

## II

# THE DOCTRINE OF NATURAL RIGHTS AND THE EVERLASTING MAN

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A

**I**N the preceding lecture I sought to make us all aware of the impasse to which we men have been brought in the modern world—of an inner contradiction and confusion which has found an outer and visible form in the world crisis through which we are passing. The practical confusion and paradox is, however, as I tried to point out, but an outer and visible sign of an inner and spiritual disgrace—of a degradation of men's ideals of knowledge and reason which I described as the degradation of scientific dogma.

Science, it scarcely requires a philosopher to point out, is central in modern life—central not only with regard to what we do, but also with regard to what we think. With what we think, moreover, about the world of things and the world of men. We have a dangerous instrument in our hands—a two-edged sword with which man may hew his way through things to God, but also one with which he may rend his own manhood, perhaps beyond recovery.

In the present lecture I invite your attention to the consideration of a second dogma of the nineteenth century—that of the absolute value of man and the doctrine of natural and inalienable rights in which it found expression. This is the democratic dogma *par excellence*, that which underlies what we like to call our entire democratic way of life. It implies faith in the rational nature of man and in his ra-

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tional origin and destiny. This is the central faith of what men have called the old liberalism, the liberalism of Lincoln and of Woodrow Wilson.

At the beginning of the preceding lecture I gave a definition of the philosopher which should, I hoped, afford the keynote to the entire discussion. I should like to begin this lecture with another definition which will serve to show the relation of the philosopher to human life and culture. "Culture," said Emerson, "is the measure of things taken for granted." It is the philosopher who constantly points out anew the things that must be taken for granted if culture is to be and to survive. The same idea has been expressed by the German poet, Otto Erich Hartleben :

Es bleibt der Philosoph von Wert für alle Zeiten  
Er findet stets auf's Neu die Selbstverständlichkeiten.

It is the *Selbstverständlichkeiten*—the things that must forever be taken for granted—which it is the business of the philosopher constantly to rediscover and to conserve. It has been truly said that great literature is the orchestration of platitudes. I shall not claim for this lecture a place in great literature, but I shall nevertheless proceed to the orchestration of a few platitudes.

### II. NIETZSCHE AND THE GENEALOGY OF MORALS

#### A

In the latter part of the nineteenth century there appeared two books by that outstanding figure, Friedrich Nietzsche, which, when the story of our present epoch is written, will be found to epitomize the chief tendencies which I described in the preceding lecture. They bore the titles, *Beyond Good and Evil* and *The Genealogy of Morals*. Both are closely related but it is with the latter that we are here chiefly concerned.

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In this really great book we are told that we must change all our moral conceptions—there must be a complete transvaluation of all our values. Hitherto we have taken them for granted—as the measure of culture. In Nietzsche's own words—of the Preface—"we have never seriously considered the value of our values themselves." This is the question of our century, as he views it, and it is the question set us by Darwinian evolution and its view of man. On this view he holds all our inherited moral and political values are false.

Nietzsche, it is important to realize, starts with the primacy of science in the modern world, and with the view of nature and of man which he thinks is made necessary by science. He accepts the view of man which follows from Darwinian naturalism and seeks to place both morals and politics on a scientific or naturalistic basis. The human values which we have taken for granted—the distinctions between good and evil inherited from another philosophy of man—cannot be grafted upon modern evolutionary naturalism. We must get beyond the distinctions of good and evil, as they have been handed down to us by the Greek and Christian civilizations, and work out ideas of good and bad which are deducible from the biological conception of man. "All the sciences," we are told, "have now to pave the way for the future task of the philosopher; this task being understood to mean that he must solve the problem of value; that he has to fix the hierarchy of values." Nietzsche believed, moreover, that, as he said in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, God is dead, and with His death went all the ideals of rights and justice which are bound up with belief in Him. The theological and philosophical structure with which our values are bound up is gone and with that structure go the values also.

