

On Certain Orthodoxies

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The world is full of conscript minds, only they are in different armies, and nobody is fighting to be free, but each to make his own conscription universal.

Oliver, in *The Last Puritan*

I

WHILE THE problem of freedom of thought and the related need for toleration in all fields of human interest have been argued for by many eminent writers, so that today, in some quarters, their desirability is at least nominally taken for granted, the related question of orthodoxy, so far as my reading takes me, has been neglected. The upshot is not only that we do not understand this phenomenon, but that we have not even asked the right questions.

I shall examine the subject of orthodoxy by means of an analysis of a regnant

pseudo-scientific orthodoxy. At present I do not believe that it is possible to do more than undertake an exposé of the shoddy thinking backing the orthodoxy I shall examine. I shall follow the exposé with a few questions that the analysis will suggest.

I am puzzled by the phenomenon of orthodoxy: by the way in which beliefs, convictions, opinions, often highly charged with arrogant intolerance of conflicting beliefs, are held tenaciously by a group of people or nation. Orthodoxies seem to develop in all areas of belief and judgment, even in the sciences. But what makes men intolerant of dissent, even on matters about

which certainty is illusory, has not been adequately explained. Let me note explicitly that this paper is not offered as a solution of the questions that need be asked about orthodoxy. If it suggests some questions to the reader it shall have done its work satisfactorily. But even if it does not, it seems to me that the exercise will be salutary, for it will bring to the attention of my readers a problem that calls urgently for examination.

Let me begin with a remark that bears repetition because it serves as context for the thesis of this paper: we live in an open society and we are proud of it—or should be. We claim to place high value on freedom, and the actual amount of discretionary freedom that we enjoy—all of us and not merely a class in our society—seems to be greater than that enjoyed by any other people on earth at any other time in history.

A vast amount of political freedom, both in thought and action, is ours, and completely discretionary freedom in religion. In morals also the old restrictions have been almost altogether lifted. No canons are enforced in art. And of course, in areas in which society has for long ceased to exercise restriction of any kind, in the sciences and in philosophy, freedom is much more of a reality today, for us, than it ever was for any other group in the past.

Whether the discretionary freedom that we enjoy is a positive value or not is a question that cannot be answered satisfactorily since the very freedom we enjoy denies us an objective and universally accepted criterion by which to judge its value. But it is puzzling that in fields of activity in which freedom is rightly recognized by all of us to be an indispensable value, and therefore in fields in which we could expect heterogeneity of opinion to flourish, this is often not the case.

One important field of interest in which

one would expect diversity of opinion is in the social sciences, for in them hard data are not available and crucial experiments are seldom feasible. And we do find indeed great diversity of opinion in sociology, anthropology, and behavioral psychology. In depth psychology the same state of course exists. These disciplines make the claim that they are truly scientific, although perhaps not as rigorously so as the physical and biological sciences. But since the genuine sciences are systemic and are ruled by unity of method and by a tendency towards unity of law, the social sciences can only be called scientific on the Humpty Dumptyian semiotic of Webster III. There is, however, one field of speculation in which almost unanimous agreement exists; and it exists about a hypothesis supported by the most shoddy string of arguments. This is interesting because it shows the way in which speculations of a specious scientific nature are devised to support rank ideological purposes.

II

I HAVE IN mind the problem of human origins, on which an almost complete unanimity of opinion exists among scholars. This unanimity arises from the pervasive philosophical naturalism which in the United States has become the almost universal basis of contemporary thinking, and which is so much taken for granted that it is seldom stated explicitly. It is to the examination of this piece of orthodoxy that I shall turn next.

Let me begin by noting that the term "human origins" is not used in this paper to refer to the biological origins of the human species. It refers to the origin of the human capacities and virtues that make man apparently the only culture-rearing animal on the face of the earth. Apparently, man alone is endowed with the capacity

to create and employ symbolic structures, as distinct from the ability to use signs, an ability that probably all animals have. Among these symbolic structures the most important is language; it was probably his capacity to talk that enabled him to invent, maintain, and transmit the various institutions and instrumentalities that make up human culture. He began to chip stones and increase the number of tools his pre-human ancestor had employed; he discovered that he enjoyed talking to himself and others, and that some of the talk he made at one time was more attractive than at other times; because he could think and plan, as his brute ancestors had not been able to do, he probably decreased his helplessness before his environment; but now that he could realize his weakness, he concocted the pilgrim idea, one that his present-day heirs have not altogether abandoned, that by incantations, prayers, and magical practices addressed to forces whose impact he felt, but which he only dimly understood, he could increase his own powers; probably responding to the terror of nature and its impenetrable mystery, as well as its kindness, he developed religion; he discovered the fascination of making things that appealed to a sense of proportion and harmony of which he was not clearly aware; and he burdened himself with the fantastically complex enchainment of commands and prohibitions that made up his morality. He took on incredibly heavy burdens.

I would like to iterate with emphasis that I refer solely to the origins of those powers and capacities that created what Kroeber called "the superorganic" dimension of man, and not to man's biological origin. The digging of a hundred thousand bones cannot throw any light whatever on what I mean by human origins. If we find bones so arranged that they give evidence of deliberate burial, we know the animals that

put them into the earth took care of their dead; and this seems to mean that they were capable of piety towards their dead and probably had some sort of moral sense. The finding tells us that these bones were interred by human beings, but it does not tell us what we want to know: how did the talents that led men to want to bury their dead originate.

