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The Darwin Centenary (II)

by NORMAN WEBB

"There is no doubt whatever that a mangled and mis-applied Darwinism has been one of the most potent factors in the social development of the last sixty years."

—C. H. Douglas in *Economic Democracy*, p. 8.

If it is true, as it surely is, that as Edmund Burke says, the price of freedom is eternal vigilance, then it is equally certain that our outlook on life needs to be of a two-way nature, as in crossing the street, because it takes quite as much, in fact more intelligence to recognise the favourable, compensatory factors in events than the unfavourable, owing to the absence of any direct, visible evidence of their existence. By and large, all the sensible signs are discouraging. The habit of seeing the dark side of things at the expense of a relatively balanced view, by living so to speak in anticipation, or equally un-rewarding, nostalgically in the past, in place of alertly in the present, is more deeply ingrained in us than we realise.

I find myself impelled to the above observations by the reading of Julian Huxley's article, "Man's Place in Nature," in the *Sunday Times*, based on his Darwin Commemoration Lecture at the opening of the International Zoology Congress in London recently. His desire was obviously to be reassuring, and to demonstrate, if he could, that there had been something like a change of heart among the evolutionary biologists during the intervening century. I think we can discount his rather naïve assurance regarding the impossibility of man's supersession in the evolutionary sense of physical organism. After all, the difference between a bomb-proof shelter and the tortoise's shell is not one of kind but only of degree. But Professor Huxley does, I think, make a more or less successful attempt to raise the fact of the science of evolution out of the ideological dust-heap into which it was so promptly drawn after the publication of the *Origin Of Species*.

It is none the less a rather dispiriting spectacle that is presented by the efforts of the group of trained and erudite minds that have been chosen to follow Huxley in the series of articles dealing with the Destiny of Man in the light of his general conclusions. Not one of them displays the Christian courage of Douglas, who affirms on the highest authority, that it is unknown, but all anxiously scan the philosophic horizon bounded by the still imperfectly-digested theory of Natural Selection for any hopeful sign of convincing weight and substance, but they can find none, because to do so requires faith,* which is the only substantial and convincing reason for hope there is.

* "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Hebrews, I.I.I.

A Happy Christmas to All Our Readers

In his own particular biological line of research Darwin was a model of inductive integrity, and an outstanding demonstrator of the power of factuality faithfully followed. As far as I am aware, there is no evidence that he realised the underlying cause of his sudden notoriety, that brought his name into the Music Halls and into the mouths of Prime Ministers; though he could hardly have failed to find his fame embarrassing. It is clear that his age, and he with it, lacked that particular kind of degree of religious integrity which might have made them instinctively aware of the strictly narrow limits within which, as Huxley now points out, the theory of Natural Selection can truly operate. The Evolutionists themselves might have done something to counteract and discredit the far-fetched and opportunist uses to which it was being put, as an almost divine sanction in the conventionally religious sense—"The survival of the fittest"—for the prevailing social and economic ruthlessness; for that is how the Nonconformist Conscience interpreted it. It was this typically Victorian belief, almost a creed, in the necessity and value of suffering and poverty (for the poor, of course) which robbed the Church's protests against slumery and the attendant social devastation of unbridled industrial expansion, of effective conviction; that still robs it, and is chiefly responsible for the rapid decay of religious authority. As Douglas has put it:—"Virtue may flourish in the gutter. But if virtue can *only* flourish in the gutter, then it is time the nature of Virtue received severe scrutiny."† If God (or Nature) could, or must, be ruthless, then why should not man?

Douglas goes on, of course, to point out that no philosophic attempt was made to define what was meant by the terms "fit" and "fittest,"—fittest for what? Darwin's studies were confined to survival in a natural environment which was the same for all alike—the Socialists' atavistic ideal of Equality of Opportunity, in fact. But from the time of man's appearance on the scene, physical environment became progressively less natural, as Huxley frankly allows in his article; something that was being increasingly monkeyed-with and given artificial inclinations in one direction or another, for purely personal ends, and even

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† *Social Credit*, chapter VI.