I shall never forget the long night in which, as a student

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in Germany, I first read through the *Genealogy of Morals*. It was, I think, the greatest single spiritual adventure of my life. In the grey light of the morning I found myself surveying the wreckage of my beliefs in a curious mood, one in which a profound sense of loss was not unmixed with a sense of profound exhilaration—of a great task to be undertaken. Enough that I knew from that moment that not only was the problem of values my problem, but also that it was destined to be the key problem of the epoch in which I was to live. My anticipations were not wrong. The reconstruction of our values which followed upon Nietzsche's challenge was not only my problem but that of a large part of recent philosophy.

I should like to tell the story of the long fight within philosophy itself which this issue so vividly set by Nietzsche precipitated—the struggle to solve the problem of value and to fix the hierarchy of values. It is the story of a new field in modern philosophy called Axiology. It has been a great fight and I rejoice to have had a part in it. Step by step the merely subjectivistic and biological theory of values—of which Nietzsche was but the extreme protagonist—is being met and, as I believe, at all important points, being overcome. The Ninth International Congress of Philosophy, held in Paris in 1937, devoted an entire section to this problem, which shows how fundamental it is in modern philosophy. Of the fifty or more papers devoted to the subject, the overwhelming majority represented the standpoint of objective and absolute values.

This is, however, not the immediate subject of this present lecture although the democratic dogma of natural rights is closely connected with it. Nietzsche was one of the most virulent of all antagonists of this doctrine because, as he clearly saw, it presupposes the doctrine of objective and absolute values. The relations of these two conceptions will

appear as we proceed. Let us proceed with the special subject of this lecture.

### III. THE DOCTRINE OF NATURAL RIGHTS AND THE DEGRADATION OF DEMOCRATIC DOGMA

#### A

It is often supposed that the dogma of the rights of man is a modern creation—the product of the enlightenment of the eighteenth century and of the optimism of the nineteenth. Quite the opposite is the truth. It had its origin in Greek and Christian theology and philosophy, more specifically in the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas. It was born out of the belief in reason and rationality which also gave rise to the scientific dogma of which we have spoken. The same forces which gave rise to the degradation of the one led also to the degradation of the other.

But let us first state this democratic dogma in the familiar modern form. "We hold it to be self-evident that all men are created free and equal and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights." So the bill of rights in the Constitution of the United States; or, as expressed in the Virginia Bill of Rights, "All men are by nature equally free and independent and have certain inherent rights of which, when they enter into a state of society, they cannot by any compact deprive or divest their posterity, namely, the enjoyment of life and liberty and the means of acquiring and possessing property and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety."

How could such a doctrine be grafted upon the evolutionary naturalism of the nineteenth century? In the nature of the case, it could not, and it is to Nietzsche's eternal credit that he saw that it could not be done. He saw clearly, and repeated it constantly, that it is only upon the basis of

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the Christian view of man that the doctrine has any significance whatsoever. And yet many, with a lack of logic notorious among us Anglo-Saxons, tried to hold fast to this dogma and at the same time to maintain a view of man which was in complete contradiction. Gradually this contradiction made itself more and more felt, until the doctrine of natural rights was largely abandoned and for it was substituted a purely relative and operational conception of rights and justice. I think it is of the utmost importance that we should realize just what has happened to this democratic dogma in the last decades, that we should fully understand where we now stand.

This process of degradation has been both practical and theoretical. In courts of law, principles have been insidiously sacrificed to utility and power. The demands of an expanding scientific and industrial civilization led to a constant violation by capital of these sacred rights—a violation which was offset by a corresponding will to power on the part of labor, which, just as callously, ignored these principles. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that theoretically also—in our universities and law schools—there has been a continuous destructive criticism of this dogma—until it has finally resulted in an almost complete abandonment of this historic foundation of modern law, and in a resort to a theory of force which differs only in expression from that of Nietzsche and his followers.

