

ON BELIEF IN ECONOMIC DETERMINISM

By KARL POLANYI

My main thesis is

- (a) that economic determinism was pre-eminently a nineteenth century phenomenon, which has now ceased to operate in the greater part of the world; it was effective only under a market-system, which is rapidly disappearing in Europe;
- (b) that the market system violently distorted our views on man and society;
- (c) these distorted views are proving one of the main obstacles to the solution of the problems of our civilization.

DEFINITION OF THE PRESENT PHASE OF OUR CIVILIZATION. An historian should find no difficulty in defining the stage at which we have arrived. The tour is called industrial civilization. The first stage of the tour is over, and we are embarking on the second. The machine age, or industrial civilization, which started sometime in the eighteenth century, is still far from being over. Its first phase has been called by many names, such as liberal capitalism, or market-economy; the next phase will be called by some other name, we can not yet be certain by what. The point is to distinguish between the *technological* aspect which comprises the whole of the machine age or industrial civilization, and the sociological, which differentiates the phase which is already behind us from the phase which is still to come. THE present condition of man can be described in simple terms. The Industrial Revolution, some 150 years ago, introduced a civilization of a technological type. Mankind may not survive the departure; the machine may yet destroy man; no-one is able to gauge whether, in the long run, man and the machine are compatible. But since industrial civilization can not and will not be willingly discarded, the task of adapting it to the requirements of human existence *must* be solved, if mankind shall continue on earth.

SUCH, in common sense terms, is the bird's eye view of our troubles. Meanwhile the first phase of the new civilization is, as we saw, already behind us. It involved a peculiar social organisation, which derived its name from its central institution, the market. In the greater part of the world this market-economy is disappearing in our days. But the outlook on man and society, which it bequeathed to us, persists, and obstructs our attempts to incorporate the machine into the fabric of a stable human existence.

INDUSTRIAL civilization unhinged the elements of man's being. The machine interfered with the intimate balance which obtained between man, nature and work. Whether our distant ancestors were tree-climbing creatures or whether they squatted in the undergrowth, the ominous fact remains that not until a few generations ago was our habitation physically severed from nature. Though Adam's curse made labour sometimes irksome, it did not threaten to reduce our waking hours to meaningless jerks alongside of a moving belt. Even war, for all its horrors, was a means of decision in the service of the continuance of life, not a universal death-trap. It is not possible to foretell whether such a civilization can successfully be adjusted to the abiding needs of man, or whether man must perish in the attempt.

HOWEVER, as we saw, man's present condition is set by a further fact, not of a technological, but of a social order. For his prime difficulty in grappling with the problem of an industrial civilization arises from the intellectual and emotional legacy of market-economy, that nineteenth century phase of machine civilization which is rapidly fading away on the major part of the planet. Its baneful inheritance is the belief in economic determination.

OUR situation is thus peculiar to the utmost. In the nineteenth century the machine forced an unprecedented form of social organisation, a market-economy, upon us, which proved to be no more than an episode. Yet so incisive was this experience, that our current notions are almost entirely derived from this short period. In my opinion, the views of man and society induced by nineteenth century conditions were fantastic; they were the outcome of a moral trauma as violent in its impact on the mind and soul as the machine itself was foreign to nature. These views were broadly based on the conviction that human incentive can be classed as 'material' and 'ideal', and that in everyday life man mainly acts on the former.

SUCH a proposition was, of course, true in respect to a market-economy. *But only in respect to such an economy.* If the term 'economic' is used as synonymous with 'concerning production' we maintain that there do not exist any human motives which are intrinsically 'economic'; and as to the so-called 'economic' motives it should be said that economic systems are usually not based on them.

THIS may sound paradoxical. Yet the contrary view was, as we said, merely a reflection of the peculiar conditions which existed during the nineteenth century. THE ILLUSION OF 'ECONOMIC' MOTIVES. I will now, most reluctantly, have to intrude upon your intellectual delicacy and proceed to discuss economics. However, I will restrict myself to drawing your attention to the crude outlines of the economic system of the nineteenth century, called market-economy. Under such a system we can not exist unless we buy commodities on the market with the help of incomes which we derive from selling other commodities on the market. The name of the

income varies according to what we are offering for sale: the price of the use of labour power is called wages; the price of the use of the land is called rent; the price of use of capital is called interest; the income called profit derives from the sale of commodities which fetch a higher price than the commodities needed to produce it, thus leaving over a margin which forms the income of the *entrepreneur*. Thus sales produce incomes and all incomes derive from sales. Incidentally, production is being taken care of, and the consumers' goods produced during the course of the year are distributed amongst the members of the community with the help of the incomes they have earned. Such a system can not fail to work as long as every member of the community has a valid motive which induces him to earn an income. Such a motive actually exists under the system: it is hunger, or the fear of it, which those who sell the use of their labour power, and gain with those who sell the use of capital, or land, or make profits on the sale of other commodities. Very roughly, the one motive attaches to the employed class, the other to the employers' class. Since these two motives ensure the production of material goods we are used to calling them 'economic' motives.