Seriously examined, the fact of biological evolution is as well proved a hypothesis as there is. Its rejection puts one in the class with William Jennings Bryan. But this holds solely for the fact of evolution. As to the factors, I am not equipped to judge. It is my impression that the majority of biologists accept a revised version of the Darwinian hypothesis. I have read Julian Huxley and other contemporary books and papers by neo-Darwinians, as well as going carefully through older writings.¹ But if I have no authority to reject the neo-Darwinian hypothesis about the factors of evolution, I draw comfort from the fact that serious objections have been raised to neo-Darwinism by biologists as prestigious as Huxley. In order to arrive at a decision, however, this fact is of no help to me one way or the other, since I do not believe that the truth is arrived at by counting heads—not even properly doctorified heads. I mention it to put forward the claim that it is no sign of ignorant obscurantism or a crack-pot mind to consider the question as to the how of evolution still an open one.

Acceptance of the hypothesis of the fact of evolution does not, however, as it is generally believed, involve the acceptance of an evolutionary hypothesis about human origins. But note that I am interested in establishing that there is a lacuna between biological evolution and human origins that science has not filled in. If I am right, then, the old missing link is still missing. But we must conceive of it now differently than it used to be conceived of decades ago when

it was thought that bones could supply the link.

III

LET ME REPEAT: what is lacking is a genuinely scientific explanation of human origins—in the narrow sense of science. Philosophical speculations are not scientific explanations even if they are carried on in the name of science. And the philosophical hypotheses with which I am acquainted that are intended to fill the lacuna turn out on the most cursory examination to be shoddy.

A few years ago I examined two of these attempts to supply the missing link: the account of human origins found in a fairy tale included in the *oeuvre de vulgarisation* of the eminent anthropologist, Carlton Coon, and the technical argument addressed to specialists, by C. G. Carter.² But I did not believe at the time I wrote the essay that it would be read, or if read, that it would be considered seriously, or if so considered that my efforts would work more effectively than King Canute's order to the tide. And I was not disappointed. So far as I know the essay has been read only by two or three of my students and no one has taken the pains of showing me wherein I erred. The late Robert Redfield read the essay and remarked by word of mouth on its harsh tone. But he did not show me where I had made a mistake. I knew I had been harsh towards Messrs. Coon's and Carter's arguments. As to the eminence of both men—that could take care of itself and I knew I could not touch it and had no desire to do so. Harsh I was against their views. But was I in error? Or is it the rule that in the defense of an entrenched pseudo-scientific orthodoxy any kind of shoddy argument can be used, and its critics must treat these arguments as if they were the rarest eggshells or the most precious butterflies?

In a seminar I conducted in the fall of 1956 I examined with some care Malinowski's attempt to account "scientifically" for the origins of human culture. I was about to write a critique of the result of my examination when I was forced to turn to another job, and when I finally returned to Malinowski I decided that the bird was not worth the cost of the shot. For an example of the nature of Malinowski's "scientific" argument, consider the way in which he explains the widely spread (or is it universal?) belief in immortality. Malinowski writes: "Survival after death is one of the earliest mystical hypotheses, related perhaps to some deep biological cravings of the organism."³ Perhaps. But it is in order to observe that explaining the belief in immortality by tracing it to a deep craving is to explain the obscure by the more obscure. This reminds one of the halcyon days of instinct psychology, a discipline that used a method we all miss today, for it made easy the explanation of any human activity. All one had to do to explain an act was to invent an instinct *ad hoc*. This in turn was the obsolescent remainder, in psychology, of the old scientific tradition kept alive in Montpellier in the seventeenth century, of which the famous historian of science, Molière, left us a record:

Mihi domandatur a docto doctore
Causam et rationem quare
Opium facit dormire.
A quò respondeo:
Qui est in eo
Vertus dormitiva,
Cuis est natura
Sensus asupire.

To which the examiners exclaim in a triumphant chorus:

Bene bene bene bene respondere
Dignus, dignus est entrare
In nostro docto cópore.

The great anthropologist, Malinowski, turns

out to be the heir of Molière's medical student. Since so useful a method of explanation deserves a name, long ago I christened it "explanation by verbal fig-leaf." It should be highly praised as evidence of the modesty of those who use it. It covers the shame of their ignorance. Unfortunately it does not advance their knowledge beyond the point at which the *docto corpore* of Montpellier left it. Culture we have and one of the great students of it was Malinowski—whatever we may think of his functionalism. But "deep biological cravings" are by stipulation unobservable, the more so the deeper they are. Nor can we adduce to confirm belief in them the kind of evidence the physicist offers when he posits his subatomic particles and his millionths of a second.

