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354

Present day literature of despair, 1929.

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"PRESENT DAY LITERATURE OF DESPAIR."

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER.

THE TEMPLE, SUNDAY MORNING

DECEMBER 22, 1929, CLEVELAND.

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It might come as a surprise to those who are not working in the field that the prevailing intellectual mood our age is steadily coming to be pessimistic. By that I do not mean to imply that the average man today is becoming a pessimist. The average man carries on the business of life, is too absorbed in the business of living, to be much concerned about intellectual moods. He is happy when he gains his ends, and he is unhappy when he does not gain them. He has his measure of joy and sorrow in life and makes the best of them.

There are, of course, individuals who are moody and morose, and that is due, in the main, to psychological and physiological conditions. That is not the result of any profound reflection from the vanities of life. But an age can have a mood just like an individual, and that mood reflects itself in its art and its literature, in the life attitudes of its culture and intellectual people. In the long run it is possible that this mood will percolate down to the lower reaches of the masses, but it first manifests itself in the upper regions among those classes of leisured or intellectual people who have acquired the things that they want in life, and now ask themselves the question: what next?

If you would ask what ought to be the mood of this age, you would, I am sure, say that it ought to be

✓ triumphantly optimistic, and on the basis of service, of achievements, the basis of the looks of things, you would be entirely justified in your answer; for this age has been a marvelous one as regards inventions and discovery. The human race has conquered by land and sea and in the air. Almost daily new miracles are announced in ten thousand scientific laboratories of the world. Man has devised the cunning machine to do his work for him, wealth is being increased at an amazing rate, and more and more people are coming to share in the good things of life. Laws have been liberalized, government has been democratized, education has been to a degree universalized, health has been protected and life has been prolonged. Surely, all this ought to induce in our age a sense of buoyancy and hopefulness and exhilaration; and this was the mood of the nineteenth century. But strangely enough it is not the intellectual mood of the twentieth century.

I have just finished reading a book called "The Modern Temper," by Joseph Wood Krutch. This book is an exposition,--and to my mind, a fair exposition,--of what is going on in the minds of many thinking people today, of people who have surveyed the whole field and who have struck a balance, as it were, and who have found civilization bankrupt. How widespread this mood is, as portrayed in this book, I cannot say, but it is clear that it is not

an isolated mood nor an uninformed one. It is not the mood of a few sophisticates, a few cranks. It may be said to be the present day of reaction against the excessive optimism of the last few generations which the first triumphant science induced in the minds of the people.

In those days, you will recall, men confidently believed that science would be a universal nostrum, that science would solve all human problems, and the more knowledge science brought to men, and the more power science gave to men to master the forces of nature, the happier men would become and the nobler. This was the intoxicating mood of extreme hopefulness in the last few scientific generations, but seemingly the fumes of this intoxication are beginning to evaporate and man is awakening to a cold, sober world of reality in which he realizes that while science has certainly remade his world, it has quite as certainly not made his world happier or nobler.

Science has not failed in any of its promises as regards material advance; in fact, the achievements have exceeded the most daring of its prophecies. The whole material life of man has been revolutionized. More progress has been made in the fields of biology and chemistry and physics and engineering and medicine and invention in the years in the one century between 1830 and 1930 than in the twenty preceding centuries.

But when man comes to take stock of what all this has done for man and to man, when man comes to evaluate all this and ask himself just what is meant in terms of the enrichment of man's spiritual life, in terms of giving man a greater sense of self-esteem and dignity, in terms of adjusting man more happily to the facts of existence, these men,--whose representative and spokesman this one author of many is,--these men are forced to the conclusion that science has led man to the great Serbonian bog of despair.

"Knowledge has marched on, and this knowledge has brought with it that increased capacity to control the accidents of our lives. Ingenuity has devised subtler instruments to investigate the secrets of nature, to direct forces, than any he dreamt of. Already we know more and can do more in certain directions than he (he is speaking here of Huxley) would have supposed possible for a generation as close as ours to his own; and yet in spite of so much success we are aware of a certain disappointment and of a hope less eager than his, as if our victories were somehow barren, and as though the most essential things were eluding us. We do not, we cannot, actually doubt even the most fantastic of verities which the scientist announces, since his boasted power to penetrate and control upon the basis of his hypothesis has been too often vindicated to permit of

cynicism; and when he tells us that soon we shall be doing this or that, we know from experience that we had best believe him; yet our belief is without enthusiasm, even perhaps a little perfunctory or impatient, because all his successes seem to achieve and to promise less than they once did.

"A wider and wider experience with invention has convinced the more thoughtful that a man is not, as once was said, twice as happy when moving at the rate of fifty miles an hour as he would be if he were proceeding at only half that speed; and we no longer believe that the millennium presents a mere problem in engineering. Science has always promised two things not necessarily related,--an increase, first, in our powers, second, in our happiness and wisdom, and we have come to realize that it is the first and less important of the two promises which it has kept most abundantly."

For you see, according to these writers, science in giving us many valuable things has also deprived us of a few even more valuable. Science did not and could not stop at the mere physical domain of discovery and invention. The whole of the scientific advance of the last century was made possible by the new scientific method, a new method of seeking truth, of going to the roots of things, of refusing to be sidetracked by opinion and hearsay and tradition.

Now this scientific method was destined to be applied not only to the physical outer world of man but to the inner world of man just as well,--to his mind, his soul, his moral value, his opinion, his ethics, his religion. Thus art, morality, religion came to be subjected to the same rigid, acid critique of the scientific method. And many of the most cherished--and up to that time regarded as the most solid--realities of human life,--reason, thought, love, morality, God,--were, so to speak, X-rayed by science. As a result of the fact that not only was the body of man dissipated but his soul as well, his value, the whole world of man came to be tumbling down in ruin over him. For according to these men - and they are not few in number - the more we come to know about the universe, the less we are likely to feel at home in it.

