

understand; even the dimmest-eyed of readers can discern the shadow.

The materials of our work, then, are to hand, for all material has a *nisus* towards Catholic form and the need is simply for Catholic toil with Catholic wills and Catholic intellects. It is not too much to hope that from such holy travail a new vision will be granted to our generation, a vision of the most intense suffering being borne vicariously by a St Catherine of Siena or a Little Flower, a vision of souls being saved through the tireless devotion of the unnumbered faithful, a splendid vision in which the foreground is given to those who have won it, to the Curé d'Ars, to St Benedict Labre and to all their fellows, shining with God's glory against a background of lesser souls like ourselves, like Napoleon, like Marshal Stalin. Nor need any who by their work pray that this may come to pass fear that their lives will be wasted in academic sterility, for theirs will be the greatest work of apology in centuries. As long ago as the 14th century Dante sought to justify God's ways to man through his *Divina Commedia*—he did not make the great refusal; in the 19th century a solitary priest in Spain wrote single-handed that most powerful apologetic, *El protestantismo comparado con el Catolicismo*—he did not make the great refusal; may we of the 20th century be not unworthy of them and not unworthy of the dowry of Mary in which we live: *quia judicia Domini vera et justificata—in semetipsa.*

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THE world today is struggling to shift immovable blocs, but there is one fast-forming bloc which, despite its great inherent dangers, seems to have received little notice. The extension of education and the emphasis laid on its purely formal side are tending to introduce a trade union as it were, of 'men of letters', whose blessing it will be necessary to obtain before being accepted for any profession or administrative post—I say 'men of letters', referring to those symbols of academic prowess which follow their names rather than to any knowledge of the humanities which might, in a more liberal age, have led to their acquiring them. In the academic world at the moment, fortunately, there are still many fine representatives of this more enlightened past, but it is very hard to see how they can find worthy successors under the present system, particularly if education is to be state-controlled. The more obvious characteristics of this system are excessive specialisation and an

undue respect for the expert, but more harmful is the attitude that lies behind it. The modern pundits are not misled, as the Victorians were, into an over-optimistic belief in the powers of the human mind and its ability to obtain not only physical luxury by scientific research but also spiritual satisfaction by an idealistic philosophy of its own making; but rather, cynically disillusioned by the failure of their predecessors, they limit the sphere of the human mind, even in the so-called humane faculties, to that accumulation of facts or manipulation of words which can be tested by examinations. The philosophers have no belief in any transcendent truth and only become metaphysicians in order to dismiss the possibility of metaphysics. The psychologists, who long ago sold their birthright by denying the existence of the soul, are now equally confident that we have no mind. Thus, having argued away any possible reason for their own existence, they (unconsciously, of course) build up a new scale of values in which truth gives place to cleverness and knowledge.

This new form of intellectual suicide has an interesting parallel in Descartes's attempt to replace the scholastic tradition with a more rationalist philosophy, and is, in a sense, a legacy of it. Descartes said, in effect, that the mind was the only thing that really mattered, and that the senses and the material world were something intrinsically apart: I am a thinking substance; my body is something tacked on, something that has no part in my essential ego. He had to explain, however, how it was that I am affected by my senses, and he did it by inventing a complicated sensual process which finally reached the 'pineal gland' which he described as 'the seat of the soul'. So his out-and-out spiritualism ends in the soul itself being materialised. Similarly, it seems to me, it has been found at the present time that the only way to justify this premium on mental activity is to say that it really belongs to the material world; the only way, that is, to explain the mind is to explain it away.

Despite Descartes, however, Cartesian spiritualism thrived. In the same way, despite the sense-data theory of mind, intellectualism still holds sway. The mind has, at it were, slain itself so that it might be worshipped with all the greater awe.

The value of an age can always be deduced from the particular form of snobbery that is practised. It will not be long, I think, before intellectual snobbery, already prevalent, becomes the predominant fashion; and it is by far the most dangerous kind. In the far distant days of birth snobbery most people had to make a necessity of the virtue of humility, but their lives were not intimately affected. In the more recent days of wealth snobbery, there is certainly much vulgarity and ugliness on the one side, poverty and squalor on the

other; but the roots of human life, though certainly scorched, have not yet withered. On the principle, however, of *corruptio optimi pessima*, it may well be thought that a debased intellectualism makes a far more direct and dangerous attack on the human soul.

