

# The Changing Reputation of Human Nature<sup>1</sup>

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*"Modern Liberalism, whether political or religious, needs nothing so much as a realistic and credible doctrine of man. We pride ourselves on the open-mindedness of our kind toward all sciences and their findings. But at this particular point most of us have a hereditary or a willful blind spot."*

Few things in human history are fixed. Least of all, reputations. As Santayana remarks of Hamlet, the reputations both of the great figures of fiction and of their creators have usually had an evolution and a history. One age extols Shakespeare as abiding our every question, and another devotes itself to "improving" him. One age wishes Milton could be living at this hour; another regards him as the blight of English poesy. One "school" honors Plato as the "father of all orthodoxy;" another excommunicates him as the "source of all heresy." Hence, the admonition, "Let us now praise famous men" raises again and again the questions, Which men? and How praise them?

But not only individual reputations change. The reputation of the whole species also changes. Indeed, it has been changing a good deal of late. The reasons for this are legion. One reason is, of course, that among men above the primitive level some change of outlook is always taking place. It may be slow or devious, but it is inevitable. There is a sort of dialectic in the history of ideas which over and over again manifests itself in a dissatisfaction with "established" views and in a demand for novelty. Moreover, every idea that persists in history has what Hegel calls its own "cunning." No idea can remain static, not even the conception of man. The values and insights of a given orientation or emphasis seem to exhaust themselves, and the moving finger of time points in a new direction,—and sometimes in the opposite direction. Another reason for the change

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<sup>1</sup>This essay is an expansion of the Berry Street Conference Address delivered in Boston, Mass., at the annual "May Meetings" of the American Unitarian Association, May 21, 1941.

Since the delivery of this address a number of ministers have suggested that when published the paper should provide references to significant literature on the topics discussed.

The epigraph is taken from Dean Sperry's provocative essay, "Liberalism," *Christendom*, V (1940), 185.

in the reputation of man is the fact that many of the generalizations applied to human nature in one period of world history have only a restricted validity in another period. The structure of society at a given time in large measure determines which aspects of human nature shall receive fuller expression and which shall be suppressed or called very little into play.<sup>2</sup> But there are also reasons for changes in the reputation of human nature which are peculiar to our age. For one thing, both the natural and the social sciences have in the recent past brought forth new knowledge about human nature which is affecting its reputation. Equally significant as a cause for the changes taking place today in this area is the profound change in the whole historical situation. History has its "cunning" too, and this affects man's estimate of the human condition. Hence, the current revolt against the older Liberal estimate of man is partially due to the fact that the so-called Age of Liberalism has culminated in a terrifying crisis.<sup>3</sup>

This change in the reputation of human nature presents a serious problem for every "established" philosophy. Old and encrusted forms of thought are being subjected to radical criticism. Some of them are being broken and transformed; some are even being replaced by new forms or by revised versions of old forms of thought. In such a situation it is inevitable that the attempted changes should encounter resistance, especially where the "established" philosophy has enjoyed a wide acceptance. For there is in every "established" historical movement a resistance to movement.

This resistance to movement is not necessarily a sign of ossification. Particularly in periods of crisis, prophets always abound who take a melodramatic attitude toward history and toward their own younger selves. These melodramatic prophets urge their fellows to repudiate all the doctrines that have prevailed in the recent past and frequently they offer salvation through a return to the good old days of the Mishpat or of primitive Christianity or

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Karl Mannheim, *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction* (New York, 1940), for a brilliant exposition of this thesis.

<sup>3</sup>In view of the fact that the present essay is concerned with certain changes that are taking place or are imminent within religious liberalism, it seems advisable for the sake of clarity to follow the practice of referring to the eighteenth and nineteenth-century philosophy of individualism and progress as Liberalism (with a capital L) and of referring to the ongoing broader movement for the freedom of the Christian mind and conscience in a just order of society as liberalism (with a small l). Both of these types

of the Middle Ages. In the face of these invitations to somersault, resistance may serve a valuable purpose. It may help to give continuity and stability to the processes of history and thus aid an excited generation to resist the temptation simply to pass from one extreme to another.

Just this sort of resistance one might hope will be provided by religious liberalism in a time of stock-taking such as ours. Indeed, if religious liberalism does not fulfill this function today it will in the end be rightly adjudged as the salt that has lost its savour.

But the resistance to change that is found in every historical movement may also serve as an obstruction to the emergence or appreciation of new insights. Liberalism is not unlike other "established" philosophies in this respect. Having enjoyed success for so long, it is now prone to assume glibly that it has "arrived." Hence many liberals today, instead of recognizing the inevitability of change in the reputation of human nature, are inclined to doubt whether the changes they do not like are really significant. They prefer to think that time's winged chariot only carries coals to Newcastle. What Professor E. E. Aubrey has characterized as the conservative tendency of reason plays a large role here. Thus the attitude of dogged resistance to change or criticism is often symptomatic of a change that has already taken place imperceptibly and even unconsciously,—the change from a dynamic movement of growth to a static position of defense. Among liberals this sort of resistance is in some instances motivated by the notion that the best interests of liberalism will be threatened if one concedes that it is rightly subject to radical criticism. This kind of resistance appears where liberalism has become an "ideology." Its adherents use, or rather abuse, it to protect some vested intellectual or material interest.

Another type of regressive resistance to movement in liberalism is the sort that arises from the identification of it with some par-

of liberalism, of course, have taken a secular as well as a religious form.

The confusion that obtains with regard to the use of the word "liberalism" is, of course, nothing new. For a brief study of its many meanings in the past and in current usage see Guido de Ruggiero, "Liberalism," *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 9, 435-441; see also James Truslow Adams, "Liberals," *Dictionary of American History*, Vol. III, 269-270; Willard L. Sperry, *op. cit.*, pp. 181 ff.; John Dewey, *Liberalism and Social Action* (New York, 1935); Frank H. Knight, "Ethics and Economic Reform. I. The Ethics of Liberalism," *Economica*, February, 1939.

ticular doctrines that are believed to be once for all delivered and thus not subject to criticism. This sort of resistance appears where a philosophy has become orthodox, and it plays right into the hands of those critics of liberalism who identify it with some particular doctrine and then, because of the alleged inadequacy of this doctrine, urge us to have done with liberalism of every form. By means of this ruse such critics give the impression that they were right in always having opposed liberalism, and thus they the more easily persuade their adherents that the world should attempt to assuage its guilt by casting its sins upon a scapegoat "constructed" for the purpose, a scapegoat that they call "liberalism."

In the face of this sort of attack the liberals have (as we have suggested) a very significant positive role to play in maintaining resistance, especially in maintaining it against those forces that threaten to destroy the enduring values of liberalism and that lead towards fanaticism, obscurantism, and authoritarianism. Certainly, the religious liberals should protest vigorously against the claim that they must either retain the old Liberalism in its entirety or give up liberalism altogether. They should also insist that such a false statement of the alternatives bespeaks a complete misunderstanding of the nature of liberalism. The modification or abandonment of some particular doctrine of an earlier liberalism is not tantamount to the betrayal of liberalism. Far from it. It may be actually the practice of liberalism.

This fact becomes evident if we consider a pungent criticism of modern Liberalism written by an eminent theologian of our day. Attacking the traditionally over-optimistic doctrine of man in the older Liberalism and at the same time appealing to a liberal principle as the basis for his criticism, this theologian writes:

Turning now to the criticism of Liberalism from within, to which its own creative principle gives rise, we must seriously question whether it can bear the weight of the tragedies of human existence. Does not its amiable faith in inherent goodness appear ghastly mockery when confronted by the facts of life? Believing in the immanent God, it must seriously consider what sort of God it is that nature reveals. We cannot be so enamoured of the loveliness of nature as to be blind to its terrible aspects. And what of human sin? Here more than anywhere else the weakness of Modern Liberalism shows itself. It may be conceded that traditional theology made too much of sin, but surely that was better than to make light of it. To a serious thinker, Modern Liberalism often seems too jocund for life as it actually is. . . . We would not have Modern Liberalism return to a belief

in the devil—that is too easy a solution to the problem—but it must deal more justly with the crushing tragedies of life, with evil and sin, if it is to command the respect of candid and thoughtful men. The saviors of the world have always been and always will be men of sorrow and acquainted with grief."

This paragraph was not written by an adherent of any one of those groups that are, according to some accounts, today leading a retreat into the "dark backward and abysm" of Calvinism. It was written by a representative Unitarian. Nor was it written by one whose vision was distorted by "post-war pessimism." It appeared not in the year 1942, but in 1913. And its author was undoubtedly a liberal,—the late William Wallace Fenn of the Harvard Divinity School.<sup>4</sup>

It would be wrong to suppose that Dean Fenn's criticism stands alone in the literature of liberalism or that his criticism is illiberal in spirit or consequence. It is of the essence of liberalism to criticize itself. Moreover, among religious liberals there is and there has always been a considerable variety of opinion about human nature as well as about many other matters. In other words, although religious liberals have been at one in espousing certain liberal principles, such as freedom of inquiry and freedom of conscience, they have not all brought forth the same ideas in their exercise of these freedoms. Thus we see that the liberal method or attitude is one thing, the specific content of liberalism is another. Hence, the liberal doctrine of man may change while the non-authoritarian method of liberalism remains in fundamental respects the same.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, if some particular doctrine of man—or of God—held among liberals should be viewed as final in its form of expression and as exempt from criticism or change, the principle of freedom in liberalism would thereby be surrendered. Only if the conception of man or God were altered to an extent requiring a fundamental revision of the liberal method, would liberalism as we cherish it be threatened. In this respect, the method and the

<sup>4</sup>The quotation is taken from Dean Fenn's article "Modern Liberalism," *The American Journal of Theology*, XVII (1913), 509-519. Walter Marshall Horton has characterized this article "by a great Unitarian thinker" as "the most incisive criticism of liberalism." See his *Realistic Theology* (New York, 1934), p. 33.

<sup>5</sup>In his book *The Religious Prospect* (London, 1940), V. A. Demant, the eminent British Anglo-Catholic theologian, has recognized and has succinctly delineated certain of the differences between the method of lib-

content of liberalism are correlative and interdependent. Within these limits, then, both variety and change in the stated doctrines of religious liberalism are at once inevitable and legitimate.

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Two things should strike the attention of any one interested in the changing reputation of human nature. The first is that the reputation of human nature in any epoch or movement is closely associated with a general world-view, and it cannot be understood apart from this world-view. The second is the fact that in modern times the major changes in this reputation represent to a large extent variations on a few very old themes. A novel fundamental idea does not appear often in human thought, whether that thought be concerned with man, nature, or God. Only a few basic rival conceptions are available in any one of these areas of thought, and most of these we have inherited from ancient times.

When the reputation of human nature changes, then, it is almost inevitable that either some variation of the prevalent attitude toward human nature and existence or a new version of a neglected earlier conception should emerge. This latter trend has been taking place in our day. In the very process of assimilating the new knowledge of man that has resulted from the application of modern scientific methods and that has accrued from viewing man in a changed historical situation, many people have been led to a new appreciation of certain earlier estimates of human nature and the human situation.

We now turn our attention to a consideration of three of these basic rival conceptions. Our purpose in presenting these rival conceptions is not merely to provide an orientation for the consideration of the current changes in the reputation of human nature, but also to indicate the relative merits of these conceptions and to draw from such a study an indication of the changes needful in the older Liberal doctrine of man.

In the ancient Greek tradition we find two of these typical

eralism and its content (or doctrines) at any particular time. It is to be regretted that some of the present-day critics of religious liberalism have not taken into account this distinction between method and content.