Another account of the origins of culture is to be found in the writings of the founder of psychoanalysis, Freud, who left us several theories of the genesis of some of the basic modes of human experience. The ontogenetic account of morality I examined some seventeen years ago and see no reason today for withdrawing my criticism of it. The philogenetic theory has this crippling defect: it confuses regret with remorse. Since Freud has nothing to say about form in art, his theory of the source of the informed substance is not enough to give us an aesthetic, suggestive as his theory of the nature of the substance is. When Freud's mind turned to the phenomenon of religion, one of the finest, most subtle, most creative, most sensitive, and perceptive minds produced by Europe in his age gave way to a coarse, prejudiced, unperceptive, and simplistic mind that rivaled that of the village atheist—a brother, as we would expect, of another well-known inhabitant of the village.⁴ There is plausibility in the idea that the origin of our notion of God is the result in part of our projecting into the cosmos our concept of our fathers. But this projec-

tion would account in part only for the origin of our idea of God. Unless we perform a "nothing but" reduction, it says nothing about the validity of the idea once arrived at. In any case, the traits that Rudolph Otto points to that are part of our idea of God are the result of objective experiences and cannot be traced to the projection of the father image. They come directly from our response to the creative mystery of the cosmos. One may disagree with Otto—I do—about his claim that the empirical response registers the transcendental or supernatural nature of God. His supernatural character is a theoretical imputation. Be that as it may, to trace God exclusively to the father image is a piece of reductionism unworthy of a mind as superior as Freud's.

I conclude that the genetic accounts of the origins of the various institutions and instrumentalities of culture that we find in Freud's writings fail to do what they are intended to do.

IV

LET US LOOK into another effort to account for human origins. I take a theory presented by a responsible writer. David Bidney is a distinguished scholar who has made contributions both to philosophy—in which field he did his graduate work—and to anthropology. His views therefore come to us with an initial authority that cannot be ignored. I shall make a hasty examination of his defense of the relation between biology and culture on the basis of quotations from the Introduction to the second edition of his deservedly well known *Theoretical Anthropology*—a book that after several reprints has at last appeared in paperback.⁵ I shall offer four criticisms of Mr. Bidney's views. The first is that along with the majority of thinkers today, Bidney assumes that man the culture-rearer is the product of natural processes. His job is to

explain the origin (or origins—for my purpose it makes no difference) of culture in terms of needs, survival, and emergence. He writes:

Culture is primarily a mode of human behavior acquired by man in the course of his experience of nature to promote his survival as an individual and as a member of society.⁶

It would take more space than a kind editor could put at my disposal to show satisfactorily that from a *biological* point of view the assertion could not be more in error. As already stated, when the animal that finally became man took his first steps towards humanity, he probably did so by acquiring the capacity to use symbolic structures. But I must repeat that we simply do not know how he came by this capacity. We have a number of speculative hypotheses, but none of them stand up under critical examination. Nor do we know how long it took the brute to become a man. All we know is that somehow he did, for we, his descendants, are here.

To assert, however, that it was for the sake of survival that man created culture, is to repeat uncritically a late nineteenth century cliché that can easily be shown up. One would expect an anthropologist in mid-twentieth century, particularly one trained in philosophy, to know that the *human* animal, animal though he be, is more than a mere animal because he employs unique gifts in order to discern values and to devise institutions by means of which to give them a relatively permanent anchorage. War, religious martyrdom, patriotism, feudal loyalty, and much else, prove that survival often has to yield to other values. Man's pride, his dignity, his singular achievement, consist in this capacity to espouse values that from the biological standpoint are burdensome and often too costly. These values man does not hesitate to es-

pouse, at however high a cost, since it is their espousal that makes him the singular animal that he is.

But let us look at the facts. Consider man's incest regulations. Some of them seem to make sense eugenically, as for instance the universal taboo against sexual intercourse between mother and son. But many of them do not seem to have any survival value. If it is claimed that they do, the burden of proof is on the scholar who makes the claim. And mind you, these presumptuous ex-apes *married*; something that their stand-patter relative who persisted in his old ways, had he been able to understand the institution, would have split his sides laughing at it. One takes any female that one can and all these human-shines about marriage and about keeping your wives exclusively to yourself—what in the name of decent apehood is the point of that? Besides, it is unspeakably selfish. And the business of being proud of the bambino—who among us respectable apes ever heard of that? All of this did not seem to make things easier for the ex-ape who, not content with his former lot, decided that he would be superior to his conservative relatives. But why better? Because he had a talent for complicating his life and making matters quite difficult for himself and the members of his group. Neither the progressive ex-ape nor the stand-patter conservative could have foreseen that in the earth, destroying many species of fellow animals, lording it over rivers and mountains, creating lakes and burning forests into arid deserts, this presumptuous ex-ape would reach the point, by the exercise of his ruthlessness and intelligence, of threatening to destroy himself and all other terrestrial life.

I said above "mere survival," because if we are thinking of the survival of the animal who created culture, we cannot appeal to culture to explain its existence. Once cul-

ture was created man, now fully human, may not have been able to do without its burdensome instrumentalities. But the assumption that he created them in order to survive is a generalization that will not bear examination.

