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A BARBARIAN POWER?

1. *Yahoo or Lilliputian?*

IT IS A COMMONPLACE among Europeans who know America that she has the same problems as their own world but as if in another scale. Was Swift looking into the future when he wrote about Brobdingnag and the land of the Yahoos? Or is America the land of Lilliput in Europe's modern reality? Perhaps the prophetic parable of Gulliver's travels can only be grasped if we take his adventures together. Every European visitor to America is startled by her extremes and bewildered by her contrasts. His own world seems to be there, with its types, attitudes, and structures, but he cannot take a step without feeling that everything is either too small or too large, so orderly that it hints of mindlessness, or so free that it proclaims anarchy. Further, the extremes meet: a mutter can jump without crescendo into a shout, and a soaring height is not ashamed of the lowliest thing clinging to it, for the contrasts in America are both close and great. And when they crowd, they crowd conspicuously. Their greatest congestion, in fact, is at the very edge of the continent, and the visitor's most dramatic contrast awaits him in the very welcome which the New World extends to him.

The emigrant is not a loud figure in history. He leaves his land in an aura of hush. Few listen to his adieus, and even they hear no more than a mutter as the boat pulls out to sea. And here is the visitor's first, and perhaps most powerful, contrast. The world the ill-favoured of the old have built greets him by shouting him down. For if there is any sight that rings with human sound, it is the skyline of Manhattan. There the disinherited, revelling in the newly-learned magic of technique, have propped stone against steel rafters, piling it up skyhigh. The builders of the skyline apparently knew how to do things better than how to say them, for they have heaped up their works upon the threshold as doers will do when they are greatly moved to speak about themselves, to boast to talkers and critics

about strength and skill newly unleashed. The skyline shouts a muscular boast into the ear of every visitor as his ship comes in. A cry, strident and imperious, it silences the most contemptuous murmur on board the incoming ship.

Upon landing there are more surprises. In sight of the New World the French architect, Le Corbusier, found the skyline a savage spectacle. But upon the stage of it, the tops that mark the jagged line in the harbour are out of sight, and as the skyscrapers singly settle upon the vision, the individual structure, all perpendicularity, must appear to the viewer to embody the principle of order as completely as anything will do outside a book of accounts with its rows of figures. For, asks the architect of the U.N., what is a skyscraper if not stone and steel embodying so savagely quantity from order?

If the visitor looks around, he might, as did Ilya Ehrenburg, the Soviet novelist, discover a wooden house, old and low, nestling at the foot of the giant, or perhaps a whole street of them, the skyscraper striking out from their midst, imperiously linking the mean street with the sky above it. So lightning striking into a bevy of hills makes the ground humble; no intermediate architecture, no five-storey houses, such as make up the heart of a European city. Now we know that in America Gulliver's adventures must be experienced at once.

Such contrasts are endless. Yet they need convey nothing new to a highly philosophical traveller from the Old World. In India and other highly civilized societies he has noted welters of contrasts in closest proximity. It is true that in America the world of crime can be the mudsill of civil order. But what is this compared to an Indian contrast? In India, the goddess Kali seethed at the mouth, her arms writhing with longing to destroy; yet her worshippers, assassins by profession, found dispensation under the same heaven with the followers of beast and gnat. Indian contrasts, however, have served to illustrate the civilized complexity of that society; American contrasts provoke the European to say that the people are barbarian. Yet if India does not deserve the epithet, neither does America. No European will deny that Americans are his cousins. Properly used, however, the epithet "barbarian" expresses hostility only against utter strangers. Consider the meaning of the epithet for the original users.

The Greeks, whose ears were easily offended, made up the epithet out of the stammer of a harsh syllable and used it, as Gibbon said, "against all nations who were strangers to their language and manner." They had thrown it originally against the peoples in the north, but their feelings became equally vivid when they viewed their conquerors the Romans, especially since the Romans claimed to be

painted with orders to have himself represented seated on the throne while Roman kings carried sacks on their shoulders and poured gold at his feet".¹ He enjoyed the sensation of being surrounded by the idols and insignia of the empire, but he did not receive from them any lasting intuition of a superior order, so that there remained nothing to give the barbarian an interest in saving those relics of the sublime for the next day. Thus with his voracious and external curiosity, the barbarian wastes the documents of the best.

America, on the other hand, is a land of museums and universities, and this fact involves the European intellectual in one of his most difficult dilemmas. America is his golden professional opportunity for asserting with scorn and example his faltering position as the main spirit of the Western world. Being the mentor and the apostle whose flock and class are the educated of the world and whose subject and message are the passion of civilization, he cannot pass over the fact of escape and separation. But his buskins sway in the act. Barbarism, civility, *noblesse oblige*? Faced with a relative who has a compulsion to spend when in the vicinity of his poorer cousins, the European cannot hurl the insult "barbarian" with the sureness of the ancients. They were seeking to exorcise with it a persistent shadow voraciously lingering on the threshold, an element of the dark that was steadily descending upon their world. Over Europe the sky now clears, now darkens. In the light that falls through, the European critic speaks the word "barbarian" not to blot his cousin out but to bring him out. He keeps busy exposing America's barbarisms—and just as assiduously searches for America's continuities with the old civilization.