It should be noted here that although the religious liberal renounces authoritarianism, he adopts some positive doctrine of authority. Indeed, the conception of the nature of authority as held in earlier liberalism is ripe for re-examination in the light of certain new insights of our day concerning "the seat of authority" in a religious fellowship.

estimates of human nature and the human situation. The one view is associated with the classical philosophers; it is usually called the intellectualistic or rationalistic view, the Apollonian view. According to this view, reason is the masterful principle of creation, and thus the cosmos is a moving shadow of a world of eternal ideas, essences, or forms. Correspondingly, man's primary, distinguishing faculty is his reason, and through it he can release a vitality that will enable him to achieve control of himself and of the human situation by subjecting them to clearly envisaged forms. What is to be especially noted here is the tendency of this intellectualistic view, first, to interpret existence in terms of a rational, unified, harmonious structure, and, second, to exalt the cognitive, non-affective aspects of the human psyche. The conjunction of these two elements leads to a preoccupation with the forms and structures of being and to a "theoretical attitude of distance" which aims at the development of the form and harmony of the Olympian calm. Thus the vitality of nature, man, and history is assumed, and creativity is identified with the operations of reason.

The other view of human nature in the Hellenic tradition interprets existence more in terms of vitality than of form, a vitality that is both creative and destructive, that imbues every form but that also eludes and bursts the bounds of every structure. It is associated with one of the major traditions in popular Greek religion, with certain pre-Socratic philosophers very close to this religious tradition, and in certain respects, with the great tragedians. It has usually been characterized as the Dionysian view. In recent decades this view and certain modern variations of it have been spoken of as "voluntarism."<sup>6</sup>

In general, this view exalts the dynamic aspects of existence; therefore it conceives of man's proper goal as the fulfillment of the life-giving powers inherent in existence. But here the elements of struggle, contradiction, and tragedy rather than the element of

<sup>6</sup>The term "voluntarism" was coined by the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies in 1883 and was given wide currency by Friedrich Paulsen in his *Introduction to Philosophy* (1st American from 3rd German ed.; New York, 1895). In its more general meaning it denotes any theory that asserts that will or creativity is the decisive factor in human nature and that will is the ultimate constituent of reality. Perhaps the most widely familiar statement of the position is the assertion of the primacy of the will over the intellect.

As an epistemological method voluntarism may be said to depend upon the view that the substantial character of reality cannot be

harmony is emphasized. Thus in popular Greek thought and even among certain of the élite, a large place is assigned to Fate. Man is believed to be confronted by divine and demonic forces that either support and inspire, or thwart and pervert him in his attempt to fulfill his destiny. Although there is here a keen sense of tragedy, man does not in this view necessarily lose his dignity and worth. Quite the contrary. In the great Greek tragedies, for example, the tragic element is discovered at the very point at which human greatness and the divine sphere come into conflict. It is precisely human greatness that makes possible tragic guilt and self-destruction. Indeed, according to this view, not only man is plagued by a Fate that drives him to tragic grandeur and self-destruction, but even the gods are subject to it, since no one of them can be identified with the highest principle. Fate is considered to be sovereign over both man and the gods just because it is viewed as a causal manifestation of a primordial creative principle. The point to be stressed, however, is that man is here understood in

understood merely by achieving clear and distinct ideas. For reality should determine the ideas and not the ideas the reality. Hence, scientific positivism as well as modern philosophical realism belongs within the tradition of voluntarism, though certain types of rationalistic positivism have veered away from it. Another way of stating this epistemological principle is to say that epistemology must have an ontological basis in the creativity that characterizes "the living universe." Hence, knowledge is an active understanding and a participation in creativity.

The use of the term "voluntarism" in psychology does not connote an acceptance of the old faculty psychology. The word "will" has to a great extent disappeared from the psychology textbooks except in the discussions of the freedom of the will. The words conation, striving, impulse, desire, and action have largely replaced it. The word "will" is used in the present essay to refer to the function or group of functions of the individual or the group as it manifests itself in action. Cf. "Will," *Dictionary of Psychology*, ed. Howard C. Warren (Boston, 1934). For an exposition of certain aspects of voluntaristic psychology since Nietzsche, see the valuable study by Dr. Erich Fromm, "Selfishness and Self-Love," *Psychiatry*, II (November, 1939), 507-523.

In recent decades the term voluntarism has sometimes been employed by sociologists to denote an emphasis upon the decisive significance of "the social will" in the development of society. For a survey of modern European and American voluntaristic sociology see Paul Barth, *Die Philosophie der Geschichte als Soziologie* (Leipzig, 1915), pp. 437-505; also, Ernst Troeltsch, *Historismus und seine Probleme* (Tübingen, 1922); Edward H. Redman, "A Study of Ernst Troeltsch's Theory of Historicism" (Unpublished B.D. dissertation, The Meadville Theological School, 1941).

The term "voluntarism" also denotes any theory that stresses the role of the will or of decision in religious knowledge, in faith, and in religious experience. The Pauline and Augustinian doctrines of grace may be taken as illustrations of a voluntaristic theology and psychology. In the Augustinian tradition, especially in the Middle Ages, the voluntaristic atti-

terms of the dignity and fate of a human agent confronted by a will or power that cannot be created or controlled by any merely rational technique.<sup>7</sup> The tragic process is master of all forms, causing them to undergo change and transformation and even destruction.

This tragic view of the human condition, as it was held among the Greeks, was largely ignored in eighteenth and nineteenth-century "Hellenism," as was also the fact of its affinity with ancient Hebrew conceptions. The Hellenism that has been influential since the Renaissance has taken its nourishment chiefly from the intellectualistic tendency in Greek life and thought.<sup>8</sup> Nietzsche and Burckhardt were among the first influential modern historians to become aware of the great significance of the tragic, Dionysian tendency in Greek thought.<sup>9</sup> The work of later scholars like Butcher and Diels has contributed much to the achievement of

tude toward religious experience is expressed in the view that blessedness is a state of activity. For a recent discussion of the points at issue between certain types of intellectualism and voluntarism in current theological controversy over the Augustinian theology, see Harris Harbison's article, "Will versus Reason," in *The Journal of Bible and Religion*, IX (November, 1941), 203-216. Cf. also on this whole problem, Paul Tillich, *The Interpretation of History* (New York, 1936); H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Meaning of Revelation* (New York, 1941).

For a history of voluntarism in Germany since the Renaissance, see the valuable work by the distinguished religious liberal, Kurt Leese, *Die Krisis und Wende des christlichen Geistes* (Berlin, 1932). On Leese's philosophy, see James L. Adams, "Kurt Leese and German Liberalism," *The Christian Register*, 116 (August 5, 1937), 463-465.

For a brief history of the various types of voluntarism and of the struggle between intellectualism and voluntarism in European philosophy and theology, see Heinz Heimsoeth, *Die sechs grossen Themen der abendländischen Metaphysik* (Berlin-Steglitz, 1934), chapter VI. Cf. also "Voluntarism," *Dictionary of Philosophy*, ed. Dagobert D. Runes (New York, 1942).

<sup>7</sup>On the Greek views of tragedy see Gilbert Norwood, *Greek Tragedy* (Boston, 1920); Prosser Hall Frye, *Romance and Tragedy* (Boston, 1922); article, "Moirai," Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, Vol. XV (1932), 2449-2472.

<sup>8</sup>It must be noted, however, that during both the Renaissance and the Romantic period there was considerable conflict among the Hellenizers, that is, between the rationalists and those who held the tragic view. But despite the revival of certain elements of the Greek tragic view in Romanticism, the intellectualistic view of Hellenism was the more influential in the nineteenth century, as, for example, in Hegel and Matthew Arnold. Both these writers, despite fundamental divergencies, conceive of Hellenism as an aesthetic, harmonious outlook rather than as a "tragic" one.

<sup>9</sup>See Nietzsche's essays *The Birth of Tragedy* (1870-1) and *Philosophy during the Tragic Age of the Greeks* (1873). For a brilliant characterization of the Apollonian and the Dionysian tendencies in ancient Greek culture, see also Charles W. Morris, *Paths of Life* (Harper, 1942).

a new appreciation of what Butcher has characterized as "the melancholy of the Greeks." Nevertheless, the "Apollonian" interpretation of Hellenism as set forth by Matthew Arnold has continued to exercise a wide influence, and it has veiled from the eyes of many the predominantly tragic attitude of the Greeks, an attitude much more similar to that of the Hebrews than Arnold recognized. The Hellenism described by Arnold deserves the praise he bestows upon it. But we should bear in mind that it was shared by only a small élite in ancient Greece and also that it was only for a short time able to maintain the optimistic attitude that we associate with the glory that was Greece.

In the light of what has been said, it should be clear that we cannot properly understand the third influential attitude toward man and existence—the Judeo-Christian view—if we interpret it as constituting a complete contrast with "the Greek view of life." It is true that there is little in common between the Jewish-and-early-Christian view and the Apollonian attitude. In so far as Matthew Arnold confines attention to these two points of view he is a reliable guide when he characterizes the differences between Hellenism and Hebraism. Also, in addition to the differences that Arnold describes, we should note that another difference between the Judeo-Christian and the sophisticated Greek outlook is to be discerned in their contrasting views of time and history, the one looking upon history as "forward-moving" toward an End (*eschaton*) and the other viewing it as "cyclic."

On the other hand, the Greek Dionysian view and the Judeo-Christian attitude bear a resemblance to each other in their possession of a "tragic sense of life" as well as in their emphasis upon the dynamic elements in the world and in human life. According to the Judeo-Christian view, God is a righteous will fulfilling his purpose in history; man and nature are fallen; man's natural will is at variance with the divine will, and man's sin and guilt and his conflict with the principalities and powers of this world are an inextricable part of human experience. Thus in both the Greek tragic view and the Jewish prophetic and primitive Christian outlook there is an awareness of an ontologically as well as psychologically grounded tendency in man to rebellion, perversion, and self-destruction, and thus there is an assertion of the universal guilt of man. Moreover, in both views the attention

is centered upon the dynamic, creative-destructive aspects of existence and upon the affective aspects of the human psyche.

Yet, there are also certain fundamental differences to be observed between the Judeo-Christian and the Greek "tragic" view. Two of these differences may be noted here. The first has to do with the ultimate valuation they place on existence.

The Judeo-Christian doctrine of creation involves the idea that in substance the world is good, for it is God's creation. Nothing in existence is absolutely anti-divine. In order for anything to exist it must have something of the divine in it. *Esse est bonum quia esse*. The Christian confession: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth," has this idea as its real import. Even suffering may be a means of grace. Indeed, the Cross is the highest revelation of the character of God, for through it divine providence overcomes sin and death. Likewise, the Pauline belief in original sin is outweighed by the emphasis on providence and the hope of redemption. Thus God is beyond tragedy; and ultimately, existence and history are not tragic.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, the Greek popular view from pre-Homeric times was unable to find a principle of transcendence beyond the tragedy of existence. This view finds philosophical expression in the famous fragment of Anaximander: "Things perish into those things from which they have their birth, as it is ordained; for they pay to one another the penalty of their injustice according to the order of time." For Anaximander, "the separate existence of things is, so to speak, a wrong, a transgression which they must expiate by their destruction."<sup>11</sup> The contrast between Judeo-Christian optimism and the "melancholy" of the Greeks cannot be discussed in further detail here.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup>One is reminded here of Father Tyrrell's statement that Christianity is an ultimate optimism based upon a provisional pessimism. Cf. also Reinhold Niebuhr, *Beyond Tragedy* (New York, 1937).

As J. B. Bury has pointed out, the modern belief in progress represents a rationalized adaptation of the Christian doctrine of providence. H. Richard Niebuhr has suggested that the idea of progress was also implicit in the neo-Calvinist doctrine of providence which became influential after the Great Awakening. Cf. *The Kingdom of God in America*, (Chicago, 1937), p. 192.

<sup>11</sup>Cf. Eduard Zeller, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, trans. S. F. Alleyne (London, 1881), I, 256.