One need not have read *Civilization and Its Discontents* and the relevant paragraphs in the second chapter of *The Future of an Illusion*, nor need one have knowledge of history better than an intelligent undergraduate (and not the knowledge of that walking encyclopedia who was Macaulay's schoolboy) to have become aware of the heavy burden that culture places on man, and the frequency with which cultural products—beliefs, values, institutions he feels threatened—lead him as an individual and a group to extinction. Bidney has probably forgotten the story of the Jews who refused to take the last train out of a Polish town when the thunder of the Nazi artillery could be heard in the distance. Why would they not take the train? Because orthodox Jews do not ride trains or cars on Friday after sunset. As I remember the story, it took an influential rabbi hard talking to persuade some members of the congregation that it was lawful to take the train under the critical circumstances. The story raises the question whether religion was, in this case, a means of survival. And if I do not remember the story accurately, other accounts are no doubt available of the way in which religion can get in the way of survival with commands or prohibitions that are accepted in spite of their dire consequences.⁷

But if religion is a means of survival, we shall also have to add up carefully both sides of the ledger to see whether we come out in the black or in the red. But the CPA who balances the books will have to know universal history for he has to add up the victims of religious intolerance, the witch burnings, the religious persecutions, the

massacres of holy wars and crusaders, the countless victims of inquisitions, the martyrs—in short, the whole red page, or more precisely, the bulging stacks of ledgers from all over the world, soaked in human blood, in which the butcheries caused by religion have been recorded. Does it seem as if religion aided survival? It may aid sometimes by maintaining the morale of a group, its conscious identity, and by giving its members hope and fending off despair. But whether it helps more than it hinders I do not know, and I submit that neither does Bidney nor anyone else know; and further, that in falling back on a vague reference to survival all Bidney is doing is helping the revival of the nineteenth century notion that Boas and Goldeweiser did in quite a number of decades ago.

What shall we say in terms of human survival of the misery, hunger, and death which must have been the cost of building the great monuments of art in Asia, Egypt, Europe, and Central America? Is it not likely that the energy put into rearing the Maya temples—without the wheel, remember—might have done more for survival if the laborers had been raising corn? I remember vaguely an account of the building of a cathedral somewhere in France. It was at the time when the cathedral building rage, that I believe began in France, swept through Europe like fire over a dry plain. As the rage spread, the Gothic Bishops, it appears, contended with one another to see who could build the greatest, most stupendous building. To this madness we owe the monuments celebrated by Henry Adams in his famous book and the other glories of that age. But to build them, I remember reading, the Bishop's overseers had to ride forth to collect the peasants, and drive them with the knout to the quarries. Pulling hard and probably not too well fed, the peasants brought the stones to the building site. A

factual answer to the following question would be required before we accepted Bidney's claim that culture helped man to survive: How did the building of the great architectural monuments of the world help those who built them to survive? Who survived and who perished? If we are going to accept the notion of survival we have to answer these questions with care, and not for one building alone but for a representative number of them. And not for one art alone but for all the arts. I do not know the answers to these questions and I do not know who has sought to answer them. Apparently no one. In view of our ignorance it will not do to accept the survival theory, no matter how respectable it might have been considered during the second half of the last century and for a number of years in our own.

But this is not the only difficulty to be found in Bidney's explanation. He writes:

Culture is organically conditioned, and the universals of human culture may be explained by the needs and potentialities of the human organism, individually and collectively, in coping with his environment.⁸

This kind of argument clearly takes us back to Montpellier and the *docto corpore*. What Bidney is doing is fig-leafing the shame of our ignorance.

The following passage from Bidney gives rise to two criticisms:

Culture, in particular, as an emergent from human nature acting upon its natural, ecological environment, requires the creative activity of man, not only for its genesis, but also for its continuation in existence and its progressive development.⁹

The first criticism is best put in the form of a question: Was the man referred to in the passage already endowed with human nature when he began to create culture?

If the answer is in the affirmative, as the passage suggests, man became human and was endowed with creativity historically before he created culture. And the question arises: How did he become human? The second criticism must be directed to the usage of the notion of "emergence" to explain the appearance on earth of man the culture-rearer. The late Paul Henle long ago analyzed the notion in a brilliant paper that, alas, naturalistic philosophers seemed to have overlooked and that today seems to be forgotten.¹⁰ The argument (and Henle is not responsible for my formulation of it here) is that if the notion of "emergence" is advanced in a naturalistic context, all it does is to assert that the person using the term believes there are causal connections between the process or condition from which the emergent emerges and the emergent itself, although he cannot exhibit these connections. What this means is simply that he has faith in the existence of the connections and in his naturalistic philosophy. Against faith there can be no argument—but, then, neither is faith a scientifically acceptable mode of proof. If the man using the notion of "emergence" does not hold that he has faith in the existence of the connections, he is unwittingly, I submit, appealing to a miracle. Miracles are not in good standing as scientific explanations.

V

A NUMBER OF problems remain. The first is: Why don't men see that the arguments they use to explain the origins of man are shoddy? To the high quality of their minds the rest of their work testifies with eloquence. One possible explanation is that the educated mind today thinks in terms of a disjunction: either special creation or evolution. The first term in the disjunction is today, for intellectually sophisticated men,

inadmissible; therefore we must accept the second. But why must we? Because a third alternative is inconceivable. But why is it inconceivable? I suggest the reason is that the hypothesis of evolution is so deeply rooted in our minds that we are no more able to look at it critically than Wilberforce was able to look at the story of *Genesis*. Any other way out but evolution is inconceivable. But is it really inconceivable? I do not think so, since I can conceive of a third alternative to either special creation or evolution, and that is to admit with candor that we have no scientific answer to the question of the missing link, although we must recognize that it is a scientific question or one of fact. And this takes us to the second problem.