We used to believe that knowledge of the world would give us a sense of power; instead, knowledge of the world is giving us a sense of impotence and feebleness. The scientist, these people maintain, has discovered that the world, the universe, has in it no intelligence, no purpose, no will, and that therefore man has no way of identifying himself with this universe about him. There is no correspondence between man's inner life and the outer life of the universe; therefore man's life can have neither meaning nor justification in

terms of the universe. Man is therefore alone, lost upon a little planet swinging through these infinite waste spaces of the universe, a planet which is doomed to ultimate extinction in darkness and in eternal ice.

Before the coming of science, before the scientific era, man felt supremely important, man felt great, man believed that he belonged in a superior way in this universe, and in fact, he believed that the whole universe was built around him, that he was the crown,--the whole universe was a stage set and built expressly for man upon which to play the great drama of his life; and there was grandeur and nobility to such a conception.

But now, science, according to these people, has demonstrated that man is not even a humble scene shifter in this universe; that he is simply a biologic incident,--just an incident in this endless process of blind energy in eternal agitation; that man is only a physiologic process having only a physiologic meaning.

Now see what this does to man in terms of his ideas about himself. The psalmist would say, "Thou hast made me just a little lower than God." But there being no God, only clods of agitated matter, then man is just a little lower than that. With the dwindling of God man also dwindled. When the glory of God disappears, there also goes, according to this author, the glory of man.

Thus science has humbled man. It has increased his knowledge but destroyed his confidence; and it has paralyzed his will for any great creative effort, because in order to create mightily an age must have confidence in the dignity of human life, must have respect for the purposefulness of human ideas and human emotion, must believe in the amplitude, in the beauty, in the nobility of human life,--and that science seemingly has destroyed.

Science in its laboratory has found no trace of the human soul, according to these men,--only a cognition of instincts and aptitudes and complexes and impulses. Science has been able in its sociological investigations to find no trace of morality,--only of shifting customs and morals. Science has taken this mighty social value which we call love, which in the past gave rise to so much of romance and beauty and art and poetry, and after analyzing it in the laboratory clinically, as it were, returned it with the label, "Just another physiologic urge, just another biologic instinct."

Thus all along the line science, according to these people, has been devaluating, depreciating the world of human values, stripping it of its mystery, of its meaning, of its grandeur, and in return for this science has given us a cupboardful of toys,--radios and cinemas and telephone and airplanes, to play with and

amuse ourselves. And this low estimate which scientific thought has come to place upon man's role in the universe, his emotions, is already being reflected in our art and in our literature. In the writings of the so-called "smart set," which make us write of things which heretofore have been looked upon as sanctities of life; in the increasing cynicism with which moral values are being treated, and superciliousness; in this flood of cheap sex plays and novels which has inundated our age, one finds evidence not of a corruption but of a loss of faith in and respect for the nobility of human life. Because when love, for example, becomes only a physiologic urge, then it ceases to function as a motive for art; then it becomes a subject for study in the clinic, in the scientist's laboratory, and a subject of ribaldry in the smoking room. It can no longer serve as a high motive or theme in any great artistic creation.

This being the case, according to our writer, modern civilization is doomed to decay; in fact, every civilization is doomed to decay as soon as it becomes sufficiently enlightened to realize the despair to which science leads human beings. The future belongs to a new race of barbarians, to people who are too absorbed in living to think much about thought and reflection and ideas, and that race of barbarians, virile and vigorous, will carry on the work of the world until it too becomes

debilitated and enfeebled by culture and civilization and science. As far as we are concerned, our prospect is gloomy, indeed. Ours is a lost cause, according to the writer, and the theme of life is therefore one of utter dejection and despair.

A book like this is well worth reading. It is an antidote to a good number of things,--a corrective. I believe that the mood reflected in it,--and of other books of which I would have spoken this morning had I the time,--in spite of the fact the mood is a growing and gathering one today, is only a passing one; for it is, when all is said and done, the result of undigested knowledge. It is a mental disturbance caused by undigested knowledge. It is based on too hasty and peremptory an interpretation of what scientific facts really seem to imply.

New science may vouch for its fact; it will not vouch for the inferences drawn from such fact. New science, new knowledge, may alter both the facts and the conclusions drawn from them. People are prone to forget that, after all, science is at the beginning of things, that it has not yet said the last word on anything, and the real scientist would be the first one to acknowledge this fact. Therefore to draw universal conclusions about the ultimate facts of existence on the basis of that modicum of scientific knowledge which is already in hand

is unwarranted and is doomed to lead to such hasty and depressing conclusions.

People are very much in haste to draw conclusions from an insufficient number of facts. One can readily understand that tendency. You see, every age has just a certain number of years to live,--forty, fifty, sixty years, and then it ends; and during those years it has to build for itself a system of thought that will satisfy its life; but, unfortunately, at any given generation not all the facts are in,--the returns are not all in, and won't be for millions of years to come, consequently any worldwide conclusions as regards the ultimate facts of existence based on incomplete returns must of necessity be awry, distorted and crude.

You may recall the hasty conclusions that men drew from the theory of evolution when it was first propounded. Men were dumbfounded and demoralized. Why they had always been taught to believe that man was created by a fiat of Divinity as a perfect man, and here this scientific truth proclaims that man is a descendent from very low forms of life,--a cousin to the ape. That meant--and the age was quick to draw conclusions--that human life was cheap and valueless, that there was no sense in struggle and effort, and as a result a wave of suicide swept over Europe. But the second generation, which had time to digest a bit this theory of evolution, to study it

a bit, was able to put a totally different interpretation on it. It is true that man is descended from lower forms of life, and that man has evolved out of lower conditions of being. But what of it? Isn't the mere fact that he has done that, that he has been able to rise through successive stages of evolution from the ape, say, from the jungle beast, to become a Plato, a Sophocles, a Shakespeare, a Newton,--isn't this fact one of the most magnificent tributes to the worthwhileness and to the beauty of human life?