The ancients faced purer facts than does the modern European. America, after all, for all her crudities, is a land of museums and universities. There is no single notion in common use to do justice to the complexities of the trans-Atlantic situation. "Barbarism" is the rhetorical term backed by great tradition, the grand crumbling term of invective that relieves feelings, and it will remain the word to use; but the concept behind the term, although it had served well the Greeks and the Romans, will not do in the present situation. America is a recreant, not a barbarian society. It is the condition of recreance that calls forth the attitudes which keep the epithet alive. This concept sums up, as the epithet does not, those facts about Americans which serve to harden European aloofness.

2. *Rebels and Recreants*

A barbarian community is a universe. As far as the future goes, a barbarian society may have in itself all that the great society has had and more. On the other

hand, a recreant population constitutes a sample of certain portions of another society. It is recruited from the disinherited of the parent society who took action on the animal impulse of getting away from an insufferable condition. In fine, a recreant is one who has failed to rebel. He was interested in freedom rather than in justice. Having passed up the opportunity to discover his rights as a human being, he puts his trust in luck. He arrives in freedom without a concept of rights to it.

What has aggravated the trans-Atlantic situation is the fact that the Great Emigration was taking place at the time when Europe was in its heyday of revolutions. The whole continent had been blazing with revolts for over half a century before, England not remaining immune, and there seemed no lack of opportunities for the nobodies of the Old World to humanize themselves. Thus the risk of further reduction, imprisonment, death—and worse. Such has been the tough condition that the spirit of Europe has exacted. Never noted for its leniency, and now itself tried in the fires of the revolution, nay itself re-made in them, it came to expect the nobodies of its world to go through the same hell if, having been born without a face, they wished to thrust themselves forward and expected to be taken note of. Rebellion earned one a better right, a more solid right, a right with deeper spiritual foundations, and also a more spectacular right than money, than obedience, than loyalty, than work, to become of account, to be heard, to be heard with respect.

Revolution and emigration are twin destinies of the same latitudes, issues of similar moods; they lie close to each other in Europe's history, close enough to appear today to have been the choices of the same hour. This was the appearance in Italy, more so in Ireland, still more so in Poland. There was hunger, stagnation, or depth of humiliation, discontent, to the point that a man who still felt himself a man knew he must act. Across the ocean, the entire longitude of the opposite shore invited; but in his own land a path was also waiting for the step of desperation. To rebel or to emigrate? To the European eye, to any eye alive to the opportunities of history, the situation in retrospect must reveal these as the supreme choices contained in the situation. For the man who went underground and the man who took the ship appear in many ways alike. Discontent, vitality, decision—these are in the makeup of the rebel; and when a man decided to emigrate he gave enough inkling of these to suggest an invidious comparison with the other act. In rebel countries, in Poland or Ireland, the other, the terrible choice, was always the haunting symmetry of the decision to take the first. As a foremost authority, Florian Znaniecki, says about the Polish emigration, "only a very small part have had any

training in rational co-operation and for most of them the Polish national ideal has little meaning." And what better proof of this than the decision itself? When an emigrant took the ship he deserted the cause—and earned the scorn of the national leaders.

Thus from a certain viewpoint the emigrant is a recreant—someone who has failed to rebel. The viewpoint is that concerned with the spiritual development of society in history, that of the European intellectual. Rebellion revives a society's spirit and renovates its self-awareness. The rebel rejoins humanity; he grows a face, learns to speak and to make sense, supremely. The recreant and the rebel impulses arise from the same feeling, the feeling of being cramped beyond endurance, of being reduced to nothingness. But a recreant has been cramped in his vitality and a rebel in his pride. What is frustrated in the recreant is not the feeling that there was something in him worthy of the notice of others, but his energies and senses. He has tended toward facelessness, and the home community, insofar as it took note of him at all, would take note of his tendencies rather than of his features. A rebel stays at home and faces the authorities, for what keeps him in his community is a vision of justice. He seeks to establish a new birthright for himself and his fellows. Something is pulling a recreant out of his community, and it is a mirage rather than a vision. He knows about some free place where vitality counts for more than personality or conventional competence. The prodigal son in the parable of Jesus was being distracted by such a mirage from playing his part in his father's household. As soon as he was of age, he broke away from the dull village for a distant city of pleasure. A recreant collects as much of his birthright as society will let him, and then like the prodigal son departs without explanations. Henceforth he will have difficulty in developing a profile. He tends to drop out of biography.