<sup>12</sup>It must suffice to direct the reader's attention to one of the best treatments of these contrasts in S. H. Butcher's two volumes, *Some Aspects of the Greek Genius* (New York, 1893) and *Harvard Lectures on Greek Sub-*

The other major difference between the Judeo-Christian and the Dionysian view concerns their contrasting attitudes toward reason and morality. The Dionysian view was strongly characterized by "enthusiastic" irrationalism and amorality, defects made familiar to most of us through the diatribes of Euripides against Dionysianism. The Judeo-Christian mentality in its formative period made no virtue of irrationalism and it strongly opposed amorality. Whether we think of the Old Testament prophets, of the writers of the Wisdom literature, or of the great rabbis of normative Judaism, whether we think of Jesus, of Paul, of the author of the Fourth Gospel, or of the Greek fathers or Augustine—the main line of the Christian tradition—we find no exaltation of irrationalism and we find a great emphasis placed on conformity to the righteous will of God. With respect to the attitude toward reason, it is no accident that the Christian outlook could be merged with Greek theology. It is largely because of this coming together of Judeo-Christian voluntarism and Greek intellectualism that Christianity became the transmitter of much of the best in both the ancient Semitic and the ancient Greek tradition.

Much of the history of thought in the West may in its broader perspectives be interpreted as a history of the combination of, and the tension and interplay between the three attitudes toward existence which we have briefly described. In view of the fact, however, that the *pagan* tragic view was effectually overcome in the Middle Ages,<sup>13</sup> modern thought about man and existence in the main represents an interplay between only two of these attitudes, the Greek intellectualist and the Judeo-Christian voluntarist view. The views that prevailed in the Middle Ages, in the Renaissance and the Reformation, and even in the periods of the Enlightenment and of Romanticism are to be interpreted as modern developments, combinations, or perversions of motifs already present in these ancient Greek and Hebrew traditions. The

jects (New York, 1904). See also Paul Tillich, "The Meaning of Our Present Historical Existence," *The Hazen Conferences on Student Guidance and Counselling*, 1938, pp. 19-29, and Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man; Human Nature* (New York, 1941), chap. 1.

<sup>13</sup>A fascinating account of this struggle between the pagan idea of Fate and the Christian idea of Providence is to be found in H. R. Patch, *The Tradition of Boethius; A Study of His Importance in Medieval Culture* (New York, 1935). See also E. K. Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage* (2 vols., Oxford, 1903).

increasingly dominant force in modern Western culture, however, has been the rationalistic tradition. Although intellectualism reached its high points in Thomism, in the Cartesian tradition, and in early eighteenth-century rationalism, and although it met with strong opposition in Romanticism—a form of Dionysianism, it has in many quarters continued to hold its own. To be sure, it has in this process undergone certain transformations. Indeed, its "success" is perhaps due to this very fact. Thus the earlier static rationalism was in the eighteenth century replaced by a dynamic, progressive rationalism that has exercised a considerable variety of influence. This dynamic rationalism is to be seen, for example, in the revolutionary rationalism of the late eighteenth century; it has served as the core of modern bourgeois democracy; and, alongside the influence of empiricism, it has also decisively affected eighteenth and nineteenth century science and technology. This change to a dynamic rationalism took place at the time when the bourgeois man was freeing himself from the feudal system and bringing about in its place the modern industrialist society. This fact has no small bearing on the character that modern rationalism has assumed in its various stages.

Meanwhile, the voluntaristic view has also undergone many changes. Its peregrinations may be roughly identified with the pilgrimage of the Augustinian point of view through its many variations, as in Bonaventura, Duns Scotus, and Luther, and through essential changes, as in Schelling and Nietzsche. A list of the significant figures who in the modern period have in one way or another stressed the role of creative will and conflict rather than of unitary reason and harmony would be long and imposing. Yet it would for the most part include philosophical outlooks that have been sub-dominant in modern thought until recent decades. Some of these thinkers have set forth a basically irrational philosophy, others have stressed the role of the non-rational or the a-logical, and still others have attempted to combine rational or metalogical analysis with a recognition of the decisive role of the will.<sup>14</sup>

In general, however, we may say that whereas intellectualism

<sup>14</sup>The wide range of interpretation possible here can be suggested if we note that in the list of voluntarists the following thinkers have been included (in addition to those already named in the text): Calvin, Boehme, Pascal,

as a consequence of its having centered attention on the cognitive aspects of human nature has emphasized rational poise, harmony, and "a theoretical attitude of distance," voluntarism, although for the most part insisting upon the basic significance of the intellectual disciplines, has tended to stress the dynamic and contradictory elements in existence and the affective aspects of human nature. Hence, the latter point of view has emphasized what is today called the existential attitude, that is, "an ultimate concern about the meaning of being for us, demanding an attitude of decision."<sup>15</sup> In the light of these contrasts in typology we must interpret the age-old conflict between those who assert the primacy of the intellect and those who assert the primacy of the will. And it must be noted again that the voluntaristic tradition, especially in Christian theology, has stressed the fateful, tragic aspects of human existence. Indeed, in its most extreme forms voluntarism has asserted the arbitrary sovereignty of God and the helpless corruption of human nature, and in secular thought it has asserted the arbitrary sovereignty of some particularist loyalty to tradition, blood, class, or nation.

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The modern development of intellectualism must be understood as a reaction against these extreme forms of voluntarism. In large degree the Renaissance was a revolt against the obscurantism and authoritarianism of the Middle Ages and also against certain forms of earlier voluntarism, (though it must be added that the

Jonathan Edwards, Hume, Kant, Kierkegaard, Schopenhauer, Marx, James, Babbitt, Dewey, Bergson, Freud, Troeltsch, Otto, Berdyaev, Tillich, Leese, Tennant, Klages, van Holk, and Mannheim.

The distinguished Orientalist Deussen in *Die Philosophie der Bibel* (Leipzig, 1913), pointed out the affinities between this type of thought and that of the Bible. The American Orientalist, Duncan B. MacDonald, has dealt with the same themes in his *The Hebrew Philosophical Genius* (Princeton, 1936), showing the voluntarist elements in the Old Testament.

Modern psychologists have recognized the significance and originality of Augustine for the theory of the primacy of the will in psychology. Even in that Thomist stronghold, the Latin Church, voluntarist influences have been evident not only among the Scotists but also among those deeply influenced by the Bible and modern realism and pragmatism. Especially significant in this respect are the writings of P. Laberthonnière and Maurice Blondel.

<sup>15</sup>Cf. Paul Tillich's review of Reinhold Niebuhr's *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, in *Christianity and Society*, VI (Spring, 1941), 34.

Renaissance was also voluntaristic in some respects). Likewise, intellectualism in later centuries represents a revolt against the extreme forms of voluntarism found in orthodox Calvinism and Lutheranism.

Indeed, religious liberalism itself can be understood in its proper perspective only when interpreted as an aspect of this opposition. In religious liberalism the rationalistic view of human nature and of the human situation appeared as a revolt against the older forms of authoritarianism, a revolt in the name of the principles of freedom of mind and freedom of conscience. But concomitantly the liberal movement represented also a revolt against the Protestant dogma of the total depravity of human nature, that is, against a depraved, lopsided, rationalized form of the Christian doctrine of original sin. In short, it was a revolt against a voluntarism that had gone to seed.

The Unitarians and their predecessors were among those who were in the vanguard of this revolt against the pessimistic Reformation conception. In opposition to the Calvinist view, and in no small measure utilizing the dialectical powers inherited from Calvinism, the Unitarians asserted that man's possession of the faculty of reason gives him the dignity of a child of God; and they held that by means of this faculty man could eliminate the superstitions and unworthy accretions of the Christian tradition, and bring about both a fulfillment of the human spirit and a return to "pure Christianity."

The fruits of this struggle and of the great humanitarian impulse of the nineteenth century represent no mean cultural accomplishment. This fact can scarcely be over-emphasized. Moreover, contemporary Protestantism owes to religious liberalism the social emphasis that in the past century has been reintroduced into Protestant thought and action.

But, unfortunately, not all the fruits issuing from the new movement were actually intended or expected by its proponents. Nor was the movement able to maintain in the main body of its adherents the prophetic power of its early days. The new intellectualism, which in its early stages was powerfully dynamic, more and more moved in the direction of emphasizing again the cognitive aspects of human nature ("the theoretical attitude of distance") and of thus neglecting the affective side of human nature

and "the attitude of decision."<sup>16</sup> The influence of the scientific method, despite its value in other respects, played no small role in accelerating this tendency.

Perhaps this trend in religious liberalism can best be brought into relief by an illustration drawn from an early phase of its development. At the time of the Great Awakening in the middle of the eighteenth century, there was a sharp division of opinion concerning the value and validity of the "visible upsets of grace" that attended the revivalist movement, a movement that had arisen partially as an attempt to stem the tide of the Enlightenment. Certainly, little can be said in defense of the methods of the revivalist preachers of the time. The significant thing to be noticed, however, is the particular form that the opposition to the new movement took. This opposition to the New Lights was led by Charles Chauncy of the First Church in Boston.<sup>17</sup> Chauncy was justly impatient with the irrational extravagances of the movement. He charged that it was "a plain stubborn Fact, that the Passions have generally in these times, been apply'd to, as though the main Thing in Religion was to throw them into Disturbance." "The plain truth," he insisted, is that "an enlightened Mind, and not raised Affections, ought always to be the Guide of those who call themselves men; and this, in the affairs of religion, as well as other things." "Reasonable beings," he declared, "are not to be guided by passion or affection, even though the Object of it should be God and the things of another world." Chauncy's preference for the restraints of reason as against "raised affections"

<sup>16</sup>Other aspects of this revolt and of certain consequences that have not been "favorable to piety" were discussed by Professor Perry Miller in his address on "Individualism and the New England Tradition" at the annual meeting of the Unitarian Ministerial Union at King's Chapel, Boston, Mass., May 18, 1942. This address was published in the Summer 1942 issue of this JOURNAL.

Professor Miller in his essay on "The Marrow of Puritan Divinity," *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts*, XXXII (1935), 247-300, has shown that the rationalistic revolt against the Calvinist emphasis on the inscrutability of the divine decrees emanating from the will of God, began among the Puritans in early seventeenth-century England and was widely prevalent among the first Puritan divines of New England. Indeed, Jonathan Edwards was the first strictly Calvinist theologian in New England; he looked upon the earlier divines as heretics.

<sup>17</sup>See his *Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New England* (Boston, 1743). The controversy is well described in the Introduction to C. H. Faust and Thomas H. Johnson, *Jonathan Edwards, Representative Selections* (New York, 1935).

indicates the trend of his thought. He did still believe that some fundamental change of heart and will—a conversion—is necessary for one who would become a Christian, but his own preoccupation and the increasing preference of his age were with more intellectual matters. As time went on man's reason and not the quality of his will was more and more widely assumed to be of primary importance. As one historian has phrased it, regeneration was now felt to be far too big a word to describe the difference that religion should make.<sup>18</sup> No doubt one reason for this change of attitude was the improved social status and the increased security of the people concerned. "Conversion" was more and more relegated to the underprivileged classes, and middle-class Liberalism became increasingly a form of accommodation to the ways of the world. The elapse of a century and a half of capitalism with its concomitant marriage of convenience with "religion" and the rise of new religious and secular forms of protest were required to make these facts plain. But in the long run the increase in the power of the middle class served to replace the idea of the necessity of conversion with another ideal: the formation of a "respectable" type of "religious" and moral character through "reasonable" and increasingly secularistic (and "safe") education.

What was happening here may be taken as characteristic of one important element in the modern movement of rationalism since Descartes. The emphasis on the quality of the will, on the disposition of the *entire* personality, was being replaced by a one-sided emphasis on "reason." The attitude of Greek rationalism as mediated through Stoicism and scholasticism and transformed by modern rationalism, was taking the place of the older Augustinian emphasis on the will and the affections. Here we find, then, the element that has given to Unitarianism its reputation for being intellectual. The appeal to affective experience, the belief in the necessity for conversion, and the use of the emotive symbols of the religious tradition were more and more deprecated.<sup>19</sup> Thus religious Liberalism, in the name of *intellectual* integrity, tended to neglect the deeper levels both of the human consciousness and of reality itself. As a consequence, it gradually became associated

<sup>18</sup>W. P. Paterson, *Conversion* (New York, 1940), p. 123.

