows that, in this “imperfect world,” no imaginative possibility can ever attain complete bureaucratization. Even capitalism, as Sombart has pointed out, has not attained its “ideal” perfection. Capitalism would not be ideally perfect until we had a monetary equivalent for everything, until every last bit of material exchange among friends were done for profit, until every casual greeting were given at a price (and that price as high as the traffic would bear).

In bureaucratizing a possibility, we necessarily come upon the necessity of compromise, since human beings are
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not a perfect fit for any historic texture. A given order must, in stressing certain emphases, neglect others. A bureaucratic order approaches the stage of alienation in proportion as its "unintended by-products" become a stronger factor than the original purpose. The heightening percentage of alienation corresponds with an intensification of class struggle because, at the point where the accumulation of unintended by-products is becoming impressive and oppressive, there will be a class of people who have a very real "stake in" the retention of the ailing bureaucratization. From this you get a further alienation—as the dispossessed are robbed even of their spiritual possession, their "right" to be obedient to the reigning symbols of authority.

Obedience to the reigning symbols of authority is in itself natural and wholesome. The need to reject them is painful and bewildering. The dispossessed struggle hard and long to remain loyal—but by the nature of the case, the bureaucratic order tends simply to "move in on" such patience and obedience. Eventually, sectarian divergence becomes organized (as thinkers manipulate the complex forensic structure, to give it a particular emphasis in one direction). But those in possession of the authoritative symbols tend to drive the opposition into a corner, by owning the priests (publicists, educators) who will rebuke the opposition for its disobedience to the reigning symbols. The opposition abandons some of the symbolic ingredients and makes itself "ready to take over" other symbolic ingredients.

Insofar as it can unite in a new collectivity, progressively affirming its own title to the orthodoxy, tendencies toward the negativistic, satanistic, sectarian, disintegrative, and "splintering" fall away. But insofar as its own imaginative possibility requires embodiment in bureaucratic fixities, its necessary divergences from Utopia become apparent.

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Many persons who scorn the very name of Utopia become wounded as the "imperfect world" of bureaucratic compromise is revealed. They are simply Utopians-scorn ing-the-name-of-Utopian. At times, the doctrine of Zweck im Recht is required to understand a policy. By this doctrine, we are advised to "discount" the face value of a statement by noting what "interests" it protects. The principle of the discount advises us to note that many advocates of socialism, for instance, can gain asylum for their views by interlarding their appeal with attacks upon Russia. Thereby they can advocate an unpopular philosophy by "sharing" with their audience the usual capitalist aversions. They need not be hampered by the realistic problems involved in the "bureaucratization of the imaginative." Or in explicitly condemning Utopianism, they can conceal from both their auditors and themselves the underlying Utopian pattern of their thought.

We concede the close relationship between this concept (bureaucratization of the imaginative) and Spengler's culture-civilization dichotomy. But we should hold that every individual man, at any period in history, must develop his own mature "civilization" out of his own childhood "culture." Again, Spengler's use of the formula vows him to an overly mystical notion of historic change. And it asks us to think of culture and civilization as historic absolutes, with one reigning at one time and the other reigning at another, a schematization that makes for a false philosophy of purpose. Yet undeniably the accumulated by-products leading to "alienation" are greater in some periods than in others. And our concept might offer a method of conversion whereby Spengler's formula could be sufficiently "discounted" to make it useful for a comic critique of social relationships.
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In the modern laboratory, the procedure of invention itself (the very essence of the imaginative) has been bureaucratized. Since the time of the Renaissance, the West has been accumulating and perfecting a methodology of invention, so that improvements can now be coached by routine. Science, knowledge, is the bureaucratization of wisdom.

We could state the principle of the laboratory in this proposition: "Every machine contains a cow-path. That is: there are embodied somewhere in its parts the variants of a process that remains simply because the originators of the machine embodied this process in their invention. It has been retained, not because it has been criticized, evaluated, and judged to be the best possible process, but simply because no one ever thought of questioning it. And it wasn't questioned because it was never even formulated, never given explicit verbalization. If the original inventor used a variant of reciprocating motion in one process of his machine, for instance, improvements may have been designed that simply introduced new variants of reciprocating motion. Once you name this, by the "efficiency" of abstractions, you are equipped to ask yourself whether the basic process might be altered: could you change from a reciprocating motion to a rotary motion, and would the change be more efficient by reason of its advance from the cradle to the wheel? Maybe it would, maybe it wouldn't; in any case, you have a "cue," a "lead," for criticism and experiment. As it stands, the process is a "cow path," in pious obedience to its secret grounding in the authority of custom.

Our formula, "perspective by incongruity," is a parallel "methodology of invention" in the purely conceptual sphere. It "bureaucratizes" the "mass production" of perspectives. It "democratizes" a resource once confined to a choice few of our most "royal" thinkers. It makes perspectives cheap and easy.

Must there follow the usual deterioration in quality? Unquestionably. But "deterioration" from one standpoint is "improvement" from another standpoint. The deterioration that would go with the democratization of planned incongruity should be matched, we hold, by a corresponding improvement in the quality of popular sophistication, since it would liquidate belief in the absolute truth of concepts by reminding us that the mixed dead metaphors of abstract thought are metaphors nonetheless.

It should make one at home in the complexities of relativism, whereas one now tends to be bewildered by relativism. And relativism cannot be eliminated by the simple legislative decrees of secular prayer (as when one tries to exorcize it by verbally denying its presence). We must erect new co-ordinates atop it, not beneath it. For this reason we hold that a popular understanding of the rational pun, as made bureaucratically available by a "methodology of the pun," should be a social improvement. The issue will be discussed more fully in our remarks on "perspective by incongruity."