LET us stop and consider. Is there anything intrinsically economic about these motives in the sense in which we speak of religious or aesthetic motives being based on religious or aesthetic experiences? Is there anything about hunger or, for that matter, about gain or gambling which may have their attractions, but again that attraction is not intrinsically 'economic'. In other words, the connection between these sensations and the activity of production is nothing inherent in these sensations but is contingent upon social organisation. Under the market organisation, as we saw, such a connection most definitely exists: hunger and gain are linked here, by virtue of that organisation, with production. That explains why, under a market-system, we call these motives 'economic'. But what about other social organisations, apart from market-economy? Do we find here also hunger and gain linked with the productive activities without which society could not exist? The answer is decidedly in the negative. We find, as a rule, that the organisation of production in human society is such that the motives of hunger and gain are not appealed to; indeed, where the motive of hunger is connected with productive activities, we find that motive merged with other strong motives. Such a mixture of motives is what we mean when we speak of *social* motives, the kind of incentives which make us conform with approved behaviour. Scanning the history of human civilization we do not find man acting so as to safeguard his individual interest in the acquisition of material goods, but rather so as to ensure his social standing, his social claims, his social assets. He values material goods primarily as means to this end. Man's economy, as a rule, is submerged in his social relationship. Some of you might have been wondering on what facts I was basing these assertions. First there are the

fundamental results brought to light by research done by social anthropologists in the field of primitive economies. Two names are outstanding, Bronislaw Malinowski and Richard Thurnwald. Together with some other scholars they made fundamental discoveries on the place of the productive or economic system in society. The legend of the individualistic psychology of primitive man is exploded. Neither crude egotism, nor a propensity to barter or exchange, nor a tendency to cater chiefly for himself is in evidence. Equally discredited is the legend of the communistic psychology of the 'savage', his supposed lack of appreciation of his separate personal interest and so on. The truth is that man has been very much the same all through the course of history. Taking institutions not separately but inter-relatedly, we find him behaving in a manner comprehensible to us. Yet as a rule the productive, or economic system is arranged in such a manner that no individual is moved by hunger (or the fear of it) to participate in production. His share in the common food resources is secured to him independently of his part in the productive efforts of the community. Here are some brief quotations: Under the kraal-land system of the Kaffirs "destitution is impossible: whosoever needs assistance receives it unquestioningly" (Mair, L. P.: *AN AFRICAN PEOPLE IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY*, 1934). No Kwakiutl "ever ran the least risk of going hungry" (Loeb, E. M.: *THE DISTRIBUTION AND FUNCTION OF MONEY IN EARLY SOCIETY*, 1936). Or this—"There is no starvation in societies living on the subsistence margin" (Herskovits, H. J.: *THE ECONOMIC LIFE OF PRIMITIVE PEOPLES*, 1940). As a rule, the individual in primitive society is not threatened by starvation unless the community as a whole is in a like predicament. It is the absence of the threat of individual starvation which makes primitive society, in a sense, more humane than nineteenth century society, and at the same time less economic. The same is true of the stimulus of individual gain. "The characteristic feature of primitive economics is the absence of any desire to make profits from production or exchange" (Thurnwald, R.: *ECONOMICS IN PRIMITIVE COMMUNITIES*, 1932). "Gain, which is often the stimulus for work in more civilized communities, never acts as an impulse to work under the original native conditions" (Malinowski, B.: *ARGONAUTS OF THE WESTERN PACIFIC*, 1930). "Nowhere in uninfluenced primitive society do we find labour associated with the idea of payment" (Lowie: *SOCIAL ORGANISATION*, E.S.Sc., Vol. XIV). There is, secondly, unbroken continuity of primitive society with civilized types of society. Whether ancient despotic civilization, feudal society, city state, medieval urban society, mercantile society or regulative system of the eighteenth century Western Europe, everywhere we find the economic system embedded in the social system. Whether the actual motives fall under the heading of civic custom or tradition, duty or commitment, religious observance, political allegiance, legal obligation or administrative regulation, issued by state, municipality or guild,

makes no difference. Not hunger nor gain but pride and prestige, rank and status, public praise and private reputation provide the incentives for individual participation in production. Fear of having to forego material necessities, the incentive of gain or profit need not be absent. Markets are widely spread under all types of human civilization and the occupation of the merchant also is fairly general. Yet, markets are sites of trading and merchants are in the nature of things expected to act on the motive of gain. But the markets are mere isolated patches which do not link up into an economy. Never before the nineteenth century did they become dominant in society.