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From Week to Week

Imagine a point, x , to represent the centre of the Universe, and let this be the location of the Interplanetary Monetary Fund; further, suppose the only legal tender valid on Earth to be currency issued by the I.M.F. Let I.M.F. currency (M) be self-extinguishing by automation,* the value of its purchasing power, y , being according to the

formula $y = \frac{D}{t^r}$, when D = the distance of Earth from x ,

t = time, and r is a variable determined by the I.M.F. On this hypothesis a continual replenishing of currency on Earth is necessary.† Now suppose further that I.M.F. currency is made available by the I.M.F. to Earth (and to any other planets subscribing to the Agreement) in proportion to the number of interplanetary missiles (M) launched, this proportion being determined by the equation

$M \propto \left| \frac{M}{t} \right| R$, where R is a variable determined by the I.M.F.

On this general hypothesis, a number of interesting questions can be put; but for the moment we content ourselves with one: Why? (Answer: Why not?)

The Sydney *Sun-Herald* in its edition of 9th November, 1958, came out with a full front-page editorial analysing the electoral policies of R. G. Menzies and of H. C. Evatt.‡ It was an excellent analysis, granted current premises, and on this basis would establish its author as far ahead of Messrs.

* A modern application of the Gesell Theory as partially adopted by most Progressive Governments.

† According to current astronomical calculations. It is not known for certain whether we are receding from or approaching x , but opinion is heavily in favour of recession.

‡ The leaders in Australia of the alternative administrators of current international financial policy.

Menzies and Evatt in aptitude for political economy. But we know that both Mr. Menzies and Dr. Evatt are of the highest intelligence; so that the conclusion seems clear—both are speaking to a common brief, provided by the graduates of the London School of Economics, and marked 'Top Secret'; and so not available to the Editor of the *S.H.*

“The British monarchy endures because it is suited to the habits of the British people. Does anyone really think that a Gaitskell, or a Cripps or Attlee, as President would command the emotion or respect aroused by the young and lovely Queen? Has anyone ever seen a President of any republic who looked other than what he is, a rather curious executive in a lounge suit not too well tailored? In Britain, at any rate, every part of the national life is bound up with the monarchy. What is the House of Commons as compared with the monarchy? It is a thing of yesterday. . .”

“Right up to 1914 the power of Great Britain as the world's first state was unchallenged. A quarter of the earth's surface was under the British flag and it was the greatest empire that the world had ever known. It was well ordered and administered. It was pacific, for why should it be otherwise? It was an object of envy to other powers. Eventually from a combination of jealousy and bad statesmanship Germany and Britain went to war. One result . . . was the severe blow which it gave to the hegemony of Europe over the world. . . . The war of 1914-18 shook the supremacy of Europe but did not abolish it. The British colonial system received a great blow but this too could have recovered, as could Europe itself, had not two fatal factors intervened. In the case of Britain, the efforts of the 1914 war led to great losses of the best manhood of the country and this real treasure was never replaced. The men who were killed in the mud of the Flanders trenches were the flower of British youth. While they bled and perished, the conchies and the misfits lived on to vex their Motherland with their theories in the post-war world, and the men who would have been their corrective died in France. One-tenth of the lives which were sacrificed in 1914-18 would have been sufficient to have policed the vast Empire and to have moderated the self-appointed leaders, politicians and visionaries who now stride jubilantly across the structure of our former Empire. In 1921 the decision was made to cast away the south of Ireland. That began the rot and from then on the intriguers and dissidents saw that, driven hard enough, the British Government would give in. The long Indian wrangle developed to the point where Britain had nearly lost the will to govern. Egypt perceived that she too could wring concessions from the Government at Westminster. The coming of the 1939 war brought for a moment—as time goes a few years are a moment—resolution and a call to the despised virtue of patriotism. The great patriot who had uttered warning after warning on the dangers of abandoning the Empire and of weakness while would-be aggressors armed themselves, was called in hurriedly, after over a decade of neglect, in the belief that he could save the country. Under the dispensation of Providence, the leadership of Winston Churchill was successful and this country was delivered from the Germans. The Empire came out intact but, his work done,

Churchill and his Government were replaced by the Socialists. The Empire quickly disintegrated.

"It is in the light of this terrible crumbling of the imperial position that we now have to view the British monarchy. Since 1945 India, Palestine, Egypt, Ceylon, Burma, Sudan, Ghana, Malaya have left British control. Nigeria, the West Indies, British Guiana, and many other remaining territories will follow suit. South Africa debates the precise time when it will become a republic. It is as though the building process of British history, whereby the various territories came gradually to be associated with England, is now in reverse. Is Her Majesty the Queen to be the last of the line? . . ."

"The strongest bastions against the flood of Communism in Asia were the territories under the aegis of Britain, France and Holland. All these have been undermined by weakness in Britain and the American dislike for Colonialism. . . ."