Casuistic Stretching

By casuistic stretching, one introduces new principles while theoretically remaining faithful to old principles. Thus, we saw the church permitting the growth of investment in a system of law that explicitly forbade investment. The legalists "took up the slack" by casuistic stretching, the "secular prayer" of "legal fictions."

The devices for ostensibly retaining allegiance to an "original principle" by casuistic stretching eventually lead to demoralization, which can only be stopped by a new start.
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The term, for our purposes, certainly need not be confined to law. It could apply, for instance, to the strategies of "tragic ambiguity" whereby a new trend is given its first expression in the role of a reprobate. The court fool, in plays at least, introduced serious views casuistically in profiting by his "professional immunity." And if there never were court fools so philosophic as those portrayed by dramatists, the dramatist doubtless felt sympathy with the role because the dramatist himself, as entertainer to the tyrannic public, was often forced into analogous casuistries.

All "metaphorical extension" is an aspect of casuistic stretching. Our proposed methodology to "coach" the transference of words from one category of associations to another, is casuistic. In this technical sense, it is casuistic to speak of the "head" of a "corporation" or the "network" of a "broadcasting" system. Since language owes its very existence to casuistry, casuistic stretching is beyond all possibility of "control by elimination." The best that can be done is to make its workings apparent by making casuistry absolute and constant. In Shakespeare, casuistry was absolute and constant. He could make new "metaphorical extensions" at random. He could leap across the categories of association as readily as walking. The mortmain of dead metaphors ("abstractions") that has gripped us since his time has rigidified this original liquidity. All sorts of "academicisms" have arisen, even among those who belong to no formal academy. We propose by the casuistry of "planned incongruity" to follow in the conceptual vocabulary the lesson that Shakespeare taught us with his.

The nature of our language, for instance, leads us to be shocked at the idea of putting opposites together. And our reliance upon phonetic writing, instead of ideographic writing, re-enforces this tendency. To illustrate: Suppose we had an ideographic writing. Suppose that, in this script, the sign for "unlawful" was the gallows. And suppose that the sign for "lawful" was the halo. If, then, we wanted to invent a sign for "law," we might simply put the signs for "lawful" and "unlawful" together, getting gallows-halo. (The Egyptian hieroglyphs seem to have done precisely this, as does the story of Christ's crucifixion between two criminals.) Such ideograms would be in themselves reminders that a concept like "law" automatically "contains opposites." But since our phonetic notation does not reveal such matters, we must wait for an adventuresome philosopher to discover by years of military thought that "everything is its other."

Or, if we had a sign for "good" and a sign for "bad," we might put them together quite simply to get our sign for "morality." But when you start with "morality," in our phonetic form of notation, you go on developing by grammar. Instead of starting with morality as "good-bad," you start with it as a sound. And you can put another sound, "a" privative, in front of it—whereat you begin worrying, not with "good-bad," but with "morality and amorality."

Our language is somewhat haphazard. Sometimes we have the words for the opposites, without the "higher" abstraction that would unite them. Sometimes we have the "higher" abstraction, and believe so thoroughly in its pristine unity that we don't even seek for the antitheses submerged in it.

A truly liquid attitude towards speech would be ready, at all times, to employ "casuistry" at points where these lacunae are felt. We believe that the result, in the end, would be a firmer kind of certainty, though it lacked the deceptive comforts of ideological rigidity.
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The reader may legitimately ask why, after the many deceptions we have attributed to casuistic stretching, we should nonetheless want to say something in its favor. First, we believe that dissociative trends can be arrested only by a return to integrative thought (the over-simplification of which is manifested in adherence to a “party line”). And this over-simplification must be corrected in turn by latitudinarianism, which is another word for casuistic stretching. But also:

The process of casuistic stretching must itself be subjected continually to conscious attention. Its own resources (for simply providing a “higher level” of deception, a new function) must be transcended by the explicit conversion of a method into a methodology. The difference between casuistry as a method and casuistry as a methodology is the difference between mystification and clarification, between the concealing of a strategy (ars celare artem) and the description of a strategy (criticism as explanation).

Our remarks on “Control” will indicate why we feel that one must seek to enunciate a methodology of casuistry rather than to eliminate casuistry. The latter choice would be preferable if it were possible. But since the world is too complex for such simplifications, one can only hope to “take up the slack” by increased awareness.

Clusters

Significance gained by noting what subjects cluster about other subjects (what images b, c, d the poet introduces whenever he talks with engrossment of subject a). Excellent examples are provided by Caroline Spurgeon’s charting of Shakespeare’s imagery.

Were we to have a survey of the hills and valleys of the

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mind, to match our government’s geological surveys, it would be done by the charting of clusters, which have a momentous effect upon history. For instance, a certain man may be a great popular idol. But this does not necessarily mean that his popularity belongs in the cluster that could make him a good candidate for president. It may be in a cluster that absolutely forbids his election as president.

The humorist, Will Rogers, was a popular idol, but in an anti-presidential cluster. This situation was paradoxically apparent when, at a political convention during the preliminary balloting for presidential nomination, one bloc of delegates came forward with Will Rogers as their candidate. The move was meant as an hilarious indication that they had not yet made up their minds as to whom they would support. It said, in effect, “We like Will Rogers, and we don’t like the way in which the balloting is going, and we’ll show our liking for him and our uncertainties about a presidential candidate by this gesture. We can propose him without fear of our joke’s being misunderstood because he is not in the presidential cluster.”

By charting clusters, we get our cues as to the important ingredients subsumed in “symbolic mergers.” We reveal, beneath an author’s “official front,” the level at which a lie is impossible. If a man’s virtuous characters are dull, and his wicked characters are done vigorously, his art has voted for the wicked ones, regardless of his “official front.” If a man talks dully of glory, but brilliantly employs the imagery of desolation, his true subject is desolation.