THIRDLY, there is the suddenness with which the transformation occurred. This is not a matter of degree but of kind. A chain-reaction was induced, and the harmless institution of the market flashed into a sociological explosion. By making labour and land into commodities, man and nature had been subjected to the supply-demand-price mechanism. This meant the subordinating of the whole of society to the institution of the market. Instead of the economic system being embedded in social relationships, social relationships were now embedded in the economic system. Instead of incomes being determined by rank and position, rank and position were now determined by incomes. The relationship of status and contractus was reversed—the latter took everywhere the place of the former. To speak merely of an 'influence' exerted by the economic factor on social stratification was a grave understatement. The sides of a triangle do not rightly speaking 'influence' the angles, they determine them. The working of a capitalistic society was not merely 'influenced' by the market mechanism, it was determined by it. The social classes were now identical with 'supply' and 'demand' on the market for labour, land, capital, and so on. Moreover, since no human community can exist without a functioning productive apparatus, all institutions in society must conform to the requirements of that apparatus. Marriage and the rearing of children, the organisation of science and education, of religion and arts, the choice of profession, the forms of habitation, the shape of settlements down even to the aesthetics of every-day life, must be moulded according to the needs of the system. Here was 'economic society'! Here it could truly be said that society was determined by economics. Most significant of all, our views of man and society were violently adjusted to this most artificial of all social settings. Within an almost incredibly short time fantastic views of the human condition became current and gained the status of axioms. Let me explain.

THE every day activities of men and women are, in the nature of things, to a large extent related to production of material goods. Since, in principle, the exclusive motive of all these activities was now either the fear of starvation or the lure of profit, these motives, now described as 'economic', were singled out from among

all other motives and considered to be the normal incentives of man in his everyday activities. All other incentives, such as honour, pride, solidarity, civic obligation, moral duty or simply a sense of common decency were regarded as being motives not related to everyday life, but of a rare and more esoteric nature, fatefully summed up in the word 'ideal'. Man was supposed to consist of two components: those akin to hunger and gain, and those akin to piety, duty and honour. The first were regarded as 'material', the latter as 'ideal'. Productive activities were once and for all linked with the material. Man being strictly dependent upon means of subsistence, this amounted to a materialistic morality. All attempts to correct it in practice were bound to fail, since they now took the form of arguing for an equally unreal 'idealistic' morality. This is the source of that fatal divorce of the material and the ideal which is the crux of all our practical anthropology: instead of the 'mixed motives' in which man is at one with himself, his division into an alleged 'material' and 'ideal', man was hypostatized. The Paulinian dualism of flesh and spirit was merely a proposition of theological anthropology. It had very little to do with materialism. Under market-economy human society itself was organised on dualistic lines, everyday life being handed over to the material, with Sundays reserved for the ideal.

Now, if this definition of man were true, every human society would have to possess a separate economic system, based on 'economic motives', such as existed in nineteenth century society. That's why the marketing view of man is also a marketing view of society. Under the influence of nineteenth century conditions it seemed obvious that separate economic institutions must exist in every society. Actually the characteristic of human societies is precisely the absence of such separate and distinct economic institutions. That the economic system is 'embedded' in the social relations means precisely this.

This explains the current belief in economic determinism. Where there is a separate economic system the requirements of that system determine all other institutions in society. No other alternative is possible, since man's dependence upon material goods allows of none other. That economic determination was the characteristic feature of the nineteenth century society was exactly because in that society the economic system was separate and distinct from the rest of society, being based on a separate set of motives—hunger and gain.

LET me proceed to some conclusions.

THE task of adjusting the organisation of life to the actuality of an industrial civilization is still with us. Our relations to men, work, and nature have to be re-shaped. The atom bomb has made the problem merely more urgent.

THE civilization we are seeking is an industrial civilization on which the basic requirements of human life are fulfilled. The market-organisation of society has

broken down. Some other organisation is developing. It is a tremendous task to integrate society in a new way. It is the problem of a new civilization.

But do not let us be intimidated by the bogey of economic determinism. Do not let us be misled into a notion of the nature of man which is poor and unreal—the dualistic fallacy—according to which the incentives on which production is organised spring from one set of motives, the incentives on which communal effort, good citizens and high political achievement is organised derive from a different set of motives. Do NOT imagine that the economic system must limit our achievement of our ideals in society. Only the society which is embedded in the market is determined by the economic system. No other society is.

TAKE the problem of freedom. Much of the freedom we cherish—the civic liberties, the freedom of speech and so on, were by-products of capitalism. Need they disappear with capitalism? Not at all. To imagine this is simply an illusion of economic determinism—which is *valid only in a market society*. Hayek's fear of serfdom is the illogic application of economic determinism of a non-market economy. We can have more civic liberties—indeed extend civic liberties into the industrial sphere. MR. BURNHAM has also prophesied a great deal, on supposedly Marxian lines, about what class is to rule, etc.—all on lines of economic determinism. Yet he assumes the end of market-economy, in which alone such determinism applies.

