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FIGURES OF SPEECH OR FIGURES OF THOUGHT? London, 1946.

See also Bibliographies in *Ars Islamica* IX, 1942, and *Psychiatry* VIII, 1945.

Am I My Brother's Keeper?

By ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

With an Introduction by Robert Allerton Parker

AN ASIA PRESS BOOK

THE JOHN DAY COMPANY, NEW YORK

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The essays in this volume have been slightly revised, and notes have been added. "Am I My Brother's Keeper?" appeared first in *Asia and the Americas*, March, 1943; "The Bugbear of Literacy" in *Asia and the Americas*, February, 1944; "Paths That Lead to the Same Summit" in *Motivie*, May, 1944; "Eastern Wisdom and Western Knowledge" in *Isis*, XXIV, Part 4, 1943; "East and West" in *Biographical Review*, VIII, 1945, and in *The Religious Basis of the Forms of Indian Society*, New York, 1946; "Spiritual Paternity" and the "Puppet-Complex" in *Psychiatry*, August, 1945; and "Gradation, Evolution, and Reincarnation" in *Main Currents in Modern Thought*, Summer 1946. The author's thanks are due to the editors of these publications and to Mrs. Eric Gill for permission to use the woodcut "Progress."

This book is published on the same day
in the Dominion of Canada by
Longmans, Green & Company, Toronto

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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INTRODUCTION

DR. COOMARASWAMY has been living and writing in the United States for the past thirty years, but the fruits of his mature thought have never before been made easily accessible to the intelligent layman. To remedy this lack, we have collected these representative essays, which throw so searching a light upon the problems of the present crisis of the human race. To certain readers, Coomaraswamy's ideas may seem highly controversial and destructive of commonly accepted assumptions. Such antagonists may object that this indictment of modern Western civilization is based upon obstinate age-old Oriental prejudices. But Ananda Coomaraswamy is not merely "an eminent Orientalist" (as Aldous Huxley characterizes him in *The Perennial Philosophy*); nor is he merely an authority on Oriental art. The ideas he formulates in these essays and reviews are expressed with the authority of a lifetime of scholarship. He writes, as he has elsewhere explained, "from a strictly orthodox point of view . . . endeavoring to speak with mathematical precision, but never employing words of our own, or making any affirmations for which authority could not be cited by chapter and verse; in this way making even our technique characteristically Indian."

Since Dr. Coomaraswamy deprecates personality and personalism, and condemns the contemporary mania for exhibitionary self-exploitation, he is the most reticent of men in furnishing biographical details. Yet, for lay readers, such details, and an outline of his crowded career, seem necessary for an understanding of the broad foundations of his thought. It may

come as a surprise, for instance, to know that his mother was English; that he began his career as a geologist—a petrologist; that he holds a degree as a Doctor of Science from the University of London; and that though he is without doubt the most distinguished exponent of the *Philosophia Perennis* in the English-speaking world, he is by no means the advocate of the vague, synthetic "theosophy" vulgarized in our Western world, nor of that theory of "reincarnation"—meaning the return of deceased individuals to rebirth on this earth—which is popularly and erroneously associated in certain circles with Hindu "philosophy." In the hope of clearing the air of such prejudices and misconceptions, I have collected the following biographical details:

Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy was born on August 22, 1877, in Colombo, Ceylon, the son of a distinguished Ceylonese gentleman, Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy, the first Hindu to have been called to the bar in London, and author of the first translation into English of a Pali Buddhist text. Sir Mutu died before his son was two years old, and the child was brought up in England by his British mother (who survived until 1942).

Ananda Coomaraswamy did not return to his native land until nearly a quarter of a century later. He was educated first at Wycliffe College, at Stonehouse in Gloucestershire, and later at the University of London. Although, without doubt, the Ceylonese youth felt the all-pervading influences of John Ruskin and William Morris, in the awakening nineties, his deeper interests were focused upon science—in particular upon geology and mineralogy. At twenty-two he contributed a paper on "Ceylon Rocks and Graphite" to the *Quarterly Journal of the Geological Society*; and at twenty-five he was appointed director of the Mineralogical Survey of Ceylon. A few years later his work on the geology of Ceylon won him the degree of Doctor of Science from the University of London.

Life in Ceylon opened his eyes to the withering blight cast upon her native arts and crafts by the invasion of Occidental industrialism. Courageously and unequivocally the young Coomaraswamy became the champion of those "native" cultures and handicrafts which were threatened with extermination by the "proselytizing fury" of Occidental civilization.

Since 1917 Coomaraswamy has been with the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, as a research fellow in Oriental art, building up its unsurpassed department of Indian art; collecting, interpreting, expounding to museum curators the traditional philosophy of life and the function of art in human society; demonstrating that all significant expressions, whether in the crafts or in games and other "play," are varying dialects and symbolic activities of one language of the spirit.