In a history-conscious society like the European, the rebel, on the other hand, is a figure of paramount significance. Rebels fill more than half of Europe's heroic pantheon, and their faces have a certain specific sharpness of feature. Rebellion forges features that not merely stop the eye, but press upon memory; and it endows man with the kind of character that fascinates and that may even enlist idolatry. The rebel is driven in a straight line by the hard and cutting force of a self that has memorized its rights in a struggle for survival, and that is elevated above commonplace egotism by concern for the dignity of other selves. We see the rebel, a Savonarola or Lenin in profile, his body lines a parabola, the lineament of the effort to hold back the lunging force of the self, to pen it up into an image that will engross the multitude, the body charged like a drawn bow, the jutting head

with its flaming mouth like a fiery bolt about to fly. Goya records the Spanish rebellion against Napoleon. His most important representation of that event is a canvas called "The Third of May," which portrays a night execution of patriots. It is all in profile. Looming in the foreground to the left of centre is the blind line of executioners—no faces, only grey blurs under the monstrous shakos that in their fierce angle are like a row of attacking bullheads, bent down to strike and blind to their target. From the top they cobble the line as if in black stone while the packs the soldiers carry humpback it below; the bodies are balanced on the left leg and borne forward on the right; the trestle is below the seesaw of firing guns which are biting at the central figure, the victim. It is this figure—the rebel victim—that one remembers first. It is the only lighted form in a scene where everything absorbs light; in fact it radiates light, making a dazzling silhouette against the sombre background. Its short arms thrust up, its head gaping, it lunges towards its executioners like an enraged fowl of enormous proportions, and although on its knees, as if nailed to the ground, it faces them out, it blinds them.

The artist, with his European eye, was moved by a profound intuition when depicting the scene. In tests of strength the rebel confronts the unilluminated part of the population, and it is only by such contrasts that his cause has a chance of victory with them. The clear lines of the rebel's features, the illumination and heat they exude, distract the mass from itself. To take the attention of the mob from its provocateurs, to have troops wonder, under the light, about the boredom of their lives and the futility of their death, is to win the first part of the battle. The mass is being atomized, for the individuals who make it up are fusing with the rebel's vision and losing contact with each other. Such scenes have supplied most drama to European arts. Sometimes, especially when played out on the domestic stage, they become the climaxes of high satire. Let the rebel but match his own self—so sharply illumined, and if narrowly illumined, illumined to its very depths—against the prevailing morals, and by its light Philistinism will be exposed to its loose moorings in inherited convictions, and by its breath the most solid of these figures, the Pecksniffs and Pontifexes of the world, will be set adrift and float askew and in lifeless bulk.

And so the rebel is to be seen in profile. His work, as it emerges in his struggle, is to sharpen the human personality to a new edge, to focus it upon a number of universal values. In the spirit of every rebel an increasingly coherent image forms itself of his relations with the external world in which everything moves in concurrence with his basic and most powerful tendencies. His inner life becomes increasingly coherent, increasingly sensible. The recreant, like the prodigal

son, left home without explanations. The rebel, having stayed, learns to speak about himself. But a rebel is always concerned with more than himself. For a rebel is not a mere malcontent who simmers with resentment or ambition, but a man who has fixed his body in the constituted order just as deliberately as he has uttered his spirit out of it. Sooner or later he becomes a man with a cause. That is how he develops his impressive character. Think sooner of a cross without arms than of a rebel without a cause. In the words of the Revivalist hymn,

Dare to be a Daniel!
Dare to stand alone!
Dare to make your purpose firm,
Dare to make it known.

Eventually a rebel extends his arms, if only for a moment, to all of humanity. Every true rebellion is a fight in the name of inalienable human rights. "I too am human" the rebel protests to his masters. "Are we not as human as they?" he cries to his fellow slaves, rallying them together.

The rebel himself of course does not dream, he does not brood; this is something in his past, and his work is in the world outside him. But unless he can make his deeds signify to his followers a whole unborn universe, he will dissipate rebellion rather than promote it. Jesus, the most complete rebel, performed his miracles reluctantly, and he avoided contentious action. A true rebel, he preferred speech to action. He left Caesar's things to Caesar. And the heavenly parable of human justice soaring thus safely above the earthly struggle could remain forever a pure statement of the birthrights of all those who felt themselves disinherited.

Jesus on the cross endowed two millennia of Western history with their major moral thesis. He emblazoned the slumbering visions of his time with the sharp sign of embrace. Every rebel against society achieves this in some measure, although there is no achievement to compare with that of Jesus. Every rebel against society, however, strives to make his sign visible in the streets and in the fields to many people, in order to remind them of the loss of their citizenship, of the disappearing values of their humanity. Those who are oppressed with the sense of their own nothingness now know where to gather.

There results a division in society. The nobodies have not merely been told that they belong to society, to humanity, but that they constitute its better part. Lifetimes are turned by such statements. The nobodies are not merely dazzled: they are lit up from within. They acquire a self-insight never to be given up, a source of both drive and solidarity. What will ever compete in their memory with

the moment when they have been told that the humble are destined for supreme glory, or that to own is to have stolen, and that to toil is to create? The word, the paradox, becomes a fixture of their character. "But I say unto you" Without the sayer, nothing—a contradiction without authority. Because of him word becomes flesh, and flesh the servant of word. Every rebel's intellect mediates between the local grudge and the frustrations of mankind. He renovates the self-awareness of society and revives its feeling for the symbol.