Even our Supreme Court has not been exempt from its influence. In an article in the *Harvard Law Review*, Chief Justice Holmes spoke in this spirit of the right to life. He tells us that there is no pre-existing right to life. It is just an arbitrary fact that people wish to live. It simply means that if you take a life you will have to suffer the consequences. He even goes on to suggest the situations in which sacrifice of life to property is justifiable. I have no desire to

enter into a dispute with such an authority as Justice Holmes but merely to point out what seems to me to be the logic of his position. If it is justifiable, as he maintains, to sacrifice a human life for the sake of a valuable ship's cargo, surely it is *a fortiori* justifiable to sacrifice lives *en masse* for the ends of the State which certainly infinitely transcend the value of any ship's cargo. If there are no absolute values underlying law, which he, as an instrumentalist, denies, surely there are no limits, except in individual feeling, to which this purely pragmatic view of law may not lead. Both Marxian and National Socialism have, as we shall see, drawn the inevitable consequences.

Indeed I recall a distinguished professor in one of our most important law schools who was willing to go to the limit in this matter. He once remarked in the presence of myself and a well-known English theologian, partly no doubt to get a rise out of two old-fashioned moralists, that he saw no valid reason why he should not go out on the street and kill a man if he so desired, if he was willing to take the consequences. The theologian did not bite. He simply took his pipe out of his mouth and quietly remarked, "I am glad I met you in our host's drawing room and not on a dark street."

Do I embarrass you by this plain speaking? Well, I think we ought to be embarrassed by the situation in which modern law and politics finds itself. This rake's progress of modern law is precisely the degradation of democratic dogma of which Henry Adams speaks. I think we should be aware of this degradation. I think we should also understand how closely it is connected with the degradation of scientific dogma described in the preceding lecture. This democratic dogma rests upon a philosophy of nature and of man which, it is thought, modern science has made impossible. To this aspect of the problem we must now turn.

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### B

Modern science, we are constantly told, has forever exploded this doctrine of natural rights. Biology and psychology show us that there are no inborn or innate ideas of any kind, still less of the nature of rights. History shows us that the idea of pre-existing rights is pure myth. There are no pre-existing rights physically existing in the individual prior to his entrance into society. The idea that these rights inhere in man in any physical sense—in the sense, namely, that the qualities yellow, malleability, specific gravity may be said to inhere in the substance gold—is manifestly absurd, and belongs to an antiquated science and philosophy.

Now this is doubtless in part true, but, so far as I know, the view criticized has never been held by any enlightened exponent of the doctrine, least of all by the great Christian philosopher, St. Thomas Aquinas, who formulated the doctrine. Such conceptions belong to the wholly modern materialistic view of nature which none of the classical thinkers ever entertained. It is part of the naturalistic fallacy of which we spoke in the preceding lecture. When these great thinkers spoke of man having by nature these rights, when they spoke of them as inhering in man and inalienable from his very nature as man, they meant something wholly different. They had reference to the ideal essence of man, not his physical body. The nature they spoke of was not physical nature but spiritual nature. In this sense the doctrine of natural rights, as also the phrase, "have by nature," is not only intelligible but represents a fundamental truth. Man's moral end is as much a part of his nature, *as man*, as are his instincts, and the claims or rights deducible from this rational and moral end are as much a part of his nature as are his biological instincts and tendencies. These rights are inalienable. Man cannot be deprived of them without making him less than man.