Why is it necessary to explain the origin of culture? A scientist need not be omniscient—he is not a philosopher. Why is it not enough to say that on the evidence at hand we are reasonably certain of the fact of man's biological evolution but have not the faintest idea about how the ape that became man pulled off the feat? I submit that one possible reason we cannot confess our ignorance is that we may still be scared of Wilberforce and Bryan. The bitterness generated by the warfare that started with the publication of *The Origin of Species* has not yet been dissipated. Naturalistic philosophers and scientists are still running scared. That the philosophers should be scared is understandable. They advance the phoney argument that they have empirical evidence for their doctrines, and when we look at their arguments we find that at the critical point where the evidence is most urgently needed, they have supplied it with a fideistic link. But why should the scientists be scared? I do not know. Darwin and his bull-dog, T. H. Huxley, licked the hell out of Wilberforce; and a Bryan, in our century, is a perfect paradigm of intellectual backwardness and dogged religious

faith. But almost one hundred and ten years after their triumph, the victors seem to retain the rancor towards their beaten enemies. They are not at all amused by jokers who bury human skulls. I remember telling a positivist friend of my relief when I read that the Piltdown skull was shown to be a hoax. "Thank heavens," I said to him, "we can now go back to *Genesis* with a good conscience." The man knew me quite well but he did not even smile. There are some things you do not joke about, and evolution is one of them. Another possible account of the reason these good minds accept shoddy arguments is that while in some areas of interest they are able to distinguish clearly between faith and knowledge, in the area of evolution, for reasons to be looked into below, they are not able to make the distinction. The first possible explanation, however, does not exclude the second.

VI

ANOTHER REASON makes it necessary to explain human origins by pseudo-scientific speculations that beg the issue and introduce fig-leaf explanations that are usually hopelessly muddled, and that is that philosophical naturalism is a powerfully regnant ecumenical orthodoxy among the educated today.

I do not believe that copious evidence is needed to convince the reader that in one version or another, philosophical naturalism is widely spread among the educated today and can, therefore, properly be referred to as the regnant philosophical orthodoxy. It is true that today voluminous tomes are no longer written on the evolution of morals, or marriage, or religion, or art. As already noted, this busy industry was successfully put a stop to by Boas and Goldenweiser. Students of language no longer believe that the origin of language

is a question to which they can profitably turn, although I have heard rumors that when Noam Chomsky functions professionally, and not as a political propagandist, he is concerned with something that looks like preoccupation with the old question in a new way. But although there are no writers carrying on the tradition of Hobhouse, Westermarck, Edward Caird, Herbert Green Sparring, and the rest of that wonderfully learned band of wrong-headed evolutionists, social scientists and a large educated public have not abandoned the belief that human cultures must be the products of evolutionary processes. There seems to be today an effort afoot to revive or revamp evolutionary theories of culture. True, Leslie White and his disciples are far from constituting a majority of social scientists. But if not many social scientists write on the subject, probably the great majority take it for granted.¹¹

Often philosophical naturalism is advanced as if it were an empirically established fact and essential to the development of social science. When the doctrine is defended by professional philosophers, they at least offer arguments in its favor. Men like Dewey, Santayana, Woodbridge, Sellars, Mead, Morris Cohen, and the rest of the brilliant band of naturalists of that generation knew what difficulties they were up against. Their heirs, apparently, do not. Take the following statement found in Bennett and Tumin's *Social Life*:

A major idea underlying this book is that all objects and events in the universe are equally natural. This applies whether the events and objects are non-human, human, or man-made. A rock, a rooster, a man, a machine, an earthquake, the crowing of a rooster, a human emotion, the operation of a machine—all these are equally natural. They are all parts of nature seen in the large.¹²

The statement leaves no room for doubt. It has the apodictic ring one expects from the Pope of Rome on matters on which he claims infallibility, or from the pronouncements of a Zhdanov or a Khrushchev on the value of art or on matters that touch the basic articles of Marxist Faith. It refers to all objects, collectively and distributively I guess, in heaven and earth. I had believed, before I ran into this egregious pronouncement that sociologists were experts on sociological objects and that, since sociological objects are a rather limited class of objects, they left all other objects to the proper experts. Further, I had believed that while in their private capacity, men are free to indulge the luxury of entertaining opinions on matters on which they have no competence, professional decorum would keep them within their area of competence when functioning professionally; and I had also believed that when an expert is forced to step out of his field of competence, he does so with diffidence and alerting the reader to the fact that he could not be as responsible for what he was writing as he could for the rest of his hypotheses. This, I had thought, constituted an essential part of a scientist's code of honesty. I had also thought that the days of men whose knowledge covered the whole range of possible knowledge—men like Leibniz—were over. I could not have been more mistaken. When you run into truly great scientists the restrictions lesser men impose on themselves are not binding. Messrs. Bennett and Tumin are not tethered by a short rope. Having wandered with confidence over the whole universe, they know all about it. They investigated all classes of objects, looked into telescopes, microscopes, poked into caves, and dived into the depths of the sea; they studied the philosophy of mathematics and read metaphysics and axiology; they read theology and the history of religion; they studied the mystics and pon-

