

By *Owen Barfield*

PARTICIPATION AND ISOLATION:

A FRESH LIGHT ON PRESENT DISCONTENTS

I suppose everyone would agree that one of the particular things we observe when we try to take a general look at the world as it is today is a growing demand on all sides and by every kind of human being for a greater share in the control of his own life and destiny. This ideal used to be called "democracy", and still sometimes is, but it seems to be becoming apparent to more and more people that, although there is a great deal of what is called democracy about, there is little if any of that distributed control. One manifestation of this, often noted, is the fact that on a particular occasion where people do have the opportunity to exercise their democratic rights, that is, at an election, either municipal or parliamentary, it is extraordinary how very few people take the trouble to go and do it. "Electoral apathy" it has sometimes been called. Arising out of this feeling of dissatisfaction there is a tendency nowadays to speak less of "democracy" and more of "participation", as a better name for the thing that we ought to have but haven't got. Demands for participation are heard everywhere, as loudly on the other side of the Atlantic as on this, and indeed throughout the world, and they grow louder and louder. Some years ago I suppose we rather thought we had done something towards participation when we converted an empire into a commonwealth; but I doubt whether very many simple citizens of the Commonwealth countries feel themselves participating much more in the control of their own lives than they did under the Empire. Meanwhile, in almost any direction we turn we get the same demand. The manual and other workers in industry demand participation in the management: students call for participation in the policy decisions of their university: women want to participate in the structures of a man-

made society: and we even hear it solemnly argued that school children are being oppressed unless they are allowed to run their own schools!

There is another widely prevalent frame of mind that looks at first sight rather like the opposite to the demand for participation, although from another point of view it is perhaps the obverse or back side of the same thing, and that is the feeling that is sometimes called "alienation": the impulse not only not to assume responsibility for the conduct of society but, as far as possible, to keep out of the whole rumpus. Some time ago I happened to read in the newspaper that Timothy Leary arrived in Algeria wearing a button inscribed with the motto, "Turn on, tune in, drop out". I suppose that puts it not only on a button, but in a nutshell. Of course it *is* an attitude that is often associated with drug-taking, but not always; and I, for one, feel considerable sympathy with it as one possible conclusion to be drawn from the experience of today: when we look round us and see everywhere social organizations based on oppression, violence and war; human life and intercourse dehumanized; and nature either denatured or polluted or both, by the monster of technological progress—now, it may be felt, too powerful ever to be controlled. I am not asking whether the impulse is justified, I'm merely pointing out that it is there. It is there and it is fairly obviously a root cause, not only of dropping out, at one extreme, but also of things like motiveless violence, vandalism as we call it in England, at the other. Now very likely in this second case, overt manifestations of the feeling I'm talking about are less widespread than the mainly sensational media we've come to rely on for our news would lead us to suppose, but I have the impression that the feeling itself is very much there, both consciously and subconsciously, in the minds even of the majority who do not go to the length of acting it out in melodramatic behaviour. Altogether there is a great deal of bewilderment about, and a great deal of that paralysis of the will which bewilderment engenders.

The circumstances that led to my being honoured to come over here¹ and address you is the fact that in the course of my life I have written a few books which have attracted some attention amongst scattered groups of people here and there—in Continental terms, rather more here than there—and if in the course of the evening, you find me referring rather frequently to one or more of these books and hardly at all to any others, you will understand that it is not because of a secret conviction that they are the only books worth reading—a conviction which has been known before now to accompany the onset of senility—but simply because that is what, as I have understood it, I am expected to do. There is one additional reason. When I began thinking

of what I would say, I found myself in something of a dilemma. It seemed to me that the alternatives before me were either to use the time in a rather hopeless attempt to do all over again, in a single hour, what the books have already done, whether successfully or unsuccessfully, in a great number of pages, or else to try and add something new. In the end I chose the latter alternative as the more likely to be what was expected of me. But then the trouble arose that, if one speaks of "adding", it presumes some previous acquaintance with what is being added to, in this case of course the content of the books. But I think it unlikely that more than a small number of my hearers already possess such an acquaintance. The only apparent way to meet this difficulty is to begin by giving a sort of outline sketch of what that content is, and I decided to use about the first quarter of my time in attempting to do so.

I have been told that the books themselves are already rather highly condensed. If anyone feels that he is losing touch in the course of my preliminary attempt to condense the condensed a further thousand per cent or so, I can only hope that he will not give up in despair or disgust, but will hang on in the hope that the argument will become clearer when I go on afterwards to apply it to the symptoms I began by describing. It can happen you know. If you've tried to master a game, a new game you haven't played before, by reading the little booklet found inside the box, it is almost impossible to understand what it is talking about: but when you actually start to play the game, it often turns out to be fairly plain sailing. Well, one book in particular, called *Saving the Appearances*, is expressly on the subject of participation, and its opposite: only in a very different context, and also in a rather different sense of the word from the sense I was using it in in my opening remarks; at all events, it looks at first sight very different.