THE *Lasciate ogni speranza* of economic determinism is left behind us. Together with freedom from enslavement to the market, man also gains a more important freedom; his imagination is free again to create and shape his society, confident that he can possess the fullness of the freedom which he is prepared to plan for, to organise and safeguard.

APPENDIX I

WHITHER CIVILIZATION ?

By KARL POLANYI¹

ALTHOUGH in its quiet way England has staged a social revolution, he would be a courageous man who would assert that any conscious process of thought accompanied it. The English people have an almost innate reluctance to formulating social ideas in words. Their own, time-honoured semantics have taught them that words more often divide than unite. Thus, there is no English school of sociology. But there is an English method of social action, which subordinates thought to life, and seeks to find solutions in life itself. If one only tries long enough, questions may spontaneously resolve themselves, the English seem to say—and in any case one avoids the mistake of making them insoluble by attempting to force a solution where none is yet possible. This method reigns at those summer meetings which combine the stimulus of a holiday in the countryside with the contemplative seclusion of ashram. It could be seen at its best at the first postwar Conference of the Institute of Sociology held at Reading University, July 26 to August 2.

TRUE, the method seems to leave all too many factors to the inscrutable working of chance—yet good care is taken not to allow the mills of the intellect to run out of grist. Products of first-class thinking are put at the disposal of the gathering, which is left free to react to them or not—as collective wisdom deems fit. This permits the very stuff of thought to be tested by the only valid test: the reactions of seriously interested persons to stark facts of the mind. Of course, there is a prepared programme of lectures, open forums, symposia, and discussion groups; yet the Holy Ghost is allowed to move freely. No provision is made for the systematic treatment of a body of recognised knowledge; there is no covering of the ground, nothing but the rare phenomenon of a conversation carried on between differing and separate view-points—a hurling of shafts of light across none-too-well-defined provinces of human life, leaving the spectator to choose between the varied hints of truth.

ONLY to those who watch the Conference developing and moving warily from one subject to another does the underlying stream of thought reveal itself. The audience is largely composed of experts in their own fields, who still pretend to be merely an

¹ This account of the Annual Conference of the Institute in 1946 was first published in the American Monthly COMMENTARY (American Jewish Committee, New York) and is reproduced here by kind permission of the Editor of COMMENTARY and of the author, Dr. Karl Polanyi.

interested public with no special qualifications to judge the productions of the well-known speakers who put forth their views. Actually, it is the audience which picks up one thread of thought and drops another, pressing for clarification of one aspect, and letting another fade out of vision. The apparently random fits and jerks by which the proceedings move forward merely cover up a dialectic which ultimately is conditioned by the meaning of the total situation. In this case, the atom bomb was the true object of concern. Yet apart from one single address, which was devoted to the subject, and involved important enunciations, hardly any mention was made of the release of nuclear energy. The collective mind, in its silent rumination, had arrived at the conclusion that no more could be done about it; consequently, the less said the better.

In effect, what approximates to a state of acute distress over the international situation was one of the invisible poles of the Conference. Proof is the fact that the question of the relative contributions of America, Russia, and Britain to the problem of present-day industrial civilisation was not even mentioned. For any discussion of it would have brought up the issue of Soviet communism in all its breadth and depth. That in turn would have catalyzed thought upon the world situation, the Paris Peace Conference, and the other intractable maladies of the hour. A tacit conviction that nothing could be gained at this juncture by treating these crucial questions by the clumsy method of public discussion made the conference refrain from tackling the obviously central issue.

IF INTENSE though silent *political* concern was one pole of the meeting, the other pole was the *religious* issue. With the atom bomb hardly mentioned, the Jewish-Christian tradition moved into the foreground. The repression of politics resulted in an over-emphasis on religion.

This connection, though never mentioned, was probably apparent to all. That may be the reason why neither the differences between the various religious positions, nor even the unbridged gap separating religious and non-religious opinion, prevented the meeting from proceeding with its job.

THOUGH the fact was never brought into the open, the gathering was deeply split on the question of religion. The younger generation, on the whole, rejected the traditional lead given by the older members. It was this rift which made Professor Hodges' contribution on the failure of philosophy so poignant. Though personally belonging to the younger generation, he depicted the tragedy of non-religious thought with an almost passionate vehemence.