dered the problems of ESP as well as the cases the reputable astronomers still find puzzling about UFO's. No wonder that Messrs. Bennett and Tumin are omniscient scientists. Having made sure they had not overlooked anything in heaven and earth, they arrived at their conclusion. They had earned it. Wonderful men. Polymaths. The ages of Aristotle and of Leibniz are back with us. Messr. Bennett and Tumin have restored what we took to be a lost accomplishment. One remembers that Rabelais was hailed "an abyss of learning." But Rabelais was a chump compared to Messrs. Bennett and Tumin. The true abysses of learning are our omniscient authors. And notice also that they are wonderfully industrious, for it must have taken a great deal of energy and time to examine all objects in heaven and earth—or at least all classes of objects. But they did make a mistake, one that, had it been made by their lesser brethren, the rest of the scientists, would be considered a very big one: They forgot to tell us, as lesser men who consider themselves responsible scientists would have told us, what means and criteria they used to arrive at their conclusion. But the authority of Messrs. Bennett and Tumin is so undisputed that no doubt they can dispense with the self-imposed restrictions and the decorum of ordinary scientists.

The poor student who takes the course with our authors in order to be introduced to the science of sociology gets much more than he bargained for. He has dished out to him under the aegis of science a piece of propaganda, and has it dished out without a warning that the current orthodoxy can be questioned and that naturalistic philosophers have found, when they tried to elaborate their philosophies, formidable obstacles in their way. Because the statement is presumably backed by the authority of science, the student accepts its dogmatism uncritically, and it becomes so deep-

ly imbedded in his mind that no critical scalpel can remove it. The authors do not have the elementary candor to warn the student that some contemporary philosophers of stature, men like Max Scheler and Nicolai Hartmann, hold that values have status in being independently of those who do the valuing; and that therefore, if all objects and events are natural, not all can be equally natural in the sense that American naturalists hold they are. And I emphasize *contemporary* philosophers, lest the argument be shrugged off because it refers to superstitious philosophers who lived in the Dark Ages—ages that are dark indeed in the minds of those who know nothing about them.

It is desirable to dwell on this matter at length, because the case is paradigmatic of the way in which the regnant naturalistic orthodoxy is held and spread. Put into an introductory book on sociology, the statement is evidence not only of the intellectual irresponsibility and the partisanship of the regnant orthodoxy, but of the fact that the writers have no scruples about making propaganda in the classroom. It shows, further—and bear in mind, dear reader, that our universities pullulate with this kind of men—that they have little concern for the dignity and the intellectual integrity of their students. They do not give the student the chance to weigh critically the faith which is being pounded into him. Are all things natural? How can two sociologists know that? *Know*, that is, as they know their sociology. It is worth the iteration: Messrs. Bennett and Tumin do not tell us how they came by the egregious piece of knowledge. But although it is a substantive proposition, they have no scruples in using it as an assumption basic to their book. "All things in the whole universe are natural. Take it from us, *we know*. And no lip, either."

This is not teaching, it is brainwashing. And it is very successful. Have you ever

tried, esteemed reader, to challenge any of the regnant phoney dogmatisms inculcated in your students' minds in the name of science and philosophy? Try it. It is an experience. It is also testimony of the fact that American universities and colleges do a superb job of what they set out to do: fill the student's mind with a lot of gliberal-liberal clichés and tommyrot. You'll get back the anti-religious and socialist argle barge and bleeding heart nonsense of the gliberal-liberal orthodoxy. Tell a properly brainwashed young man who has taken an introductory course in anthropology or sociology that cultural relativism—to take an example dear to the heart of the gliberal-liberal professors—is a bundle of nonsense whose sole truth, the fact of cultural pluralism, no one has denied since Xenophanes and Herodotus. Watch him react. He will hate you. When you begin to expound the argument against cultural relativism he behaves like a coyote caught in a trap; he squeals, groans, pulls, gives evidence of acute pain and anger; but one thing he does not do: he does not open his mind to the argument. Or try to tell a well brainwashed victim of our educational system, as I tried recently, that a most important substantive distinction must be drawn between religion and superstition, a difference that is recognized by theologians and by enlightened religious minds. The experiment is worth making. But don't expect to get anywhere with your student. You won't.

But there is more to Messrs. Bennett and Tumin's statement. It is bad methodology. The sociologist does not need to make dogmatic statements about all that is. He is no philosopher. All he needs to do is to state that sociology can deal only with natural phenomena and that when it encounters—as perforce it must—phenomena that men claim to be supernatural, the sociologist deals with it as if it were natural, or deals only with its natural aspects. Thus the so-

ciologist must be interested in religion, in magic, and in belief in ghosts. He will probably arrive at a better understanding of these phenomena if he does not approach them with contempt but with sympathy. But when he turns to them, he must disregard the claim that they are super-natural and he must treat them as he treats the rest of his data, as natural. But a responsible teacher—as distinct from the brainwasher—tells his students that he believes that although he is convinced that all objects are natural, this is a philosophical tenet and some of the greatest minds produced by Western civilization—and some of these eminent as scientists, and some living today—have not been able to accept the naturalistic hypothesis. He encourages his students to be critical of his own beliefs as well as of those he disagrees with. A propagandist dishes out his propaganda and conceals all facts unfavorable to his own view.