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From all this one thing becomes, I think, crystal clear. You cannot have the Darwinian conception of man and of his nature and at the same time retain the democratic dogma of natural rights. Here also you cannot have your cake and eat it too. This Nietzsche saw clearly and the various forms of totalitarianism have simply put his teachings into practice. But the muddle-headed philosophers of democracy have not seen this so clearly—to their eternal confusion. It is equally clear, I think, that when our fathers said all men have by nature certain inherent and inalienable rights—of life, liberty, yes, even of property—they had a conception of man wholly different from that of modern naturalism and materialism. By “nature” they understood a world of reason created by the Divine Reason which is called God, not the nature of mere force and unreason which science, falsely so-called, seems to disclose. In the cosmos there is natural law, but there is also moral and spiritual law. In this “nature” there are, indeed, facts and causes, but there are also ends and values. Even the simplest element in nature partakes of the eternal values of the true, the good, and the beautiful. We can get values out of nature only if they are there from the beginning. We can speak of natural rights only if nature itself is the expression of reason and spirit.

This is the conception of nature and of natural rights embodied in Pope Leo XIII's encyclical on labor, which has become, so to speak, the basis of action for a large part of the Christian world on all social and political questions. It is interesting to recall here my own experience with this famous document. For a number of years I used it in connection with courses in Ethics and Social Philosophy, as in fact an illustration or formulation of an outmoded conception. At first it appeared to me, as to most of my students, extremely naïve and traditional. Gradually, as I reread it and taught it, it came to take on a quite different appearance.

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It seems to me now to be the one adequate expression of the entire philosophy upon which our modern democratic dogma rests. Gradually I became aware that the instinct of the Church has been essentially sound in this matter. Socialism, both communistic and nationalistic, and Christianity are essentially incompatible. They start from opposite premises and, when thought out, come to opposite conclusions.

### IV. MODERN SOCIALISM AND "BOURGEOIS MORALITY"

#### A

The degradation of democratic dogma which I have pictured in the preceding sections consists, then, in attempting to detach our democratic values from the philosophical structure with which they are bound up and to graft them upon a wholly biological and naturalistic conception of man. Is it not inevitable that they should have undergone the degradation which I have pictured?

This process of degradation has been immensely hastened, however, by anti-democratic theories of man both of which have been derived from the application of the notions of physical and biological science to man. I mean communism and national socialism, which, although differing in details, nevertheless have the same philosophical basis. It is immaterial that the one is based upon a materialistic philosophy of history, the other on a biological materialism of *Blut und Boden*; both are equally inimical to a transcendental view of man and to any doctrine of inherent right.

It is rarely realized how, despite their apparent enmity, these two ideologies are in principle so completely one, and how they are both derivable from the same fundamental premises. Both start from scientific naturalism as their primary premise; both apply this scientific naturalism to man,

reducing man to a mere part of nature. Both inevitably, and of necessity, specifically disavow all conceptions of natural rights and intrinsic justice; both make rights and justice instrumental to the existence and survival of the State. Finally, both rest upon the denial of the dogma of reason in the cosmos and explicitly affirm the scientific irrationalism of which I spoke in the preceding lecture.

It is not surprising, therefore, that, in so far as fundamental moral issues are concerned, both are one. Both not only challenge Christianity and its distinctive moral values, but both abandon equally the democratic dogmas bound up with these values. Having abandoned the principle of reason in human life, which is the essence of the Greco-Christian tradition, both find their ultimate sanction, as well as their ultimate reality, in force—in the will to power which threatens to become the fundamental belief of the modern world. Force, not reason, is the ultimate in society because for both philosophies it is the ultimate constitution of the world.

B

Long before the modern dictatorships began to put socialism into practice, Sorel, the French philosopher, pointed out that socialism is incompatible with what he called “bourgeois morality,” and that its establishment must mean a new morality, a morality of the proletariat. Now I think history has shown that this insight is fundamentally sound and that any radical reconstruction of the economic order means, in the long run, also a radical reconstruction of the moral order. Radical reconstruction of economic life means radical reconstruction of moral and spiritual life also. This has been amply proved by the developments of Russian Communism and German National Socialism. In both cases there has been a fundamental reconstruction, not only of law but of the doctrine of rights underlying the law.