And so this very theory of evolution, which was at first a source of despair, became the source of a new moral idealism in Western civilization. My point to this is an education of how scientific fact may be variously interpreted as the age has a chance to digest the fact a little more.

The surest cure for this kind of pessimism which is now pervading the ranks of our intellectuals, I believe is a searching critique of science itself. We must now apply the scientific method to science,--to question its credentials and to define its scope and its limitation, and that task has now been begun; and the next generation may see itself emancipated from the absolute tyranny of the so-called scientific method.

In the first place, it is being demonstrated more and more that science itself is very human and faulty;

that it does not present us with objective truth but only with human truth; that at the basis of it are just as many fictions and postulates and customs as at the basis of religion or of ethics or of art; but when science speaks of reality, when science says that it deals with reality, actually it only deals with a humanist reality, for everything that science knows comes to it percolated through man, through his mind first.

The objective truth of which science has boasted is being seriously questioned. And in the second place, we shall begin to question more and more whether the scientific apparatus which has been so helpful in discovering facts in the material world is adequate to study the human world; whether there is such a thing as a law of continuity between the world of matter and the world of life. That hasn't at all been demonstrated. Science has not demonstrated how dead matter becomes life, and how life becomes consciousness, and how consciousness becomes thought. And when it says that it has, it is drawing upon a credit to which there are no deposits in the bank of human knowledge of ascertained facts.

We shall perhaps learn in the next generation that we require a totally different approach to the study of life and to the study of matter,--certainly to the study of human life; for we human beings are not just bundles of so many separate and unrelated nerves or

muscles or glands. We live in our humanity; we are total beings in action, not dissected or unrelated biologic fragments. We are life in full bloom, in full action, not chemistry; and any attempt to reduce this complex, mysterious thing we call life, thought, to chemistry, is unwarranted and doomed to preposterous conclusion.

Science has not demonstrated, I maintain, in the very nature of its technique, that there is no intelligence or mind or wisdom in the universe; for to do that science would first have to read out of the universe man's mind and man's thought and man's wisdom. For if they exist in man they are part of the scheme of creation, of which man is a part. To read personality out of the universe science would first have to deny human personality.

A searching critique of science in the next generation will probably reveal that there is a whole realm of human values which science cannot penetrate, and which is legitimately the field of philosophy, of speculation, of religion, and that it is in this field where the human race has evolved through the centuries, a group of tremendous convictions touching life and destiny which are not controverted by any known facts, and which have helped to enrich and ennoble human life, given it meaning, grandeur, sublimity. And it is, I take it, the prime function of religion at all times to keep

before the human race this set of functions,--call it intuition, call it postulates, call it dogmas, if you will,--to keep before the human race, especially in its period of confusion--and ours is such a period today--to keep before the eyes of the race steadily and unfalteringly these tremendous human convictions which alone make life livable, which alone can save mankind from the bog of despair and pessimism to which undigested knowledge and hastily interpreted facts are doomed to lead.

Such, to my mind, is the chief function of religion today,--to stay put; not to trail science, not to hang onto its coat tails, not to try to justify itself on the basis of what this scientist or that scientist has said, not to be timid or apologetic, but courageously on the strength of its accumulated wisdom of centuries, on the strength of its knowledge of the heart of man, of his life, of his needs, of his perplexity; on the strength of the help and courage which it has given mankind in the past, and on the strength that none of its tremendous dogmas have been disproved by science, to proclaim in this age of doubt and confusion and shifting standards and blind gropings, to proclaim clearly and boldly the eternal verities of religion,--God the good, man the child of God's creation, moving to some ultimate end; all things integrated in one supreme and good purpose. And by so doing our age will be helped to tide over its

period of confusion, and perhaps in the next generation, or the next generation, science will catch up with religion and prove, if possible, at least some of the ideas which religion intuitively grasped centuries ago and gave to mankind as a healing balm, a guide and a torch to help him through life.

Science alone, my friends, will always and must always lead man to a mood of "Vanity of vanities, all is vanities." There is no escape from it. It is only faith which sublimates life; it is only faith which supplements knowledge, that can make man feel at home and at peace in this universe.



1. It might come as a surprise - I do not mean to imply - average man carries on - He is happy.
2. But an age - reflected - percolate.
3. If you were asked what the word ought - Conquest - new miracles - cunningly - wealth - laws - Surely all this ought - exhilaration - 19C. has 20.
4. Just finished reading "The Modern Temper" - "Joseph Wood Krutch" - exposition of what goes on in mind - How widespread - Reaction - In these days men confidently believed - nostrum - solve - the more Science - nobler & happier - Intoxication - Sc. has certainly re-made - Sc. has not failed - Excelled - revolutionized. More progress bet. 1830-1930 - But when men talk & think - (Just)
5. In Sc. is giving us many valuable things - Sc. did not stop - Sc. Method - inner life - Art, ethics, religion - not only only dissected - Prime realities - & razed - World tumbled -
6. For the more we know abt. Universe - the less at home - no intelligence - indifferent - no correspondence - man alone -
(a) Before - man felt important - stage incident - a phys. process

(b) Pralust could say 20000 - "In with
drumming of feet -

(c) Thus Sc. humbled man. Increased his
knowledge - destroyed confidence. Enfeebled -
In to create - conceptions, human dignity -
importance of human emotions, vision of the
amplified.

7) Sc. has found us face in latrality - soul -
morality - force - labelled -

8) Thus all along live - devaluated - strip
of mystery - trivial - to return
cupboard full of radio -
two estimates - reflected in the art that.

9) This being the case, modern Ant. doomed
to decay - destroyed by Sc - all embodied.
cultures doomed - Future belongs -
- "Ours is a lost cause" - Ubspari.