The charting of clusters will eventually reveal how thoroughly the syntheses of poetry manage to eschew the “law of excluded middle” dear to argumentative thought. The symbol, as “vessel,” may quite easily unite logical opposites. The same symbol may contain meanings of parents, child,
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of the childhood "thesis"). The "debunker," no matter how
mature his writing may be on the surface, remains at this
stage. "Transcendence" does not occur until he "negates the
negation." This process whereby he puts the pre-forensic
and the forensic together, has also been called the state "be-
yond good and evil," or "beyond the opposites."

"Good Life"

A project for "getting along with people" necessarily
subsumes a concept of "the good life." So let us formulate
it briefly:

Maximorum physicality. Insofar as people outrage the
necessities of the physical economic plant, they become soul-
ful in grotesque ways. Many psychologists are making a
dubious living by selling cures to people who think that
cures can be bought, whereas these people might have
earned a cure, or earned immunity from the state of affairs
wherein they needed a cure, by adequate physical expres-
sion. The more that is done by the pressing of a button (or
its equivalent, the hiring of help) the greater will be the
quantity production of poestasters (the neuroses of the psy-
chologically unemployed, the over-sedentary leisureed, are
bad poems). We must, unfortunately, resort to the semi-
decadence of "sports," insofar as technological "advance"
doing all out of adequately physical jobs and casts us
for the dignified role of filing clerks (engaged in keeping
the books that our machines require to keep themselves at
work). There will be no better day until or unless a society
at home in comedy will have been established long enough
for its citizens to lose their reverence for these exploitative
playthings.

There is an over-emphasis upon "things of the mind," due

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partly to snobbism (the insignia of mental work ranking
higher than the insignia of physical work)—and you know
many Communists who talk glibly of the proletariat while
not even walking to the office, such purely verbal admir-
aton of physicality doing the work once done for the seden-
tary by Wild West fiction. This higher rating upon "things
of the mind" is also a secular variant of the earlier religious
duality between "mind" and "body." (The body was "vile"
and the mind was "pure"—and eventually vile body would
attain the spirituality of pure mind. People now seem to
hope that such "transcendence" shall be done here on earth,
by machinery.)

If the metaphors by which the neurologists explain the
functioning of the brain are correct, we have another rea-
son for holding to the justice of a physical emphasis. Pre-
sumably there are two kinds of neural fibre, some leading
outward towards physical action, and others leading across
to one another, developing the internal activity of associa-
tion. These associational fibres, it seems, are growing thicker,
in proportion as purely mental activity takes the place of
physical activity. The "ideal" of such development would
obviously be close to that of Valéry (the creator of "Mr.
Head"), who finds that the "complete philosophical
method" would make expression in overt act a pure irrele-
vance. Such method would be developed in its internal per-
fecion, concerned with associational adjustments alone,
and would have the symmetry of a "closed circle."

The importance of Marx's materialistic emphasis is pre-
cisely the fact that it admonishes us against this "onanistic"
ideal. The pressure comes from without the circle—and the
circle leads to an act outside itself.

The Greeks realized the necessity of physical correctives,
in their tendency to keep physical and mental gymnastics
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in adjoining bins. The "ideal Greek symposium" admitted the athlete along with the philosopher. And that wise biological conservative, Aristotle, founded a school of antiseditanty philosophers, who gave their views while walking (the peripatetics). The difficulty in general was that, although both physical and mental athletes were represented in the ideal philosophical symposium, they tended to come as specialists, each representing one aspect of the duality. Thinkers tended to "take up the slack" between ideal and reality by their "healthy mind in a healthy body" formula—but too often, it seems, the mere statement was considered enough.

Maximum opportunity for expression of the sentiments. Distrust of the passions. The passions are "ambitious." They are stimulated to the maximum by the "creative psychiatry" of capitalism. In an ideal society, a man would not go to a doctor when he lacked ambition—he would consult a doctor to help him cure ambition. In the paradoxes of capitalism, inordinate ambition has become the norm; the man who loses it simply "drops out the bottom." And he loses it as soon as he ceases to want all sorts of idiotic baubles that keep millions frantically at work.

"Things of the mind" enter in this way. Conceptual and imaginative symbolism is required to favor the play of the sentiments. And it is required to "take up the slack" (to bridge inevitable conflicts, and to name the important socio-economic relationships with sufficient accuracy for the adequate handling of them).

Construction, to channelize the militaristic by "transcendence" into the co-operative. (The constructive, the creative, the co-operative being the "moral equivalent of war.")

Patient study of the "Documents of Error." To avoid "cultural vandalism" there must be constant exposure to the total archives accumulated by civilization (since nothing less can give us the admonitory evidence of the ways in which people's exaltations malfunction as liabilities). Not "parochial" in attitude, however. Not with the self-congratulatory notion that everybody was a fool before November 14, 18—, etc. Our stupidities are ever born anew. Even the most accurate, astute, and comprehensive of sciences would not be foolproof.

Above all, criticism should seek to clarify the ways in which any structure develops self-defeating emphases ("inner contradictions"). It should watch for "unintended by-products"—and should seek to avoid being driven into a corner in its attempt to signalize them.

Stress always upon the knowledge of limitations. In other words, an ability to carry out the proposition, essentially Spinozistic, that "freedom is the knowledge of necessity."

Distrust hypertrophy of art on paper. More of the artistic should be expressed in vital social relationships. Otherwise, it becomes "efficient" in the compensatory, antithetical sense. So completely do we now accept capitalist standards that we test everything as a commodity for sale. Hence we feel that "a mere artist at living" has "wasted his talents." Rather let him "release" his artistry through a total social texture. Let it take more "ecological" forms, though its "use value" as a commodity is thereby lessened.