<sup>19</sup>Cf. Gerald Birney Smith, "Liberal Theology," *A Dictionary of Religion and Ethics*, ed. S. Mathews and G. B. Smith (New York, 1921).

with an ascetic attitude toward the imagination as well as toward enthusiasm and gripping loyalties. Instead of confronting men with the demand of inner commitment to the ideals of prophetic religion, it more and more provided a cosmic or religious sanction for the interests of a particular group. In the end "the attitude of distance" won the day, and Liberalism achieved poise by living at the low temperature of "detached, middle-class common sense."<sup>20</sup>

These tendencies were not the consequence of a loss of faith. They were merely the negative aspects of a new faith. Nor was this a faith merely in human reason or in man alone. It was a faith that found its support in a new idea of the character of the universe and of man as a part of that universe.

This faith and its supporting conception of the universe is what is generally referred to when the modern historian of culture speaks of Liberalism (with a capital L). It is against this type of Liberalism and its contemporary residues that much of the current criticism of religious liberalism is directed. In so far as it is valid this criticism does not involve a repudiation of the liberal ideal of liberating the human spirit from the bondage of economic, social and ecclesiastical tyrannies. It is directed against the view of human nature and of the nature of reality which is explicit in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Liberalism and which is still implicit in much liberal thought of today. Hence, it is directed also against the tendency of this type of Liberalism to become associated too closely with the interests of one class in society. Let us now examine these conceptions.

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Dean Fenn has pointed out that the "favorite concept" of modern rationalistic Liberalism is its belief in the unified structure of the world.<sup>21</sup> This belief is the modern counterpart

<sup>20</sup>The "attitude of distance" is, of course, indispensable for both science and religion. But it is scarcely sufficient for religion. In this connection see G. E. O. Meyer's discussion of the I-Thou relationship, "The Religious Socialist in the World Crisis," *THE JOURNAL OF LIBERAL RELIGION*, III (Spring, 1942), 196. Cf. also the Jewish mystic, Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (Edinburgh, 1937); Philip Wheelwright, "Religion and Social Grammar," *Kenyon Review*, IV (Spring, 1942), 202-216; H. Richard Niebuhr, *op. cit.*, chap. 2.

On the religion of the low temperature, and of "detached, middle-class common sense," see A. N. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making* (New York, 1926), pp. 52 ff.

<sup>21</sup>*Op. cit.*, pp. 517 ff.

of the Greek rationalistic view of ultimate reality as a unified pattern behind phenomena, a pattern which is viewed as the source of vitality and with which the rational soul feels itself akin. It has found a great variety of expression, as in Descartes' faith in the existence of a divine power that harmonizes both mind and nature, or in Spinoza's view that thought and extension are different attributes of the same substance and that God is that substance, or in Leibniz' theory of a pre-established harmony that preserves unity despite apparent diversity, or in his view that the individual is a unified whole within the macrocosm.

We are all familiar with the result of this whole tendency. Because of the pre-established harmony, separative individualism was given a divine sanction, and the modern Liberal's over-optimism concerning human nature and its progressive and ultimate perfectibility was born. Mandeville does, to be sure, recognize the contrast between the selfish desire of the bourgeois man and his desire for order and education. But he resolves the conflict by appealing to the pre-established harmony: hence, he says private vices are public virtues. Shaftesbury and Hutcheson discover a moral sense in everybody. This moral sense, they say, is an invariant norm, the violation of which would alone introduce discord. Helvetius even goes so far as to assert that self-love leads ultimately to the love of others. Condillac says that the brain is a *tabula rasa*, but the laws of matter operative in brain vibrations will bring forth truth. How? Through the pre-established harmony. And many of the scientists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, following the lead of Francis Bacon, believed that if only the scientists would individually specialize and then pool their findings the kingdom of man would be ushered in. Finally, Liberal economics proclaimed the faith that if markets were made free and state interference were reduced to a minimum, the rationality of economic forces would do the rest and harmonious well-being for everybody would ensue.<sup>22</sup> This view was sup-

<sup>22</sup>For a discussion of the theory of pre-established harmony and of related ideas, see E. H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939* (London, 1941), chap. 4. See also J. H. Randall, Jr., *The Making of the Modern Mind* (rev. ed.; New York, 1940), Bk. III; Wilhelm Pauck, "What Is Wrong with Liberalism?" *The Journal of Religion*, XV (1935), 146-160; Carl Becker, *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers* (New Haven, 1932); Ernst Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress*, trans.

ported by the doctrine of the harmony of interests, according to which the individual could be relied on, without external control, to promote the interests of the community for the reason that those interests were identical with his own. The harmony was believed to be none the less real if those concerned were unconscious of it. The pre-established harmony would operate willy-nilly. According to Adam Smith, the popularizer of the doctrine of the harmony of interests, the individual "neither intends to promote the public interest, nor knows how much he is promoting it. . . . He intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention."

Out of roots such as these grew the ideas of progress and perfectibility characteristic of the secular as well as of the religious Liberalism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In some quarters these ideas were related to a new faith in man; in other quarters they were related to a thoroughly worked-out philosophy of history; and in still others they were rooted in a belief in "cosmic progress." Within these variations there were still others. Some liberals, for example, emphasized the natural power of Reason, while others, under the influence of Romanticism, emphasized the natural power of Sympathy. In 1885 belief in "the progress of mankind onward and upward forever" became one of the main articles of the Unitarian faith. And, as an eminent Unitarian historian says, Dr. James Freeman Clarke "leaves us in no doubt concerning the importance" he ascribed to the famous Point Five: "He did not intend 'the Progress of Mankind' to be an *omnium gatherum*, or an anti-climax; on the contrary, he regarded the belief in human progress as an essential and a summary of a true Liberal's religion." Dr. Clarke's sermon in which the "Five Points of the New Theology" were first set forth concludes with this affirmation: "The one fact which is written on nature and human life, which accords with all we see and know, is the fact of progress; and this must be accepted as the purpose of the creation." The historian already quoted comments as

W. Montgomery (New York, 1912); Paul Tillich, *Sozialistische Entscheidung* (Potsdam, 1933), pp. 68 ff.

Professor Carr (*op. cit.*) shows the disastrous effect of the theory of "the harmony of interests" on international politics during the past two decades.

follows on Dr. Clarke's general position: "There is ground for believing, indeed, that Dr. Clarke was influenced by the doctrines of Herbert Spencer and August Comte regarding the inevitability of progress—a process and a consummation implicit in the course of evolution and assured by the trend of natural forces."<sup>23</sup>

Since the turn of the century some religious liberals have greatly altered their attitude toward the older ideas of progress and perfectibility. Indeed, some of them no longer even mention the ideas, except when singing hymns written a generation or so ago. Moreover, liberalism has taken on new forms as a consequence of the influence of scientific positivism, of ethical relativism, and even of Marxian dialectical materialism,—not to speak of the influence of Marxian Utopianism. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to suppose that the outlook on the world entertained by the majority of religious liberals has undergone radical modification in respect to belief in the unified structure of the world or in the continuous progress of the race. As operative presupposition if not as explicit doctrine the old beliefs in harmony and perfectibility still serve as a groundwork for "faith." This is especially true among the laity of all the denominations in the left wing of Protestantism, not to mention millions of people outside the churches. In short, the general outlook on life of many people continues to have its roots in the rationalistic "non-tragic" tradition, especially as it took form in the eighteenth century. It is therefore necessary for us to examine critically the basic presuppositions of this tradition in order to understand the present "changing reputation of human nature."

(To be concluded in the next issue.)

<sup>23</sup>Charles H. Lyttle, "The Faith of Progress," *The Meadville Theological School Quarterly Bulletin*, XIX (January, 1925), 4. For a recent discussion of the idea of progress as held among religious liberals and Unitarians between 1880 and 1895, see Daniel Day Williams, *The Andover Liberals* (New York, 1941). For a psychoanalytical interpretation of the extreme optimism of nineteenth-century religious Liberalism, see the New Testament scholar Robert P. Casey's article, "Oedipus Motivation in Religious Thought and Fantasy," *Psychiatry*, V (May, 1942), 219-228.

# The Changing Reputation of Human Nature

## Part II

JAMES LUTHER ADAMS

The major criticisms of Liberalism can be subsumed under the general objection suggested by Dean Fenn in the article referred to, that the world, man, and God are envisaged by "Modern Liberalism" as too neatly harmonized in a purely logical concept of unity.<sup>24</sup> In order to understand this criticism as it affects the Liberal doctrine of man, it will be instructive first to observe the application of it to the theory of nature characteristic of the old "harmonistic" rationalism and then to proceed to an application of it to the reputation of human nature.

From the point of view of the modern voluntarist, the seventeenth and eighteenth-century view of nature as a beautifully working mechanism or as a manifestation of reason was subjective,—it did not sufficiently take into account the stubborn external reality. The voluntarist, agreeing with the empiricist, holds that although nature lends itself to rational methods of inquiry, existence as *fact* comes first and man's rational interpretation only later. The conditions under which existence is maintained or modified are "given." The world might have been any one of an infinite number of possible worlds, but actually it is the kind of world it is. This actual existence is a primary datum. Or, as the British empiricist F. R. Tennant says, it is an alogical datum. It is not legislated by reason or by necessary being.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, man's

<sup>24</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 517. "Modern Liberalism will have to revise its favorite concept of unity. At present, monistic idealism is very much under the weather philosophically, and a theological system akin to it must suffer correspondingly."

<sup>25</sup>A recent writer on Whitehead expresses this idea as follows: "When we say, 'This is a bit of concrete reality,' what do we mean? We mean more than a mere assertion that 'this exists now.' According to Whitehead, we mean that 'this' is just what it is *in contrast* to what it might possibly have been. That is what 'becoming real' means—just *this* has happened, just this that *might* have been something else. At this point it might be objected that the occurrence of any event is determined by causal laws, and that therefore whatever happens could not in fact have been anything else. But this, if granted, merely pushes the inquiry a step farther back. We may explain the occurrence of event X by a causal law perhaps, but

reason itself has roots in a being and in a history that might have been different. Nor is the alogical datum of existence identical with an idea that is "clear and distinct." Actuality is richer than thought. There is always a tension between *logos* and being. Hence, "natural laws" must be viewed as only tentative generalizations formulated on the basis of certain observed data.<sup>26</sup>

But the older Liberalism was not only subjective in its view of nature. It also interpreted nature in terms of form rather than of vitality, in terms of reason rather than of "the divine fecundity of nature." Moreover, structural centripetal forces rather than individual centrifugal tensions were stressed. In so far as a man bases his religious convictions upon this "rational" conception of nature he tends to develop an over-harmonious view of it, and thus also to develop a "simple" belief in the immanence of God. For this reason, I take it, Dean Fenn recommends to those who adopt a monistic view that they "seriously consider what sort of God it is that nature reveals." As he says, "we cannot be so enamoured of the loveliness of nature as to be blind to its terrible aspects." The heavens may declare the glory of God, and nature may exhibit the operation of a principle of mutual aid, yet the struggle for existence in nature amply justifies Tennyson's description of it as "red in tooth and claw." No doubt it was because of this internecine struggle in nature that St. Paul as well as the ancient Hebrews looked upon even the world of nature as a fallen world, a world to be restored to love by the New Age or by the atonement of Christ. At all events, nature exhibits both creative and destructive tendencies, both a "will to harmony" and a "will to power." Neither of these tendencies appears without the other. Moreover, the power to exist and the power of love (or mutuality) do not possess perfect correlation; disharmony as well as harmony, devo-

is not the causal law itself real? For the real particularity of the causal law itself exists only in contrast to what it might have been but which in fact it is not." Stephen Lee Ely, *The Religious Availability of Whitehead's God* (Madison, 1942), p. 9.