It is in a revolution that the passage of speech into action takes place most quickly. A rebel becomes a revolutionary when in his struggles he has given up concern with justice to become a fighter in behalf of a particular principle of civil order. Revolutionaries seek physical effects on the widest possible scale, and in securing them they inevitably reach a point when they severely restrict spontaneity, including speech. But in the pre-revolutionary, the rebel period, society has awakened. When a revolution prepares, new humane ideas are born and the commonplace disappears from everyday life; poetry blazes up and flames out of the study, the salon, and the boudoir, into the parliament and the street, where it becomes a deed and a cause of daily deeds. Men who have sat behind desks, who have been chained to them, mount rostrums and barricades; and thinkers and writers become prophets and demagogues, while professional administrators and generals must become writers and thinkers. It is the time when nobodies rise to the notice of history, when whole new classes make their mark upon its consciousness.²

3. *Recreation*

Against the ringing drama of such events emigration must appear as a shame-faced performance. An embarrassed mood dominates the process. To those who have any concern with the conscience of society, a boatful of emigrants could be a more poignant and disturbing gesture of reproach than speeches of tribunes. After all, is emigration a feat of adventure? Is it even a cry of protest? Or is it an enterprise of repudiation? Even the most cynical of the society's keepers are embarrassed by it. In the experience of the most selfish governance it stands out unpleasantly. Emigration makes the home society share its problems with humanity at large; emigrant statistics constitute an index of internal misery conspicuous in the world. And for those who have charge of the nation's heart and imagination, emigration poses the great social question of their careers: has not their imagination been living at the expense of their conscience? In the grim light from the path that led to the boat, the land's charm, glory, or holiness turned into ashes upon the heads of those who make it their business to turn them into hymn and song. Revo-

lution is the cry of cramped strength, the declaration of an unfolding spirit. Emigration is silence, the silence of disappointment, disillusionment, shame, defeat, exhaustion. The subtle, when they listen to it, might at best hear a mutter or a whimper. A currish gesture marks the emigrant's departure. As he turns to watch the retreating shoreline, his body does not fling out or his jaw jut out. Leaning on the rail, he turns landward a dry eye and a sour mouth. The Irish emigrant leaving his island regretted none of its greenness. Sean O'Casey, travelling on board such a ship, says "few among the tourist class, fewer among the passengers may return. But the ones in the steerage had muttered a kiss-me-behind goodbye to Banba-of-the-Streams." The imprecation is large enough to include the island's history as well as such identity as the emigrant derived from it, and the kind of choice the history had offered him. Neither does the European miss in the emigrant's goodbye a snigger for those who have chosen to tend the island's history.

Every act of recreance is an incomplete gesture. Things have been left unsaid, and there is a feeling that the moment for saying them is past. Recreance, with its moody gestures, its muffled speech, constitutes the sluggish moment past the event that has not occurred, past the opportunity that has not been seized. The authority that denied had not been challenged, the condition of which one was both product and victim had not been spiritually transcended. For the recreant himself, of course, the day of sullen departure is far from being just another date in his existence. After all it is a kind of première, even if the curtain is also going down on the old scenes. And at such a moment his curling lip, his mutter, his currish gesture are omens of destiny. The sullen, unprecipitating temper of the recreant's leave-taking portends a future muddled and peevish. It is true that the recreant moves with determination, seemingly towards a goal, but his movements, like those of figures in a grade B film, express decision rather than character. And just as an experienced playgoer expects from the first act of a bad drama a *deus ex machina* in the third, so in the European's catalogue of gestures, those which achieve recreance portend inability to reach any but a specious climax. And it is true that the climaxes reached by men at the height of recreance are liable to be above all disappointing to themselves. Consider Calvin. After failing to gain a foothold at the royal court in Paris, that reformer who had missed martyrdom by a day addressed in turn the courts of the two principal sovereigns of France and Italy. At first a timid pleader, he eventually turns into an outlaw shuttling in exasperation between the outer reaches of the two civilizations, an angry wasp caught between smiling window panes, a failure at becoming a rebel seeking a never-afforded second chance.

Calvin is Luther's contrast. Never secure as a leader in his own country because, as he complains from exile to his king, "the fury of certain men in your kingdom has left no room for sound doctrine", he finally becomes a leader of emigrés and the ruler of the semi-barbarous population of a crossroads centre. Luther infused a new feeling of life into men who shared the freedom he won by establishing immediate contact between man and God through faith; Calvin rationalized the futility of a recreant's freedom by denying all moral authority to statements made spontaneously and ascribing it instead to external circumstance.