To be sure, we do not thereby dispose of the whole issue. There is also the artist's desire to immortalize the transitory. He wants to see a "good thing" made permanently available, as Plato made the statements of Socrates permanently available. Plato "implemented" the conversations of Socrates for purpose of transmission. He was the instrument for "broadcasting over a history-wide network." One must salute the

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Pious tendency to immortalize the transitory. One need simply note an important distinction in quality between this act and the act of a man who gets art on paper at the sacrifice of art in living.

"Heads I Win, Tails You Lose"

A device whereby, if things turn out one way, your system accounts for them—and if they turn out the opposite way, your system also accounts for them. When we first came upon this formula, we thought we had found a way of discrediting an argument. If a philosopher outlined a system, and we were able to locate its variant of the "heads I win, tails you lose" device, we thought that we had exposed a fatal fallacy. But as we grew older, we began to ask ourselves whether there is any other possible way of thinking. And we now absolutely doubt that there is. Hence, we should propose to control the matter not by elimination, but by channelization. That is, we merely ask that the thinker cooperate with us in the attempt to track down his variant of the "heads I win, tails you lose" strategy. It will necessarily be implicit in his work. And we merely ask him, as a philosopher whose proper game is Cards-face-up-on-the-table, to help us find it, that we may thereby be assisted in "discounting" it properly.

The whole matter is related to the scholastic distinction between "essence" and "existence." A thing has many aspects, good, bad, indifferent. You "transcend" this confusion when, by secular prayer, you "vote" that one of these aspects is the essence of the lot. For instance, you may vote that the essence of man is "the way in which he is like a god"; or you may vote that his essence is "the way in which he is like an animal." When you have, by an "act of will" (a "moral" choice) completed your balloting, the attributes that do not confirm your choice of "essence" are labeled "accidents."

Thus, in our discussion of principles and policies: the constant principle is the "essence" of motivation, and the shifting policies, often directly contrary to one another, are the "accidental" variants. If you decree by secular prayer that man is "essentially" a warrior (as did Nietzsche) you may then proceed, by casuistic stretching, to discern the warlike ingredient present even in love. If on the contrary you legislated to the effect that man is essentially a communicant, you could discern the co-operative ingredient present "essentially" even in war. Capitalism is "essentially" competitive (on this point, both opponents and proponents agree). But despite this essence, we note the presence of many non-competitive ingredients (there are many examples of true "partnership" in the competitive struggle).

"Heads I win, tails you lose" is a technical equivalent of the formula named moralistically "opportunism." Thus you get the "opportunism" of Whitman who, by his doctrine of "unseen existences," could welcome an event in spirit ("in principle") where the same event, in its raw existential attributes, might have wounded him. That is, the "essence" of a real estate boom was in its "unseen existence"; and this unseen existence was not speculation for profit, but the zeal and zest of collectively building up a continent; when beholding men building capitalism, he could "transcendently" welcome their existential act by a vote that they were building socialism, as, to an extent, they actually were. (Addendum, 1955: In either case, they would be building sociality.)

"Perspective by incongruity" is a "heads I win, tails you lose" device—and we hereby lay our cards on the table by
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saying so. For example, take the excellent “planned incongruity” in Palme-Dutt’s intellectual pun (his definition of Fascism as “the organization of decay”). By the pliancy of this term, you can’t lose. You name the militaristic ingredients of the Nazis by italicizing one of the words: the organization of decay. You name the co-operative ingredients by italicizing the other: the organization of decay. Decay is the “essential,” organization the “accidental.”

We select this formula for exposure because we ourselves would wholeheartedly vote for it. Philosophers, in helping us to play Cards-face-up-on-the-table, should look for two other manifestations of the “heads I win, tails you lose” formula in their work. They should seek to discover the “master metaphor” they are employing as the cue for the organizing of their work. Thus: “man is herein to be considered a god, an ape, a machine,” etc.—and I shall tell you what can be said of him by the use of this metaphor. Or, further, I shall try to help you in discovering just where I mix my metaphors and subtly shift from one to another. I started by saying that I would consider man as a machine, for instance, but at this strategic point you will note that I “opportunistically shift and begin discussing him as a hero (that is, a god).”

One must say why he feels called upon to choose the metaphor he does choose. We choose the “man as communicant” metaphor, for instance, because we feel that it brings out the emphases needed for handling present necessities.

* When the banished Duke in As You Like It says his speech about the theme, “Sweet are the uses of adversity,” he is carrying out a “perspective by incongruity” for “heads I win, tails you lose” purposes. While banished, he seeks the “rewards” of banishment—and when his ducal properties are restored to him at the end of the play, he is ready to resume the rewards of dukedom.

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We modify it with the dead, mixed metaphor “bureaucratization of the imaginative” because we think that people thereby are kept from being too sensitively exposed to disillusionment as they are confronted by the “let down” that necessarily occurs when when a tender imaginative-Utopian possibility is implemented by being given its practical embodiment in “this imperfect world.”

Identity, Identification

All the issues with which we have been concerned come to a head in the problem of identity. Bourgeois naturalism in its most naive manifestation made a blunt distinction between “individual” and “environment,” hence leading automatically to the notion that an individual’s “identity” is something private, peculiar to himself. And when bourgeois psychologists began to discover the falsity of this notion, they still believed in it so thoroughly that they considered all collective aspects of identity under the head of pathology and illusion. That is: they discovered accurately enough that identity is not individual, that a man “identifies himself” with all sorts of manifestations beyond himself, and they set about trying to “cure” him of this tendency.