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In my callow days I used to think that the radical views of the family associated with Marxianism were extraneous—that you could have Marxian economics without Marxian morals. I now think that this is impossible. It is quite clear, I think, that it is impossible to modify the institution of private property as radically as socialism proposes without an equally radical remodeling of the family and the whole of sex morality. And this is, again, impossible without an entire re-education of man in the sentiments connected with sex and the family—a complete transvaluation of all values in this sphere. But, more than this, I think it is impossible to do these things—to remodel radically our institutions of family and property without remodeling—and as I think destroying—all our ideas of rights and justice.

The Soviet play *Red Rust*, produced by the Theater Guild in New York, illustrates my point precisely. One of the communist girls, “married,” in the communist sense, to a communist leader, cannot rid herself of the old bourgeois ideal of constancy and is, therefore, sad over the brutal infidelities and cynicism of her partner. To which one of her more enlightened and hardened sisters replies, “Why should they be faithful? We are merely female animals.” And indeed it is hard to find any reason why they should—on these premises. But there is much more to it than this. The communists in the play speak quite frankly of the whole structure of morality, including the notions of rights and justice themselves, as essentially bourgeois virtue, which must disappear in a communist society. Rights and justice have no meaning except as instruments in the service of the will to power and survival of the State.

Let us not be deceived by the confusion of tongues about us. An objective analysis of the ideologies of both our allies and our enemies implies neither depreciation of the one nor sympathy with the other. No economic system or political

ideology is the whole of life. There are impulses and powers in human nature, thank God, over and above all systems. In the last analysis these impulses and powers reside in all men and women, to whom the Creator has given a common humanity. The defense of their soil by the Russians is magnificent, and, like you, I have followed it with growing admiration of the possibilities of my fellow men. But this does not blind me for a moment to the principles which underlie Russian communism, nor to the practical consequences of those principles which we all know. It is possible that, as Maurice Hindus would have us believe, the experiences through which the Russian people are going is bringing a change in their ideology and a greater emphasis on the value of the individual. It may be, but we are here talking about what we know to be the present ideology of the system.

Let us not, I repeat, be deceived by the confusion of tongues about us. It seems beyond doubt that we have for some time been in a revolutionary period of human history. What the outcome will be depends at least in part upon the dominant assumptions about man and his destiny which emerge or survive.

Our present order has been ruled by the democratic dogma of inalienable human rights and by the conviction that men are subject to a universal moral law to which governments must submit and against which unjust governments cannot stand. The totalitarian revolutions in Russia and Germany explicitly reject this dogma. They hold that there is no moral law superior to the customs of the people and the decrees of government.

Many of you will doubtless say that it is precisely this dogma for which we are now fighting—that is why this is an ideological war. But how many in the democratic countries as well share this naturalistic conviction regarding man and his destiny? It is surely time to ask whether we can

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any longer afford to leave the issue obscure. It does not matter very much—in the long run—whether we quite frankly deny this democratic dogma of inalienable rights and the whole conception of absolute values that underlies it, or whether we subtly undermine it by the doctrine of relativism and naturalism which I have described. Personally I prefer frankness and even cynicism, for then we know where we really stand.

As a youth I was taught a hard lesson which I have never forgotten. I happened to speak of Gladstone in the presence of a typical fine old straightforward English conservative, as “the grand old man.” With a snort he replied, “grand old humbug.” I have never forgotten that it is possible that liberals may be humbugs. But just as because patriotism is the last refuge of scoundrels it does not follow that most patriots are not decent God-fearing men, so because liberalism is the favorite refuge of humbugs it does not follow that most liberals are not forthright and sincere.

I spoke earlier of a justice of the Supreme Court who denied all such basal values. It is only fair that I should also speak of one who asserts them. Justice Cardozo has pointed out the dependence of legal concepts on ethics, showing that “legal concepts when divorced from ethics, tend to become tyrants and fruitful parents of injustice.” But he goes further than this. He points out that, when conflicts in the law appear, the resolution of these conflicts always indicates that a certain scale of values is presupposed and certain principles of precedence acknowledged; a scale, moreover, which however it may be strained and pressed out of shape in the struggle for existence and power, always tends to reassert itself. For this order or scale is in the very nature of things.