Coomaraswamy has been labeled as an expert in Oriental art: but his "Orientalism" has nothing in common with the pseudo-occultism and syncretic theosophy that are volatilized by the self-appointed prophets of the "cults." He likes to puncture the stereotyped fallacy of the "mysterious" and "mystifying" East, and has asserted that a faithful account of Hinduism might be attained by a categorical denial of most of the statements (e.g. about "reincarnation") that have been made about it not only by European scholars, but even by Indians trained in the contemporary skeptical and evolutionary habits of thinking.

His pen is an instrument of precision. His closely and tightly woven fabric of thought is the very model of explicit denotation—a virtue of written expression that is nowadays being rediscovered. For this scholar the exegesis of ancient texts is above all else a scientific pursuit, considered as means to a more abundant life. He prides himself upon never introducing phrases of his own and never makes any claims for which he cannot cite chapter and verse. His compact, condensed prose often pre-

sents a forbidding mosaic on the printed page, offering nothing in the way of enticement to slothful contemporary eyes, but challenging attention nonetheless because of its rigorous exactitude, like that of a mathematical demonstration. Not infrequently matter that would suffice for a whole article is compressed into a footnote. But even when he is thus writing for scholars, it is certainly not only for scholars; and when expressly for those who are not scholars, he can, as the essays in the present collection show, write very simply, relegating footnotes to concluding pages where the reader can ignore them if he so desires.

In the unfolding of this "myriad-minded" intellect—from geology to archaeology and thence to all the arts and expressions, from the humblest to the highest aspirations of all mankind—one is tempted to find a parallel to Leonardo's universal interests.

Beginning, as we have seen, with geology and mineralogy, Coomaraswamy's researches have become universal and all-embracing, ranging from philology in a dozen languages to music and iconography, and from the most ancient metaphysics to the most contemporary problems in politics, sociology, and anthropology. As an admirer has recently stated: "Never has he had time for, nor interest in, presenting personal ideas or novel theories, so constantly and so tirelessly has he devoted his energies to the rediscovery of the truth and the relating of the principles by which cultures rise and fall." Nor does he ever compromise or pull his punches in stating these truths as he has discovered them.

This courage is especially manifest in Coomaraswamy's essays devoted to art. He is today our most eloquent defender of the traditional philosophy of art—the doctrine exemplified in the artifacts that have come down to us from the Middle Ages and the Orient. This philosophy Coomaraswamy has in-

terpreted many times and with a wealth of explicit references; and in contrast he has pointed out the pathological aspects of our contemporary aesthetes who collect the exotic and the primitive with the greediness of the magpie snatching up bits of colored ribbon with which to "decorate" its nest! The arts of the great timeless tradition move ever from within outward, and are never concerned merely with the idealization of objective fact. Modern art, on the other hand, has no resource or end beyond itself; it is too "fine" to be applied, and too "significant" to mean anything precisely.

For Coomaraswamy, as spokesman of tradition, "disinterested aesthetic contemplation" is a contradiction in terms, and nonsense. The purpose of art has always been, and still should be, effective communication. But what, ask the critics, can works of art communicate? "Let us tell the painful truth," Coomaraswamy retorts, "that most of these works are about God, whom nowadays we never mention in polite society!" One is reminded of the fact that our modern treatises on ukiyoye rarely mention the *hetaerae* upon whose lives the great part of this art centers. Youthful anthropologists, like Deacon or Tom Harnisson, retracing the continuous-line sand drawings on a lonely beach of the New Hebrides, re-enacting the *dromenon* of the last survivors of a forgotten culture, in this process of feeling-with, may come closer toward understanding alien races, to the heart of true art, than does the most ecstatic and hysterical of Picassolaters in a Fifty-seventh Street gallery. For, to understand and to appreciate the art of any people, one must become united with it in spirit; one must have learned to feel and to understand the cosmos as they have felt and understood it—never approaching them with condescension or contempt, or even with the sort of "objectivity" that, while it may succeed in depicting, always fails to interpret their works and days.

This is not the place to enlarge upon these arresting and challenging ideas. If we are "off the beam" today in our "appreciation of art," as Coomaraswamy diagnoses our current ailment, it may be, as he asserts, because we are living through "one of the two most conspicuous ages of human decadence"—that first being the late classical. Narcissistic exhibitionism and magic aestheticism—with its greedy acquisition of the irrelevant—are but twin symptoms of our cultural schizophrenia. The manufacture of "art" in studios, coupled with the artless manufacture of the things that are made in factories, represents for him a reduction of the standard of living to subhuman levels. The coincidence of beauty and utility, significance and aptitude, must determine all human values. Artifacts serving such values are possible only in a co-operative society of free and responsible craftsmen—a vocational society in which men are free to be concerned with the good of the work to be done, and individually responsible for its quality. Coomaraswamy's ideas on art may be studied in *Why Exhibit Works of Art?* and *Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought?* (London: Luzac & Co., 1943, 1946).