It can’t be “cured,” for the simple reason that it is normal. One may, by analytic debunking, assist him in breaking loose from some particular identification that is disastrous (the normal tendency of the Germans, for instance, to identify themselves with Hitler had disastrous implications, since Hitler in turn was identified with malign economic relationships). But the mere removal of an identification is not enough. The man who dies in battle, as the result of a faulty identification, is better off than a man who can identify himself with no corporate trend at all. And what-
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ever he might think he was doing, the psychoanalyst "cures" his patient of a faulty identification only insofar as he smuggles in an alternative identification. (Often, for instance, the patient identifies himself with "the corporate body of psychoanalytic science."

As Hellenism drew to a close, and the disorders of the state made it impossible for the earnest man to identify himself with the emperor (as the Stoics had done) many of the "enlightened" were enfeebled by the attempt to avoid all identification whatever. And in thus attempting to reject any corporate identity, they automatically despoiled themselves (with inanition, emptying, boredom, alienation as the result). Christian evangelism met the situation actively by introducing a new concept of corporate identity. And because of this important social asset, it prevailed. Similarly, the corruption in Russia, involving both Czar and Church, frustrated the needs of corporate identity, until you got as substitute the Marxist doctrine of the "proletarian corporation."

The so-called "I" is merely a unique combination of partially conflicting "corporate we's." (See Harold Laski's writings on social "pluralism." ) Sometimes these various corporate identities work fairly well together. At other times they conflict, with disturbing moral consequences.

Thus, in America, it is natural for a man to identify himself with the business corporation he serves. This is his birthright, and insofar as he is denied it, he is impoverished, alienated. But insofar as business becomes a "corrupt sovereign," his only salvation is to make himself an identity in an alternative corporation. The struggle to establish this alternative corporation is called the struggle for the "one big union." Hence, the drive for "industrial unionism," for parties of "farmers and workers," etc.

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Loyalty to the financial corporation is necessarily impaired insofar as the obligations are of a one-way sort. Complete corporate identity must be of a two-way sort. The overlord requires fealty of the underling—and in exchange he guarantees certain protection to the underling. By various insurance systems, the big financial corporations are attempting to establish this two-way system. Hence their resistance to federal insurance projects, which turn the worker towards an identification with his government instead of his company. Such issues illustrate the reasons for the partial struggle between "business" and "government" that goes on despite the willingness of political parties to do all they can in league with business. Their allegiance cannot be complete (however much they might desire to make it so) because businesses themselves are in conflict with one another. Hence there is no such thing as "one business corporation" with which the political party can identify itself on all points. Insofar as "industry" neither will nor can do all that would be necessary to establish a full two-way relationship between owners and workers, the confused shufflings of identity must go on.

We should also include the corporate identity of family, since property rights in the feudal structure were rigorously fixed by its co-ordinates. In King Richard the Second, we note how Bolingbroke, who took an oath of banishment under his corporate identity as Hereford, can violate the oath with good conscience by returning under his corporate identity as Lancaster:

As I was banish'd, I was banish'd Hereford;  
But as I come, I come for Lancaster.

By this "prayerful" device (by attributing a different
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“essence” to himself as individual) he could avoid the magical strictures placed upon him, as an individual, by the king. The use suggests analogies with the contemporary conveniences afforded by the modern concept of financially corporate identity (where the individual, by reincorporation, can “transcend” the limits put upon him in a previous corporate role).

There is a clear recognition of “corporate identity” in the “editorial we.” The editor selects and rejects manuscripts, and writes comments, with vague reference to his membership in an institution. (He also, of course, quickly learns to “cash in on” the privileges of such an identity, as he rejects your manuscript with a frank admission that “the editors” could not agree on it, without adding that he may have deputized for the lot.) A variant is the “we” of business correspondence, where the writer of the letter pronounces his corporate role without so much as a thought on the matter.

The simplest instance of conflicting corporate identities is to be found in the old stories showing the hero “torn between love and duty.” “Duty” is a shorthand way of indicating identification with some larger corporate unit (church, nation, party). “Love” is shorthand for membership in “the smallest corporation,” a partnership of two. Alienation (culminating in divorce) characterizes the partnership insofar as it not a “collective enterprise,” but is the “war of the sexes” celebrated by nineteenth-century novelists (a war in which “rivals” may unite for a time against the “common foe” of loneliness).

To sum up: Identification is not in itself abnormal; nor can it be “scientifically” eradicated. One’s participation in a collective, social role cannot be obtained in any other way. In fact, “identification” is hardly other than a name for the function of sociality. At other times, people use the word to mean “bad identification” (such as occurs when one identifies himself with the reigning symbols of authority while these symbols of authority are in turn identified with covertly anti-social processes).

One may note, however, the subtle ways in which identification serves as braggadocio. By it, the modest man can indulge in the most outrageous “corporate boasting.” He identifies himself with some corporate unit (church, guild, company, lodge, party, team, college, city, nation, etc.) and by profuse praise of this unit he praises himself. For he “owns shares” in the corporate unit—and by “rigging the market” for the value of the stock as a whole, he runs up the value of his personal holdings. We see the process in its simplest form, when the music-lover clamorously admires a particular composer, and so “shares vicariously” in the composer’s attainments. Such identification will be observable even among mistreated clerks of rival business concerns, as the sales girls of one department store are somewhat contemptuous of the goods offered by the department store across the street (an attitude that the heads of the business are prompt to “cash in on” by putting “company loyalty” against “interference from outside agitators and union organizers”).