V. BOURGEOIS OR CHRISTIAN MORALITY AND THE  
EVERLASTING MAN

A

It seems reasonably clear from the foregoing where the deepest issues of modern life lie. There are indeed fundamental economic issues, and with these are bound up other problems of the most fundamental kind, both practical and philosophical. It is impossible to change our economic and political structures without affecting the moral values which they presuppose. But the issue is deeper than this, namely, whether the degradation of democratic dogma, and all that it involves, does not mean ultimately the derationalizing and dehumanizing of man.

But it may be asked why not destroy these values: why should the loss of the democratic dogma mean necessarily degradation? Why not destroy bourgeois morality and substitute what Sorel calls proletarian morality, or Nietzsche the morality of the higher man? Why not abandon the notion of universal rights and justice and substitute racial conceptions of justice? Man's moral codes and values have changed in the past. Why not a complete change in the future?

Well, I may be dreadfully wrong, but I do not believe that there is any such thing as proletarian morality; any such thing as racial morality or any "new morality" of any kind. There is only human morality and, as a philosopher who has given a great deal of thought to this question, I believe that human morality expresses the laws of nature and of God.

Leon Trotsky wrote a book making fun of proletarian art and the ridiculous and artificial attempt to create it. "There is," he said, "no such thing as proletarian art—only human art." I think he is right and that the same holds for moral-

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ity. What a materialistic philosophy of history calls bourgeois morality—simply the reflection of economic forms of life—is really merely human morality. What a wholly biological and naturalistic theory of man speaks of as a morality of sympathy and weakness is simple human morality. In any case it is with this simple human morality that democracy, rightly understood, stands or falls. It is built upon the doctrine of the *Everlasting Man*, who abides in essence unchanged through all historical changes. This is the essence of democratic dogma.

Here, then, we come to the crux of the matter. We speak of the democratic way of life. But there is no way of life which does not presuppose some ideology and embody some fundamental dogma. The basis of all democratic dogma is the doctrine of the *Everlasting Man*. This doctrine cannot be abandoned without stultification of the inmost essence of democracy. And let us not, in our overweening conceit, thank God that we are not as other men. For it is precisely the point of this entire lecture that we ourselves, in our own way, have had our part in this universal degradation of democratic dogma.

### VI. DEMOCRATIC DOGMA AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF NATURE AND OF MAN

#### A

I hope we are beginning to see where all this is inevitably leading us. The democratic dogma for which men think they are fighting—although they, alas, often deceive themselves—is bound up with certain views of nature and of man. The idea of man—the *Everlasting Man*—has been built up through the long years of our Western Christian culture and cannot be divorced from it. This idea of man is again bound up with certain ideas of nature—of the world in which man lives, of the cosmos of which he is a part—and



these things which God has joined together no man can put asunder. To try to graft our Christian ideals and morals on the conception of man which follows from evolutionary naturalism is as absurd as it is impossible.

Thomas Mann has said—truly I believe—that “Christianity and the Greek tradition are and will remain the two main pillars of occidental culture. Each pillar supports the other, so that no people could abandon or deny either without shutting itself off from the moral and spiritual culture of the European peoples.” The specific meaning which he gives to this statement in the present social and political crisis of Europe is obvious. But it has much deeper significance and implications. The abandonment of the principles he speaks of is not confined to the particular peoples he has in mind, but is, in one form or another, a characteristic tendency of our entire modern culture, and present in different forms and degrees in all peoples, including our own. It is a universal phenomenon. More than this, the moral and spiritual continuity of which he speaks is not a matter of feeling or sentiment wholly, but of fundamental religious and metaphysical beliefs.

