

TUMBRILS

No. 5

TRUTH * UNIVERSALITY * AUTHORITY * UNITY * PURITY * PARENOLGY

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Material is entirely editorially written, unless otherwise credited. Larry Shaw originated the contents-page format in the first mailing. This, somewhat against my normal inclinations, is the polemic issue of TUMBRILS, and don't say you didn't ask for it. (Shaw's language, too, somehow or other.)

Vanguardists interested in the arts are asked to show RENASCENCE to their friends. The book includes both critical and creative material. Incidentally, it needs contributions of both kinds as well.

TUMBLERS

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ANTIMACASSAR

Reading is a serious business not necessarily confined to books. I do not think necessary, in view of that statement and its implications, to thumb any peppercorns in the direction of Donald A. Wollheim's mill; for if I were to produce a list of Socialist "basic texts" nine pages long, he would still consider the list inadequate so long as I still showed some doubts about the essential holiness of the subject; and as for pointing out to him that there are other windows on society than textbooks - or even novels by Dos Passos - that is a procedure not calculated to impress a man who knows only two categories of the written word.

Like Mr. Wollheim, I am generally reluctant to question the label a man applies or denies for himself; unlike him, I do not honor such a claim in one paragraph in order to lightly imply the opposite in the next, because I know that in that very possible future for which he hopes, men are shot upon the turn of such a phrase. Many of the executed will have called themselves Socialists.

I've read a lot of these men. Also I have read the Bible and Paul Bunyan, that is to say the DAILY WORKER and the NEW MASSES, rather frequently of late. And, unlike Mr. Wollheim, I am not so blinded by the notion that a vast and successful military machine insures the social perfection of its nation, as to be unable to read other newspapers and magazines, and even an occasional history book, with eyes toward what is happening instead of what I want to be happening.

Also I have read some texts; but these I deliberately undervalue, to emphasize that there are still other ways of finding things out, besides the priests and the renegades, if one has not yet donned blinkers. But why list them, for a man so single-minded and humorless that he does not hesitate to write "the polluted anti-Soviet press?" What does it matter what information I got about the USSR, or where I got it? If it is anti-Soviet, it is polluted and unreliable; if it is pro-Soviet, it is true. With this one-value orientation, Jim Blish, "never very strong on logic," is supposed to make a logical judgement on the USSR.

If I were the intellectual trickster my Stalinist friends imagine me, I should here ask Mr. Wollheim to trot out for me a list of the books on logic he has read. Instead, I shall content myself with a specific refutation. On p. 5 of K'TAOGM-M (which translates to ONE - MAN - TRUTH) Mr. Wollheim, charging humorlessly down the rails of his obsession, declares, "What was originally an 'if' supposition becomes in the next sentence an accepted fact...it has often been used by fascists."

Mr. Wollheim seems unable to imagine anyone disposing of him in one paragraph. Having defined, provisionally as a supposition, what I thought his attitude to be, I went on to say that other replies were demonstrably guilty of the same attitude. This is not only stated as fact, it IS fact.* If he had stopped flailing the air with shibboleths long enough to reread

"If DAW's attitude is...then I consider it to be..." New paragraph. "The remainder of the replies are guilty" - get it, Mr. Wollheim? - "are guilty of this attitude." I would cheerfully reduce this to symbolic logic, which would show that no contradiction or trick exists except between the ears of the lip-reader; but unfortunately our expert on logic would be unable to read the equations.

the sentence this might have been evident; as it is, my original provisional accusation of carelessness has been rather thoroughly documented. Mr. Wollhoim also has opinions on poetry.

AT THE NEW SCHOOL

Thus, at the last, the vocal residue
 Become scavengers from out the Tarpt pack
 Playing the Three of Crows against the Tower
 Of Silence; crouched on a fetid grating,

A sleek, complacent trio. The Parsees built
 Those towers for a simple purpose, understandable
 To vultures; but the bones, the shining
 Bones for whom that other spoke -

The flesh is gone, the skulls and radii
 Drop through the grating, where below
 They can be seen, at noontime, when the sun is right,

Agloam, quite out of reach of nibbling beaks.
 The vultures tread the bars, their droppings
 Follow. They are happy. Here they rule.

- Marcus Lyons

E.P. ODE TWENTY WEEKS AFTER

"As I came through the desert thus it was,
 As I came through the desert;..."

The postcards that were supposed to have been included in the last TUMBRILS were held back by lack of funds; they were sent out later to the 37 Vanguardists who had seen the Pound dispute in its entirety. The answers were divided thus:

Do you think Ezra Pound should be imprisoned or otherwise punished for his war-time activities?