The more imminent dangers of this outlook are most clearly seen in the young people produced by the present educational system. It would take a bold man to claim that their minds had been broadened by what they have learnt, to say nothing of their characters, the building of which should be the essence of education. From an early age success in examinations has been held out as the only objective at which they are to aim. The selected seeds of knowledge are planted and forced at great heat. Soon the soil is barren. Though the power of accumulating facts may increase, the power of assimilating them is lost. It is rather reminiscent of the practice among a certain Burmese caste of fixing rings around the necks of their women. By this means the head is forced further and further from the shoulders. As soon as new flesh appears another ring is added. The longer the neck, the greater the number of rings, the greater the lady's beauty is thought to be. So we, it seems to me, try to force the minds of our children. We never let them expand or take in what they have learnt. We pay no attention to what harm we may be doing to other parts of their system. But we admire the finished product in all its distortedness.

Other signs, no less disturbing, are apparent in our politics, art and religion. In the Socialist Party there is a keen struggle between the 'intellectuals' and 'the rest', and it is not difficult to see which of the two have the more real knowledge of human affairs. 'The rest', happily, are in the ascendant at the moment, but who knows for how long? In modern art all the previously accepted values are rejected. It is, however, essentially a theoretical art, and its theories pass from one extreme to the other, Significant Form having given place just now to Significant Formlessness; and its secrets are known only to a select coterie. 'Progressive thought' or 'Keeping an open mind' are the hall-marks of modern religion.

In all these things, then, much of what goes to make up the fullness of life is cast out in a desperate recourse to a world of books and theories, and the search is not for truth, but recognition, recognition according to the standards which the pundits themselves have evolved. Now, as everybody knows, Aristotle described man as a *logikon zoon*, usually translated 'rational animal'; and it is worth considering what he meant by that. To the Greeks, *logos*, whose ordinary meaning is 'a word', had at least three other connotations: 'ratio' or 'proportion', 'rule' or 'principle of life', and 'reason'; and

of course these meanings were not separate in the Greek mind, but were included, as it were, in the whole flavour of the word. So that Aristotle was indeed saying that man is characterised by that peculiar self-conscious activity which we call 'reasoning'; but for him reasoning could only be practised if it had some rational principle of life to work on; the very word 'reason' included that idea. Moreover *logos* was traditionally used in Greek philosophy to denote that mystical number or proportion which was thought in some way to give the clue to the world's existence. It was precisely in this setting that the New Testament writers adopted it to denote the Son of God.

Thus it was that at the climax of Greek speculation about 'the word', the Word was made flesh. This is the supreme example of the marriage of philosophy and reality, and it is the supreme folly of modern philosophers that they are not interested in reality, as much as it is the supreme folly of modern realists that they are not interested in philosophy. This is precisely the cleavage, and this is how the intellectualist bloc is being formed. Consider, for example, the typical modern philosophy of Logical Positivism, or, as I believe it is sometimes now more significantly called, The Linguistic Habit Theory of Thinking: the aim of these philosophers is not objective truth, which indeed they would dismiss as a meaningless metaphysical conception, but rather to hit upon some formula or formulae which will allow them to make a series of definitions without falling into verbal inconsistency. Such an attitude, moreover, is far wider than Logical Positivism.

For such reasons, therefore, the 'intellectual', as he is misleadingly called, is rightly mistrusted by the 'philistine'. On the other hand the philistine holds his learning in some awe, and is ready, as we have said, to accept his standards as measures of competence in all walks of life. So we have the dismal spectacle of the two schools of 'learning for learning's sake' and 'learning for earning's sake' joined in a conspiracy to feed their minds on food which may excite the appetite of a few, but for most is tasteless enough, and for all has little sustenance. Along this drab path of modern education the intellectual has some compensations in a certain sense of achievement and pleasure in exercising his mind with dexterity, but the philistine has nothing, save perhaps the right of entry into some more lucrative field of employment; and even here, the imminent inflation in academic distinctions is likely to render this advantage at best only negative. Just as the industrial movement has ended in destruction, poverty, and physical starvation, so the academic movement will end in boredom, sterility, and intellectual starvation.

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