Especially valuable is the treatment of the relation between fact and idea to be found in F. E. England, *The Validity of Religious Experience* (London, 1937). Dr. England relies heavily upon Whitehead. See also F. R. Tennant, *Philosophy of the Sciences* (Cambridge, 1932), Lecture III.

\*Sir William Bragg has said that the modern physicist must use one set of conceptions on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, and a different set on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.

lution as well as evolution are to be found in nature.

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Analogous objections may be directed against the older Liberalism's view of the human level of existence,—history. Here again the rationalistic conception is criticized because it is subjective and also because it overlooks the element of vitality or creativity as it appears on the level of human freedom. That is, it ignores the alogical character of history and it rationalistically formalizes history by interpreting it as a progressive movement towards harmony. Thus it fails to take fully into account the elements of conflict and perversion; it fails to recognize that vitality in history does not issue from logic (which is a regulative and not a constitutive principle); and it fails to recognize that this vitality brings forth both harmony and disharmony, both creation and destruction.

The great liberal Ernst Troeltsch, who anticipated much of contemporary voluntarism, has decisively set forth these criticisms in his famous work, *Historismus und seine Probleme*. History, Troeltsch says, is something "given," and the forces that operate there share the alogical character inherent in existence itself. This alogical character of history is manifest both in necessity and in freedom. Neither the necessity nor the freedom can be understood merely in terms of reason with its self-evident premises. In the first place, knowledge of the character of that necessity can be acquired only by observing it inductively and not by deduction from *a priori* principles. In the second place, the very fact of human freedom gives to history a singularity peculiar to all human creations. "In history," as Troeltsch says, "a qualitative unity and originality is assumed to be originally given . . . which may be called fate, destiny, creation, or something else." He speaks of this aspect of history as metalogical and not logical. For whereas organic nature is practically enclosed within the biological circle of birth, growth, procreation, and death, history does not repeat itself,—it generates novelty. And because of this also, it cannot be interpreted in strictly rationalistic terms. As Bergson and Whitehead (as well as Troeltsch) have pointed out, strict rationalism precludes the possibility of novelty.<sup>27</sup>

Now, there are certain implications for the nature of man which

<sup>27</sup>On this whole problem, see Troeltsch's brief but profound article, "Contingency," *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. James Hastings, Vol. 4, (1921), 87-89.

must be seen to follow from the fact that history is the realm of both necessity and freedom. Man is fated as well as free. As Wilhelm von Humboldt puts it, "man always ties on with what lies at hand" (*Der Mensch knüpft immer an Vorhandenes an*). Certain fateful conditioning factors always operate in the individual as well as in society. Man must act in terms of the historical process and of his psycho-physical organism. His actions must be of a certain kind in order to be relevant and also in order that he may avoid destruction. He cannot act merely in accordance with logical canons of an *a priori* order. Even his ethical ideals emerge through his experience of being and of history. In this sense, it may be said that "being is older than value." Yet, despite these conditioning factors, man is fated also to be free; he is compelled to make decisions. For he can transcend his situation and in some measure he can freely change it; he can even change himself. As a creative entity he can act to preserve or increase, destroy or pervert, mutuality,—though it must be remembered also that conditions over which he has little control may affect the results of his action. Thus man lives both in and above history. He is fatefully caught in history, both as an individual and as a member of a group,<sup>28</sup> and he is also able to be creative in history.

Through the use of this creative freedom man expresses the highest form of vitality that existence permits. Indeed, since this creativity is a manifestation of a divinely given and a divinely renewing power, we say that man is created in the image of God, that is, he participates in the divine creativity. This and not reason alone is the basis for the liberal's faith in man, and no change in the reputation of human nature could involve a denial of this fact without also repudiating the very essence of the liberal doctrine of man.

Because of this freedom, human history not only exhibits a singularity that transcends all *a priori* conceptions of the intellect; it also provides a more complex and spiritual form of conflict than that to be found on the level of nature. For history is a

<sup>28</sup>It should be said in passing that Professor Frank H. Knight has pointed out that economic Liberalism erred "in taking the individual's actual endowment with means as a datum," that is, "in taking the individual too much for granted" as such. Cf. his article "Religion and Ethics in Modern Civilization," *THE JOURNAL OF LIBERAL RELIGION*, III (Summer, 1941), 16.

theatre of conflicts in which the tensions between the will to mutuality and the will to power appear in their most subtle and perverse forms.<sup>29</sup> In short, history is tragic. Let it be said immediately that this does not mean merely that men violate the moral code or disobey the law. That they do these things is obvious and universally recognized. The changing reputation of human nature does not depend upon any such "discovery."

It is at this point that we come to the consideration of the major deficiencies in the older Liberal doctrines of man and progress. These deficiencies can be brought into bold relief by showing concretely what is meant by the assertion that history is tragic. We shall use the Liberal epoch as an illustration of this view of history, not because that epoch is different from other epochs as a revelation of the nature of history, but rather because the tragic outcome of Liberalism in the present crisis presents the major problem confronting contemporary society and also because Liberalism provides certain of the principles that are of decisive positive significance for the continued development of a democratic society and of liberal religion. In dealing with these problems we shall have to go over some very familiar ground. But it would seem worthwhile to do this, not only in order to show how the monistic, Liberal doctrines of man and progress actually contributed to the tragic outcome of the Liberal epoch but also in order later to indicate how a voluntaristic interpretation of man and history purports to correct the deficiencies of the "harmonic" conception.

When we say that history is tragic, we mean that the perversions and failures in history are associated precisely with the highest creative powers of man and thus with his greatest achievements.

<sup>29</sup>On these two qualities of will, see the writings of Jacob Boehme, or see H. Brinton, *The Mystic Will* (New York, 1930), a study of Boehme's philosophy. Cf. also Irving Babbitt's distinction between *élan vital* and *frein vital*, *Democracy and Leadership* (Boston, 1924), pp. 17 ff., and Appendix B, "Theories of the Will."

A third type of will is also to be seen occasionally, namely the sort that tries to escape conflict by devotion to love without power. It was against this sort of weak will to love that Nietzsche inveighed in his criticism of Christianity. Cf. G. B. Foster, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, ed. Curtis W. Reese (New York, 1931), chap. 12. See also Erich Fromm, *op. cit.*, and G. A. Morgan, *What Nietzsche Means* (Cambridge, 1941).

One may describe the extreme positions here by saying that the absolute pacifist seemingly believes in love without power; Hitler believes in power without love.

One might call this the Oedipus motif in the sphere of history: nemesis is very often encountered almost simultaneously with the seemingly highest achievement. The very means and evidences of progress turn out again and again to be also the instruments of perversion or destruction. The national culture, for example, is the soil from which issue cherished treasures of a people, their language, their poetry, their music, their common social heritage. Yet nationalism is also one of the most destructive forces in the whole of human history. Progress in transportation has assisted tremendously in the raising of the standard of living: yet it has produced also a mobility in our cultural life which has brought in its train a new rootlessness and instability. Improved means of printing have made the treasures of the printed page available even to those who run as they read. But it has also made possible the appearance of the irresponsible manipulators of the idea industries, with the consequence that literacy is now also a powerful instrument for demagoguery and the corruption of taste. The growth of a machine civilization has made available to the peasant objects that kings used to pine for; yet the machine doth man unking, and it has necessitated so rapid an urbanization of the population that a sense of community has been destroyed for millions of people, and intimate, colorful family life has become largely a rural phenomenon.

Or, consider another aspect of progress. There is no such thing as a unilinear development in the area of *moral* achievement. We see this in the fact that each generation has to acquire wisdom over again, and within this process "the war of the generations" arises. The son of the Philistine becomes a Bohemian, and his son becomes a communist. The mystical Body of Christ becomes an autocratic ecclesiastical hierarchy, and this in turn gives place to a spiritual anarchy or a militant secularism. There is progress here, regress and a new attempt or perversion there; one year a Revolution for the rights of man, but four years later a Reign of Terror and then a Napoleonic era; an American Revolution then, Daughters of the American Revolution now; emancipation of the slaves then, poll-tax Senators now; the extension of suffrage then, the Kelly-Nash machine now. Certainly, if there is progress, it is no simple configuration of "upward trends." At times, it looks more like a thing of shreds and patches.

The general tendency of Liberalism has been to neglect this tragic factor of history. It is true that most of the theorists of Liberalism were definitely pessimistic concerning man's worthiness of being entrusted with concentrated political power, but the general and prevailing trend of their thinking was nevertheless lopsidedly optimistic.

It is true also that in the hey-day of the idea of progress a few men expressed skepticism concerning the progress "assured by the trend of natural forces,"<sup>29a</sup> but they were given little heed. A poet here and there, an orthodox Calvinist or a cranky social prophet spoke out, but the idea that some men when released from bondage to superstition or to political and ecclesiastical authority, might use their newly acquired freedom and reason to build a new Bastille does not seem to have occurred to many. In America, Theodore Parker saw the handwriting on the wall. But his skepticism concerning the goodness of the new men of power has not had a perceptibly large influence among us. For as the nineteenth century "progressed," the wonders of science, the spread of education, the extension of suffrage, the success of certain types of reform legislation, the sense of emancipation from traditional restraints and ideas, the expansion of markets, the increase of production, population, and prosperity—all of these things conspired to make men think too well of themselves. Even Marxism, despite its attack upon the evils of bourgeois society, its great stress upon the class struggle and its criticism of the theory of unilinear progress, kept the faith in perfectibility by proclaiming a belief in dialectical progress towards a Utopian classless society.<sup>30</sup> One might suppose that the Civil War would have disturbed the American's com-

<sup>29a</sup>For example, Huxley, a scientist and not a "harmonizer," said in 1892: "The doctrines of predestination, of original sin, of the innate depravity of man and the evil fate of the greater part of the race, of the primacy of Satan in this world, of the essential vileness of matter, of a malevolent Demiurgus subordinate to a benevolent Almighty, who has only lately revealed himself, faulty as they are, appear to me to be vastly nearer the truth than the 'liberal' popular illusions that babies are all born good, and that the example of a corrupt society is responsible for their failure to remain so; that it is given to everybody to reach the ethical ideal if he will only try . . . that everything will come right (according to our notions) at last." (Quoted by Dean Sperry, *op. cit.*, p. 184.)

<sup>30</sup>In "orthodox" Marxism "reliance upon 'processes at work in the order of things' became translated into the mythical language of the 'inevitability' of the development of capitalism into socialism." Sidney Hook, *Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx* (New York, 1933), p. 26.

placency, but instead of being interpreted as an illustration of man's unwillingness to relinquish power for the sake of the pre-established harmony, it was taken mainly as evidence of the increasing emancipation of the race from bondage. And most of the colored folk, not to speak of millions of others, still remain slaves. Even after the publication of *The Origin of Species* the old optimism continued to prevail. What Carlyle contemptuously called "Darwin's Gorilla damnification of humanity" was exorcised by the grace of the older idea of progress. Thus the idea of evolution rather than the idea of struggle became the dominant if not the only "note" of the popular anthropology. In other words, the tragic note was softened and "harmonized."<sup>80</sup>

And meanwhile, what had been happening? The rising bourgeois class, with which Unitarianism had been largely associated along with other branches of Protestantism, was gaining control of nature and commerce. A new will to power, comparable in irresistibility to ancient feudalism, became the main line of "progress." The principles of freedom and liberation were more and more domesticated into the service of Big Business and manifest destiny. As Professor Hocking puts it, the *feeling* for democracy that characterized the early days of Liberalism was lost. A solicitude for the dogma of "rugged individualism" has served

<sup>80</sup>Carr (*op. cit.*, pp. 58 ff.) points out that "the survival of the belief in a harmony of interests was rendered possible by the unparalleled expansion of production, population and prosperity, which marked the hundred years following the publication of *The Wealth of Nations* and the invention of the steam engine. Expanding prosperity contributed to the popularity of the doctrine in three different ways. It attenuated competition for markets among producers, since fresh markets were constantly becoming available; it postponed the class issue, with its insistence on the primary importance of equitable distribution, by extending to members of the less prosperous classes some share in the general prosperity; and by creating a sense of confidence in present and future well-being, it encouraged men to believe that the world was ordered on so rational a plan as the natural harmony of interests. 'It was the continual widening of the field of demand which, for half a century, made capitalism operate as if it were a liberal utopia.'"