ON the other hand, the main religious currents in England represented in the Conference struck an uncompromising note, as if to meet the challenge of the hour by an extreme formulation of their tenets. Youth, increasingly indifferent towards religion, was thus confronted with absolute statements of the various Christian

positions. The immediate issue of the day, the atom bomb, was dealt with in an informal, but authoritative fashion. The recently formed Atomic Scientists' Association, comprising a considerable part of British nuclear physicists, was represented by its president, Professor N. F. Mott of Bristol University, Fellow of the Royal Society. His address, chaired by G. W. Scott Blair of Reading University, was felt to be an important event. Professor Mott declared that he, like his colleagues in America, wished to address himself to the public not as a scientist but as a citizen. "Science cannot flourish behind barbed wire—in the atmosphere of ten years' prison sentences," he said, alluding to the recent conviction of the King's College physicist, Dr. Nunn May. England does not fear the spirit of friendly rivalry either with the scientists of the USA or with those of the USSR. After these introductory remarks he warned of exaggerations in regard to the military effects of the use of the atom bomb under present conditions. As long as atom bombs could not be produced by the 10,000—and this certainly would not be the case within the next years—the bomb was not a war-winning weapon. Its destructive effect was, on the whole, comparable to a raid of 1,000 bombers carrying ordinary bombs. Yet, obliteration bombing did not cut short the German war effort. In effect, German war production continued to increase right up to the end of 1944. Now, both the USA and the USSR possess numerous industrial centres, the units of which are dispersed. Short of several tens of thousands of bombs, nothing in the way of a decisive military defeat could be inflicted on either of them. "To call a spade a spade", he said, "the Red Army would not be stopped on its march on Calais." The Atomic Scientists' Association based its practical policy on the Lilienthal Report, which he called "one of the historical documents of the age". He supported its proposals to set up an Atomic Development Authority to own all uranium stock piles, and to become the prime body of atom research in the world. Outlawing of the use of atom bombs would be mere eye-wash. An international police force armed with atom bombs could not avert wars. Would you agree, he asked, to the atom bomb being used as a policing measure, for instance, in Palestine? Or to stop Argentina from misbehaving? A strong man can be restrained only by fighting him. Punitive measures alone could not prevent any powerful nation from making bombs. The use of the atom bomb must therefore be envisaged in a large-scale war of Great Powers. Therefore, he said, we must teach the nations to live together, *because they must*. The Atomic Scientists' Association does not combine its proposals with the demand that the "veto" should be dropped in the Security Council. Even though the Russians are overdoing the use of the "veto", UN without Russia would no longer be an international authority in the true sense of the term. What we need is an acceptance by the Russians of the Lilienthal Report. Inspection on both sides of the frontier would then start. We must peg away until this

happens. Russia has changed her policy more than once in the past; she may do so again. The Atomic Scientists' Association is determined to keep this realistic view before the public eye.

The audience gave an ovation to Professor Mott. And at the close of the Conference the following was unanimously adopted as part of the resolutions:

There was a progressive decline of moral judgment during the war, as evidenced by the widespread acceptance of obliteration bombing, and carried a big stage further by the use without warning of the atom bomb.

The Conference welcomes the initiative taken by the Atomic Scientists' Association of America and of Great Britain in bringing these issues before the public.

It calls upon its fellow citizens to urge the government to give full support to the Baruch plan for the control of atomic energy and to support similar provisions against the use of all weapons of indiscriminate extermination.

(The chairman of the Conference session emphasized that the resolutions were an act of the Conference and did not commit the Institute.)

On the theoretical level of politics, two lecturers offered original contributions: Professor George Catlin, late of Cornell University, and Professor Hsun-Cheng Shao, of National Tsinghua University, Peiping.

In their addresses, an orientalized West was being confronted by an occidentalized East. Professor Catlin said: "When we see the new teaching of psychologists, educationalists, philosophers, political scientists, anthropologists all pointing in the same direction, we may be sure that something will emerge as a new cast of thought, as significant in its day as the work of Adam Smith or of Jeremy Bentham (or of Karl Marx)." The problem of power consisted, it was increasingly realized, in superseding its dominative forms by its cooperative forms. This passed into a problem in education and even of religion. Here the issues of teleology, that is, of the norms and values of the required society, became all important. Professor Catlin had taken this position in 1929 and found no reason to withdraw from it in 1946. A galaxy of minds was moving in the same direction. Novelists such as A. Huxley, S. Maugham, A. J. Cronin, depicted the "good man" of Leibnitz's Perennial Philosophy. Writers such as E. Gill, J. Middleton Murry, J. Macmurray, G. Heard, and R. M. MacIver, had developed and deepened the idea of community. Educational psychologists, such as Isaacs, Anderson, and Horney; psychoanalysts, such as Suttie, Harding, Ranyard West, or Glover; social anthropologists such as Ruth Benedict, Dollard, and Malinowski; all had made important discoveries concerning man as a cooperative being. Niebuhr's analysis of pride, Russell's diagnosis of power, gave substance to the "remedial approach" broadly followed by Albert Schweitzer, M. K. Gandhi, and Aldous Huxley. As a practical matter, Catlin said, we need a great increase in the