YES 12
 NO 5

(Answers declaring this question not answerable in blanket form: 1)

(Undecided: 2)

Cards not reaching me by deadline will be tabulated as they come in.

Was this your opinion prior to the discussion in VAPA?

YES - 12
 NO - 4

(no prior opinion: 5)

Total number of cards returned: 21

All the members and subscribers in Vanguard were included in the survey except a few whose addresses were dubious for military reasons.

Number of cards bearing signatures: 20

SOME FUNCTIONS OF HISTORICAL
RATIONALISM

I should like to begin this with a coldly inarguable datum remote from the hothouse rhetoric of polemics. The physical sciences offer many such data, but none so germane to the subject as that pregnant series of symbols with which Einstein predicted a geometry for t .^{*} Outside this consummately simple equation no twentieth-century political discussion has meaning.

Such an extraordinary association naturally provokes impatience in any mind unaware of the idiotic nature of twentieth-century thought, but it is simple enough to demonstrate. The ways of looking at history are not numerous, and can be ticketed: A history is a group of events - not necessarily a chain, or a pattern, but at least a lump of things-that-have-happened. Either these events have a pattern, or they do not. If they have a pattern, then this pattern either is knowable or it is not. If patterns exist in history, then there is either one fundamental and universally explanatory one, or several. All other attitudes toward history fall into one or another of these divisions.

I shall use the following terms for them: the belief that there is no pattern I shall call historical nihilism; that we cannot know whether or not there is a pattern, historical skepticism; that there is a pattern, historical rationalism; that there is one fundamental pattern, historical monism; that there are several irreducible patterns, historical pluralism; and finally, that there is a pattern, but that it is unknowable, historical mysticism. When I refer below to a man as a skeptic or a mystic, it will be in the sense of these definitions.

I have claimed these definitions to be inclusive, and several examples will show that they are exactly that. If one is to exclude another possible attitude from the myriads of borderline cases, historical subjectivism - the assumption that whatever patterns exist are imposed upon the record by our own minds and hence are equally untrustworthy - comes to mind; but a moment's thought will show this to be a special case of historical nihilism. It assumes that the pattern is not present in history but only in the mind. Similarly, every attitude toward history may be reduced to two fundamentals:

- (1) Either there is pattern (rationalism), or
- (2) There is not (nihilism.)

These are, or begin as, opinions. Actually, however, attitude (2) has been entirely untenable since September, 1903. At that date the social sciences - built mainly of opinions through a scaffolding of facts any brilliant mind could interpret any way it thought advisable - were confronted with a datum from the world of physics whose inarguability, while not absolute, made any social datum look like a fairy tale. That datum presented working proof that "Events exist in time as objects exist in space, wherein such events and objects operate in a continuum." In social terms: this statement - enforced upon the violent reluctance of Newtonian physicists

^{*}Cf. the present issue of DISCRETE for a condensed statement of the math involved.

by a definitive cataclysm in the constellation Perseus - drove home the concept of pattern. If events have position as well as objects, historical nihilism is out, for position implies interrelation.

History, then, has pattern. Whatever the quantitative unreliability of our sociological data, the most reliable information that we have - pragmatic information, information that works; information through which we have made chemical predictions and liberated physical energies - points toward a meaningful relationship of events. In the physical sciences we have acted upon the assumption, supported by the Einstein equations, that a whole is primary and greater than the sum of its parts, and ~~thereby~~ have done such unimaginable (even if inhuman) things as the destruction of Hiroshima and the V-2 bombing of London; and the best evidence that we have that this assumption is temporary - the Heisenberg formula - goes no farther than to say that the parts are subject to individual and inconsequential variation. We can do no more reasonable or profitable thing than to accept these results upon the James basis: "What sort of everyday world would there be, if this were true?" We find the world this metaphysics predicts, and must accept it, if not as Real, as the reallest we know.

History has pattern.... Is it knowable? We must assume that it is, or leave the question entirely; and this latter alternative is impossible while we live in a plenum wherein every sect is determined to force its personal pattern upon us - wherein we are constantly subject to the second James test, "What sort of conduct is required of me if this is true?"... Is it arbitrary? If it is, then the evidence of our senses, which have recorded the supporting facts, is untrustworthy - and we have seen the evidence of our senses answer the pragmatic test too often to find such an attitude workable.

