

EXAMINATION 1977

Those who regard the decay of civilisation as something quite normal and natural console themselves with the thought that it is not civilisation, but a civilisation, which is falling a prey to dissolution, that there will be a new age and a new race in which there will blossom a new civilisation. But that is a mistake. The earth no longer has in reserve, as it had once, gifted peoples as yet unused, who can relieve us and take our place in some distant future as the leaders of our spiritual life. We already know all those that the earth has to dispose of. There is not one among them which is not already taking such a part in our civilisation that its spiritual fate is determined by our own. All of them, the gifted and the un-gifted, the distant and the near, have felt the influence of those forces of barbarism which are yet working among us. All of them are, like ourselves, diseased, and only as we recover can they recover.

It is not the civilisation of a race, but that of mankind, present and future alike, that we must give up as lost, if belief in the rebirth of our civilisation is a vain thing. But it need not be so given up. If the ethical is the essential element in civilisation, decadence changes into renaissance as on as ethical activities are set to work again in our convictions and in the ideas which we undertake to stamp upon reality. The attempt to bring this about is well worth making, and it should be world wide. It is true that the difficulties that have to be reckoned with in this undertaking are so great that only the strongest faith in the power of the ethical spirit will let us venture on it.

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Again the renewal of civilisation is hindered by the fact that it is so exclusively the individual personality which must be looked to as the agent in the new movement. The renewal of civilisation has nothing to do with movements which bear the character of the experiences of the crowd, these are never anything but reactions to external happenings. But civilisation can only revive when there shall come into being in a number of individuals a new tone of mind independent of the one prevalent among the crowd and in opposition to it, a tone of mind which gradually win influence over the collective one, and in the end determine its character. It is only an ethical movement which can rescue us from the slough of barbarism, and the ethical comes into existence only in individuals.

The final decision as to what the future of a society shall be depends not only how near its organisation is to perfection, but on the degrees of worthiness in its individual members. The most important, and yet the least easily determinable, element in history is the series of unobtrusive general changes which take place in the individual dispositions, and that is why it is so difficult to understand thoroughly the men and events of past times. The character and worth of individuals among the mass and the way they work themselves into membership of the whole body, receiving influences from its and giving others back, we can even today only partially and uncertainly understand.

One thing, however, is clear. Were the collective body works more strongly on the individual than the latter does upon it, the result is deterioration because the noble element on which everything depends, namely the spiritual and moral worthiness of the individual is thereby necessarily constricted and hampered. Decay of the spiritual and moral life then sets in which renders society incapable of understanding and solving the problems which it has to face. Therefore sooner or later, it is involved in catastrophe, and that is why it is the duty of individuals to a higher conception of their capabilities and undertake the function which only the individual can perform, that of producing new spiritual-ethical ideas. If this does not come about many times over nothing can save us.

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Precise

Revival of Civilization

Decay of civilization is not normal.

The earth gifted us leaders who can relieve us and take our

place in some distant future. We

have faced the forces of extreme

cruelty because of decay of civilization.

Cultural and moral decline ^{should} change

into renaissance as on as ethical

activities are set to work again

in our convictions and in the

ideas which we undertake to stamp

upon reality. Renewal of civilization is

important. It is an ethical

movement which can rescue us

from extreme cruelty. The future

of society depends on worthiness

of individuals. It is duty

of individuals to a higher

conception of their abilities and

tackle the function which only

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individual can perform that of
producing new spiritual ethical
ideas. (121 words)