"It is against this sombre background that we have to consider the royal position in England. The caperings of peers, who would be of no concern at all if they did not possess a peerage, which they affect to despise, are of little moment. The British aristocracy is in decay, and it is useless to look for its redemption while taxation is used as an instrument of social distribution. It was left to the twentieth century to witness the pauper peer whose hereditary estate has been wasted, not at the gaming table but by successive devastations of death duties over two generations. What a country, which can accept the sacrifice of lives of its citizens and at the same time render it impossible for them to pass on their property to their heirs! Even without the incidence of war the rate of income tax and surtax together with estate duties makes the maintenance of any sizeable estate quite out of the question.

"To sum up, by the year A.D. 2000 there will, given the continuance of our existing rate of taxation, be no more landed proprietors and very few wealthy industrialists either. . . ."

"Of one thing I am profoundly convinced and that is, the great effect which the abdication of King Edward VIII had upon the monarchy. . . ."

"The Abdication showed beyond a shadow of doubt that real power was in the hands of anyone but the sovereign. Our Lord the King was but a phrase. . . ."

The above extracts are from *The Twilight of Monarchy*, by L. G. Pine (Burke, London: 1958). Like so much else, they pose the one great question which is really relevant to our time: is the story of our decline merely accident, or evolution, or 'progress'; or is it the outcome of a consistently applied policy, having as its objective not only the disintegration of the British Empire, but the destruction of the British character?

If the "successive devastations of death duties" are not the exhibition of part of a consistent policy, what is? Mr. Pine refers to "the evil influences which have destroyed the

greatest commonwealth of the world's history." Our future, if any, depends on the identification of the persons who are responsible for the evil influences, and appropriate action to deal with them.

The Christian View

The Christian view of man's responsibility towards Nature implies a certain respect for the material he uses. . . . Avoidable and harmful waste is disrespect to Nature. . . . What about . . . those engaged in making worthless patent foods, shoddy materials, and so on?

These personal and vocational problems are rendered impossible of solution "with the best will in the world" when men have to serve in a system which has actually to waste on a colossal scale both natural and human resources in order to carry on at all! This waste can be traced to the fact that society has to be mainly concerned with economic effort rather than with the satisfaction of economic needs. For various moral and technical reasons, men are allowed claims on wealth in proportion to the economic efforts they expend, or to the economic satisfactions they forgo. Industrialism has therefore been built upon the ideal of the multiplication of effort. . . . With the inherent effort-saving advances in technique, this objective could only be achieved by waste in diverse forms. Waste has taken diverse forms: rapid industrialisation, the products of which the world's population has to be persuaded, bullied or corrupted into requiring, while elemental needs are still far from being met; the fetish of commerce and trade as a measure of prosperity because it provided work for displaced producers; export surpluses from the more successful nations, while their populations, in order to keep themselves employed, were pinched by not being allowed the equivalent of their exported production; the ruthless exploitation of natural resources for cheap and easy supplies by nations and industries in competition to sell, not to enjoy; and as an undesigned result of these complex efforts, war, as the result of that economic imperialism which afflicts modern industrial communities striving for security of market. . . .

No Church on earth can sustain the Christian revelation of the true end of man if it is dispensed in an order of human life whose very assumptions deny it and which religion makes no effort to condemn. . . .

St. Paul's dictum "If a man will not work, neither shall he eat," was a moral precept which derived its sanction from the fact that, in a society where each man produced only the equivalent of what he consumed, the idler was robbing his brother. But to erect this into a universal moral law would be to cast reflections upon the countless non-producing saints and sages and artists who have enriched the world in other than an economic sense, and even upon our Lord Himself, who, during great periods of His ministry, was not "economically employed." Today, the individual, on the average, produces a hundred-fold of what he consumes. Why should he grudge his brother the rest, unless he, too, bears an economic burden?

Moreover, it cannot be evaded that the contemporary fear of relaxing economic effort for the majority is largely due to the stress of industrialism over the last two cen-

turies which has undermined men's power of living in a more natural and spontaneous manner. . . .

Not the use and enjoyment of God's gifts, but the discipline of producing and trading, came to be the ends of economic life. That itself was a complete reversal of earlier attitudes. . . .

—From *God, Man And Society* by V. A. Demant.
(Student Christian Movement Press, London, 1933.)