Historical rationalism attempts to arrange a vast congeries of objects (events) into a pattern upon which (a) predictions may be made, and (b) meaningful action may be predicated. These objects are of very different characters, ranging from the fact of a war to the fact of a particular soldier's part in it, from the prevailing myth of a time to the orthography of its literature; and the sociologist must decide first of all what types of events have significance and what have not, and secondly what events within these types logically can be considered as objects. That is, is the technological development of a period as important, or more important, than its prevailing mythology? And is the fact of technical development a whole, or must it be broken down to account for the effects of specific techniques? And if the techniques themselves are the units with which we are to deal, is the discovery of any one of them fortuitous or predetermined?

Thus we are confronted at once with four different kinds of rationalistic historical theories:

1. The linear
2. The cyclical
3. The monist
4. The pluralist

It is possible to examine these four types as attitudes, without reference to specific cases, since they make certain basic assumptions common to their individual representatives. Thus, in the sense that both view history as an orderly progression from a darkness to a desideratum, both Meritism and traditional supernaturalism are alike. They are linear theories. The materialism of Jose Ortega y Gasset² and the materialism of Oswald Spengler³ agree in a cyclical view, regardless of the differences in their views of how or why "history repeats."

First on the list is the linear theory. Such a theory involves the following assumptions: (a) The idea of progress, and (b) the idea of finality. Every event falls somewhere along the line, and is either "ahead" or "behind" of any other; or, it is an "advanced" or a precedent or "primitive" event in relationship to others. Of course, no theorist intelligent enough to compile a philosophy of history would

make such an analogy, and there are various ways to disguise it to which the sophisticated mind can resort. A linear monism based upon facts of an economic type can agree that in a given period a number of events were alike - that for xy many decades the financial situation of the common man did not change to any significant extent. To this stop-and-go linearism may be added the jump-two-slide-one type, wherein actual regressive events are admitted; but no one familiar with mathematics is deceived into thinking a linear theory cyclical because the theorist is drawing spirals. "Onward and upward" is the motto, no matter how epileptic the progress of the pattern may be. The very concepts of stasis and regression imply linear movement, and the idea of progress.

The idea of finality is perhaps more obvious, but at the same time more difficult to state. In the Hebraic supernaturalist hypothesis⁶ the goals are fixed and stated; history begins with Adam and ends with Millenium. Linear rationalisms involve the same assumption. The scientific supernaturalism of H. G. Wells,⁷ though it is based upon a different congeries of objects than Hebraic supernaturalism - the fact of technical change rather than the fact of mystical experience - predicates an end-product, a moment when the millennial period may be said to have begun. The moment when an International Soviet is become the human race is such an end-point. What exactly does this mean? It means that at the arrival of this moment, however variously its character is described, history will stop acting as history has acted up to that point, and start acting in a different manner. Events do not cease to happen, but with the arrival of the Millenium, the scientific World-State, or the Socialist Society, the pattern changes.

Now if there is one thing that we have learned from history, it is, to quote Henry Sostman, that "from time to time the same things happen."⁸ No careful spiraling of a linear notion can disguise the fact that evidences from other arts and sciences show regular recurrence. The example cited in Pantomas⁹ is one fact in a vast body of facts. For the purposes of this essay I shall cite, not a tabulation of those evidences, but another evidence of the same kind - that among the philosophers of the last two thousand years - including men who followed Marx, men such as E.T. Bell,¹⁰ Toynbee,¹¹ and Spengler - Marx is the only one of any importance who found a linear rationalism tenable. In the present century there are only two other linearists (Ouspenski¹² and Santayana¹³), and of these two, one is a mystic, the other a skeptic. When one adds to this evidence the fact of the Marxian procedure, it becomes evident that his iconoclasm is far from the result of insight - for note that the "dialectic" which is the Marxian method of examining facts and reasoning from them is the invention of Hegel¹⁴, a man who hated the empirical method, distrusted science, agreed with Spengler on the reliability of numerology, swore that nobody, including himself, understood what he wrote, and based a lifetime's work upon the idea that a state or nation is a living organism. Out of such stuff was Historical Necessity contrived... Naturally I am not implying that Marx himself believed all these things; but it is fact that he considered a method of reasoning derived from such assumptions to be the best method of examining history; and it cannot be anything but evident that the little that was useful in the dialectic has now been as thoroughly outdated by symbolic logic and the calculus of statement as the linear metaphysics has been damned by Einstein and the calculus of function.

Nor is this all, for we have as yet said no thing about the monist-pluralist antithesis. The problem of determining which categories of events have significance and which have not involves explaining recurrences. If there is one basic kind of evidence which, from age to age, accurately indicates the nature of the historical pattern, the repeated returns to the same kind of situation in other categories will invariably involve considerable gymnastic dove-tailing. While the Marxian economic pattern is naively climbing through technological revolutions the McKinley pattern of change of government with change of military technique is lashing back and forth like a vinegar eel, and Pareto's elites¹⁶ are circulating without much worry over a

* Cr. "Onward and downward," as with Nordau¹⁵ and Herbert¹⁶.

ther factor. Many men among social philosophers have been able to take these internal fluctuations into account. To bring us full circle back to James, one might say that these are tough-minded men who do not require a box universe as one of their creature comforts, while tender-minded philosophers require a monistic metaphysics, a universe neatly coverable with a few blanketing dogmatisms.