Those who grow up into a sense of insufferable restraint may develop a craving for freedom and even cry for it. But if they are not to waste its fruits, once it is won, they need to be reborn. At first perhaps they desire no more than to move clear of all barriers. But just as mathematics springs from acceptance of axioms, so a rational approach to independence springs from belief in absolutes, and to date the birth of a matured self from mere eluding of prevailing authority or from its breakdown is to invite a pretentious illusion to preside over a life of anarchy. A soul seeking to be reborn must look into the sources of its own self-awareness and grope there for some viewpoint to relate to its frustrated cravings. He may come up with a phrase, and he may proclaim it. He may take a stand on it. But how to draw a new life from it? Here his enemies may come to his aid. Recant, demand the authorities, thereby affording him an opportunity to become their equal. For at least they have conceded that he is not a mere babler, that his phrases have enough meaning to become dangerous. But a still greater opportunity is in store for him if he refuses. From persistent adherence to a statement in the face of danger a new and independent self will arise, filled with drive and assurance.

Every rebellion has its heroes and martyrs. Their blood or readiness to shed it sanctify the maxims of the movement, touching them with absoluteness. A criminal does not wipe away his guilt by signing a confession. An accomplished fact has its own consequences, and a contrite heart will not do away with the effects of a crime. It is different with a viewpoint. The author by admitting error destroys the power of a belief. That is why it is so important that the founder of the movement should be mainly a phrase maker. As a doer of deeds he may be liable to criminal status. But if his work has been mainly to persuade, then his refusal to recant establishes him as master of his life, and at least the equal of authorities. Perhaps all that he needed then to stop his liability, certainly seriously to limit it, perhaps even to make a respectable career, was to say a word or sign a statement. Anyone can do that, provided he is sane, which means that his compliance is a question of pure

will, not at all of capacity. The refusal to recant establishes the rebel as somebody; even his enemies see him towering above others. He has established the power of his personality; in fact, he has established something about the human personality in general that is of universal significance. Especially if announced in the face of great danger, refusal to recant establishes the human personality as the sovereign function of life. Self-awareness has shown the capacity to overrule existence.

This raises the rebel above the authorities. If, like Jesus, he is in their hands, it is now he who passes the sentence and not they. And if, as in Luther's situation, the authorities stay clear of him, his refusal proves his conviction that not only true standards but also the community are on his side and not on theirs, who are mere users of force. In either case he has rid himself decisively of the feeling of nothingness. Furthermore, his viewpoint has gained completely new status. His readiness to suffer, perhaps to die, for a statement of human rights is the strongest evidence in favour of regarding his viewpoint as a standard. His own conviction is brought to peak intensity by the sheer fact of his imagination overruling the demands of existence. And as for the community, it is more than impressed; it is drawn close to him as to one of their own. Obviously the author is confident that his viewpoint will survive him. That is, he assumes that it lives, if only latently, in the minds of other men. This humane conviction endears the rebel in a peculiarly intimate way to his community, especially to those in it who are oppressed with a sense of nothingness; and such men in later generations, if not in the rebel's own, will gloss over his moments of doubt, only remembering, as they did about Jesus, that he had died for his beliefs, this fact having imparted for them the final, the most humane touch to the proofs of the validity of these beliefs. His stand has served to establish an organic connection between him and the community. He has, as it were, entrusted his viewpoint to their keeping. And this serves both to distinguish the authorities from the community and to drive a wedge between them. In this way a standard is established which will enable men to pass from a sense of nothingness to meaningful use of freedom.

The recreant, on the other hand, carries his feeling of nothingness with him into his freedom. A failure with his king, with the queen, and with the princes, Calvin arrives in freedom "in the mood of a sheep destined for slaughter", as he puts it in a letter to his king which introduced the book of doctrine he wrote in exile, a mood rather out of keeping with his role as a religious founder. This obsession with being dehumanized, in fact, remained with Calvin, appearing in various guises. His new friends were not likely to restore his confidence in his own humanity. The

opinions of the unruly crowds that filled Basel and Geneva could matter little to Calvin compared with that of the King, or of France, the source of whatever he knew of himself as a human being. But France, the King, and the Pope remained undivided. Calvin, being so often in flight, did not put himself in a position where he would be called upon to recant, thus failing to put to test the possibility that there was an important viewpoint in his community to which his discontent could be related. For now that his voice was coming out of a place of refuge, it could have none of the authority of that of a man facing death for his statement, and so there was no need for the King to take serious account of it.

All this condemned Calvin to perennial doubt as to whether he was the mouthpiece of God, and perhaps even whether God existed. He did not establish himself the equal of authorities, and he had brought no real standards with him into exile. The unresponsiveness of the community becomes in exile the worse muteness of the universe. Calvin's God falls deaf and silent. There is no voice to speak out of the whirlwind. Is the universe meaningful? Does it take note of us? Or does man's voice fall upon infinite spaces? Calvin in his recreance is unable to give a positive answer to this question. He did not dare to do away with God, but he dehumanized Him, which amounted to bringing down the human personality, the spirit of the people, from its throne in the Absolute, where it had been placed by the Hebrews. God was no longer sublimated humanity, its communal interest, or man's inward presence at his moments of sublimity, the fiery mark of his thought, imagination, and conduct when they have reached their communal best. Calvin renders Him an abstraction, a figment of scholarship, the inscrutable ingrown purpose—not a human experience, but a subject for theological dissections.