Thus we see that the extremely optimistic and non-tragic attitude as well as the moralism of the Anglo-Saxon mentality have been largely a product of historical conditions, that is, a concomitant of the "success" of the British and American empires. Perhaps it was this "success" that also inspired the "prophets" of the age to believe that "mankind had discovered that secret of perpetual motion called progress." Here also we see the reason one finds so little discussion of tragedy in the literature of religious liberalism or in that of England and America of the nineteenth century. R. H. Gabriel speaks of Melville as an exception in this respect. Cf. *The Course of American Democratic Thought* (New York, 1940), chap. 6.

only thinly to conceal the rigid desire to preserve economic gains. The dominant group has come to identify the interest of the community with its own interest, and any assailant of this group is told that he is working at cross purposes with his own interest as well as with the good of the community. As E. H. Carr points out in *The Twenty Years' Crisis* (p. 102) "the doctrine of the harmony of interests thus serves as an ingenious moral device invoked, in perfect sincerity, by privileged groups in order to justify and maintain their dominant position." In this way middle-class morality has become merely the product and the tool of power. The beginning of this shift in the temper of Liberalism can be traced back at least a hundred and fifty years in American history. Certainly, the old feeling for democracy had already very much subsided among the federalist Unitarians in the early days of the Republic. The commercial life of the nation was in time more and more looked upon as the supreme manifestation of its activity. In the words of Harold Laski:

The central theme of political policy thus became the supply of what commercial life required for its full expansion; and to this all effort in the community was increasingly subordinate. The religious discipline to which the individual had been formerly subject could then be replaced by an ethic derived predominantly from economic circumstance. [And it should be added, humanitarian movements made no essential change in this ethos.] Laissez-faire as a program was the logical counterpart in social philosophy of Protestantism in the religious, of free inquiry in the intellectual, sphere. Each came as a herald of freedom to an age hampered by obsolete principle. Each definitely enlarged by its victory the area in which the human spirit was free to voyage in self-discovery. But each in its adventure was to find that the abolition of unnecessary social restraint was not identical with the creation of necessary social control.<sup>81</sup>

In other words, the latest phase of the bourgeois epoch simply

<sup>81</sup>"The Rise of Liberalism," *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (New York, 1930), Vol. I, 124. Mr. Laski gives the impression in this essay that economic Liberalism has no merits except as an ethic of aggrandizement. On the enduring values implicit in the philosophy of Liberalism, see Frank H. Knight, *The Ethics of Competition*, (New York, 1936). If we do not recognize the genuine accomplishments and the enduring principles of Liberalism, we not only fail to appreciate its tragedy, we also prepare the way for still greater destruction. Quincy Wright has criticized E. H. Carr on these grounds. He asserts that Carr underestimates the accomplishments of nineteenth-century Liberalism and also that in his statement of the economic principles which should govern post-war reorganization he "weights his argument in favor of totalitarian economics." See Wright's discussion of Carr's *Conditions of Peace*, "The War and the Peace," *Ethics*, LIII (1942), 64-68.

presents in a new form the problem that the earlier dynamic Liberalism set out to solve. The difference is that whereas formerly the demand for the free play of economic forces was made in the name of liberation from older social and political obstructions, today the same demand is made against those who would liberate men from the new bondage. (And it must be added that in the face of this perversion of liberty some contemporary pseudo-liberals point the way out of the new bondage by offering a Utopian society that would destroy every vestige of liberalism and bring a still greater bondage.)

Thus while many of the "emancipated" have been paying lip-service to the ideals of an autonomous society, the actual social process has been moving in the direction of a new heteronomous society, dominated on the one side by heavily concentrated wealth (which is protected by the unblushing selfishness of bourgeois ideals and practices) and threatened on the other side by the irrationalism of the masses who have been shut out of democratic participation by the moralism and "rationalism" of the "elect." The average middle-class citizen and his wife (and his priest) now slumber in almost immovable complacency, and many who have been awakened by harbingers of doom have thrown in their lot with those who accept the gospel according to the National Association of Manufacturers. Hence, so far from providing a machinery whereby autonomous man through the exercise of his freedom and reason might enter into the shared life, Liberal society (partly, to be sure, by its failure to cope with new and old forms of illiberalism) has given rise to a congeries of power groups that have been so deeply caught in a conflict of interests and "freedoms" that the whole fine flourish has at last shown its teeth by ushering in two World Wars. Society is thus divided against itself, and it is caught in a titanic struggle of wills which is now operating on a planetary scale. History has bequeathed us not a pre-established harmony or a natural trend towards progress but rather a fateful conflict from which none can escape,—and no one knows to what ruinous lengths the conflict will go before the savage violence can be stopped. Hence there is full justification for Troeltsch's statement that the older Liberalism was "all too credulous of harmony and all too egocentric."<sup>82</sup>

<sup>82</sup>Ernst Troeltsch, *Christian Thought: Its History and Application*

And there we have the tragedy of modern history. "The freedoms of the past . . . have somehow brought forth the slaveries of the present,"<sup>83</sup> and with them a widespread cynicism and even a doubt concerning the value of life itself.

Is it any wonder that the reputation of human nature has been changing? Is it any wonder that the old world-view of Liberalism is today under attack on all sides? Dean Fenn's observation that Modern Liberalism is "too jocund for life as it actually is" now seems to be sardonic understatement. Thus more and more liberals are coming to agree with his statement that "Modern Liberalism . . . must deal more justly with the crushing tragedies of life, with evil and sin, if it is to command the respect of candid and thoughtful men." Undoubtedly it is for this reason that the subdominant motifs of the past two centuries as well as the motifs of the Bible and of Greek "tragic" philosophy have in recent decades gained in power and pertinence.<sup>84</sup> The "tragic sense of life" has been reawakened with a start. It may be too much to expect the modern secularized liberal to recognize the possible relevance of the biblical world-view "in our day and age." Yet, perhaps those who harbor a "cultured" antipathy or a "philosophical"

(London, 1923), p. 203.

For very recent indictments of Liberal culture, see E. H. Carr, *op. cit.*, and Max Horkheimer, "The End of Reason," *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science*, IX (1942), 366-388.

<sup>83</sup>Harris Harbison, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

<sup>84</sup>Here it must be noted that the influential trends in this direction have for a long time been coming from the anthropologists, the sociologists and the psychologists as well as from the theologians. Certainly, the religious liberal should be cautioned against accepting the oft-repeated assertion that the attack on Liberalism is the outgrowth of post-war pessimism (Dean Fenn's criticism, remember, was written in 1913) and first emerged with the dialectical theologians, Barth and Brunner. In so far as these two thinkers have had an influence on the changing reputation of human nature, it has been a belated influence. They are themselves continuators of an earlier revolt against the tenets of the old Liberalism, a revolt that appeared first in the areas of secular philosophy, psychology, and economic theory. The uniqueness of Barth's protest resides as much in its extremism as in its novelty. Cf. Paul Tillich, "What Is Wrong with the 'Dialectic' Theology?" *The Journal of Religion*, XV (1935), 127-145; also, his long and critical review of Brunner's *The Mediator*, in *The Christian Century*, LI (Dec. 5, 1934), 1554-1556. It must be noted, however, that in the field of theology, Kierkegaard in his attack on Hegel one hundred years ago sowed some of the seeds that are now bearing fruit in theological gardens. But Kierkegaard was accorded little attention until after Marx and Nietzsche had planted and watered their quite different but scarcely less valuable seeds.

*hauteur* toward the Bible will before long be willing to heed the admonition, "Leave your Bible closed then, and open your Sophocles."

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The same sort of analysis, and with similar results, must be applied to the individual psyche. The modern psychologist, like the sociologist, has gradually moved away from the presuppositions of the older Liberalism. Reason is now seen to be conditioned by history, its conclusions depending upon the premises that the reasoner starts with and thus largely upon the individual's primary interest, (or upon the interest of the group to which he belongs), whether that be social or anti-social. Hence, the conflict between love and power exists not only in the world at large. The "war within the cave" is found in the heart of Everyman, for the inner and the outer struggles mirror each other in what Malcolm Cowley has called a psycho-social parallelism. The picture of man as a purely logical machine, who first thinks of some desirable end and then calculates the means by which that end can be attained, has given way to the infinitely more complex social concept of man as a creature of impulse and passion and emotional preference, who only through a strenuous social discipline can transcend his incompatible desires and direct them toward some intelligent end. Indeed, reason is now seen to occupy the ambiguous position of being at the same time the umpire among unruly, conflicting impulses and the producer of ideologies, that is, the rationalizing instrument whereby selfish interest is given a plausible but false justification. Basic predispositions, deep-seated conflicts between men and groups, and the tensions of the historical situation again and again draw the reason down from its unsteady pedestal. Consequently, many of our "ideas are weapons" and are conceived in the sin of mere self-interest, with an accompanying perversion of mind and abuse of liberty. This destruction of the older belief in the immaculate conception of ideas is for the liberal a far more significant turn than the destruction of belief in the immaculate conception of Jesus. We need not go all the way with cynics like Thurman Arnold and contend that the older Liberal conception of Man Thinking is a myth, or with Karl Marx and say unequivocally that existence determines consciousness rather than consciousness existence, (though we should

at least recognize the great contribution that Marx has made especially in his conception of ideology, a conception that is, by the way, found also in Martin Luther's writings). Nor need we go all the way with the Freudian interpretation of the origin and function of human reason. But we must recognize that the new social psychology has uncovered sources of vitality as well as a deep, dark area of conflict and even a fatefulness in the life of the psyche which the earlier rationalistic psychology perforce neglected.<sup>85</sup>

Again we see that, although man possesses a divinely-given dignity in his freedom and creativity, he is also a creature of contradictions. He shares in the autonomy of the underlying creative will. But this means that he possesses a certain independence of God and his fellows; he can assert his own ego in a way that violates the divinely given conditions of meaningful existence. Through the abuse of freedom he becomes bound to tendencies in history which narrow the range of his freedom and which also pervert its operation so that he gives his energy and devotion more to power than to love. Thus the "gift" and ideal of freedom, "freedom with," degenerates into "freedom from." In this way man, reasoning but unreasonable, inflates his freedom into the self-enclosed egoism of undisturbed security.<sup>86</sup>

Now, what should be noticed here is that this contradiction in human nature derives from the fact that man's will is a decisive element in his structure. And it is a will that is ambiguous in character. He can use his freedom by expressing a will to mutuality, but he can also abuse it by exercising a will to power. Freedom is therefore both the basis of meaning and the occasion for the destruction of meaning. Here we see again the tragic nature of the human condition. The tragedy does not derive merely from the fact that man carries within him an inheritance from the jungle. It derives also (and primarily) from the fact that he has

<sup>85</sup>It is well to note in passing that in order to describe the conflicts of the human psyche, Freud has drawn upon the conceptions of "tragic" Greek mythology. Hence we might add to the previous admonition this one: "When you have finished your Sophocles, turn to your Jung and your Freud."