The followers of Marx are an even more tender-minded lot. Having discovered a theory of history which covers thirty of the thirty-two facts about events that they know, they are quite content to tailor or even to lop off the leftovers, rather than to investigate the work of other men upon its own grounds. For the comfort derivable from the assurances that they have a Leader, are persecuted by the Capitalists, and inevitably will reach the Millennium, they swallow whole the quasi-Fascist Hegelian bludgeoning of words (stateless race), and with a perfectly straight face declare that they have arrived by reason at the conclusion that history stops functioning when We take over. So great is their apparent need for their metaphysics to be tight as a trivet or an apple-pie that they will not subject it to the tests which any science must pass:

Marxism's one-value orientation provides so incomplete a pattern that scarcely two Socialists can agree on what actions it predicates as meaningful;

and so insubstantial factually that its predictions have time and time again been discovered to be pure fantasy.

If the reader thinks the previous sentence too strongly colored, he should consult the writings of latter-day Marxists, or question Marxists among his friends; he will find the facts to be as stated, though the emotion-words, naturally, will be a little different.

No reasonable claim can be made that any of the other men named in this essay can provide historical patterns which completely fulfill the functions required of historical rationalism. As in the natural sciences, there is no healthier attitude than a suspension of judgement, if it is accompanied by continual investigation. Each of these men provides a disparate point of view, includes different types of patterns, emphasizes different classes of events. Among them there is a common denominator, and this denominator is findable; for that much, at least, the physical sciences have provided trustworthy evidence. The task is much simpler than it was in 1900.

But it cannot yet be expected to give in to so simple-minded an investigation as that which Marxists consider adequate.

1. William James; Pragmatism
2. Jose Ortega y Gasset; The Revolt of the Masses
3. Oswald Spengler; The Decline of the West
4. George Herbert; Parochialism in Historical Theory
5. Max Nordau; Degeneration
6. anthology; The Bible
7. H. G. Wells; The Shape of Things to Come (original edition)
8. Henry E. Sostman; The Folded and the Quiet
9. Marcus Lyons; Fantomas
10. Eric Temple Bell; The Search for Truth
11. Arnold J. Toynbee; A Study in History
12. P. D. Ouspenski; A New Model of the Universe
13. George Santayana; Reason in Religion
14. G. W. F. Hegel; Philosophy of History
15. Silas McKinley; Democracy and Military Power
16. Vilfredo Pareto; The Mind and Society (Trattato di Sociologia Generale)

THREE-DOTS

4th Mailing: It is the purest of pleasures to welcome STEFANTASY, whose improvement over A DANGEROUS THING will doubtless be so frequently commented upon elsewhere in this mailing that I need do no more than mention it. It is, for me, much easier to enthuse over the sometimes-not-quite-professional print job than over the neatness of, say, SAPPHO; having done typesetting and printing myself, I am much more impressed by the hours of loving care Danner has put in than by the parallel expenditure of money by Messrs Watson and Ebay. Furthermore, the result is worth reading. The Hollywood Menace remarks upon a general trend I deplored specifically in the first V-R RECORD REVIEW; needless to say, I am heartily in accord. The note on water-proof matches reminds me that ten years ago I was carrying kitchen matches coated with sodium silicate; the stuff is slowly water-soluble, but the finished product would resist soaking for a goodly number of hours. It took two scratches to light 'em, first one to get the coating off the head. (Can anybody think up a situation where one's life might depend upon a match's lighting on first stroke? This is not a rhetorical question; I'm really curious about it.)

Joe Kennedy's comment on AGENBITE points up what has been for me the principle excellence of every copy of that magazine I have seen; variety. I am inclined to question, however, the wisdom of printing one of one's own worst poems directly under one of Henry Sostman's best...Sing ho for a Lowndes doodle that has two jagged lines and a feeling of composition in it....Sing haw for Hart's parable, and would that Lowndes' guillotine had fallen vengefully upon it.

Putting Annals of Arkya into the mailing at a time when Lowndes is striving for a more mature style is something of an injustice to the poet, but on other

counts PHANTASHERE is a welcome addition. I remember the old days of the PHANTAGRAPH with great pleasure, and hope to see something similar here. As for the poems themselves, they are good Lovcraft and doubtless will be widely enjoyed by the audience that most minor of writers somehow has collected. The narrative sonnet is not an easy form & Lowndes has used it skillfully in Lovcraft's own manner.