power of the religious spirit. He called for an unqualified support of organized religion, preferably of the Roman Church, for only in that way can the right psychological training be translated into political terms. In a conversation which he recently had with Gandhi, the Mahatma told him that "no religious man talks about rights and political guarantees; he is never a 'minority', because he feels himself to be with God". This faced Catlin with the question, "Must we, in the name of Christianity, abolish all police and all courts?" But if so, what about Russia, the enemy of the Roman Church? Should the USSR go unrestrained? No, the medieval scholastics were sound when they established "the later churchly doctrine" on the subordinate and limited use of the "secular sword". Our world tribunal is UN, and its armed executive is the secular sword. Nothing should stop us in our determination "to enforce without flinching the decisions of the world tribunal against the makers of all disorders," Catlin concluded.

WHILE Catlin was calling on the mystics of the East to help us in righting the balance of Western politics, Professor Shao offered a remarkable application of the most rational political science of the East to our problems.

TRADITIONAL political thought in China is often falsely regarded as "philosophical" in the contemplative sense of the term, and as "moralistic", that is, as an approach through the question of right behaviour. Actually, Chinese political thought is based on stark realism in respect to the deadlock which is at the heart of political and social problems. Far from regarding that deadlock merely as a matter of ignorance (as Socrates might have put it) or of man's moral inadequacy (a view towards which the Christian tends), it accepts it as real and basic. Consequently, Chinese tradition is suspicious of "solutions" that would directly interfere with the deadlock or suppress one of its factors. Time is often needed for any spontaneous shift in the underlying forces to work itself out and permit of a direct solution. Again, the gaining of time is not a mere matter of patience and toleration—although the techniques of these virtues are highly developed—but of a concrete understanding of the nature of the balances involved. Professor Shao's conclusions in regard to the present world crisis were, accordingly, concrete. A world state is not yet possible; to believe in its proximity is therefore dangerous. On the one hand, it prevents us from facing actualities, on the other, it leads to the futile (and undesirable) attempt to eliminate differences by ignoring them. Here lies the danger of a utopian cosmopolitanism. Even in view of recent scientific advances with their threatening implications, existing differences cannot be blunted. In the future as in the past, such differences can contribute much to man's collective existence as long as they are rationally controlled, not eliminated through a process of levelling. Admittedly, the present bi-polar power constellation of Anglo-American democracy vs. Soviet communism may well lead to catastrophe. But it is not beyond the range of the

possible to introduce such modifications as would make it workable and safe. The prime need is for the creation of a neutral belt or additional "poles of power", independent of the two dominating poles in the world today, thus forming a multi-polar system. In Europe, Graeco-Latin civilization should be fostered and organized under the moral and cultural leadership of France, as one of the neutral poles. In Asia, China would have to bear the burden of being the neutral pole. Although she may have to go through a tragic process of transformation before achieving recovery and prosperity, she will prove equal to the task of blunting the edges!

AN EVEN richer orchestration than for the discussion of politics was provided for that of religion. Professor H. A. Hodges, of Reading University, opened with an address on "Philosophy and Civilization," which asserted that philosophy had ceased to provide any basis for the use of reason. "How long can such a civilization stand?" he asked again and again. The Roman Catholic thinker, Monsignor Ronald Knox, amazed the Conference by his answer, which was to the effect that Christianity was indifferent to the future of civilization. Donald MacKinnon, of Keble and Balliol Colleges, made it, on the contrary, the crucial test of Christianity, whether it is or is not able to save civilization. He called this religion's "total engagement in society". Confronted with the schism between agnostic and Christian, Professor Hodges demanded a new consciousness in which the two can meet. Without such an "understanding of understanding" the disruption of our civilization was final.

HELLENISM, the self-conscious civilization of the Greeks, Professor Hodges said, is the only valid conception of civilization known to the philosopher. It postulates man as the rational animal, who fulfils his purpose in a city-state community ruled by reason. He is capable of an intellectual contemplation of the universe, because the universe itself is rational. In the 17th century, this basic concept was enriched: observation and experiment led to "progressive methods", employed in exploring a developing world. Reason now meant Enlightenment; deliberate purpose replaced intuition and emotion. Self-control offered itself as the content of the idea of freedom. Still, man and the world had a purpose, and man was rational in a world of reason. The fatal turning of the screw took place in the 19th century. Positive science and psychology undermined the rational idea of the world. Civilization was seen as the result of unconscious trends; the world, as an accident. In Marx and in Spencer, this was still accompanied by a humanist outlook and confidence in the future—"an optimism without cause". For survival—the highest value in the new evolutionism—depended upon factors none of which was "civilized". For strength, cunning, and cooperation may well reach their peak in violence, applied science, and the herd instinct, respectively. No longer was an appeal to the concept of man as a rational animal implied.