There can be no question that there has been a widespread abandonment of these pillars in the name of modern science. If it were proper I could name many leaders of so-called liberal thought in England and America who have not only themselves abandoned them, but have spent their lives in blasting at their foundations. I shall confine myself, however, to a description of the modern situation as seen by one of the most charming and persuasive of modern writers, the well-known biologist, Julian Huxley. He asks the question, *Will Science Destroy Religion?* and he answers it in this fashion. Yes it will destroy the ideology with which our human values are bound up, but the values themselves remain.

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"Gone, clean gone," we are told, "is the supposedly necessary rational basis for the whole magnificent scheme of thought which has dominated the world for over a thousand years," that scheme of thought of which we have found Thomas Mann writing. Science, we are told, has demolished that structure with which our values, our democratic dogmas of rights and justice, have been bound up. But these realities, or values by which the construction had life—they are found to persist.

"The values are there," we are told. "Even the complete mechanist cannot escape them . . . he must acknowledge that the ecstasy of beauty, the overpowering awe that sometimes seizes upon reflection and the rapture of love are facts that have the utmost value for men." The values are there. "We find, moreover, that some values are higher than others—there is a scale of values. Some are ends in themselves and some only means to ends, and the higher among them, by universal consent, are the values of truth, beauty, love and goodness."

Thus, he concludes, "science, in taking stock of the world is brought up against the existence of values and must acknowledge them. The search for truth for its own sake, irrespective of apparent value; the realization of the existence of value as apparent fact; and then the adjustment of mental knowledge and of the control born of knowledge, to the value-charged scheme of human thought—that is the new humanism." Yes, that is the new humanism with which so much of modern scientific thought presents us. But I think it is an amiable illusion which the terrible realities of the last decades have torn to shreds. With Thomas Mann, I believe that these values cannot be detached from the theological and philosophical structure with which they have been bound up and continue to live.

One cannot but smile at some of the things that are going

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on about us. One can scarcely believe his ears when one hears men who for decades have sought persistently to divorce our Western civilization and culture from its Christian basis calling again on the Christian values; when one hears men whose teaching has been pure naturalism now appealing to beliefs the very essence of which is the very opposite of naturalism. One may smile, but it is a wry smile. I cannot help feeling that in all honesty they should admit their mistakes. If in fair weather they wrote "Prefaces to Morals" which consisted in the abandonment of the basis of morals, it is only fair that when, in foul weather, they fall back upon the eternal values, they should at least recognize what it is that alone makes them eternal.

### B

Many of you have doubtless found this lecture a series of platitudes. If so, I have no apology to make. The truths men live by are always platitudinous and the philosopher can be well content if he can but orchestrate them nobly. They are like the humble folk songs which become the motifs of the great symphonies and which, precisely because they have their roots deep in the rich soil of the common life, can lift their heads to the heavens of absolute music.

Culture is indeed the measure of things taken for granted and it is with these things that must be taken for granted that the philosopher must be primarily concerned. When, however, within a given culture things are no longer thus taken for granted, a crisis in that culture inevitably ensues. We are now witnessing a culture fighting for its life. With this statement most of you would agree but I must warn you that I do not mean quite what you mean. I will not deny that when a culture has its back to the wall it may fight for its life with guns and planes, but I am sure that it will never save its life in this way. That is a short cut which, as

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I think, history has shown is always a movement in a circle. It simply reinstates in another form the very tyrannies it would destroy. Ideas can be fought only by ideas.

What then of the fortunes of this fight? Who shall say? It is possible of course that it is a losing fight—that the degradation of democratic dogma represents a permanent trend in history. It is possible that the logical foundations of this dogma are indeed gone, that Nietzsche is right and men will abandon it for other ends and values. It is possible that, as some philosophies of history are telling us, the dogma of progress in which our democratic culture has so firmly believed must also be abandoned. However this may be, these questions bring us to the topic of the third and last lecture, “Progress or Regress: The Philosophy of History.”