1. It might come as a surprise to those not working in the field that the prevailing intell. mood of our age is steadily becoming more and more pessimistic. I do not mean to imply that the average man in the street is becoming a pessimist. The average man ^{of every age} ~~always~~ carries on as best as he may, too engrossed in the business of living to worry much about cultural moods or metaphys. speculations. He is happy when he achieves his ends. He is unhappy when he fails to achieve them. He has his measure of joys and sorrows and makes the best of them. He may be a moral and moral person, but that is due to ^{his} ~~his~~ not to ^{any} ~~any~~ ^{philosoph.} reflections on the vacuity of life ^{but to some inherent} ~~but to some~~ psych. or physiological conditions. Some people are temperamentally optimistic - others pessimistic.

2. But an eye may have it record also. and that mood is reflected in its art & literature and in the life-attitudes of its thoughtful & intellectual men & women. In the long run that mood ~~will~~ may percolate down to the masses, but it first manifests itself in the ~~among~~ ^{the} educated classes who have leisure for reflection - ~~it is~~ those people who having acquired all the material things which they wanted - come to ask themselves - What next?

3. If you were asked off-hand what the record of this age ought to be you would, I am sure reply that it ought to be triumphantly optimistic. And you would, on the face of things, be justified in your answer - we live in an age of marvell. invent. and discoveries. The brightest hopes of the early 19c. 12. have been outdistanced. We have conquered on land and sea & in the air. New miracles are achieved almost daily in our laboratories. Myriads hasten curiously

Sc. has not failed & any & it material promise.
In fact it fulfilled its most daring prophecies.
Achievement ^{actually} ~~can be~~ of prophecy. It
has completely revolutionized the material
world & man as well as his intellectual.
New progress has been made in the fields of
biology, chemistry, physics, medicine, engineering,
invention ^{in the century} from 1850- to 1930 than in the two preceding
centuries. (p. 60) But when men take stock of what
all this has done for man, & to man, when men
set out to ascertain the actual "human" worth
in terms of increased of satisfactions in terms
of higher sense of self esteem and dignity, in
terms of happier adjustments to the fact of
existence - they - many of them - are driven to
despair (p. 60-61)

5. For Sc. in giving us many valuable things, has
deprived us, then maintains, of some things even
more valuable - The Sc. method invaded the
~~and~~ For Sc. did not stop at mere phys. discovery
and invention. These discover. was made possible
by the Sc. method of cold, objective analysis, of
brushing aside opinion and tradition & going to
the roots of things. This Sc. method was destined
to be applied also to the inner life, man's
his mind, his ~~judgments~~ ^{values} ~~convictions~~, his ^{values}
and his religious convictions. Thus art, ethics,
religion were subjected to same ruthless in-
quiry. Nothing was spared. Not only the human
body was dissected, but also the human soul.
And the unquestioned ~~human~~ prime realities
of human life, Reason, Thought, Will, Force,
virtue, God Himself - were Sc. X-rayed - and
it was - And behold - as a result -

man's whole mind & sp. came humbly low
upon him.

6. To, then maintain, that the more we learn about the laws
of the universe, the less we ^{can} feel at home in it. ~~There~~
universe is so completely indifferent to our hopes,
needs & desires. There is no cosmic justice at all
but our inner world & the ~~outer~~ outer world.
Sc. has not been able to discover any intelligence
in the mind in the universe - with which man
could identify himself. To us it seems incompre-
hensible. ~~There can be no~~ ^{not by any rational justification of life} Man is alone, lost on a small planet,
surging amidst ^{ever greater} ~~space~~ & destined to alti-
mate darkness & eternal ice. Before the To. ap-
Man felt important - proud in his high
estate - the center of the universe. The creation
& creation - the world was a vast stage - ~~upon~~
~~where~~ ^{where} purposely built & set for ^{the human} ~~man~~ to play
out ~~his~~ ^{this} great drama of life. Sc. has shown
that man is not even a ^{human} ~~person~~ - chapter. He
is just an incident in an endless, blind
process of ~~unending~~ ^{unending} energy in purposeless opto-
tion. "Living is only a phys. process with only a phys. meaning".

⑦ The To. could say ~~nothing~~ ^{nothing} but only words of
this being in fact - ~~that~~ ^{but} only words of
matter in motion, man is a little less than
that. For with the dissolving of fact, man also
dissolves. When the play of fact goes - so goes
also the play of man".

8) Thus Sc. has humbled man. It has in-
creased his knowledge but destroyed his confidence.
Roughed man, these mighty illusions which
gave meaning & grandeur to life. This ~~is~~
inferable ^{paralyzes his spirit} ~~man~~ ^{to create greatly}

an age must have a conception of human
dignity, the importance of human passions,
a vision of the amplitude of human life."

7. Sc. has found no trace in the laboratory,
the human soul - only a congeries of impulses,
instincts, complexes & what-not. Sc. has
found no trace of morality in the ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~the~~
study of sociology - only shifting customs
and mores - Sc. has taken note of the
most sacred & glorious social values -
^{- which his scientific method & technique, and partly, aptly}
and after, analyzing them, returned at
them labeled just another physiological
stage - a biologic incident ~~and~~

8. Thus all along the line Sc. has devaluated
& depreciated the world of human man -
stript it, its mystery, its meaning and
its splendor ^{made human civilization trivial, & bare, & devoid of} and in return has
given us a corpse-wad - full, robes,
cinemas, telephones and airplanes -
and that play ~~things~~ with our dearest in-
terests -

9. ~~For that~~ This being the case - concludes our author
and in so doing voices the sentiments of a growing
class of men, devotees of Sc. but sadly disillusioned
by it with it - Modern civilization faces
decay - doomed thereto ~~not~~ by the very science
which was to advance it unambiguously. All
Sc. enlightened peoples are doomed to such
decay. Only the naive, the people who are too

"absorbed in living to feel the need for that" can
carry on ^{onward} the work; delegation until such
time as they are pure as debilitated by
reflection ^{of deepening} ~~and of~~ which is pure ~~reflex~~
men. The future belongs to a new race
of barbarians - perhaps the Chinese, perhaps
the Persians - as for us - "Ours is a lost
cause".