MAN cannot understand a universe which is not understandable, said Professor Hodges. Nor would understanding be of value once survival does not involve civilization. Philosophy has criticized itself out of existence. There is no longer any basis for the use of reason. "How long can such a civilization stand?" On this note of unqualified despair Professor Hodges closed.

MONSIGNOR Knox disowned civilization in the name of religion. The work of the Church is to colonize Heaven, the work of the reformer is to breed for Utopia. Religion thrives when civilization is sick. It is weak where civilization is strong. In the Athens of Pericles, religion was mere lukewarm municipal piety; the Augustan period and the Renaissance were low points of religion. Religion and civilization were inimical—except where religion gained strength by revolting against civilization, or civilization advanced religion by persecuting it. "Am I hauling down the flag of religion, and handing over," Knox said, "to the poet, the artist, the scientist, the philosopher?" No, civilization, can exist without them. The Victorians had no art, the High Middle Ages no science, the Augustan age no philosophy. These adornments of life are in truth parasitic on the general well-being of society. The criteria of civilization are security of life, security and comfort. Yet civilization must decay if the age has lost the instinct of living dangerously. That precisely is happening in our time. The modern state, if it can keep clear of war and palace revolution, is omniscient: man exists for the state. Behind the "iron curtain" the last remnants of democracy are being stamped out. And it is not much better in the West. Artists, scientists, philosophers, divines, should unite against the state, to avert the dehumanization of humanity. True, there are quarrels between them, but all must concentrate on Enemy Number 1, the menace of state-encroachment. Private quarrels can be settled later.

To no views did the conference react more strongly than to those so brilliantly expressed by Monsignor Knox. His intellectual nihilism was all the more clearly realized to the extent that it was proclaimed in the name of religion. All too obviously his "*Ecrasez l'infame*" was hurled against the State with the intent of enthroning the Church. Donald McKinnon raised the religious issue with an incisiveness reminiscent of Soren Kierkegaard's dialectic a century ago. His response was both global and total. Religion entered into the bitter battles fought in India and Palestine today. The Nazi creed confronted the Christian world. And in the clash between Russia and the West an essential component was the interaction of Marxist doctrine and the fervent Christian belief of an unreformed Church. "Christians are becoming self-conscious, perhaps for the first time," he said, "that their religion involves a total engagement in the life of the society in which a Christian has to live." Eventually, in Nazi Germany, Christians overcame the Lutheran split between Faith and State. Resisting on the religious issue, they were driven

to resist on the political plane as well. Religious thinking reveals itself by its *crucial quality*: for unless it is crucial, it is nothing. "Russia can attack the democracies successfully," he said, "on one point: on the issue of imperialism. Indeed, how far do the achievements of democracy depend directly on imperial circumstances? Our consciences are still troubled by Hiroshima, Nagasaki. By its power to gain illumination on the relation between Russia and the West, our religion will be judged."

Clearly, in spite of the transcendentalism he shares with Knox, both the theology and the politics of McKinnon were radically opposed to those of Monsignor Knox, who had preached the total disengagement of religion from civilization.

PROFESSOR Lewis Mumford's address (entitled: *The Nature of the Age in which we live*, involving the problem: "What action shall we take to suit the time and the place?") was chaired by Sir Alfred Zimmern, late Professor of International Affairs, Oxford University.

THE problem of our civilization, Sir Alfred said, arose on three distinct levels: on the international plane, which involved the rule of law and the control of nuclear energy; on the plane of the good society, which demanded planning for welfare as well as social equality; on the philosophical or religious plane, which required the understanding of life on its deeper level. In all three he regarded Mumford as a leader of our time. Lewis Mumford is a great name in England. His *CULTURE OF CITIES* and *CONDITIONS OF MAN* rescued for Britain the inheritance of Patrick Geddes, the Scottish genius, and made their author perhaps the strongest single influence in forming the revival of urban civilization here. With Aneurin Bevan's housing schemes and Lewis Silkin's New Towns Bill in the limelight, Mumford's ideas are far from being of merely academic importance in a country which is in the course of reshaping its whole national existence. Professor Mumford has what is needed to transform theories and vistas into a dynamic message. "The task before me," he began, "is an impossible task; but our age has to attempt to fulfil the impossible." The first half of the sentence accounts for the facts; the second arouses our slumbering moral faculties. The call is not contrary to reason; yet, in order to be heard, it demands a re-interpretation of the functions of reason. This is attained by virtue of a fundamentalism which erects the idea of man's communal achievements into an absolute—let our ideals be subordinated to the single aim of saving the sources of higher life. Ultimately human civilization is a unity of its parts and functions, none of which is to be allowed to turn into an act of self-destruction against the idea of a meaningful common life. Far from being a construct of mere wish-fulfilment, such an ideal of civilization has a hard core of realism. It does not make absolutes of knowledge, efficiency, or even peace; *it sets the content of life above life itself.* We must forego our culture as it is, our civilization as it stands, our personality which

we secretly idolize. *We must, as individuals, strengthen our weakest sides, and weaken our strongest.* Thus only can civilization be a unity, and live on. As far as the English mind is concerned, the secret of Mumford's appeal is twofold. The hint at a crucial experience makes him an authentic witness to some; to others the dethronement of absolutes transcending common human existence rightly appears as a restatement of the case for reason.