VII

THE FAITH OF the naturalist and that of the believer in the doctrine of the evolution of culture are extrinsically interesting because they are professed by men who have no respect for fideism in religion, and many of them are men who in many ways display superior lucidity, acuity, and critical fastidiousness. Yet about naturalism and the evolutionary origin of man they accept arguments that are shoddy. Extrinsically, therefore, I am baffled by this question: How did the orthodoxy about human origins manage to impose itself on these minds? I do not mean to ask by means of what specious arguments and inadmissible assumptions these men accepted the doctrines they accept. We have seen the grounds on which three of them accept inadmissible theories of human origins and, as already stated, I have studied the arguments of two others elsewhere. I mean to

ask how can minds of unquestionable quality and probity allow themselves to be taken in by arguments that are inadmissible? Why the faith? My extrinsic interest in this doctrine arises from the fact that for me the acceptance of these views poses in a concrete manner the problem of orthodoxy. The well-nigh universal acceptance of the evolutionary hypothesis by critical minds is a voluntary acceptance. It has not been imposed, like Marxism in Russia or China, by powerful institutional means backed by strong sanctions. We live in an open society and social scientists and philosophers distrust fideistic propositions. Why, then, are they so easily sold on doctrines that are so poorly grounded? I put it to the reader: We are confronted with a strange phenomenon on which, alas, there is, so far as my reading takes me, no light. But it is the general question that is most important: How do opinions, doctrines, beliefs, ideologies, attitudes, moral commitments—philosophical, theological, political and the rest—gain the acceptance they gain? It is this general question that is of interest to me.

I am relatively confident that no one knows with any degree of adequacy the reason a climate of opinion, intellectual ethos, the spirit of an age, a *Zeitgeist*, a catholic orthodoxy, a body of opinions held on faith by a group of men, imposes itself on the thinkers of an age. Have you ever seen, esteemed reader, a school of small tropical fish swimming in a shallow, transparent sea? The school may be over a yard in length and a couple of feet in girth. They hold together, opening and closing their small mouths and wiggling their fins, guided by God-knows-what objectives, bent on God-knows-what goals. Suddenly, for no visible reason, they swerve, all of them, in one body, and those that fall out hasten to join the school. No doubt something guides them: thermal currents, smells, sounds. And no doubt some scientist has a probable

theory about the way they hold together and move in a body. I often saw them as a child in Curaçao, and they fascinated me.

I have also seen intellectuals move in an ideological body and then swerve, and have seen the laggards trying to catch up. There are a number of phenomena displayed by the intellectuals that are of interest. The complacent confidence with which they hold their beliefs, the unanimity of their minds, the small number and the kind of differences of opinion allowed, and the fierceness, the enthusiasm, in the eighteenth century sense of the term, with which their opinions are espoused. This holds not merely for pseudo-scientific, philosophical, and theological doctrines, but for attitudes, value judgments, political responses, moral notions, and in some groups, literary and artistic opinions. Groups of men are polarized by fear, or hatred, or loyalty, or piety, and are held together with a powerful cohesive force. When I became aware of this fact I looked back on my past experience and became ashamed: a man who has always prided himself on his autarchy could not look back on the fact that he had been a member of a flock. I realized, before the relatively recent disclosures of the guilt of Sacco and the innocence of Vanzetti, that my belief in their innocence, once upon a time, had not been based on a critical examination of the evidence. A member of the liberal flock, I had swallowed what *The Nation* and other liberal and socialist organs printed. Nor was this piece of dogma the only one I had swallowed. I had been a faithful member of the flock, bah-bah-ing along with the rest of the docile sheep, taking as truths judgments and valuations that, once you started to look at them critically, turned out to be mythological propaganda. Of course, once you see that this is what you have been doing you take off by yourself. And you come more or less rapid-

ly to the conclusion that integrity, intellectual honesty, and uncritical partisanship of any kind do not mix.

That the Russians and Chinese think alike does not seem to constitute a problem. We know the enormous pressure put on them to believe the Higher Truths of their political religion. This statement will have to be qualified presently. But it is true that in communist countries deviation from the prescribed orthodoxy is dangerous and when discovered it is punished. The Nazis, after they gained power, made it dangerous for anyone within the Reich to disagree with them. But the majority of Russians today—and this is the qualification—do not have to be forced to believe in the Higher Truths of their political faith. Having been brainwashed in school from their earliest years and having little opportunity to meet critical opposition to the faith they acquired in school, they probably believe as firmly in the Higher Truth of Marxism as Messrs. Bennett's and Tumin's students believe in their dogmatic and uncritical naturalism. Power, no doubt, accounts for the way in which some orthodoxies are initially forced on people. But there are other factors since, for instance, some religions have successfully spread in spite of the fierce opposition of those in power, and other beliefs have spread by a kind of prestige gained by osmosis.

How can we account for the nearly universal acceptance of inadequate philosophical and pseudo-scientific opinion by a body of men who live in an open society and whose fundamental commitment is to truth? The spread in our century of evolutionism and naturalism is not difficult to explain: It is accounted for by the prestige of Darwinism and the often inept opposition which the theory of evolution encountered. Wilberforce and Bryan did perhaps as much as Huxley for the triumph of our contemporary philosophical orthodoxy. And

kindly note: The men who accept the evolutionary hypothesis of human origins and its naturalistic basis are accepting "opinions," in the dyslogistic Platonic sense of the term. Scientists, teachers of philosophy, and men in the humanities are professional thinkers. Creativity is a very popular term among us at the moment. Yet on certain questions there is as much conformity among us as there is among Mao's slaves. Why do men who claim to inquire in freedom build Iwo Jima defenses against the criticism of their opinions and fight like fanatical Japanese soldiers for their fideistic dogmas when their dogmas are so clearly erroneous? This is a question that I find puzzling and to which I have no answer.