10. We believe that this ^{thesis is now proving & so then} ~~is~~ is a passing record.
It is the result of untested Sc. knowledge.
It is based on a few hasty & preliminary interpretations
of Sc. ~~conferences~~ facts. Sc. may much for the fact.
It does not vouch for the inferences drawn
from them. Forward knowledge may alter
both facts and inferences. Sc. has not yet
spoken the last word on anything. The real
Sc. would be the first to acknowledge this.
It is too early in the day to draw universal
conclusions touching the ultimate fact
existence from anything that Sc. has dis-
covered.

① Men are very hasty - Many only a few years
old, each gen. want to elaborate a complete system
(that). But the returns are not all in yet to
unravel such systems - Ulanin

② The surest cure for such permeation is
a searching critique of Sc. - a Sc. investigation
of its premises & its limitations. This has
already begun -

③ On the one hand - Sc. itself not objective
truth - but human - distorts facts

Dr. deals with reality, but how does he
know what is Reality - when all things
have to precede the man, the
"humanized" before it can ever succeed
in it -

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④ On the other hand - (Sc. ~~investigates~~ apparatuses adequate
for investigation; matter, but not of life.
(The ^{biologist} ~~life~~ requires quite a diff. approach than
that; the yard-sticks & test-tubes; the physicist
& chemist. There is no demonstrated link
continuity but, material world + human
life. Sc. has not demonstrated how
dead matter becomes life, & how life be-
comes thought. Where lies the humanity
not in a world of electrons. We humans
are total beings in action, not dissected
and separated biol. fragments. We are
life in full action, not chemistry. Sc.
has failed utterly to explain life or
to account for it.

⑤ Sc. has not demonstrated that there is no
intelligence or mind in the universe. It would
just have to show the presence now in
man. For if it is in man, it is in the
universe, & creation of which man is a
part.

⑥ There is a whole realm, human that
speculation which rightly do not be-
long to Sc. but to phil. & religion -
- There are traces of human exp. & the presence
& deduction the science has revealed certain
connections, which, unacknowledged by human
phil., have helped scientists to perfect the

⑦ Role of Religion - to do what science
& comprehension

1. In spite vast increase in Science - swept -
2. Seemingly optimism 19C - was - Early
Victories - glow - confidently moving
3. Then came World War - upheaval - defeated
left our generation - French Rev -
"Weltismus" - Byronic - Le Mal du Siècle
Goethe's "Werther" - Prometheus
4. Such a literature is now - In fact -
"Sp. + intell. prosperity"
5. Typical of these - "Oswald Spengler" who
began -
(1) Is the most stupendous -
(2) Koheleth - 2300 - 2700 -

1. In spite of vast increase in Science, ~~comforts~~ improved standard of living for masses - extension of Educat. opportunities - Spread of democ. institutions - there has swept over the intell. circles world, W. Eur. Amer. a wave of Pessimism.

2. Seemingly the optimism of most of 19c and first decade + 1/2 of 20c. came to an end with World War - The ^{equally important} ~~great~~ ^{standards} ~~victories~~ of Sc. in the realm of Physics, chemistry, medicine, the ^{newly discovered} ~~newly~~ ^{united} ~~united~~ ^{biology} and geology - gave the people of W. world a glow of optimism. The key note was continued & uninterrupted progress - to the far off distant future - then came confidently moving on the vestibles hid which would carry them to increased knowledge and consequently to increased happiness.

3. And then came the World War - and all is changed. The vast intell. turmoil, the upheaval shook the foundations, this optimism - The departed promises of 20c. civilization - the terrible disillusionment with a humanity that could revert over night to barbarism - and the unrealized objectives, the war - democracy - left our generation in the same mood of confusion & despair in which the Gen. following the French Rev. war left. You will recall the "Weltschmerz" word in Germany @ close, 18th May, 19c -

ול 23 ר' לילך האם זה חזק פול. כמ היה אסלום
ולו היה אסלום

~~(2) Manhood is an experience - regional~~

(3) Human hist. is record not of a single culture which began in jungle, & continues in unbroken progress to this day - but a series of cultures.

(4) Each culture is an organism - possessing a def. structure and def. org. limitations. Each one passes thru a def. cycle of infancy, maturity, old age & decay - Spring, Summer, Autumn & Winter.

(5) A culture is like a man - an animal of free - subject to growth & decay - Do all - Man.

→ (6) Intro I

(7) Our own W. Europ. culture began at about 1000 A.D. - awakening time - passed into Ren. era - time of awakening of life - which closed in the middle of 16c - Entered Autumn period of rationalism which closed with Kant & Fr. Rev. - To-day we are in the winter of this cycle, culture characterized - My City Civilization - Un-religious, unphilosophical, Sp. Every day. Extinct - Recurrent 12-13c. & Rena -

unimpaired, practical, decadent -

→ (8) Intro II

(9) Shewell claims that his view is not pernicious - That may be - It is certainly not of the essence of optimism - that of which led us to assume that our culture was many as soon - to our dread of being left by sp. intellect. achievement and that our present age was the best of all ages.

(10) What is involved here is the Dogma of Progress - Sp. may be right in his cycle theory - yet man is free to hope to every succeeding cycle adds something to store of man's assets - some impermanent - some newer weight - and that, in this sense, - the cumulative achievement of successive cultures - may do progress uninterruptedly

(11) But this is Faith - without it - Defeat Science without Faith is sterile -

(12) Straw-breakers. -

13- Charles Richet - "The Impotent Man" - surveys human life from another angle - the physiologic and strictly empirical and arrives at an even sadder summary.