THE present writer delivered a talk attempting to establish man's freedom to shape his own civilization. He called for a rejection of the very concept of economic determinism, which would limit this freedom.

MAN's dependence upon material goods—the economic factor—is not translated into an immediate incentive. What has been thus identified during the past century is nothing other than the working of the market-economy, which existed during the 19th century but which—with the exception of the United States—is in our time rapidly disappearing. Its peculiarity was twofold: First, it included markets for labour and land, that is, for man and nature; consequently, the whole of society was embedded in the economic system. Secondly, motives for participating in production were reduced to fear of hunger and hope of gain; these incentives were regarded as being "economic". Actually, in no other human society of which we know, are hunger and gain motives for participating in production. On the contrary, such motives are of that "mixed" character which we usually associate with civic duties. The economic system is therefore embedded in *social relations*—these determine the form of economic institutions. No "economic determinism" exists under such conditions. Fear of the road to serfdom in a planned economy was proof of an uncritical belief in the validity, in general, of economic determinism. True, much of what we have come to cherish as freedom was a by-product of market-economy. In the future we shall have to plan for such freedom in a planned economy. The bill of rights will have to be extended into the industrial field, protecting the individual against abuses of the power agglomerated in the hands of governmental or trade union authorities. There is no reason for our not having as much freedom in a planned society as we wish to possess. It is human ideals, not economics, which are determinative outside a market society.

THE educational problem was brought to the fore by Dr. John Bowlby and Kenneth Richmond, regional education officer of the British Broadcasting Corporation. Bowlby offered a most instructive account of educational experiments in the USA, while Richmond argued for a more equalitarian system of general education in Britain, combined with a reform of teaching method. Noel F. Newsome, late editor of the European news service of the BBC, a policy-making member of the Liberal Party gave a forthright and embracing presentation of problems of freedom in a planned society. Montgomery Belgion speaking, as invited, about poetry

and other literature, discussed whether the quantity and quality of their production at any time provide criteria for civilization, or whether social conditions necessary for the production of poetry and literature of the highest quality, could be laid down. Discussions were conducted by Alexander Farquharson, Secretary of the Institute of Sociology.

THE problem of the three civilizations—American, Russian, British—was, as we said, not touched upon. Concern about the day after tomorrow took precedence over the freedom to scan the far horizons.

APPENDIX II

RESOLUTIONS¹

THIS Conference, called to consider "Whither Civilization in the Atomic Age?", and having reviewed religious, economic, educational and religious trends, records the following resolutions:—

1. THE primary task facing civilization is to understand the limitless potentialities offered both for social betterment and for the destruction of human personality and life, and therefore to discover means of directing all forms of power to social purposes and of preventing the abuse of power whether by private interests or the State.
2. EACH actual abuse of power leads to a deadening of human sensitivity, a growing callousness and a perversion of moral and political judgment until the abuse is recognised and reparation made.
3. IT is an essential characteristic of the democratic way of life that citizens do not divest themselves of the responsibility for the use of power in favour of government. Power with its responsibilities ultimately resides in the whole adult population. All government by edict or order must be viewed in the light of the above principle.
4. DEMOCRATIC government depends upon the widest possible dissemination of accurate and many-sided information.
5. A primary cause of the abuse of power by individuals is to be found in a faulty and one-sided education which exalts the training of the intellect and leaves the emotions untrained. The Conference welcomes signs of the development of a more balanced curriculum based on a deeper understanding of the psychology of the person.
6. THERE was a progressive decline of moral judgment during the war, as evidenced by the widespread acceptance of obliteration bombing and carried a long stage further by the use without warning of the atom bomb. THE Conference welcomes the initiative taken by the Atomic Scientists' Associations of America and of Great Britain in bringing these issues before the public. It calls upon its fellow citizens to urge the government to give full support to the Baruch Plan for the control of atomic energy and to support similar provisions against the use of all weapons of indiscriminate extermination.
7. IN the present age the control of power involves the progressive limitation of national sovereignty. THE Conference, therefore, urges support for the government in any explorations which it makes to that end.

¹ These resolutions are circulated by desire of the Conference. They have not been considered or adopted by the Council and members of the Institute.