Now this traditional philosophy of art is integrated with the whole traditional philosophy of human society, or in other words, and as the readers of the following essays will learn, with the concept of a kingdom of God on earth. Coomaraswamy's work is a monumental achievement in integration: he has become the foremost exponent of the *Philosophia Perennis*, of St. Augustine's "wisdom uncreate, the same now that it ever was, and the same to be forevermore." Across far continents and over centuries and millennia of recorded and unrecorded time, this doctrine speaks in varying dialects, but with a single voice. It is the *sanātana dharma*, the *bagia sophia*, the "justice" or "righteousness" of the tradition, unanimous and universal. All of Coomaraswamy's "myriad-minded" concentra-

tion, together with an almost fabulous self-discipline and positive "drive," have been yoked together to demonstrate the single voice of human aspiration. It is we, the contemporaries, with our genius for fission and division, who are lost—*nous sommes les égarés!* "We are at war with ourselves," as Coomaraswamy insists at the end of his compact essay on René Guénon, "and therefore at war with one another. Western man is unbalanced, and the question, Can he recover himself? is a very real one."

Coomaraswamy's essay on Guénon, included in this book, may be studied as a model of his precision, accuracy, and mathematical brevity. Within the space of a few pages, we are presented with a complete and accurate guide to the intellectual career of one of the most arresting and most significant of contemporary thinkers. This introduction to Guénon is worth the price of admission; for the author of *The Reign of Quantity*, of *East and West*, and *The Crisis of the Modern World* seems to have been, for the American public at least, one of the casualties of the war. It is reassuring to know that the *Études Traditionnelles*, the monthly periodical which for many years had been the vehicle of Guénon's expression, has now resumed publication. And *Le règne de la quantité* has appeared in book form in Paris.

I can only hope that the present volume may open the door, to some readers at least, to a whole "new" realm of thought, as did my belated discovery of Coomaraswamy some years ago. Even his footnotes contain more provocative reading and point the way to more explorations and discoveries than one can ever find in any of the standard-brand, ready-made, ready-to-wear opinions proffered in many noisily advertised best sellers.

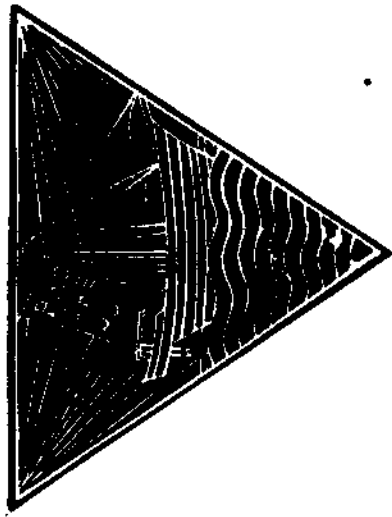
Robert Allerton Parker.

New York
March, 1946.

I: Am I My Brother's Keeper?

CAIN, who killed his brother Abel, the herdsman, and built himself a city, prefigures modern civilization, one that has been described from within as "a murderous machine, with no conscience and no ideals,"¹ "neither human nor normal nor Christian,"² and in fact "an anomaly, not to say a monstrosity."³ It has been said: "The values of life are slowly ebbing. There remains the show of civilization, without any of its realities."⁴ Criticisms such as these could be cited without end. Modern civilization, by its divorce from any principle, can be likened to a headless corpse of which the last motions are convulsive and insignificant. It is not, however, of suicide, but of murder that we propose to speak.

The modern traveler—"thy name is legion"—proposing to visit some "lost paradise" such as Bali, often asks whether or not it has yet been "spoiled." It makes a naïve, and even tragic, confession. For this man does not reflect that he is condemning himself; that what his question asks is whether or not the sources of equilibrium and grace in the other civilizations have yet been poisoned by contact with men like himself and the culture of which he is a product. "The Balinese," as Covarrubias says, "have lived well under a self-sufficient cooperative system, the foundation of which is reciprocal assistance, with money used only as a secondary commodity. Being extremely limited in means to obtain the cash—scarcer every day—to pay taxes and satisfy new needs, it is to be feared that the gradual breaking down of their institutions, together with the drain on their national wealth, will make coolies, thieves, beggars and prosti-