→ (1) Juste book p. 18.

(2) There is no answer to this except the answer of Religion - "There is God" - denounced thereby - ~~that~~ It is not the answer - It alone - value - dogma -

14- Joseph Wood Krutch - "The Modern Temper"

(1) ~~brings~~ the Tales story of our modern civilization & finds it bankrupt -

(2) Science has not failed, its promises - exceeded its most daring prophecies - but in terms of what it has done for man's spiritual life - enrichment - peace renewal self-esteem - depression - happiness - failed miserably.

→ (3) Juste III.

(4) According to Krutch sc. has revealed that universe has no

intelligence - purpose - will - Human values
not related to comm. values -

(5) Man was once infantant. His
emotions, his thoughts, his aspirations his
deeds had an Epic quality Tragic
incident and his intell. activities,
are "fuss & fury signifying nothing"

(6) Science has humbled man - destroyed
his confidence, paralysed his will for
great creative effort - (for such can only
be based on respect for self)

(7) Science ~~can~~ has given us no
meaning, the soul (only a complex of
instincts, aptitudes, complex, & impulses),
no basis for morality (only mores)
no sublimation of force (which is put
not use to restrain & Act) only a
physiological urge

(8) And a tragedy - is no compensation

(9) Decay - Every civil. doomed to
decay as soon as it becomes sufficiently
enlightened - Future belongs to new
race of barbarians - Too busy

(10) Quote IV

(11) But Mr. Kutch is not a Scientist
only a careless misrepresenter of Science

(12) Science has not demonstrated

(a) life at bottom physical

(b) explained life & consciousness

(c) Man mere clay - external forces -
automaton - external stimuli

(d) nothing is qualitative

(e) Quite the contrary - Hypothesis of
a Creative intelligence

(f) Man more than bio-chem. compound

- Origin of order - Order in nature -
direct action - purposeful structure

self appearance - moral truth

freedom - factor in his

own evolution —

15. Walter Lippman "A Preface to Morals"

(1) Not a Perennialist - Stoic - but
Stoicism, leads to cynicism, then to
Despair.

(2) Quote IV p. 329.

(3) But - cavechery -

(4) life not a game -

(S) Role, Religion - נדב דאק / 181 נ



It is true that the 19th Century A. D. seems to us infinitely fuller and more important than, say the 19th Century B. C.; but the moon, too, seems to us bigger than Jupiter or Saturn. The physicist has long ago freed himself from prepossessions as to relative distance, the historian not so.

- p. 94

Cycles
I.
Every culture passes through the age-phases of the individual man. Each has its childhood, youth, manhood and old age. It is a young and trembling soul, heavy with misgivings, that reveals itself in the morning of Romanesque and Gothic. ~~It fills the cathedral of Bishop Bernward. The spring wind blows over it. "In the world of the old German architecture," says Goethe, "one sees the blossoming of an extraordinary state. Anyone immediately confronted with such a blossoming can do no more than wonder; but one who can see into the secret inner life of the plant and its rain of forces, who can observe how the bud expands, little by little, sees the thing with quite other eyes and knows what he is seeing."~~ Childhood speaks to us also - and in the same tones - out of early Hellenic Doric, out of early-Christian (which is really Early Arabian) art, and out of the works of the Old Kingdom in Egypt that began with the Fourth Dynasty. ~~There a mythic world-consciousness is fighting like a harassed debtor against all the dark and daemonic in itself and in Nature, while slowly ripening itself for the pure, day-bright expression of the existence that it will at last achieve and know.~~ The more nearly a Culture approaches the noon culmination of its being, the more virile, austere, controlled, intense the form-language it has secured for itself, the more assured its sense of its own power, the clearer its lineaments. In the spring all this had still been dim and confused, tentative, filled with childish yearning and fears ~~- witness the ornament of Romanesque-Gothic church porches of Saxony and southern France, the early Christian catacombs, the Dipylon vases.~~ But there is now the full consciousness of ripened creative power ~~- that we see in the time of the early Middle Kingdom of Egypt, in the Athens of the Pisistratidae, in the age of Justinian, in that of the Counter-Reformation, and we find every individual trait of expression deliberate, strict, measured, marvellous in its ease and self-confidence. And we find, too, that everywhere, at moments, the coming fulfilment suggested itself, in such moments were created the head of Amenemhet III (the so-called "Hyksos Sphinx" of Tanis,) the domes of Hagia Sophia, the paintings of Titian.~~ Still later, tender to the point of fragility, fragrant with the sweetness of late October days, come the Chidian Aphrodite and the Hall of the Maidens in the Erechtheum, the arabesques on Saracen horseshow-arches, the Zwinger of Dresden, Watteau, Mozart. At last, in the grey dawn of Civilization, the fire in the Soul dies down. The dwindling powers rise to one more, half-successful, effort of creation, and produce the Classicism that is common to all dying Cultures. The soul thinks once again, and in Romanticism looks back piteously to its childhood; then finally, weary, reluctant, cold, it loses its desire to be, and, as in Imperial Rome, wishes itself out of the overlong daylight and back in the darkness of

protomysticism, in the womb of the mother, in the grave. ~~The~~
~~spell of a "second religiousness" comes upon it, and Late Classical~~
~~man turns to the practice of the cults of Mithras, of Isis, of the~~
~~Sun - those very cults into which a soul just born in the East has~~
~~been pouring a new wine of dreams and fears and loneliness.~~

p 107-8
"The Decline of the West"
By Oswald Spengler



limits
The future of the West is not a limitless tending upwards and onwards for all time towards our present ideals, but a single phenomenon of history, strictly limited and defined as to form and duration, which covers a few centuries and can be viewed and, in essentials, calculated from available precedents.