Could it be that orthodoxy is as necessary to men—and to men of all classes, including the class of men who are professionally expected to be independent thinkers—as hanging together in one school is necessary to some small tropical fish? Is it that unless men are sustained by agreement, they are uncomfortable, anxious, in fear? Are we men, then, no more than children, comfortable only in the unanimity of our agreements and deeply tremulous (however unconscious the trembling may be) when we have to strike out by ourselves, when we have to be, each by himself, the only man in step in the regiment? To these questions we have only very dubious answers. But of the fact we may be reasonably certain.

Since I have asserted that the phenomenon of orthodoxy, so far as my knowledge carries me, is not understood, I cannot claim that the various fields in which orthodoxy reigns belong to one class or to several. It would be most enlightening to discover what forces go towards the creating of the polarization of opinion that constitutes the heart of any orthodoxy.

It remains to point out that when an out-

sider speaks of an orthodoxy that he does not accept—as I have done in this paper—he can only mean a body of opinion held by a majority. But of course to recognize that a group, however large, accepts a body of opinion is not to explain why the group

holds it. We must therefore remain content with noting the fact. Those who take adequate note of it will enjoy a bracing experience, one that should lead to a great gain in autarchy and in tolerant charity of human folly.

¹Julian Huxley, M. A., D. SC., F. R. S. *Evolution The Modern Synthesis*, (New York and London, 1943). I do not imagine anyone would wish to deny the eminence of Julian Huxley as a biologist. But the man is also a peddler of a secularistic, Pelagian Erlösungslehre, as muddled as it is pretentious and inadmissible. See my "Julian Huxley's Ethics," in *Ethics* Vol. LVIII, No. 4, (Summer, 1958), and my *The Moral Life and The Ethical Life*, (Chicago, Illinois, 1950), Chapter IX. This chapter does not appear in the paperback Gateway edition published by Henry Regnery Co., Chicago, Illinois, 1963.

²"Science and the Studies of Man," in *Scientism and Value*, edited by Helmut Schoeck and James W. Wiggins, (Princeton, New Jersey, 1960), pp. 50-82.

³*A Scientific Theory of Culture and Other Essays*, by Bronislaw Malinowski, with a Preface by Huntington Cairns, (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1944), p. 174.

⁴Freud's ontogenetic theory of the super-ego I examined in my *The Moral Life and The Ethical Life*, Chapter IX. This chapter does not appear in the paperback Gateway edition. The philogenetic theory is to be found in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, authorized translation by Joan Riviere, (New York, 1930). In Chapter VII Freud tells us the well known fairy tale about the brothers who killed their father. But he suddenly introduces remorse into the account, when, if he is going to explain the genesis of the conscience of super-ego, or capacity to feel guilt, he has to tell us how the feeling of remorse came about. Without a conscience or super-ego, or capacity to feel guilt, all the brothers could have felt in retrospect and when they needed the father was regret. Remorse is the product of the conscience whose genesis Freud is trying to explain. Freud worked out his theory also in *Totem and Taboo*, to be found in that useful collection, *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*, translated and edited with an Introduction by Dr. A.A. Brill, (New York, 1938), pp. 914 ff. Again re-

morse is introduced as the result of the killing of the father. Freud wrote a number of papers on art. For the scholar interested in his aesthetics the most important is perhaps "The Relation of the Poet to Day-Dreaming," in *Collected Papers*, Vol. IV, pp. 173-83. On religion, *The Future of An Illusion*, translated by W. D. Robson-Scott, (New York, 1949).

⁵David Bidney, *Theoretical Anthropology*, (New York, paperback edition, 1967).

⁶*Ibid.*, p. xiv.

⁷Note that I am writing about the biological survival value of religion. I am not writing about the truth or the cultural functional value of religion or of the various religions. These questions raise problems of a totally different nature. The cultural functional value of religion can be indicated briefly: Capacity to respond to the numinous—however interpreted—adds to men a dimension of personality that those who do not have that capacity lack. As to the truth of religion or of the various religions: this is too difficult a problem for a book, let alone for a footnote. Let me say in passing as regards it that I call myself in all seriousness a theist, although I am not a member of a church and do not even call myself a Christian. It goes without saying, therefore, that my theism is horrendously heterodox. Had I been living in the sixteenth or seventeenth century in Spain and thinking as I do today, I would have had to exercise more prudence and guile than I know myself to be capable of in order not to find myself sooner or later chained to a stake on top of a pile of dry wood.

⁸*Supra* note 5, p. xx.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰Paul Henle, "The Status of Emergence," *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 39, No. 18, pp. 486-93.

¹¹*Evolution and Culture*, edited by Marshall D. Sahlins and Elman R. Service, (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1960).

¹²John W. Bennett and Melvin M. Tumin, *Social Life, Structures and Function An Introduction to General Sociology*, (New York, 1948), p. xiv.