FLING is funny in a pleasant, unforced way. For eight years now Futuria and most of the rest of fandom have been so deeply intrigued by GhuGhuism that they seem to have had no time to develop any sense of humor of their own. As a result, it's grateful to find somebody laughing through his own mouth for a change.

DISCRETE, the magazine with even edges and docked margins, is another case of a Futurian with her own sense of humor. Special enthusiasm for the Knight fairy tale, a form in which he is obviously at home. I think the Toadstool, however, should have been left on the wall where it was drun.

Drumbent: As far as I know, nobody else has had the courage to apply for the job thus far, but I'll go out on the limb far enough to declare that Lowndes should have the Managership regardless. I've watched his activities in Vanguard's behalf for six months, from the vantage-point of an apartment-mate, and I think he has earned every member's vote. Aside from the evidences of fruitful labor visible in the regular appearances of the mailings and in the VANGUARD AMATEUR, his indefatigable letter-writing and drumming up of new members has consumed a great deal of his time; and it would be a grave mistake to replace such proven sincere enthusiasm with someone whose calibre is untested.

Being Official Manager, furthermore, means having a vote on the BOA in suc-

ceeding years, a position for which Doc has proven himself qualified,
Lowndes for Presidente.

Bombshell;* Comes now the close of the year, when the Board of Advisors decides who gets invited to renew. Members have no vote in this matter, which is probably just as well; on the other hand, we all have an interest in keeping the quality of the mailings at the level predicated by the original prospectus, and consequently most of us must have some hopes regarding who gets the boot in dieser heil'gen Stunde.

Excluding those members who are on the "insufficient activity" list, there seem to me to be two members whose rejection upon grounds of quality should be unprotestable. These two are Elsie B. Wollheim* and H. Loren Sinn; the former having shown herself to be a person full of second or third-hand truisms and one completely ignorant of written English; the latter, a member determined to give us nothing but the most pedestrian and vapid kind of "fan" material.

Perhaps the very notion of turning away a renewal upon grounds of quality is foreign to a Jay conceptions - it must certainly be suspect among our own Zissman-Knight faction, which holds that anything a member chooses to publish goes in an a.p.s. As Vanguardists have had the opportunity of observing, however, I am inclined (being misled, no doubt, by the Prospectus and the Constitution) to consider Vanguard as a purveyor of items I shall want to read more than once; and throughout the year have consistently thrown out any publication, no matter how neat or sincere, which wasted my time and money in blithering. Into my boneyard in 1945 went 211, Highpoints No 1, Leprechaun #4, Sappho, Modern Concept, Crying Snowflakes, IT, Parnassus, & Phantagraph Vol 14 #3; and only the part they took in the Pound controversy retained a number of others in my envelopes.

Explication du texte: It occurs to me that the Sostman poem in RENASCENCE #2 loses a fraction of its effect for the one-language reader - though it would lose four times its effect to others were the passages

in question in English. If one knows German those two stanzas are marvelously effective; if not, then one loses in prose sense what little one gains in Zimeisterized rhythm. Without Henry's approval, I offer the following translation:

"For what I feared not
is come upon me
what troubled me not
hath struck me down."
"...Was I not content?
Was I not well at peace?
Had I not found quiet?
I have found weariness!"

This is not exact, exact translation being ridiculous in poetry; it is, instead, a sort of librettose - my best approximation of the sense, with as little distortion of the inimitable metre and tonality of the German as I can manage. Henry himself, perhaps more sensibly, prefers a more synonymized version:

"The thing that I did not fear is
come upon me"
"...I was not in safety,
neither had I rest
neither was I quiet
yet trouble came"

which makes a startling contrast with the 17th-Century richness of the English of the remainder of the poem. (For the facile among us, it is worth noting that this translation is not literal, either.)

Fraud: The sudden inundation of the insecticide market with 3% DDT products (it is ineffective below 5%) has now been topped by an even more cynical bit of chicanery: the appearance of a flea powder called "TTD," which does not contain even a trace of dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane. The Pure Food and Drug Act doubtless will look the other way as usual. After all, Listerine has been defaming the reputation of a great scientist for years by calling it-self an antiseptic, and nobody has done so much as scowl officially.

Erratum: In the historical essay: for "the materialism of Spengler," please read "the mysticism."

*This is hardly a bombshell now, of course; it was so labeled while I still imagined DAW to be an old friend of mine.