Up to now everyone has been at liberty to hope what he pleased about the future. Where there are no facts, sentiment rules. But henceforward it will be every man's business to inform himself of what can happen and therefore of what with the unalterable necessity of destiny and irrespective of personal ideals, hopes or desires, will happen. When we use the risky word "freedom" we shall mean freedom to do, not this or that, but the necessary-or nothing. The feeling that this is "just as it should be" is the hall-mark of the man of fact. To lament it and blame it is not to alter it. To birth belongs-death, to youth-age, to life generally its form and its allotted span.

It will no doubt be objected that such a world-outlook, which in giving this certainty as to the outlines and tendency of the future cuts off all far-reaching hopes, would be unhealthy for all and fatal for many, once it ceased to be a mere theory and was adopted as a practical scheme of life by the group of personalities effectively moulding the future.

Such is not my opinion. We are civilized, not Gothic or Rococō, people; we have to reckon with the hard cold facts of a late life, to which the parallel is to be found not in Pericles's Athens but in Caesar's Rome. Of great painting or great music there can no longer be, for Western people, any question. Their architectural possibilities have been exhausted these hundred years. Only extensive possibilities are left to them. Yet, for a sound and vigorous generation that is filled with unlimited hopes, I fail to see that it is any disadvantage to discover betimes that some of these hopes must come to nothing. And if the hopes thus doomed should be those most dear, well, a man who is worth anything will not be dismayed.....

The lesson, I think would be of benefit to the coming generations, as showing them what is possible - and therefore necessary - and what is excluded from the inward potentialities of their time. Hitherto an incredible total of intellect and power has been squandered in false directions.. The West-European, however historically he may think and feel, ~~at~~ at a certain stage of life invariably uncertain of his own direction; he gropes and feels his way and, if unlucky in environment, he loses it. But now at last the work of centuries enables him to view the disposition of his own life in relation to the general culture-scheme and to test his own powers and purposes. And I can only hope that men of the new generation may be moved by this book to devote themselves to technics instead of lyrics, the sea instead of the paint-brush, and politics instead of epistemology. Better they could not do.

- P. 39-40-41

And I maintain that today many an inventor, many a diplomat, many a financier is a sounder philosopher than all those who practice the dull craft of experimental psychology....

It is a very grave question whether this stage has or has not set in for us already.

- P. 44

Disappointment
with Science

From "The Modern Temper"
by Joseph Wood Krutch

Huxley

Knowledge has marched on ~~more rapidly perhaps than he hopes~~ - and this knowledge has brought with it that increased capacity to control the accidents of our lives which he predicted. Ingenuity has devised subtler instruments to investigate the secrets of Nature and to direct her forces than any he dreamed of; already we know more and can do more in certain directions than he would have supposed possible for a generation as close as ours is to his own; and yet, in spite of so much success, we are aware of a certain disappointment and of a hope less eager than his, as though our victories were somehow barren and as though the most essential things were eluding us. We do not, we cannot, actually doubt even the most fantastic of the verities which the scientist announces, since his boasted power to foretell and control upon the basis of his hypotheses has been too often vindicated to permit a skepticism, and when he tells us that soon we shall be doing this or that we know from experience that we had best believe him. Yet our belief is without enthusiasm - even, perhaps a little perfunctory or impatient - because all his successes seem to achieve and to promise less than once they did.

- - P. 60.

A wider and wider experience with inventions has, however, convinced the more thoughtful that a man is not, as once was said, twice as happy when moving at the rate of fifty miles an hour as he would be if he were proceeding at only half that speed, and we no longer believe that the millennium presents merely a problem in engineering. Science has always promised two things not necessarily related - an increase first in our powers, second in our happiness or wisdom, and we have come to realize that it is the first and less important of the two promises which it has kept most abundantly.

- - p. 61

Loss of Dignity

Certain ages and simple people have conceived of the action which passes upon the stage of the universe as of something in the nature of a Divine Comedy, as something, that is to say, which will reach its end with the words "and they lived happily every after." Others, less naive and therefore more aware of those maladjustments whose reality, at least as far as outward events are concerned, they could not escape, have imposed upon it another artistic form and called it a Divine Tragedy, accepting its catastrophe as we accept the catastrophe of an Othello, because of its grandeur. But a Tragedy, Divine or otherwise, must, it may again be repeated, have a hero, and from the universe as we see it both the Glory of God and the Glory of Man have departed. Our cosmos may be farcical or it may be pathetic but it has not the dignity of tragedy and we cannot accept it as such.

- P. 141

Walter Lippman

Believes that man can enjoy his world even if he
- saw it as farce -

From "The Modern Temper"
by Joseph Wood Krutch

Leaving the future to those who have faith in it, we may survey our world and, if we bear in mind the facts just stated, we may permit ourselves to exclaim, a little rhetorically perhaps,

Hail, horrors, hail,
Infernal world! and thou profoundest hell,
Receive thy new possessor.

IV
If Humanism and Nature are fundamentally antithetical, if the human virtues have a definite limit set to their development, and if they may be cultivated only by a process which renders us progressively unfit to fulfill our biological duties, then we may at least permit ourselves a certain defiant satisfaction when we realize that we have made our choice and that we are resolved to abide by the consequences. Some small part of the tragic fallacy may be said indeed to be still valid for us, for if we cannot feel ourselves great as Shakespeare did, if we no longer believe in either our infinite capacities or our importance to the universe, we know at least that we have discovered the trick which has been played upon us and that whatever else we may be we are no longer dupes.