"Progress," by Eric Gill

tures of the proud and honorable Balinese of this generation, and will, in the long run, bring a social and moral catastrophe. . . . It would be futile to recommend measures to prevent the relentless march of Westernization; tourists cannot be kept out, the needs of trade will not be restricted for sentimental [or moral] reasons, and missionary societies are often powerful."⁵

Sir George Watt in 1912 wrote that "however much Indian art may be injured, or individuals suffer, progression in line with the manufacturing enterprise of civilization must be allowed free course."⁶ In the same year Gandhi said that "India is being ground down, not under the English heel, but under that of modern civilization." In an open letter to Gilbert Murray, the late Rabindranath Tagore said, "There is no people in the whole of Asia which does not look upon Europe with fear and suspicion."⁷ When I said to a working woman that what the Germans were doing in Belgium was very dreadful, she retorted, "Yes, too bad the Belgians should be treated as if they were Congo Negroes."

Modern civilization takes it for granted that people are better off the more things they want and are able to get; its values are quantitative and material. Here, How much is he worth? means How much money has he got? A speaker at Boston College lately described modern Western civilization as a "curse to humanity"; and those who now recognize its reflection in the Japanese mirror are evidently of the same opinion. Nevertheless Henry A. Wallace, then vice-president, in a well-meant speech, promised that when the war should be over, "Older [!] nations will have the privilege to help younger nations get started on the path to industrialization. . . . As their masses learn to read and write, and as they become productive mechanics, their standard of living will double and treble."⁸ He did not speak of the price to be paid, or reflect that an incessant

"progress," never ending in contentment, means the condemnation of all men to a state of irremediable poverty. In the words of St. Gregory Nazazien,

Could you from all the world all wealth procure,
More would remain, whose lack would leave you poor!

As for reading and writing, we shall only say that the association of these with "productive mechanics" (and the "chain belt" that suggests the "chain gang") is significant, since these arts are only of paramount importance to the masses in a quantitative culture, where one must be able to read both warnings and advertisements if one is to earn money safely and "raise one's standard of living": that if reading and writing are to enable the Indian and Chinese masses to read what the Western proletariat reads, they will remain better off, from any cultural point of view, with their own more classical literature of which all have oral knowledge; and add that it is still true that, as Sir George Birdwood wrote in 1880, "Our education has destroyed their love of their own literature . . . their delight in their own arts and, worst of all, their repose in their own traditional and national religion. It has disgusted them with their own homes—their parents, their sisters, their very wives. It has brought discontent into every family so far as its baneful influences have reached."⁹

Systems of education should be extensions of the cultures of the peoples concerned; but of these the Western educator knows little and cares less. For example, O. L. Reiser assumed that, after the war, American ideals and policies, so far from allowing for other peoples' cultural self-determination, would dominate the world and that all divergent religions and philosophies could and should be discarded in favor of the "scientific humanism" which should now become "the religion of humanity."¹⁰ We can only say that if Western races are in the future to do

anything for the peoples whose cultures have been broken down in the interests of commerce and "religion," they must begin by renouncing what has been aptly called their "proselytizing fury"—"hypocrites, for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte."¹¹

It is overlooked that while many Asiatic peoples, for reasons sufficiently obvious, are inadequately provided with the necessities of life, this is by no means true of all Asiatic peoples. In any case it is overlooked that it is a basic Asiatic conception that, given the necessities of life, it is a fallacy to suppose that the further we can go beyond that the better. Where the European seeks to become economically independent in old age, the Indian map of life proposes for old age an independence of economics. The "guinea pigs" of a well-known book, in other words you and I, whose wants are perpetually exacerbated by the sight and sound of advertisements (it has been recognized that "Whole industries are pooling their strength to ram home a higher standard of living"¹²), have been compared by an Indian writer¹³ to another animal—"the donkey before which the driver has dangled a much coveted carrot hanging from a stick fastened to its own harness. The more the animal runs to get at the carrot, the further is the cart drawn"; i.e. the higher the dividends paid. We are the donkey, the manufacturer the driver, and this situation pleases us so well that we, in the kindness of our hearts, would like to make donkeys also of the Balinese—at the same time that we ask, "Have they been spoiled yet?" "Spoiled" means "degraded"; but the word has also another sinister meaning, that of "plundered," and there are ways of life as well as material goods of which one can be robbed.