<sup>86</sup>See on this topic the brilliant combination of theological commentary and literary criticism in Nicholas Berdyaev's *Dostoevsky* (New York, 1934).

a freedom that he did not have in the jungle,<sup>87</sup> a freedom to exercise the infinitely higher powers of human nature in terms of creative love, and a freedom to waste them in mere lassitude and triviality, or to pervert them for the sake of a will to power.

It is this co-existence in man of the possibility of using his freedom *ad majorem gloriam dei* and the possibility of perverting it to his own destructive ends which constitutes the deepest contradiction of his nature. And this contradiction is no merely human, subjective phenomenon. As Martin Luther suggests, man is the *Schauplatz* of opposing cosmic forces, the forces of love and of power. The contradiction penetrates his inmost spiritual life. It goes to the very center of his being; and it reaches out through the individual and permeates all his social relations. It is not, as the Marxists contend, merely a precipitate of the structure of society.

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It was in connection with the sort of interpretation here set forth that the historic Judeo-Christian doctrine of sin was developed. The "orthodox" theory of "original sin," because of its association with the notion of Adam's Fall "in whom we sinned all" as well as with an ascetic conception of sex, has been rightly abandoned by religious liberals. It is doubtful, however, if there is any word available that has more profound metaphysical implications than the word "sin," for the word has the theonomous reference necessary for any truly theological category.<sup>88</sup> But, whether the liberal uses the word "sin" or not, he cannot correct

<sup>87</sup>In this connection it is interesting to note the contrast between the popular conception of sin as rooted in "the flesh," and Luther's more profound conception of it as rooted "not in 'the flesh,' that is . . . 'the inferior and grosser affections,' but in the most exalted and noble powers of man . . . that is, in the reason and in the will." It should be added, however, that Luther, like St. Paul, did not maintain consistency with regard to this interpretation of the nature of sin and the role of "the flesh."

<sup>88</sup>The use of the word "sin," of course, provides no *guarantee* of religious depth or of philosophical adequacy. Many liberals who use the word have secularized or moralized it. (And, correspondingly, many conservatives have demoralized it.) As Gerald Birney Smith pointed out some years ago, the sociologizing and psychologizing of the conception of sin by modern liberalism has had the consequence of depriving the conception of its "metaphysical content." "Sin" as a theological category is no merely ethical or sociological or psychological concept. Like the doctrine of the divinity of man, the doctrine of sin—properly understood—attempts to give metaphysical depth to an aspect of human nature. The two doctrines taken together epitomize the paradoxical character of the human condition, the paradoxical relationship of man to the creativity that he both shares and perverts. Indeed, one

his "too jocund" view of life until he recognizes that there is in human nature a deep-seated and universal tendency for both individuals and groups to ignore the demands of mutuality and thus to waste freedom or abuse it by devotion to the idols of the tribe, the theatre, the cave, and the market place. The old triumvirate of tyrants in the human soul, the *libido sciendi*, the *libido sentiendi*, and the *libido dominandi*, is just as powerful today as it ever was, and no man can ignore its tyranny with impunity. It cannot be denied that religious liberalism has neglected these aspects of human nature in its zeal to proclaim the spark of divinity in man. We may call these tendencies by any name we wish, but we do not escape their destructive influence by a conspiracy of silence concerning them. Certainly, the practice of shunning the word "sin" because "it makes one feel gloomy and pious," has little more justification than the use of the ostrich method in other areas of life.<sup>89</sup>

Obviously, a correction here does not involve any lending of support to the old view of the total depravity of man, at least not among liberals. Indeed, the expression of fear in this respect would be comparable to the propagandist device of calling a New Dealer a communist. We ought to have enough faith in man and God to believe that even a "realistic and credible doctrine of man" will not separate us from the love of God. Certainly, we ought to be willing to take the risk that we would incur by giving more serious consideration than we have in recent years to the

may say that an understanding of the metaphysical implications of the derived dignity of human nature (the doctrine of *Imago dei*) requires a correspondingly metaphysical interpretation of the universal perversion or frustration of man's essential dignity (the doctrine of sin). H. Shelton Smith (*Faith and Nurture* [New York, 1941], pp. 93-99) has succinctly described the metaphysical shallowness of the conception of sin dominant in religious liberalism in the past century.

<sup>89</sup>A friend of mine who is a theologian tells of a conversation he had some time ago, after he had given an address at one of our conferences in the East. He had been stressing the centrality of the ideas of sin and repentance in the Christian religion. Following the address, a minister approached him and, after thanking him for the address, said that he was sorry to hear a discourse that was so gloomy. He said Jesus was a man whom people liked to have around and his gospel is one of joy. Whereupon my friend replied: "That is true. But I thought the ideas of sin and repentance were very much stressed by Jesus. Did he not say: 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Repent ye?'" The minister, not to be worsted, replied, "Oh, yes, that does stand on the record. But that was one of Jesus' weaker moments."

sinful nature of man, and even to the biblical myth of the Fall as a description of the contradictions in human nature.<sup>40</sup>

If the earlier intellectualism exalted man into an archangel, the new voluntarism is right in viewing him, in the words of Charles Lamb about Coleridge, as an archangel slightly damaged. This change of attitude has long been evident among the poets. Malcolm

<sup>40</sup>Nor would we have to begin by studying the so-called "orthodox" and "neo-Calvinist" theologians. Dean Sperry some years ago set forth a sociological reinterpretation of the doctrine of original sin especially stressing the fact that every man shares the guilt for the injustices and inequalities of society. Cf. *The Disciplines of Liberty* (New Haven, 1921), chap. 4, "A Modern Doctrine of Original Sin."

On the metaphysical level, one of the most profound studies of the human condition in terms of the myth of the Fall is to be found in the essay of the German philosopher Schelling, entitled *Of Human Freedom* (1809). In this connection, Rowland Gray-Smith has performed a valuable service by the publication of his doctoral dissertation on *God in the Philosophy of Schelling* (Philadelphia, 1933). For a more popular and "literary," though metaphysical, interpretation of the Christian doctrine of original sin, see Thomas Mann's discussion in the symposium, *I Believe*, ed. Clifton Fadiman (New York, 1939), pp. 189-194. On the ethical level, one of the significant defenses of the tragic view of life and one that emphasizes (perhaps over-emphasizes) "the radically evil will of man" is to be found in Immanuel Kant's *Religion within the Limits of Mere Reason* (1793).

For the psychological level, Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (New York, 1930),—especially his discussion of the so-called "destruction instinct"—should not be neglected. The writings of Fromm, Horney, and Lasswell are also pertinent here. Cf. also Anton T. Boisen, "The Problem of Sin and Salvation in the Light of Psychopathology," *The Journal of Religion*, XXII (1942), 288-301. The contrast between the psychoanalytic theory of cleavages and the old Liberal doctrine of harmony of interests may be taken as typical of the great change in the reputation of human nature. Cf. on this point Lionel Trilling's review of Karen Horney's *Self Analysis* (1942) in which he criticizes her Liberal theory of "the progressive psyche," *The Nation*, Sept. 12, 1942, pp. 215-217.

For Unitarian expositions of the conception of sin, see H. W. Bellows *Restatement of Christian Doctrine* (New York, 1860), chap. 3; J. E. Carpenter and P. H. Wicksteed, *Studies in Theology* (London, 1903), chap. 5; J. W. Chadwick, *Old and New Unitarian Beliefs* (Boston, 1894), chap. 2; James Drummond, *Studies in Christian Doctrine* (London, 1908), pp. 203-239; E. Emerton, *Unitarian Thought* (New York, 1911), chap. 3; C. C. Everett, *Theism and the Christian Faith* (New York, 1906), chaps. 21-24; L. A. Garrard, *Duty and the Will of God* (Oxford, 1938); James Martineau, *The Seat of Authority in Religion* (New York, 1890), Book IV, chap. 3; George Batchelor, "A Modern View of Retribution," American Unitarian Association, tract No. 261; S. M. Crothers, "The Faith of a Free Church," American Unitarian Association tract No. 98, pp. 27 ff.; Minot Simons, "Redemption or Recovery?" American Unitarian Association tract No. 256; S. H. Mellone, *God and the World* (London, 1919), chap. 8; T. G. Soares, *Three Typical Beliefs* (Chicago, 1937), pp. 83-90; Oliver Martin, "Sin and Sinners," *THE JOURNAL OF LIBERAL RELIGION*, III (1941), 3-10; Alexander Winston, "The Metaphysical Status of Evil," *ibid.*, III (1941), 100-106.

Cowley in an article on "What Poets are Saying"<sup>41</sup> points out that the principal themes of contemporary verse are (1) the psycho-social parallelism to which reference has been made, (2) the sense of doom, (3) the sense of personal guilt, and (4) a sense of comradeship in the attempt to confront our common fate.

This change may seem to represent a swing toward a one-sided pessimism. If so, it may be explained as an illustration of the old adage that extremes breed extremes. Or, as Thomas Hardy once put it, when prurience thrusts the human shape beneath the stream, the first part of the anatomy that will reappear when the pressure is released will be the posterior.

But the change need not involve a shift from optimism to pessimism. The poets to whom Malcolm Cowley refers counter-balance the sense of doom with a sense of comradeship. "We must love one another or die," says W. H. Auden, a poet who has been drawn by the present cultural crisis into a new appreciation of Christian doctrine. But, unfortunately, not all the poets and not all the "Christian" theologians have achieved this balance between optimism and pessimism, a balance implicit in the Christian doctrines of sin and redemption. This lack of balance in our day takes the form of a sadistic and indiscriminating attack on all ideas of progress, and in some instances it takes also the form of a seemingly complete renunciation of even the valid principles of freedom which come to us from the older Liberalism.

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In the face of these renunciations, contemporary liberalism has, as we have said, a positive, creative task to perform. To be sure, the failures and the perversions of Liberalism must be recognized before there can be a reasonable hope of moving in the direction of a truly liberal society. But humanity will only be brought to greater suffering under greater tyrannies if the liberal principles of freedom are abandoned. These principles must be given new forms that are relevant to the demands of a modern economy and that will prepare the way for a transformed liberalism and a transformed liberal society.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>41</sup>*Saturday Review of Literature*, May 3, 1941.

<sup>42</sup>Cf. the author's article, "Freud, Mannheim, and the Liberal Doctrine of Man," *THE JOURNAL OF LIBERAL RELIGION*, II (Winter, 1941), 107-11;

In the judgment of the present writer, however, the widespread skepticism concerning the principles of Laissez-faire has become so acute (even among "liberals") that there is grave danger of our losing our grasp on the principles of freedom. For this reason, it might be well for liberals, both secular and religious, to clear away much of the confusion by a serious study of the classical writings of Liberalism, and especially of the writings of Thomas Jefferson and John Stuart Mill. For, so long as liberalism in any form continues to exist in the world, the thought of these men will be relevant for it.

We need also to achieve objectivity sufficiently to reexamine the idea of progress. The older idea of progress has been tried and found wanting. But the idea of progress, like the idea of freedom, should not be abandoned; it should be revised. It is a fact that, despite all the perversions of sinful man, there has been progress in history. We ought soon to stop bandying the word and acquire a fairly clear idea as to the areas in which unilinear progress is not possible and the areas in which it has been achieved and is still achievable. The older Liberalism was not only sound, it was also Christian in holding before men some vision of the End of human history. In doing so, it was maintaining some continuity with the Christian doctrines of creation and redemption. Thus it was asserting also the Christian view of history as the history of salvation. On the other hand, it was Utopian in failing to distinguish between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of man that is possible on earth. And it was naïve in so far as it supposed that progress is a natural trend or in so far as it overlooked the tragic character of historical achievement. But the correction of these errors will not be found in denying all meaning to the idea of progress. It lies rather in our acquiring a sense of the dialectical nature of man and of the human situation, a sense of the splendor and promise and meaningfulness of life, and a recognition of the fact that all human achievement and meaningfulness are asserted only in the teeth of obstruction and of ever possible perversion. To overlook the reality of human sin is to invite disaster, or at least disillusionment. To long for a time

also, Edward A. Shils, "Irrationality and Planning," *ibid.*, II (Winter, 1941), 148-153; Mannheim, *op. cit.*; Meyer, *op. cit.*; Paul Tillich, "War Aims," reprinted from *The Protestant*, 1941.

when freedom will not be perverted is to long for a time when life shall have lost its meaning, for the moment freedom can no longer be perverted, it will no longer be freedom. This is not pessimism; it is simply the recognition of the fact that freedom, the basis of meaningful human existence, is also the ever-present occasion for the perversion of existence.