Rejuvenation may be offered to us at a certain price. Nature, issuing her last warning, may bid us embrace some new illusion before it is too late and accord ourselves once more with her. But we prefer rather to fail in our own way than to succeed in hers. Our human world may have no existence outside of anything else we know, and we will cling to our own lost cause, choosing always rather to know than to be. Doubtless fresh people have still a long way to go with Nature before they are compelled to realize that they too have come to the parting of the ways, but though we may wish them well we do not envy them. If death for us and our kind is the inevitable result of our stubbornness then we can only say, "So be it." Ours is a lost cause and there is no place for us in the natural universe, but we are not, for all that, sorry to be human. We should rather die as men than live as animals.

History has but too frequently shown that if the educated men begin to laugh at the gods, or to resolve their existence into philosophical abstractions, immediately the half-educated masses, becoming unsteady and unquiet, seize upon every folly in order to exalt it into a religion.

P.50 - "History of Materialism"
Frederick Albert Lange

The following from "The Conquest of Happiness" by Bertrand Russell.

~~But what is the use of making everybody rich if the rich themselves are miserable?~~

~~P. 32~~

"Ecclesiastes" is tragic; Mr. Krutch's "Modern Temper" is pathetic. Mr. Krutch, at bottom, is sad because the old medieval certainties have crumbled and also some that are of more recent origin.

- P. 32

Mr. Krutch, like most other literary men, is obsessed with the idea that science has not fulfilled its promises. He does not, of course, tell us what these promises were, but he seems to think that sixty years ago men like Darwin and Huxley expected something of science which it has not given. I think this is an entire delusion, fostered by those writers and clergymen who do not wish their specialties to be thought of little value.

- P. 33

One of Mr. Krutch's most pathetic chapters deals with the subject of love. It appears that the Victorians thought very highly of it, but that we with our modern sophistication have come to see through it.

It is curious how different the Victorian age looks to the young of our time from what it seemed when one was living in it.

p. 35

~~His ideas are derived evidently from certain writers who were by no means in harmony with their environment.~~

p. 36

The cure lies not in lamentation and nostalgia for the past but in a more courageous acceptance of the modern outlook and a determination to root out nominally discarded superstitions from all their obscure hiding places.

p. 38

I come next to what Mr. Krutch has to say about tragedy. It is undoubtedly the case that the old-fashioned kind of tragedy which dealt with princes and their sorrows is not suitable to our age, and when we try to treat in the same manner the sorrows of an obscure individual, the effect is not the same. The reason of this is not, however, any deterioration in our outlook on life, but quite the reverse. It is due to the fact that we can no longer regard certain individuals as the great ones of the earth, who have a right to tragic passions, while all the rest must merely drudge and toil to produce the magnificence of those few.

P. 40-41

next page

out

Mr. Krutch talks throughout his book at intervals about despair, and one is touched by his heroic acceptance of a bleak world, but the bleakness is due to the fact that he and most literary men have not yet learnt to feel the old emotions in response to new stimuli. The stimuli exist, but not in literary coteries. Literary coteries have no vital contact with the life of the community, and such contact is necessary if men's feelings are to have the seriousness and depth within which both tragedy and true happiness proceed.

P. 42-43

The secret of happiness is this: let your interests be as wide as possible, and let your reactions to the things and persons that interest you be as far as possible friendly rather than hostile.

~~From "The Conquest of Happiness"~~
~~by Bertrand Russell.~~

The following from "The Modern Temper"
by Joseph Wood Krutch

Limit
-
Emb Sp.

The antithesis between human and natural ends is thus ultimately irreconcilable, and the most that man can hope for is a recurrent defiance recurrently subdued. He can deviate so far but no further from the animal norm. He can make himself into an artist or a philosopher, but there are limits set both to the perfection of those types and to the extent to which the bulk of any population can be allowed to approach either, for individuals and races alike fall victim to their humanity. In the search for human values they first lose interest in those natural virtues which serve to keep the structure of the ant hill sound; and then when they discover that, even for them as individuals, life has no purpose which their intellects can accept, even they perish of a taedium vitae and leave the world to simpler peoples who have still some distance to go before they reach the end of the tether which attaches them to nature. In the drama of history barbarians are always appearing in the role of the deus ex machina, and the historian is always laying great stress upon "fresh blood" brought in from the provinces or infused by primitive conquerors. And yet he has seldom cared to draw the pessimistic conclusion which alone seems deducible from the facts in his possession.

P. 52-53

And so the mature man would take the world as it comes, and within himself remain quite unperturbed. When he acted, he would know that he was only testing an hypothesis, and if he failed, he would know that he had made a mistake. He would be quite prepared for the discovery that he might make mistakes, for his intelligence would be disentangled from his hopes. The failure of his experiment could not, therefore, involve the failure of his life. For the aspect of life which implicated his soul would be his understanding of life, and, to the understanding, defeat is no less interesting than victory. It would be no effort, therefore, for him to be tolerant, and no annoyance to be skeptical. He would face pain with fortitude, for he would have put it away from the inner chambers of his soul. Fear would not haunt him, for he would be without compulsion to seize anything and without anxiety as to its fate. He would be strong, not with the strength of hard resolves, but because he was free of that tension which vain expectations beget. Would his life be uninteresting because he was disinterested? He would have the whole universe, rather than the prison of his own hopes and fears, for his habitation, and in imagination all possible forms of being. How could that be dull unless he brought the dullness with him? He might dwell with all beauty and all knowledge, and they are inexhaustible. Would he, then, dream idle dreams? Only if he chose to. For he might go quite simply about the business of the world, a good deal more effectively perhaps than the worldling, in that he did not place an absolute value upon it, and deceive himself. Would he be hopeful? Not if to be hopeful was to expect the world to submit rather soon to his vanity. Would he be hopeless? Hope is an expectation of favors

to come, and he would take his delights here and now. Since nothing gnawed at his vitals, neither doubt nor ambition, nor frustration, nor fear, he would move easily through life. And so whether he saw the thing as comedy, or high tragedy, or plain farce, he would affirm that it is what it is, and that the wise man can enjoy it.

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