Perhaps temperamentally Calvin, for all his theology and dogmatism, was a sceptic, although one hesitates to say this in view of the role history gives him. Also, his phraseology certainly gives the opposite impression. But no doubt can arise from this source in regard to the assertion that he was a nihilist as far as the value of the human personality is concerned. Certainly for him man was not the measure of anything. He admits, he proclaims, that humanity is nothing. Denial that human nature has intrinsic merit is his passionate conviction. There is nothing surprising about this in view of his recreant experience. The rebel establishes the human personality as an absolute because he demonstrates that its spontaneous force, which through him takes the form of faith inspired by a vision, is capable of overcoming the demands of existence. Calvin's faith did not prove its sovereign capacity, perhaps because Calvin's mind was incapable of forming images, for a book of accounts con-

tains as much imagery as a treatise by Calvin. Luther, who had seen the devil and had wrestled with him, and had stood up to authorities, formulated a doctrine which turned on the exercise of the most humane of man's capacities—faith, the proven capacity of the rebel. Calvin did not concede sacredness to any of the humane capacities of man. Imagination, insight, faith, as spontaneous faculties, as man's own, as his efforts towards a state of certainty, are of no avail. Calvin's God remains aloof. Neither work achieving an intended end nor prayer from the heart ending in tears could give peace. Strain your faculties as hard as you can, there is nothing to reach, no point of certainty, no moment of sublimity. Thus the faculty of self-awareness, which distinguishes man from animals, of its spontaneous functioning, which the rebel safeguards by asserting rights, presents to Calvin's recreant mentality no claims to respect. Having so poignantly experienced the failure of his own self-awareness to overcome the reflexes of existence, he could not but feel that human beings are the slaves of existence as much as animals, and so no more than they entitled to claim inalienable rights. Calvin's mind was intensely logical but incapable of forming images, independent but immune to the essential experience of faith. A mentality of that type, working from a sense of restraint that has become insufferable, leads not to rebellion but to recreance. Calvin's doctrine is the effort of an assertive spirit humiliated by existence to impose order upon a freedom which its inability to formulate a standard of human rights has rendered meaningless. The results of this were bound to be remarkable, not the least of which was that Calvin became the moralist of recreance.

Calvin's doctrine assumed that one's worth (phrased by Calvin in the conventional religious terms of his time as God's grace) can never be sufficiently proved to one in his lifetime, the nearest to satisfactory proof being devotion to one's duties, especially economic duties. This was only a step away from including among such proofs the fruits of one's industry as well as industriousness itself, a recreant morality which was to rationalize the profit motive to the point of idolatry. And as everyone knows, the pursuit of profit is endless. For in the absence of standards of achievement, only activity with materialistic results can stave off doubt, and that only while it lasts. In effect, Calvin replaced the absolute with circumstance, and lesser men falling under the influence of his ideas replaced community with success and standards of achievement with the relativist and quantitative criterion of economic progress.

Thus the recreant continues busy, of all days his Sundays the busiest. Renegades, prodigal sons, slaves liberated by freedom-lovers, reformers who have not stood

their ground, rebels who have eluded the battle, leaders with private assets invested abroad—all have their share of restless Sundays to pay for the freedom they have seized and the fight they have not faced. The recreant has been disinherited by his own world, the world of standards from which his identity derives. He enters freedom without having formulated a statement of rights to it, and like Kerensky fleeing the Bolsheviks, he may at this point altogether drop out of history. But with someone like Calvin, who becomes the moralist of recreance, and thus enters history, the need to prove in his recreant freedom that he is somebody becomes obsessive. This creates a dilemma: since there are no new standards in his freedom, how can he discover that his spontaneous achievements in it have merit? Luck is the only testimony that remains. The recreant becomes involved in a frenzy of activity, which gives the appearance of being instrumental. That, however, is a deception. For in reality he acts not to achieve goals, for in the absence of standards there are none that can be clear, but to accumulate signs. But signs are never conclusive; luck can end. He is thus, together with Calvin, condemned to perennial search for the proofs of his own worth.

The recreant then is a failure in this humane sense, in the sense of being a loss to humanity, to those pauses in activity in which its ends are achieved. Although all recreants suffer from lack of self-sufficiency, few exhibit Calvin's intensity of effort to overcome it. But after all, remember that Calvin missed rebellion by a narrow margin. Mass phenomena are more likely to be composed of the wayward type, to whom the possibility of rebellion perhaps never even occurred. This type exhibits low emotional temperature. "Noble found I/ Ever the native/ And insipid the emigrant", says the poet. This insipidity is the fate of those recreants who have packed up without attempting to rebel. This is no comedy of manners, and like a great deal of recreance bad drama, perhaps the career of those waywards has in it at least the materials of a farce. Every skylarking expedition of boys in May sogs down to humid moping on the third, the rainy day. It was on a May day that an omnibus carried Mr. Pickwick across the limits of London into the unknown beyond. Every farce begins with a look of Pickwickian contempt at the street beneath one's window, rushes out with a look of dreamy ambition towards the unbound horizons beyond the roofs of the city, stumbles into a ditch just when the stars offer to be seized, and limps toward the end sighing to return to the hearth.