The function of “vicarious boasting” leads into the matter of “epic heroism” and “euphemistic” vocabularies of motives. When heroes have been shaped by legend, with irrelevant or incongruous details of their lives obliterated, and only the most “divine” attributes stressed, the individual’s “covert boasting” (by identification with the hero) need not lead to megalomania. In fact, it should tend rather to make for humility. For the legendary hero is, by definition, a superman. He is the founder of a line. He pos-
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sesses characteristics which his followers can possess only in attenuated form. The truly religious man, for instance, had no ambition to "be as good as Christ." His vicarious share in Christ's perfection was precisely the factor that freed him of such ambition. He wanted to be as near like his hero as possible within his human limitations.

Heroism loses this property of humility as soon as the "divine" emphasis gives way to a secular emphasis. The secular hero is, by definition, a hero whom one can emulate, and even surpass. Hence, insofar as the ideal of heroism becomes secularized, we hold that a corresponding shift to comedy must take place. The individual hero is replaced by a collective body (and one has a property in this body insofar as he participates in the use and strengthening of its traditions). Thus, in proportion as the church lost its Byzantine aloofness, it gravitated towards the "comic" in the stress it laid upon a body of thought matched by a collective organization. When the proposals were first brought forward for translating the Bible into the vernaculars, whereby "each man could read it and interpret it for himself," the churchmen were scandalized. They held that no one man is qualified to interpret a text, that interpretation must be corrected by a group. If, for the moment, we consider only so much of the case, the churchmen were right. (What we are omitting, of course, is the way in which people had "moved in on" this collective body of interpretation, hence requiring reinterpretation for the ends of a "new start." And since those who advocated reinterpretation necessarily had to be somewhat individualistic as a way of introducing their wedge, they were "driven into a corner" by upholding a principle manifestly dubious.)

Identity involves "change of identity" insofar as any given structure of society calls forth conflicts among our...
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whereas the one-eyed camera sees flat). The change gives one a sense of direction; hence he “prophesies.” Thomas Mann has symbolized the process most “efficiently” in his Joseph novels, as we get:

Stage one: Joseph’s self-satisfied mooniness and moodiness
Stage two: The transition, his being cast into the pit
Stage three: The new social sense of identity, and the ability to “prophesy.”

It is obvious that if such prophecy is not shaped with reference to the collective body of criticism, it is exposed to the risks of the heroic-made-secular. Mann himself, by his strict adherence to the forensic materials, is an excellent example of a man who has avoided the temptations of the individually vatic. And in keeping, he is concerned with a subtle notion of legendary identity, suggesting that the individual gauges his role by analogy with roles already given the advantage of complete “group criticism” (for in the shaping of the Biblical characters by legendary processes of revision, all irrelevant features are removed by the simple

Instead of describing mathematically the relationships between John and James and between John and Arthur, the method of Drs. Leonard and Goodman allows the philosophers and mathematicians to express the relationship between John and Arthur and James by considering Arthur and James as a single unit.

“By allowing the mathematicians to lump the two women in a man’s life, or the two men in a woman’s life, together as a un

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process of forgetting; a role defined by legend is the ultimate of “auscultation, creation, and revision”).

Roughly, we may say that a man “identifies” the logic of a human purpose with the following points d’appui: God, nature, community (lodge, guild, race, etc.), utility (capitalism, and naive pragmatism), history. At times he has tried another, the self, with the inevitable punishments visited upon the narcissistic.*

Or we might divide up the field in this way:

Totemistic identification. Individual relation to tribe. Magical ways in which obedience is given or exacted in small primitive communities. Manipulated by variants of the medicine man.

The carrying of the “family” perspective into the treatment of a vast corporate, latently political organization, as

* What we call identity with the self is often merely vagueness of identity. Vagueness of identity is often symbolized by travel (sometimes actual mobility, sometimes the consumption of travel books). We refer particularly to the kind of traveler who lives in transit, among aliens. The anthropologist, living as observer among primitive peoples, usually adopts a very definite identity in his relations with them. While, as “member of his academic corporation,” he retains the role of spectator, the people he is studying often make calls upon his authority, and in this way he may gradually come to integrate his science with their customs (a process made all the easier by the admiration and sympathy they may arouse in him).

One who experiences difficulty in remembering the names of close acquaintances when introducing them might console himself somewhat by noting that such sudden forgetfulness indicates sensitiveness to the subtleties of identity. At the moment of introduction, he alters his relationship to each of the introduced, seeing them as strangers (in keeping with the nature of the situation). And so closely are names associated with identities, that in thus changing his attitude towards the personal identities of the persons he is introducing, he loses his grip upon their names.

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in Catholic-feudal thought. Non-intimate relations were handled as though they were intimate relations. Manipulated by priests.

The parliamentary. The turn to delegated authority. Abandonment of the attempt to handle "forensic" relationships on a purely "family" basis. Usually managed by retention of many intimate relationships, however. Manipulated by the politician.

Transitional. Based primarily on concept of historic purpose (whereas the strictly bourgeois-parliamentary had been rationalized by co-ordinates of "profit" or "utility"). Concerned with clarification of conflicts underlying the so-called "co-operation" of the bourgeois forum. Would coach shift in allegiance to the symbols of authority. Propagandist ("informal adult educator").

Universalizing opportunities to be plumbed by establishment of new co-operative frame, once the economic mal-adjustments underlying the social order are removed. Coordinated by "planners." Ideal: comic self-consciousness. "Neo-catholicizing." Ideological homogeneity, to be corrected by a methodology of humanism.

