

present generation a native Catholicism can once more come into being, the ultimate future of the nation is secure. For Catholicism does not destroy: it fulfils.

T. CHARLES EDWARDS.

METAPHYSICS—OR MOODS?

TO read modern non-catholic philosophy at the present day one would really think that the world was presented to us 'on approval,' to such an extent does the conception of Value seem to dominate the discussions. Mr. C. E. M. Joad in the *Spectator* of October 6th last, remarks that four out of the five specifically philosophical books reviewed by him since the beginning of the year were to do with some theory of 'Value.' Dean Inge notices the fact in his *God and the Astronomers*, and has a whole chapter on the World of Values; while Windleband says frankly that what is expected from philosophy to-day is not so much a 'theoretical scheme of the world. . (but) . . reflection on those permanent values which have their foundation in a higher spiritual reality, above the changing interests of the times.'

One would like to know by what authority Philosophy abandons its proper function so as to substitute appreciation for apprehension, and turn Metaphysics into a mood—be it optimistic or pessimistic. We will, however, make some attempt to discover why this strange, non-rational, man-centred change has come over non-catholic thinking.

1

As to origin no doubt in some form the idea of Value goes back right to the very beginnings, but in its more modern shape it seems to have its root in the writings of Kant. (What modern error has not?) The purpose of the

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Critique of Pure Reason was to deny that the ideas or ideals of the speculative reason have any real relation to true knowledge. Yet we need these Ideas—God, Freedom, Immortality—as the *Critique of Practical Reason* duly admits, and so we get the 'As if' philosophy. This means that the problem with regard to the great truths of religion is not concerning their validity but their value.

Having thus set to partners, on with the dance. We trace the windings through Schliermacher with his teaching that religion is mostly a matter of feeling, so that doctrine tells us not what God is in Himself, but what we find Him to be in our experience. Then comes Feuerbach saying that God is the *name* of the sentiment, so that God is *our* creation—an anticipation in some sort of the modern theory of 'Projection.' And to speak of values in connection with any philosophy of this kind is merely to pay a compliment to the externalization of our own mind, as Mr. Joad has aptly pointed out. We may notice also in passing that it seems to be in opposition to such theories that there arises the 'throw-back' thought of Karl Barth, who, albeit on protestant lines, calls for a theology that shall be more than anthropology, and emphasizes what God thinks about man in place of what man thinks about God. This is not surprising. An 'As if' philosophy is sure, in time, to provoke an 'As you were' theology.

Mention must also be made of Schopenhauer. He is in line with the older philosophers in that he dealt with the universe as a whole, though he is modern in that he tried not so much to understand it as to value it. And while trying to deprecate intellect and understanding; he yet made considerable use of them in trying to prove that life was, on the whole, not worth living. More recent writers have been rather selective and have contented themselves with explanations or valuations of departments of existence such as ethics, or aesthetics, or have concentrated on such entities as life. Though perhaps this is hardly true of

¹ Cf. Fulton Sheen, *Religion without God*, p. 186.

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Schopenhauer's great follower Nietzsche, so sweeping are his demands. He calls for a 'transvaluation of all values' and ethics subordinated to biology. Lusty life should be a law to itself and to all besides.

Speaking of transvaluation reminds us of Hoffding's definition of religion as 'faith in the conservation of values' though exactly what he meant by this is none too clear. It appears to be an attempt to express the timelessness of spiritual realities in terms of physical duration.*

But we have gone on rather too fast. It was Ritschl following on Kant and Lotze who drove a wedge between facts and values by his famous theory of judgements of fact and judgements of value. This leads straight on to Modernism, and just as the Arians of old were willing to give to Christ the highest titles conceivable provided they were not required to use the term 'consubstantial,' so many modernists to-day are willing to concede to Christianity almost as much 'value' as its orthodox adherents demand provided they are left free *to* hold that it may have no basis in actual historical fact.

It can hardly be denied also that there may be yet another reason for the prominence of the theory of value at the present day, and that is its connection with, if not its derivation from, the science of economics. Dr. William Brown remarks that it first occurs explicitly in Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, where it is identified with the satisfaction of man's needs. This connection is just what we might expect, seeing that discussions of value so often centre round human appetites and aspirations, the underlying idea frequently being: '*O* that will be, Value for me.'

This is rather like what Maritain calls Egocentricism, a much more dangerous and subtle thing than Egoism. And perhaps it is worth while to note that even apart from philosophy and in the realm of practical protestant religion this kind of thing seems at times to be at work in a quiet

² Dean Inge, *God and the Astronomers*, p. 210.

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way. For example, the Wayside Pulpit—those printed words of appeal to be seen outside many chapels—generally emphasize some value which religion has for man, often true enough but unaccompanied by teaching about obligation; the coaxing of a customer rather than a call to a creature.

Indeed, it is by considering values that some writers come to believe in the existence of God. They feel that without a Deity there is no guarantee of the objectivity or the permanence of value. Whitehead says: 'God is the means of securing values against their disappearance into the biological flux.' Many think that this is the only telling demonstration we have to-day for the existence of God, as they consider that other roads, such as the cosmological or teleological arguments, are either closed or under repair. And closely connected with this 'proof' is the practice of some to speak of the existence of God as a hypothesis, though they do not seem to be aware that this cannot issue in anything more than hypothetical hope and charity, manifested in hypothetical worship.