Let us make it clear that if we approach the problem of inter-

cultural relationships largely on the ground of *art*, it is not with the special modern and aesthetic or sentimental concept of art in mind, but from that Platonic and once universally human point of view in which "art" is the principle of manufacture and nothing but the science of the making of any things whatever for man's good use, physical and metaphysical; and in which, accordingly, agriculture and cookery, weaving and fishing are just as much arts as painting and music. However strange this may appear to us, let us remember that we cannot pretend to think for others unless we can think *with* them. In these contexts, then, "art" involves the whole of the active life, and presupposes the contemplative. The disintegration of a people's art is the destruction of their life, by which they are reduced to the proletarian status of hewers of wood and drawers of water, in the interests of a foreign trader, whose is the *profit*. The employment of Malays on rubber estates, for example, in no way contributes to their culture and certainly cannot have made them our friends: they owe us nothing. We are irresponsible, in a way that Orientals are not yet, for the most part, irresponsible.

Let me illustrate what I mean by responsibility. I have known Indians who indignantly refused to buy shares in a profitable hotel company, because they would not make money out of hospitality, and an Indian woman who refused to buy a washing machine, because then, "What would become of the washerman's livelihood?" For an equal sense of responsibility in a European I can cite the infinite pains that Marco Pallis took, in selecting gifts for his Tibetan friends, not to choose anything that might tend toward a destruction of the *quality* of their standard of living.

The modern world has, in fact (as was recently remarked by Aldous Huxley), abandoned the concept of "right livelihood," according to which a man could not be considered a Christian in

good standing if he made his living by usury or speculation, or considered a Buddhist if he made his living by the manufacture of weapons or of intoxicating drinks. And as I have said elsewhere, if there are any occupations that are not consistent with human dignity, or manufactures however profitable that are not of real *goods*, such occupations and manufactures must be abandoned by any society that has in view the dignity of all its members. It is only when measured in terms of dignity and not merely in terms of comfort that a "standard of living" can properly be called "high."

The bases of modern civilization are to such a degree rotten to the core that it has been forgotten even by the learned that man ever attempted to live otherwise than by bread alone. It had been assumed by Plato that "it is contrary to the nature of the arts to seek the good of anything but their object,"¹⁴ and by St. Thomas Aquinas that "the craftsman is *naturally* inclined by justice to do his work faithfully."¹⁵ To what a level industrialism must have lowered the workman's sense of honor and natural will to do a "good job" if, in a reference to the mechanics and groundmen who make and service airplanes, Gilbert Murray could propound that it is "a quite wonderful fact that masses of men have been made so trustworthy and reliable" and could say that "it is the Age of Machines that, for the first time in history, has made them so."¹⁶ That was a part of his apology for Western civilization, in an open letter to Rabindranath Tagore. All that this cock and bull airplane story really means, of course, is that where production is really for *use*, and not mainly or only for profit, the workman is *still* "naturally inclined to do his work faithfully." Even today, as Mrs. Handy has remarked, "Technical perfection remains the ideal of the Marquesas Island craftsman."¹⁷ In Europe, the instinct of workmanship has not been extinguished in human

nature, but only suppressed in human beings working irresponsibly.

Anthropologists, as impartial observers who do not attempt to consider the arts *in vacuo*, but in their relation to the whole structure of society, mince no words in their description of the effects of Western contacts on traditional cultures. Mrs. Handy's record of the Marquesas Islanders, that "the external aspects of their culture have been almost wiped out by the white man's devastating activities,"¹⁷ is typical of what could be cited from a hundred other sources. Of the "savages" of New Guinea Raymond Firth says that "their art as an expression of complex social values is of basic importance," but that under European influence "in nearly every case the quality of their art has begun to fall off."¹⁸ C. F. Iklé writes that due to the influence of the Western world "which is so ready to flood the remainder of our globe with inferior mass products, thus destroying among native peoples the concepts of quality and beauty, together with the joy of creation . . . it is a question whether the beautiful art of Ikat weaving can long survive in the Dutch East Indies."¹⁹

It is true that we have learned to appreciate the "primitive arts"; but only when we have "collected" them. We "preserve" folk songs, at the same time that our way of life destroys the singer. We are proud of our museums, where we display the damning evidence of a way of living that we have made impossible. These museum "treasures" were originally the everyday productions of live men; but now, "due to the breakdown of culture in the islands where the objects were made, they may be studied more satisfactorily in museums," while at their source these "highly developed and beautiful techniques have died, or are dying."²⁰ "Dying," because in the words of the knighted fatalist, "progression in line with the manufactur-

ing enterprise of modern civilization must be allowed free course"! To which we can only rejoin that, if it *must* be that offenses come, "Woe unto them through whom they come." What, indeed, has lately happened to the cities that Cain built? Let us not assume that "it can't happen here."