In Russia, the lack of synchronization between revolution there and elsewhere has brought up problems extrinsic to the political pattern per se. The rabid rearming of Germany, for instance, has imposed upon Russia as drastic a contradiction as any to be found in capitalism. For it requires the allocation of enormous manpower and the squandering of vast material resources in purely unproductive ways—that is, the training and equipping of the army. As judged by the standards of peace (the proper tests for judging a socialist economy) this vast expenditure for the military is precisely the same as the "unearned increment" given to the coupon-clippers of the capitalist economy. Insofar as the army must train for battle, and millions must devote their efforts to its equipment, constructive enterprise is strangled. And since Russia would have no other choice but to let herself be overrun by Hitler, she must continue to build up her military (which functions as a rentier class, as the "idle rich," so far as peacetime criteria of production are concerned).

Nor is this difficulty lacking in "spiritual" counterparts. The euphemisms of the "secular heroic" are an integral aspect of military action (and the preparation for military action). Where an army is so necessary, it must be exceptionally dignified. Instead of "planners," who are deputies (subject to comic co-ordinates) you get magical-heroic vessels of authority ("superior" to the comic).

There arises another contradiction: Members of a co-operative enterprise founded along sufficiently rational lines to make for peace must identify themselves with a corporate unit devoted to war. Such paradoxes must inevitably distort the logic of a truly socialist development. We ask only that those who gloat over such distortions pause long enough to suggest how matters could be handled otherwise. The methods of adjustment in a going concern composed of 160,000,000 people cannot be as subtly pliant as the methods of adjustment operating between a couple of private individuals. And even when you get things down to that scale, you find considerable unwieldiness.

Imagery

We have previously mentioned our delight in Caroline Spurgeon's study of Shakespeare's Imagery. To be sure, Mr. M. D. Zabel, whose opinions on matters affecting poetry
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Every situation in history is unique, requires its own particular gauging or sizing-up of the factors that shall be considered pivotal in the situation. The “scientists” of history have brought us unintentionally to the realization that the gauging of the “right historical moment” is a matter of taste. Thus, every situation calls for a policy that is a “casuistic stretching” of the principle. To sum up: implicit in both historicism and politics there is the technical problem of opportunism—and the detection of this technical problem is given a moralistic twist (leading to the charge of opportunism in the censorious sense) when a speaker would employ a shorthand version of secular prayer for recruiting allies against an opponent.

Perspective by Incongruity

A method for gauging situations by verbal “atom cracking.” That is, a word belongs by custom to a certain category—and by rational planning you wrench it loose and metaphorically apply it to a different category.

Our contemporary orthodox economists, hired by business to provide the scholastic rationalization of its procedures, might best be defined by incongruity, as we carried over a term from semi-feudal Germany: they are our “cameralists,” bureaucrats who were “introspectively” concerned solely with the “internal adjustments” of the bureaucratic order. And as we are warned against the spread of “bureaucracy” in Russia, or in our own government, we are encouraged to forget that if one were to transplant a typical American business from the United States to Russia, leaving all its managerial and co-ordinating processes intact, its functionaries now dignified as examples of “private enterprise” could automatically, in the new setting, be stigmatized as “bureaucrats.” One would thus be using a “perspective by incongruity” if he named the business man’s own associates as “bureaucrats.” (We intentionally use an instance that is dissolving, to lend weight to our contention that “perspectives by incongruity” do not belong to a cult of virtue, but bring us nearest to the simple truth.)

Perspective by incongruity, or “planned incongruity,” is a methodology of the pun. “Pun” is here itself metaphorically extended. Literally, a pun links by tonal association words hitherto unlinked. “Perspective by incongruity” carries on the same kind of enterprise in linking hitherto unlinked words by rational criteria instead of tonal criteria. It is “impious” as regards our linguistic categories established by custom.

The metaphorical extension of perspective by incongruity involves casuistic stretching, since it interprets new situations by removing words from their “constitutional” setting. It is not “demoralizing,” however, since it is done by the “transcendence” of a new start. It is not negative smuggling, but positive cards-face-up-on-the-table. It is designed to “remoralize” by accurately naming a situation already demoralized by inaccuracy.

Such pliancy is the basis of the “casuistic stretching” in Shakespeare’s metaphors. Recall, for instance, the lines from Romeo and Juliet:

For nought so vile that on the earth doth live
But to the earth some special good doth give,
Nor aught so good but strain’d from that fair use
Revolts from true birth, stumbling on abuse:
Virtue itself turns vice, being misapplied,
And vice sometimes by action dignified.

Carry out the “policy” of Friar Laurence’s speech, and you have a “plan” for putting incongruities together. You get,
for instance. Act V, Scenc II of Antony and Cleopatra, where Cleopatra exposes her flesh to the sting of the asp, and says:

Peace, peace!
Dost thou not see my baby at my breast,
That sucks the nurse asleep?
The "whimsical Barrie" contrived to expand a "perspective by incongruity" into a whole play. He wrote a play in which he tried his hand at one of Empson's "pastoral" revolutions. A group of upper-class people were marooned on a desert island—and their butler, who alone among them is equal to the situation, becomes their "ruler." If we remember correctly, however, the play has a happy ending: in the last scene you are back in England—the party has been rescued—everything is as was—and the butler has returned to his proper role.

In his book on recent movements in painting (cited elsewhere in these pages) James Johnson Sweeney tells us that at one period the artists were attempting to introduce a variety of perspectives, seeing the same objects from many sides at once. And after they had made such purely disintegrative attempts at analysis for a time, they began to search for a master perspective that would establish a new unity atop the shifts. Was not this concern akin to Einstein's method, whereby he gets shifting frames of reference, but co-ordinates their relativity with reference to the speed of light as a constant?

Perspective in painting arose with the rise of individualism. It depicts nature by stressing the point of view of the observer. And precisely at the terminus of individualism, we find some artists who would return to two-dimensional painting (abolishing perspective) and others who would...
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less of an “act,” quite as “the diffusion of investment” is less of an act than “the democratization of investment, with attendant deterioration of quality, as it spread with casuistic stretching, to the point of demoralization, whereas it was remoralized by Calvin’s changing of the rules.”