II

This lack of certainty concerning the existence of God is due in part to the substitution of 'experience' for rationality, now so common in religious writings. Experience, we are told, is the functioning of the whole man—all the elements of human nature are involved, and the implication seems to be that the exercise of reason means the unfair isolation of only one of them. This at first sight may seem very fair and square, but further reflection shows that there are two ways in which this can be verified.

In one case reason is supreme and the other faculties are subject to it. In the other there is no definite principle of government, so that reflex may rise against reason, and instinct against intellect—a sort of psychological communism. In a word the inferior elements of our mind and nature should be subordinate to, and not co-ordinate with, our reason. If we employ reason, the existence of God

becomes a certainty by the argument for a First Cause. But if we indulge in experience merely, it may very well be *to* us no more than an hypothesis.

III

Experience of this sort seems to be a form of that Ego-centrism mentioned by Maritain, who points out how prominent it was in the character of Luther, and goes on to remark that 'the Reformation unbridled the human self in the spiritual and religious order, as the Renaissance (. . . the secret spirit of the Renaissance) unbridled it in the order of natural and sensible activities.'³ Therefore we may now turn to consider this aspect of our subject—the question of values and Humanism. And we cannot do better than glance at Professor Julian Huxley's book *What dare I think?* especially the chapter entitled 'Scientific Humanism' where we find a very common view plainly set forth. He gives a short survey of his idea of the process and progress of Evolution and says he sees man 'against a background of irresponsible matter and energy of which he is himself composed . . . Humanity . . . appears as . . . a fraction of the universal world-stuff which, as a result of long processes of change and strife, has been made conscious of itself and of its relations with the rest of the world-stuff, capable of desiring, feeling, judging and planning. It is an experiment of the universe in rational self-consciousness. Any value it has, apart from its selfish value to itself, resides in this fact.'

In passing we may ask how the Professor knows that the production of conscious life is an 'experiment.' It seems as if these scientific philosophers made their image into a deity, or at least a deputy. Their life is spent in making experiments and formulating hypotheses, and so experiments and hypotheses are ultimate goodness and truth. We note also the assumption that the higher has come from the lower, the greater from the lesser, though reason must

³ *Three Reformers*, p. 14.

demand that (unless they have been introduced at a later stage by a higher power) they must have been there in some form from the very first—like the rabbits of the con-juror, as someone has aptly remarked. And writings of this kind are not unlike the accompanying patter in so far as they are interesting, clever, and well calculated to divert attention from the real point at issue.

But to return to the quotation. We see that the professor leads up to the question of values, and later goes on to say: 'even if we should choose one way or one activity as having supreme value €rus , we must not deny the right of others to choose differently.' This is rather like having spades and hearts both trumps at the same time, and we foresee more of that struggle which is said to be so salutary and productive. For if struggle has produced values, such values will certainly provoke more struggle—a sort of conservation of conflict.

IV

In truth the greatest value a thing can have is ultimately its reality. 'For St. Thomas there are no value-judgements that are not being-judgements (*i.e.*, existential).' So writes Dr. Olgiati in his *Key to the Study of St. Thomas*. And even in the practical sphere that which exists over against us and independently of us is always in some way impressive, as is shown by the remark of the American who after gazing for some time at the Niagara Falls turned to a friend and said: 'Runs all night I suppose.' On the other hand, things done merely to impress, often quite fail to do so. This is admirably brought out by Guardini in the last section of his *Spirit of the Liturgy*, entitled 'The primacy of the Logos over the Ethos.' He notes that the Liturgy does not provide us with any 'easily transposable motives or ideas realizable at first hand . . . for daily conflicts and struggles.' The Liturgy reminds us that intellect precedes will, that the contemplative life is higher than the active life, and that truth is independent of all human confirmation—the *Is* is more fundamental and important than **the Ought**.

This is what Baron von Hügel said when in his *Letters to a Niece* he asks: What is the precise meaning of insistence upon religion as primarily an is-ness, not an ought-ness? In reply, he first gives an account of the movement of thought in the 'moribund' Middle Ages—say after 1300 A.D.—and claims that then there was a tendency to consider great truths, especially spiritual truths, in too great isolation from the subject who contemplated them. And he thinks that this gave occasion to subsequent ages to over-emphasize their subjective aspect, as was certainly done at the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the French Revolution. And having said this he concludes that religion 'intimates that first of all . . . a superhuman reality *is*, exists.' And he adds that the first and central act of religion is adoration.

We may well close by recalling what the Baron says about himself and the development of his own thought, for no one could accuse him of being unsympathetic to modern tendencies. He tells us that for a long time he *would* try to view the great truths of life in the light of a more or less Idealist philosophy, a philosophy, that is, so full of the 'activities of the subject as largely to overlook the distinct reality . . . of the object.' And he goes on to state that it is a 'sheer fact' that some sort of Realism is in possession, remarking that no astronomer tries to analyse his subjective impressions, except to try to get rid of them . . . In another book the same writer makes the significant statement that 'the thirst for Religion *is*, at bottom, a metaphysical one.'

We are told in Holy Scripture that Almighty God first made the world and then said that it was good. His creature man will do well first to learn what he can from the sheer existence of this world before he presumes to assess its value.

A. G. HERRING.