Our "love of art" and "appreciation" of primitive art, as we call whatever art is abstract and impersonal, rather than self-expressive or exhibitionist, has not aroused in our hearts any love for the primitive artist himself. A more loveless, and at the same time more sentimentally cynical, culture than that of modern Europe and America it would be impossible to imagine. "Seeing through," as it supposes, everything, it cares for nothing but itself. The passionless reason of its "objective" scholarship, applied to the study of "what men have believed," is only a sort of frivolity, in which the real problem, that of knowing what should be believed, is evaded. Values are to such an extent inverted that action, properly means to an end, has been made an end in itself, and contemplation, prerequisite to action, has come to be disparaged as an "escape" from the responsibilities of activity.

In the present essay we are concerned, not with the political or economic, but with the cultural relations that have actually subsisted, and on the other hand should subsist, as between the peoples who call themselves progressive and those whom they call backward, a type of nomenclature that belongs to the genus of "the lion painted by himself." Not that we overlook the sinister relationships that connect your cultural activities abroad with your political and economic interests, but that there is the imminent danger that even when you have made up your minds to establish political and economic relations with others on a basis of justice, you will still believe that you have been entrusted with a "civilizing mission." There is more than political and economic interest behind the proselytizing fury:

behind all this there is a fanaticism that cannot away with any sort of wisdom that is not of its own date and kind and the product of its own pragmatic calculations; "there is a rancor," as Hermes Trismegistus said, "that is contemptuous of immortality, and will not let us recognize what is divine in us."²¹

That is why the export of your "education" is even more nefarious than your traffic in arms. What was attempted by the English in India when they proposed to build up a class of persons "Indian in blood and color, but English in tastes, in opinion, in morals and in intellect" (Lord Macaulay) is just what Middletown, substituting "American" for "English," would like to do today. It is what the British tried to do in Ireland where "in thirty years Irish was killed off so rapidly that the whole island contained fewer speakers in 1891 than the small province of Connaught alone did thirty years before. . . . The amount of horrible suffering entailed by this policy . . . counted for nothing with the Board of National Education, compared with their great object of . . . the attainment of one Anglified uniformity. . . . The children are taught, if nothing else, to be ashamed of their own parents, ashamed of their own nationality, ashamed of their own names."²² Everyone will recognize the pattern, repeated alike in the case of the "English-educated" Indian and in that of the American Indian who has been subjected to the untaught ignorance of public school teachers who cannot speak his mother tongue.

Such are the fruits of "civilization," and the fruit betrays the tree. All that can only be atoned for by repentance, recantation, and restitution. Of these, the last is a virtual impossibility; the fallen redwood cannot be replanted. A traditional culture still, however, survives precariously in "unspoiled" oases, and the least that we can say to the modern world is this: Whatever else you dispense in "wars of pacification" or by way of "peace-

ful penetration," be good enough to reserve your "college education" and your "finishing schools" for home consumption. What you call your "civilizing mission" is in our eyes nothing but a form of megalomania. Whatever we need to learn from you, we shall come to ask you for as the need is felt. At the same time, if you choose to visit us, you will be welcome guests, and if there is anything of ours that you admire, we shall say, "It is yours."

For the rest, it is much more for its own sake than in order to make restitution that the modern world must "change its mind" (repent); for, as *Philosophia* said to *Boethius* in his distress, "You have forgotten who you are." But how can this "reasoning and mortal animal," this extroverted mentality, be awakened, reminded of itself, and converted from its sentimentality and its sole reliance on estimative knowledge to the life of the intellect? How can this world be given back its meaning? Not, of course, by a return to the outward forms of the Middle Ages nor, on the other hand, by assimilation to any surviving, Oriental or other, pattern of life. But why not by a recognition of the principles on which the patterns were based? These principles, on which the "unspoiled" life of the East is still supported, must at least be grasped, respected, and understood if ever the Western provincial is to become a citizen of the world. Even the goodness of the modern world is unprincipled; its "altruism" is no longer founded on a knowledge of the Self of all beings and therefore in the love of Self, but only on selfish inclination. And what of those who are not inclined to be unselfish; is there any intellectual standard by which they can be blamed?

If ever the gulf between East and West, of which we are made continually more aware as physical intimacies are forced upon us, is to be bridged, it will be only by an agreement on principles, and not by any participation in common forms of

government or methods of manufacture and distribution. It is not, as *Kierkegaard* said, new forms of government, but another Socrates that the world needs. A philosophy identical with Plato's is still a living force in the East. We called the modern world a headless body; in the Eastern books there is a teaching, how to put heads on bodies again. It is one of sacrifice and of preoccupation with realities; outwardly a rite and inwardly a being born again.