It is to be regretted that some exponents of the Christian doctrine of sin in our day have been unable to state the paradox of the human condition without giving the impression of having surrendered to "black and bleak pessimism." Nor are all these extreme pessimists to be found among the so-called neo-Calvinists. The writer heard an eminent Unitarian preacher say recently, "When I look down into the human soul, do I see the spark of divinity that Channing prated about? No! I see the tangled vipers of greed, lust, and ambition." This statement was followed by the assertion that modern civilization is doomed and that we are now headed for half a millenium of the Dark Ages again. Such histrionic hyperboles must be interpreted as a perversion of mind and spirit as well as an implicit denial of man's potentiality as a child of God, and of the ever-present possibility of repentance.

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But extreme pessimism is not the only danger of the tragic view of life that is now emerging. Just as rationalism had its characteristic besetting sin, namely, "feeling terribly at ease in Zion" and "cuddling up to the Almighty," so voluntarism has its own peculiar danger. Certain types of voluntarism, it must be remembered, have often been infected with irrationalism. Indeed, they have even exalted irrationalism into a virtue. Duns Scotus illustrates this tendency when he urges acceptance of the Catholic faith without question and without reference to reason. National socialism takes the same attitude of authoritarian subjection to blood and soil. Observers from the Orient have long noted this tendency to irrationalism in the Christian Occident. Charles Chauncy valiantly opposed it in the New Lights, and many oppose it today as it appears in Nazism and Barthianism. But such irrationalism is not the only alternative to rationalism. We find keen rational analysis in great historic exemplars of voluntarism, for example, most of all in the Buddha, and to a marked degree in St. Paul and St. Augustine; or to cite three modern examples, in Jonathan Ed-

wards, Ernst Troeltsch, and Rudolph Otto. What is needed, of course, is that combination of *logos* and *dynamis* which can effect a vitalizing tension between the attitude of distance and the attitude of decision. One of the best characterizations of this sort of relation between the reason and the will is suggested in the metaphor repeated by most of the voluntarists of the Middle Ages and especially by the anti-Thomists; they compared reason to a torch lighting the paths ahead, and the will under God's grace, the whole self, they said, both guides the reason and chooses the path to be taken. We see, then, that a recognition of the large role of the will, a recognition of the fundamental significance of the basic orientation and predisposition of a man, does not necessarily involve a deprecation of reason.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, the voluntaristic theory of the nature of man is itself the result of an intellectual and rational analysis of the human condition.

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The older Liberalism underestimated the destructive possibilities of the contradictions in human nature and was thus unrealistic. It offered salvation through the "restraints of reason." But the "restraints of reason" are inadequate for entering the "war within the cave." Merely intellectual education is not enough. The world has many educated people who know how to reason, and they reason very well; but, curiously enough, many of them fail to examine the pre-established premises from which they reason, premises that turn out on examination to be anti-social, protective camouflages of power. Where a man's treasure is, there will his heart be also. And where his heart is, there will be his reason and his premises. The "theoretical attitude of distance" needs for its completion the existential "attitude of decision." St. Paul underlines this fact when he speaks of the foolishness of the wise.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>42</sup>Jacques Barzun wisely rejects W. T. Stace's idea (set forth in *The Destiny of Western Man* [New York, 1942]) that "Western man's destiny is to put reason and sympathy above will," that Greece represents the fountain of Reason, Palestine the fount of Sympathy, and Germany the tradition of Will. See Dr. Barzun's review in *The Saturday Review of Literature*, Mar. 21, 1942. The present writer trusts that the discussion above has shown the superficiality of generalizations of this sort.

<sup>43</sup>Professor Robert L. Calhoun of Yale emphasizes this point when he writes: "Schopenhauer's devastating analysis of the futility of education and all cultural refinement as a safeguard against inner frustration is in principle as true now as when he wrote it. Current history is driving home

The element of conflict inherent in man and in man's relations with his fellows can, as St. Paul knew, be dealt with only by a regenerated will, a will committed to the principles of liberty and justice and love, a will prepared by a faith, a decision, a commitment sufficient to cope with the principalities and powers of the world.<sup>44</sup>

Kant, who in this respect stands in the Pauline tradition, suggests that the *root* of evil must be touched. What is needed, he says, is not piecemeal reformation with minor adjustments of character and conduct, but an alteration of the basis of character and of the habitual way in which the mind works. Nor is this reformation a "conversion" of the evangelistic order, a conversion that takes place at one moment and is then complete: Martin Luther came much nearer to describing it when he said that our whole life should be a repentance (*metánoia*) that brings forth fruits meet for repentance. Nor is this "conversion" merely what a man does with his solitariness. It is a conversion that affects his social relations and brings about some conversion in society.

These principles can be stated in non-theological terms also. The way in which the reason operates depends upon the aims and interests around which the personality is organized. Morality has as its basis an underived commitment to certain guiding principles and purposes. Thus the basis of choice is not irrational in the sense of being contrary to reason, but it is non-rational in that the direction taken by choice is determined by the evidence or

his theory with the hammer blows of fact. Current psychology is helping us to see why intellectual and moral education does not get to the root of the trouble, and how profoundly man needs to be made over. But all these insights are new variations on a very old theme, which St. Paul set out clearly in the seventh chapter of his letter to the Romans, and which has been central in Christianity ever since." *What Is Man?* ("Hazen Books on Religion," New York, 1939), p. 69.

<sup>44</sup>Dean Sperry says, concerning the Christian word for love: "The term *agape*—which is Paul's word—is not a word which concerns the senses or emotions. A classical scholar who has meditated much on an exact translation says that whatever else the word *agape* may mean, it means in the first instance 'a steady set of the will.'" Willard L. Sperry, *What We Mean by Religion* (New York, 1940), p. 121.

See in this connection Erich Fromm's brilliant observations on love from the point of view of a voluntaristic psychology, *op. cit.*, pp. 510 ff.

The reader should bear in mind here that the *agape* of early Christianity was viewed as a gift of grace, an aspect of the inbreaking kingdom. Cf. Rudolph Otto, *The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man* (London, 1938), and Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros* (New York, 1932), Vol. I; also, Meyer, *op. cit.*, III (Winter, 1942), 139 ff.

principles that can be applied.<sup>45</sup> Accordingly, the decisive quality of a personality is its commitment, for the basic commitment determines the self and its interests, instead of being determined by them.<sup>46</sup>

The way in which a personality will interpret its freedom and use its reason depends, then, upon the character of the self and upon its relation to and attitude toward the rest of reality. A readiness even to enter into discussion for the sake of reaching agreement (or of reaching at least a common understanding) depends upon a man's total character and not upon his intellectual capacities alone. It depends, in short, upon a proper relation to the creative ground of meaning and existence. Moreover, science as well as religion, politics as well as art, properly flourish only when the primary quality of human character or integrity is the foundation and when that integrity has a positive and critical relation to larger integrities, social and metaphysical.

We have now seen the ways in which the rationalistic tradition has optimistically taken for granted the idea of unity in the world, in society, and in the structure of the individual psyche; we have also seen how it stresses the role of reason in such a way as to offer a truncated view of the functions operative in both society and the individual and also in such a way as to encourage both separative individualism and "the attitude of distance." The voluntaristic outlook, we have seen, aims to correct and supplement this view by stressing the significance of the alogical factors in existence, in human nature and history, by emphasizing also "the tragic sense of life" arising from man's entanglement within its deep-going conflicts, and by stressing the significance of the creative depths of the entire personality (and of the group to which it belongs) for the dynamic achievement of relevant and vigorous action.

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Theology is, in the language of Bonaventura, "an affective science," the science of the love of God, and the function of the church

<sup>45</sup>Cf. Charner M. Perry, "The Arbitrary as Basis for Rational Morality," *Ethics*, XLIII (1939), 127.

<sup>46</sup>For the role of commitment in politics, see Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (New York, 1936); for its role in science, see J. D. Bernal, *The Social Function of Science* (London, 1939) and Robert S. Lynd, *Knowledge for What?* (Princeton, 1939).

is to bring men into communion with a group wherein the divine power of transformation and the ethical standards rooted in it are operative. When we say operative, we mean that this power is capable of changing men, of eliciting commitment to a way of life that makes a difference in their attitude toward themselves, their fellow-men, and God; in short, it aids them in the achieving of voluntary community.<sup>47</sup> Only by some such commitment can we, in Channing's words, be always young for liberty. And without such a commitment, we become content with "philosophic" objectivity and "distance" that insulate us from the source of true vitality, from openness to the power of the Spirit. We become attached to the forms that have given us our cherished securities; or, as Augustine puts it, we give our devotion to creatures rather than to the creative power from which issue all forms and all true vitality. We substitute our aspirations and "virtues," our reason and our moralism, for God's power and goodness. Thus our rationalism and our moralism "miss and distort reality and the real possibilities for improvement of the human situation."<sup>48</sup> They give us a "poise" that freezes the knees and keeps us erect and "harmonious" in face of the divine demand for repentance, for change of heart and mind. The early Christians (and also the Dionysians) saw that the creative and redemptive power is not subject to domestication by means of these techniques. It breaks into a human situation destroying, transforming old forms and creating new ones, manifesting the expulsive and creative power of a new affection,—the *amor dei*.

Thus we are driven back to a view similar to the one that Charles Chauncy opposed in 1743. It is not reason alone, but reason inspired by "raised affections" that is necessary for salvation. Man becomes what he loves. Not that information and technique are dispensable. Even a St. Francis with commitment to the highest would be impotent when confronted with a case of appendicitis if he did not recognize the malady and did not know what to do. One sector of the problems of society is its intellectual problems,—problems of statecraft, economics, pedagogy, and the like. Here no amount of good will alone can suffice.

<sup>47</sup>On this whole problem of the relation between decision and transformation, see E. E. Aubrey, *Man's Search for Himself* (Nashville, 1940).

<sup>48</sup>Meyer, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

But something of the spirit of St. Francis is indispensable if the benefits of science and of society are to be in widest commonalty spread, and, for that matter, if even the intellectual problems are to be dealt with adequately. The desire to diagnose injustice as an intellectual problem as well as the power of action to achieve a new form of justice requires "raised affections," a vitality that can break through old forms of behavior and create new patterns of community. But the raising of the affections is a much harder thing to accomplish than even the education of the mind; it is especially difficult among those who think they have found security. Spiritually significant change takes place only when a man discovers that he must make a decision for a way of life that distinguishes him and his whole orientation from the man who has not made such a decision. As Kant puts it, "the feelings must be raised to the pitch of enthusiasm where we are disposed to make the greatest sacrifices for the sake of principle." If religious liberals could learn that no significant change can be initiated before men become *committed* to liberal principles, a new strategy would not be far behind.

This element of commitment, of change of heart, of decision, so much emphasized in the Gospels, has been neglected by religious liberalism, and that is the prime source of its enfeeblement. We liberals are largely an uncommitted and therefore a self-frustrating people. Our first task, then, is to restore to liberalism its own dynamic and its own prophetic genius. We need conversion within ourselves. Only by some such revolution can we be seized by a prophetic power that will enable us to proclaim both the judgment and the love of God. Only by some such conversion can we be possessed by a love that will not let us go. And when that has taken place, we shall know that it is not our wills alone that have acted; we shall know that the ever-living Creator and Re-creator has again been brooding over the face of the deep and out of the depths bringing forth new life.