The neutral idea prompts one to forget that terms are characters, that an essay is an attenuated play. The essayist’s terms serve to organize a set of interrelated emphases, quite as Othello, Iago, and Desdemona are inter-related emphases. There are “hero” and “villain” terms, with subsidiary terms distributed about these two poles like iron filings in a magnetic field, and tracing somewhat of a “graded series” between them. Emphases cannot “contradict” one another, so far as the “total plot” is concerned, any more than Iago’s function in the play can be said to contradict Othello’s.

The element of dramatic personality in essayistic ideas cannot be intelligently discerned until we recognize that names (for either dramatic characters or essayistic concepts) are shorthand designations for certain fields and methods of action. Perhaps Samuel Butler was both on the track and off it when he said that “Men and women exist only as the organs and tools of the ideas that dominate them” (on the track, insofar as he recognized the integral relationship between people and ideas, but off it insofar as, under the stimulus of idealism, he took the ideas as causally prior).

In line with such thinking, we cannot say enough in praise of the concept, “the socialization of losses,” as a pun for liquidating the false rigidity of concepts and for inducing quick convertibility from moralistic to economic categories. The operation of this salvation device in the investment field has its counterpart in the “curative” doctrine of “original sin” whereby a man “socializes” his personal loss by holding that all men are guilty. It suggests, for instance,

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the ingredient of twisted tragedy behind Swift’s satire, whereby he uses such thinking, not to lift himself up, but to pull all mankind down (the author himself being caught in the general deflation). “I have ever hated all nations, professions, and communities; and all my love is towards individuals. . . . But principally I hate and detest that animal called man, although I heartily love John, Peter, Thomas, and so forth.”

In men as different as Malraux and Whitehead, we see the essentially religious attempt to socialize one’s loneliness, though Whitehead stresses purely idealistic strategies in the accomplishment of this, whereas Malraux seeks the corrective “dialectically” in collective action, in accordance with Marx’s formula for the socialization of losses, to the effect that “I am not alone as a victim; I am in a class of victims.” Swift, being essentially religious, was essentially tragic; but over-individualistic emphases turned the tragic scapegoat into a satiric scapegoat, thereby turning a device for solace into a device for indictment. Lack of religiosity is a convenience; but religion gone wrong is a major disaster.

Recently we heard a speech that ran somewhat as follows: It was confessional in tone, an intimate talk by a writer addressing writers. The speaker first humbled himself: “I am a bad critic. There is too much that I still have to learn. I should not write a word for five years. I should simply study and practice. In sum, I am a bad critic.” Whereupon he went on, to “socialize” this loss, by adding, “In fact, we are all bad critics.” Hence, the more we look about us, the greater becomes our belief that the “planned incongruity” in the concept of the “socialization of losses” gets us pretty close to the heart of things. The formula seems basic for purposes of “putting things together,” by establishing modes of convertibility be-
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tween economic, religious, and esthetic vocabularies. But we have not as yet been able to locate the author of the term. So far his contribution to the architecture of thought remains like that of some anonymous mason who contributed an especially accomplished bit of stonework to a mediaeval cathedral.

Problem of Evil

Every policy is a policy of lesser evil. Thus the religious Augustine and the atheistic Jefferson unite when the first explains government as a punishment for the fall of man, and the second calls it a necessary evil. For, in our terms, government necessarily means bureaucratization; and bureaucratization eventually produces a preponderance of unwanted by-products.

The problem of evil is met by transcendence—the process of secular prayer whereby a man sees an intermingling of good and evil factors, and “votes” to select either the good ones or the evil ones as the “essence” of the lot. And a choice between policies is not a choice between one that is a “lesser evil” policy and another that is not. It is a choice between two lesser-evil policies, with one of them having more of a lesser evil than the other.

Repossess the World

As the imaginative becomes bureaucratized, the bureaucratic body brings up new problems of its own. Thus, the bureaucratic complexities of modern business bring forth the need of complex filing systems. The persons who must devote all their genius to such incidental by-products (the filing systems) are, to that extent, threatened with “in-anition” or “alienation.” They are robbed of the world, since their efforts are expended in so cramped a territory.

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And they must struggle to repossess the world. Usually, when such a state of affairs becomes aggravated, you will find strong material for “class struggle,” as the development of the bureaucratic body will have led to a class actually or apparently enjoying the fruits of the given bureaucratic order and another class of relatively alienated or dispossessed. Their struggle to repossess will involve all the tactical issues concerned with shifts regarding allegiance to the symbols of authority.

A rationale of history is the first step whereby the dispossessed repossess the world. By organizing their interests and their characters about a purpose as located by the rationale, they enjoy a large measure of repossesison (a spiritual property that “no one can take from them”) even though they are still suffering under the weight of the bureaucratic body oppressing their society. Maximum alienation prevails when the oppressed suffer oppression without a rationale that locates the cause of the disturbance and the policies making for its removal. By a rationale of history, on the other hand, they own a “myth” to take up the slack between what is desired and what is got.

Such a myth, incidentally, may also operate on other occasions to promote the ends of resignation. Imagine a man running the same elevator the same number of hours under three different economies: capitalist, Fascist, communist. Though the material processes were the same in all instances, the act would be a different act, in accordance with the change in rationale, the logic of collective purpose by which this individual act is located. This important difference can make a man willing to undertake without protest a dismal kind of work, if only its ultimate relationship to a rationale of history is genuinely believed by him. The resources for casuistic stretching are obvious (as men might conceivably