To propose an agreement on principles does not involve or imply that the Western world should be Orientalized; propaganda is out of the question as between gentlemen, and everyone must make use of the forms appropriate to his own psycho-physical constitution. It is the European that wants to practice Yoga; the Oriental points out that he has already contemplative disciplines of his own. What is implied is that a recognition of the principles by which the East still lives, and which can, therefore, be seen in operation (and few will question that peoples as yet "unspoiled" are happier than those that have been "spoiled"), could lead the modern "world of impoverished reality," in which it is maintained that "such knowledge as is not empirical is meaningless," back to the philosopher who denied the dependence of knowledge on sensation and maintained that all learning is recollection.

They cannot help us who, in the words of Plato, "think that nothing is, except what they can grasp firmly with their hands." I repeat what I have said elsewhere, that "the European, for his own sake and all men's sake in a future world, must not only cease to harm and exploit the other peoples of the world, but must also give up the cherished and flattering belief that he can do them any good otherwise than by being good himself." I am far from believing that the European is incapable of goodness.

In conclusion, let me say that the few European workers in the Eastern field to whom my criticisms do not apply will be the

last to disagree with them. Also, that what I have been saying is not what you will hear from the already English-educated and too often "spoiled" Orientals with whom you are able to converse.^{2a} I am speaking for a majority, literate and illiterate, that is not vocal, partly by inclination, and partly because, in more than one sense, they do not speak your language. I am speaking for those who once before "bowed low before the West in patient, deep disdain," and are not less a power today because you cannot know or hear them.

REFERENCES

- ¹ G. La Pianna, in *Harvard Divinity School Bulletin*, XXVII, p. 27.
- ² Eric Gill, *Autobiography* (New York, 1942), p. 174.
- ³ René Guénon, *East and West* (London, 1941), p. 43.
- ⁴ A. N. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (1933), p. 358.
- ⁵ M. Covarrubias, *Island of Bali* (1942). Cf. Colin McPhee, "Ank-loeng Gamelans in Bali," *Djawa*, Nos. 5 and 6, 17de Jaargang (September-December, 1937), p. 348: "The last five years, what with the changing tempo of life, the benefits of education, have seen the most rapid changes of all, the most irresponsible patching together of heterogeneous elements in music and drama. One wonders what will survive in ten years of what was once an art." Before we can talk wisely about co-operation it must first of all be realized that, as the editor of the *New English Weekly* recently remarked, "practically the whole of Oriental humanity, the greater portion of the human race, including the U.S.S.R., lives in a social aspiration which is the polar opposite of the American." Any possibilities of co-operation are bound up with agreement about ends, whereas almost every proposal nowadays brought forward has only to do with means, and usually with the application of Western means to Eastern situations.
- ⁶ Sir George Watt, *Indian Art at Delhi* (London, 1912), p. 72. This is the modern form of the Amaurian (Amalrician) heresy; the economically determined man, without free will, is by the same token irresponsible; no blame to him, the fault is fate's! Cf. Sir George Birdwood, *Siva*, pp. 84-5: "England . . . where every national

interest is sacrificed to the shibboleth of unrestricted international competition; and where as a consequence, agriculture, the only sure foundation of society, languishes . . . its last result, the bitter, stark and cruel contrast presented between the West End of London and the East. And do Europe and America desire to reduce all Asia to an East End?" And K. E. Barlow (in *Purpose*, XI, 1939, p. 245): "In our everyday world the principle of exploitation without responsibility has brought a disorder in society and in Nature which stupefies all of us who think. . . . It has become clear that our civilisation is pursuing a course which cannot long be maintained."

⁷ Rabindranath Tagore and Gilbert Murray, *Open Letters, East and West* (Paris, 1932), p. 44.

⁸ Henry A. Wallace, then vice-president, in a speech, 1943. And as the late President Roosevelt truly said, "Never again must we in the United States isolate ourselves from the rest of humanity"; but he showed by his next words, "I am confident that the foreign trade of the United States can be trebled after the war—providing millions more jobs," that he had not in mind the root of the matter, that is, an abandonment of America's *cultural* isolation. As for the "price" of industrialism, it must be recognized, in the first place, that the American "standard of living," judged by qualitative standards, is beneath contempt, at the same time that the artist, no longer a member of society but a parasite upon it, "has become the pkinese of the rich" (Erich Meissner's phrase in *Germany in Peril*, 1942, p. 42). "The standardised products of our mills and factories are a disgrace to American civilisation" (Mgr. G. B. O'Toole in Foreword to Krzesinski, *Is Modern Culture Doomed?* 1942). On the salesman's and producer's side: "Modern machinery and its irresistible advance fills these men with mystic frenzy" (Meissner, *ibid.*, p. 115); and, "Eventually Man . . . adopts a discipline which transforms him into a machine himself" (Ernst Niekisch, quoted by Meissner, *ibid.*). Vice-President Wallace's words and two current, and very revealing, American advertisements are a dramatic demonstration. Of the advertisements, one, depicting a salesman behind his counter, puts into his mouth the words: "Handmade? Of course not! Why, most everything in this store is made by machines nowadays. If it weren't I wouldn't be selling half these things, and you couldn't buy them. They'd cost too much." The other prints a "poem," called "My Machine," and its first lines are:

There are many other machines, but this one is mine.