Wayward communities, like characters in a farce, are liable to an enthusiastic but confused pursuit of the joys of independence, and the most important thing we can say about them is that they lack self-possession. This is a moral attribution, and

at first the visitor from the other world will hesitate to make the statement because of a feeling that it is not proper to moralize about those whose faces are unmarked and appear fresh. Wayward communities always have the appearance of newness. They appear new in the way in which Polynesian societies appear new, in the way they are new, perennially new, always presenting the aspect of bustling life, and life in the making. The Polynesians have been on their islands since the Stone Age, yet there is little around that bears the mark of great age; houses, utensils, clothes, and most ornaments shine like leaves in springtime, not because their inhabitants have only now come to the place, but because their selves have never formed themselves with sufficient sharpness to leave on things an impression that would make them worth keeping.

The self of a wayward community is also amorphous, which accounts for the smoothness of its façades. And yet life in America has none of the tranquillity of the South Seas. For unlike the Polynesians, its inhabitants must always venture out of the world they have brought together, must always seek to find in outside opinion reassurance as to what they are, must always test their achievements against the standards of another society. And that is why in speaking of their inner life we have been able to go so far as to say that it lacks self-possession. For not only does a wayward community form itself in separation from a high civilization, but it is never able to achieve spiritual independence away from it. The parable of the prodigal son indicates this spiritual insufficiency of the wayward recreant.

A recreant has given the slip to established institutions, feeling in the act as if he were breaking out of a magical circle. This was the mood of the prodigal son as he was leaving his native village. Once out of it, he made haste to reach a fabled city of pleasure where his desires broke forth like a geyser and played upon him like a fountain, bursting his senses and flooding his common sense. But the case of the prodigal son is trivial compared with that of the emigrant. The prodigal son merely wanted to have fun. And being spoiled, he was unable to think beyond his desires. Emigration was hardly made up of spoiled sons, and the emigrant's frustrations were infinitely more basic. Security and success had to come before fun. The emigrant sought to prosper, and if he attained material wellbeing, as on the whole he has so conspicuously done, he considered himself successful, and attributed the success to himself. He had now enough to satisfy his appetites, indeed to sate them, and to quiet his senses. Necessity no longer demanded his energies on the dot. And yet such success felt incomplete. His vitality, or what was left of it, could now play, but with what? Become a playboy like the prodigal son? The American

story has neither the simplicity nor the sweetness of Jesus' parable. But there is a lesson in the tale. Spending freely the money he collected from his father, the prodigal son soon became in the big city the life of parties, the darling of ladies. But with his money gone his friends also went, and there seemed then nothing left to him; the experiences his money had bought him taught him nothing, gave him nothing, and so the prodigal, in poverty, became nothing, less than nothing, for to become a swineherd in the Israelite society was equivalent to becoming an outcaste. Then his thoughts turned back to his father, to the dull village.

Eventually every recreant faces a similar crisis. Either his vitality is spent, or with his needs filled, he is overcome with satiety; and then, whether he has been a wastrel or worker, his one need is to feel that something within him is still alive. This feeling no place of refuge, whether of work or fun, can give its dwellers. A wayward centre is itself centreless, and a wayward society is the loosest of all societies. There such standards as exist are the momentary issue of the force of individual vitality. But when one's vitality is low, one wants to feel himself near a centre that has not moved throughout; when sensuous enjoyment has become a tiresome distraction one wants a stable standard by which to order his desires so that he may feel that he is of account beyond his vitality, that he is somebody beyond his senses.

A recreant starts a new life away from the sources of his self-awareness and without giving serious thought to returning. But he starts it on the basis of a doubt.

If he does not think of himself, his new life seems to present no grave spiritual problems. But sooner or later even the least reflective arrives at a limit of external experience. And then at the point of satiety he finds himself without goals or at the point of exhaustion without confidence. Is there any meaning to his freedom? He begins to worry about the direction his new life is taking or about its intrinsic merit: in brief, he wants an authority to justify it. This, however, he will have a hard time achieving.