A Trinitarian Constitution

"Liberty should reach every individual of a people, as they all share one common nature; if it only spreads among particular branches, there had better be none at all, since such a liberty only aggravates the misfortune of those who are deprived of it, but setting before them a disagreeable subject of comparison.

"This liberty is best preserved, where the legislative power is lodged in several persons, especially if those persons are of different rank and interests; for where they are of the same rank, and consequently have an interest to manage peculiar to that rank, it differs little from a despotical government in a single person. . . ."

"If there be but one body of legislators, it is no better than a tyranny; if there are only two, there will want a casting voice, and one of them must at length be swallowed up by disputes and contentions that will necessarily arise between them. Four would have the same inconvenience as two, and a greater number would cause too much confusion. I could never read a passage in Polybius and another in Cicero to this purpose without a secret pleasure in applying it to the English constitution, which it suits much better than the Romans. Both these great authors give the pre-eminence to a mixed government, consisting of three branches, the regal, the noble, and the popular. They had doubtless in their thoughts the constitution of the Roman commonwealth, in which the consul represented the king, the senate the nobles, and the tribunes the people. This division of the three powers in the Roman constitution was by no means so distinct and natural as it is in the English form of government. . . ."

—L. [Joseph Addison] in *The Spectator* No. 287.
(January 29, 1711-12).

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more significantly on the psychological plane of propaganda and education. To quote Douglas again:—" . . . although such books as Mr. Benjamin Kidd's *Science of Power* have pretty well exposed the reason why the individual, efficient in his own interest and consequently well fitted to survive, may and will possess characteristics which completely unfit him for positions of power in the community, we may begin our inquiry by noticing that one of the most serious causes of disquietude is the obvious survival and rise to positions of the greatest power of individuals to whom the term 'fittest' could only be applied in the very narrowest sense . . . such an admission is simply evidence that the particular environment in which the fittest are admittedly surviving and succeeding is unsatisfactory . . . and that environment cannot be left to the unaided law of Darwinian evolution in view of its effects

on other than material issues."†

It is difficult at this particular time to avoid a possibly narrow comparison of the reception accorded to the achievements of these two great research workers, or to avoid contrasting Darwin's immense success and rapid fame with the treatment accorded to Douglas and his much more and significant discoveries. But one does well to remember that there is a standard of judgment other than the mundane and purely opportunist one, as to the reality and value of any man's work, which is only to be found reflected in an enrichment of outlook and broadening of general confidence bestowed upon those who have had the fortune to have come in real contact with it. Now what strikes me most forcibly in the academic parade called forth by these Centenary Celebrations is just the inspirational poverty of its celebrants; the atmosphere of short-sighted anxiety, almost of panic, which is the peculiar gift of an education in dialectical materialism.

A solitary note of confidence is supplied by Miss Rebecca West, the only non-male contributor to the series. It is not so much any specific point she makes as the general implication of her article, which may be summed up in her complaint that, as she puts it, "It is a pity that scientists make such extravagant claims." It is easy to agree with that opinion. But I think that in the present case Miss West is less than fair to Darwin and his successors in the science of Evolution. It is not they who are the chief offenders. The fact is they have been more than averagely exploited for purposes of popular spell-binding. Their extravagant claims have been largely made for them. If there is a case against them, it is that they have lent themselves rather weakly to the oracular pretence. For if there is one thing clearly apparent in this demonstration, it is the fact of the gulf that exists between the natural scientist, the inductive research specialist and what may be called the prophet—or would seer be a more acceptable term? This piece of vital wisdom was clearly recognised by our forbears, and established in the terse observation that to the shoemaker there is nothing like leather, coupled with the injunction to the shoemaker himself to stick to his last; which in turn has been brought up to date in the current wise-crack which defines the specialist as one who learns more and more about less and less until he know everything about nothing. It is a sad reflection, however, that just at this crucial point in world affairs our ancestors' cynical wisdom should appear to be deserting us, and we find ourselves being impelled by some invisible pressure, that is still an accepted mystery to the great majority, to hand over the destinies of the universe into the hands of the physics specialist, along with the atom-bomb of his own devising for a sanction.

Mysteries exist only to be de-bunked. Are there signs that the natural scientist is waking up to the inherent danger of a civilisation given over to the unrestrained worship of so-called "Science," which is no more than the natural activity of the technological specialist who, as a result of an utterly unbalanced education, knows of nothing better?

(Concluded.)

† *Economic Democracy*, p. 8.