It is a part of me, I am a part of it.

We are one.

It does not stop—unless I forget.

There is no reference to the quality, either of man or of product, in either case.

"On peut remarquer que la machine est, en un certain sens, le contraire de l'outil, et non point un 'outil perfectionné' comme beaucoup se l'imaginent, car l'outil est en quelque sorte un 'prolongement' de l'homme lui-même, tandis que la machine réduit celui-ci à n'être plus que son serviteur ['minder']; et, si l'on a pu dire que 'l'outil engendra le métier', il n'est pas moins vrai que la machine le tue; les réactions instinctives des artisans contre les premières machines s'expliquent par là d'elle-mêmes" (René Guénon, *Le règne de la quantité et les signes des temps*, 2nd ed.; Paris, 1945, p. 64, note). In Ruskin's words, "The great cry that rises from all our manufacturing cities, louder than their furnace blast, is all in very deed for this,—that we manufacture everything there except men" (*Stones of Venice*, in Ruskin's works, Vol. X, p. 196); and, "This evil cannot be cured through higher wages, good housing conditions and improved nutrition" (Meissner, *ibid.*, p. 42). "If your real ideals are those of materialistic efficiency, then the sooner you know your own mind, and face the consequences, the better. . . . The more highly industrialised a country, the more easily a materialistic philosophy will flourish in it, and the more deadly that philosophy will be. . . . And the tendency of unlimited industrialism is to create masses of men and women—detached from tradition, alienated from religion, and susceptible to mass suggestion: in other words, a mob. And a mob will be no less a mob if it is well fed, well clothed, well housed, and well disciplined" (T. S. Eliot in *The Idea of a Christian Society*).

"It is doubtful whether life can be significantly lived without conscious relation to some tradition. Those who do live without it live as a kind of moral proletariat, without roots and without loyalties. For to be significant life needs form, and form is the outcome of a quality of thought and feeling which shapes a tradition" (Dorothy M. Emmet in *The Nature of Metaphysical Thinking*, 1946, p. 163).

More than a physical well-being is necessary for felicity. An Indian peasant's face has neither the vacancy of the grinning apes and

whores that are the ideal of the American advertiser, nor the expression of anxiety that marks the American "common man" in real life. "In spite of our enormous technological advances we are spiritually, and as humane beings, not the equals of the average Australian aboriginal or the average Eskimo—we are very definitely their inferior" (M. F. Ashley Montagu, "Socio-Biology of Man," *Scientific Monthly*, June, 1942, p. 49).

⁹ Sir John Birdwood, *Industrial Arts of India* (1880).

¹⁰ O. L. Reiser, *A New Earth and a New Humanity* (New York, 1942), p. 209.

¹¹ Matthew 23:15.

¹² "It is open to question whether anything a machine turns out for direct human use is productive of human good" (in the *Nation*, November 27, 1943). Cf. L. Ziegler in *Forum Philosophicum* I, 87, 88: "Every ware which does not answer an existing need is above all the most superfluous thing in the world. . . . it must first artificially rouse up a need in places where a need does not exist. . . . Present day economic management is framed for the stimulation, yes, even for the 'creation' of needs. . . . as if wages and income could in any way keep pace with this artificially aroused need for a commodity. . . . The fashionably altering display of goods attaches to so unlimited a mass and variety of wares a label of necessity, that in the face of it even the purchasing power of the rich is beaten, whereas the poor seem doomed to a poverty hitherto undreamt of. From this point of view modern finance reveals itself as the enemy of society, yes, even as the destroyer of society." For, observe that, as Albert Schweitzer says, "Whenever the timber trade is good, permanent famine reigns in the Ogowe region." Modern wars, in fact, are fought for world markets; in other words, in order that all "backward" peoples may be forced to purchase an annual quota of gadgets from those who call themselves "advanced."

Here it is, however, with the moral effects of manufacture for profit that we are concerned, and especially with its effect on those who are forced on the one hand to provide the raw materials, and on the other to buy the manufactured gadgets. It is not merely that the change from a barter to a money economy is actually "from an economy of abundance to one of scarcity" (Parsons, *Pueblo Indian Religion*, 1939, p. 1144), but that it is a matter of the poisoning of the lives of contented peoples, whose culture is destroyed to satisfy the