His difficulty stems from the fact that no authority had presided over the origins of his independence. His self-awareness in the new life is poisoned, as it were, at its very sources. Its dynamics derive from an irresistible power of frustrated needs, and not from the demands of a sovereign standard. The recreant left home because he lacked intuition of an organic relationship between his maturing being and the communal spirit. Unlike the rebel, he did not distinguish between true standards of the community and false standards of authorities, between the sources of his self-awareness and the means and conditions of his constraint. If in the com-

munity at large some standard of its rights was being frustrated by authorities, he did not trace his discontent to that fact. He therefore enters freedom without any concept of right to it, without a rational approach to it. All the knowledge of a viewpoint in the community relative to his discontent, which he brings with him into freedom, is that of the prevailing authorities. And what he had learned of their attitudes seemed to indicate that they had regarded his maturation more as the unfolding of the nature of an animal than of a citizen. Thus the recreant has carried his feeling of nothingness with him into his new life. From which part of his being stems his development in freedom: from the human, meaningful, and social or from the animalistic, anarchical, and presocial? Given this doubt, none of his spontaneous achievements in freedom, as Calvin's morality shows so clearly, can become standards. On the contrary, in his reflective moments the recreant is liable to fall prey to the suspicion that his liberated tendencies are bound to have an anarchical, even an inhuman, issue. He becomes involved in an endless effort of external achievement, the intensity of which masks his inability to feel convinced of its intrinsic merit. It remains for outsiders to bring this conviction to him. Eventually he turns to the world from which he had come, to the authorities whose supremacy he had not disproved. The world of origins remains the universe of standards.

4. *The New World*

When in the new land the emigrant finds himself on his own, his separation takes on a new aspect. Now he could and sometimes did stand up on a tall rock, and it might even have seemed that, as he touched the new soil, his jaw set. Open spaces favored with good soil and climate beckoned. Yet he clung as soon to the barren island where he landed, monstrously congesting. Across the waters lay the sites of that hushed departure, of the mutter, of the curish gesture. And as the emigrant straightened and filled out, he seemed to gesticulate vividly in the direction of the old society. Was he telling it what he had done? Teaching it something? Defying it? Challenging it? For what value has success for the ill-favoured unless they can face up to those who disinherited them, unless they can stare them down, amaze them by telling them something they have never heard before, awe them with a statement wholly novel, on a scale never seen before?

But the defiance is only a gesture. Perhaps not even that. The skyline is only a cry, a diapason of cries, shrill, strident, outshrieking each other, a babel, with the individual skyscraper offering nothing at which the eye can pause or the spirit grasp. With the skyline upon his vision as he comes into the New World, the visiting European is awed into silence. But at the foot of the individual skyscraper, as his

eye glides endlessly up its smooth façade, he realizes that the skyline is a work of forces, not of a mind. What act or gesture of defiance, of challenge, can come from that? What lesson? What novel statement? Even at the height of power and prosperity, the recreant's jeering at the institutions of the old society remains only that. His most vexed gestures cannot attain the salience of defiance or the fixedness of contempt, his most dramatic will not assume the structure of a lesson or a statement. Thus the gigantic attempt at a vis-à-vis to Old World institutions remains in the end a broken gesture, mainly a cry that is ringing out an old silence; and search for identity achieves at best only the security of bland features in the midst of material plenty and collective confusion. This blankness is in the face which America turns towards the Old World as if it were her trademark and manifesto of her separation from the Old World. Still, what the European looks for are not signs of separation but points of connection.

In relating himself to the amorphousness of America, to the blandness of her façades, to the sense that no point is fixed, no feature is permanent relief, the European finds the fixed point for his attitudes in the idea that here European recreance is completed. At least this is completed. This places the act of emigration itself in a new perspective. Not a willed betrayal but, in effect, in the light of the prosperity which followed, escape from the consequences of one's incompetence or wrongdoing, a vast and successful attempt to evade the cruel condition of rebellion, through which the faceless must pass if they wish to rise to the notice of the world.

And yet is America giving them a face? Are the masses who have given the slip to established institutions likely to find new moorings in the land which has offered itself? Has separation from the rules of old society freed energies for creation? Have old forms been broken and ground set for new expression? The European of spirit resists such a thesis. He shakes his head at the swagger of towers without pride, at the provocation of façades without thought. He sees escape to American soil as escapism. Space, vertically and horizontally, continues the corruption of recreance. Yet is there not something flattering in these bold American postures: are they not intended to impress? The high polish of these surfaces desires to reflect the visitor's interest; and the swagger of it all masks a craving for approval and seeks to catch his eye as judge. The flattery of this eventually comes through for almost every European. The invitation it implies is irresistible. And he responds with all the professional skill of a veteran judge of civilization. He phrases a formula of relationship that is both stern and paternal: you have congested in a formidable challenge to the Old World. But your challenge is also a plea. You would like to hear

from us that you have been born. But you have not succeeded in severing yourselves from us. The secret of creating new forms of being has not been transplanted. Americans, you and we are one reality. Remember, apart from us you do not exist.

1. Amédée Thierry, *Histoire D'Atilla et de ses Successeurs* (Paris, 1856), I, 213, cit. in Denis Sinor, "The Barbarians", *Diogenes*, Summer 1957, p. 55.
2. The utterances and the vision as the peculiar competence of the rebel are brought out by Albert Camus in his volume *The Rebel*. Camus, however, has nothing to say about Jesus; moreover, his conception of revolution differs from that of the author.