Very, very briefly, absurdly briefly, the argument of *Saving the Appearances* is, first, that the human mind is not an onlooker on, but a participant in the so-called "outside" world. Secondly, that this fact—namely that in perceiving the world we do not passively observe what is already there, but participate actively in its process—is today accepted by most educated people who think about it at all, but is nevertheless ignored in practice. Thirdly, that this includes the practice of science, except for the case of a few philosophical physicists. We all know that physicists and, to some extent, chemists, no longer deal with the world we actually perceive, but with a world whose existence they *infer* from what they perceive. As far as the world which we do actually perceive is concerned, the ordinary macroscopic world, the *Lebens-*

welt or *monde vécu* as I think the phenomenologists call it, or "familiar nature", as I call it in another book, *Worlds Apart*, where this point is argued in more detail, as far as all that is concerned, what the mind perceives is mainly itself; some would say wholly, not mainly; but on the factual issue of participation, it doesn't matter a great deal which of the two you say. What does matter is to grasp the fullness of what it signifies, to grasp it and not to substitute a caricature of it. Why do I say caricature? Because participation does not signify that by virtue of some kind of aggregated or collective consciousness, some "koenaesthesia", or "intersubjectivity", or whatever new word may be found for it, a number of separated minds join in projecting into a world already there, a kind of cinematic picture which each isolated mind then separately experiences as the objective world common to all of them; that is the caricature, the caricature with which C. G. Jung for example, tried to live. It is the attempt to concede participation and handle it philosophically, but without abandoning idolatry: I shall be explaining this use of the word "idolatry" in a moment or two. Whereas, if the concept of participation is thought faithfully through to the end and not hurriedly dropped at the point where it begins to look too uncomfortable, it entails that the world itself, the objective world that most of the scientists deal with, is not outside of man in the sense of being independent of him, but is *his* outside in the sense that every inside has a correlative outside; that it is the obverse of his self-consciousness: his self-consciousness displayed before him, so to speak, as his perceptions.

Of course, to use the term "man" in this way already implies that man, or mankind, is a real totality, as well as an abstract class of quantitative units. So that one may legitimately speak, as Rousseau did, and as Coleridge and others have done, of *l'homme général* as something no less real than *l'homme particulier*; and this I'm afraid at the moment, I must ask you simply to accept, simply to let me assume it, though many, indeed most people today, would sharply contest it. To the sceptical or the irritated among my hearers, I would say that I am very thoroughly aware of the objections that can be raised to any such assumption—I simply have no time to argue them—the arguing part of the business has been done already in the books to which I am referring. Another thing which these books of mine have in common is that their standpoint is always historical: the history of participation is perhaps most fully stated in *Saving the Appearances*, but they all, in one way or another, seem to draw attention to the fact that there was awareness of participation between man and nature, down to about the sixteenth or seventeenth century—or let us say, to the scientific revolution—since when it has been more and more

rapidly disappearing; that is to say, the *awareness* of it has been disappearing, not the participation itself, which is built into the structure of the universe. The "scientific revolution" did not, because it could not, destroy participation; it did evidence a change in the centre of gravity, or in the predominant *direction*, of participation between man and nature. And since then it has been increasingly the case that, although participation is still a fact, we are no longer aware of it; not only so, but this non-awareness culminated in a positive, but quite erroneous, denial of the very fact of participation itself. That denial was expressly formulated by the philosopher Descartes in his partition of the universe into "extended substance", or matter, on the one side, and "thinking substance", or mind, on the other. And it is on that denial of participation that the whole methodology of natural science is based. That is why the denial of participation has become implicit in the whole elaborate structure of hypotheses which constitutes the current world-picture, including, of course, our mental image of our own past. The denial was not only positive but also very sweeping, inasmuch as it affirmed, not only that there is no participation *now*, but also that there never was, or could have been any such thing. The fact remains that the denial is an illusion, and I should mention that in the book I have been mainly speaking from, that illusion is called "idolatry", the full title of the book being *Saving the Appearances—a Study in Idolatry*.

It is an illusion, but the fact also remains that on that illusion, or idolatry, the whole form and pressure of our age and its culture—the text books available to our students, the way we educate our children, what we tell them, for example, about evolution, almost our definitions of truth and untruth—have become inveterately and fixedly based. To question it therefore is subversive in the most literal sense, and for that reason it has become more than an illusion, it has become a taboo. That is a point I tried to make with rather more emphasis, both in *Worlds Apart*, and a year or two later, in a little book called *Speakers Meaning*. It is a taboo because, although you may refer to it in a proper and reasonably learned context (for instance, psychology of perception, cerebral neurology, idealist philosophy, atomic theory), you must never on any account, bring it into connection with anything outside itself. You will never, for instance, unless you are prepared to face something like ostracism, point out that it is irreconcilable with the received theory of evolution, according to which inanimate matter preceded any form of life, and the earth, very much as we perceive it today, was in existence millions of years before there was ever any kind of consciousness; still less will you go on to point out that, if it's taken seriously, it hopelessly upsets as much of psychological theory, and

of behaviourist psychology as depends on the presupposition that all soul qualities originate from physical events. The trouble in fact is, that although it can be admitted in theory and even, as I have said, very commonly is admitted, to take it seriously would mean turning the world as we see it upside-down.

And yet, you know, the world as men were seeing it has been turned upside down before now. Marx himself did something of the sort, though to a much less radical extent, less radical because the prejudice of which I am speaking is so much more universal and more deeply ingrained than the prejudices he attacked. For this one is clamped as ferociously on the minds of revolutionaries as it is on those of conservatives; it shapes their protests and ideals no less tyrannically than it shaped the structures of the establishment they seek to overthrow. Or rather, to me, it *is* the establishment *par excellence* if we define establishment as "an obsolete structure which ought to be overthrown".

This brings me at last to the question I want to open up, which is, whether there is a vital connection between the aesthetic participation I have written about, and the sociological participation to which I referred at the outset of my lecture. I use "aesthetic" of course in its widest sense of having to do with perception in general, and not having to do with the fine arts only. I shall try to show that there is such a connection, and I will begin by making a very general observation without pausing to develop it. We have just been looking at the curious phenomenon of an aesthetic fact which almost everyone admits whilst his attention is being exclusively directed to it, but which is nevertheless forgotten or ignored by almost everybody in the theoretical and practical conduct of affairs, because of the startling consequences it entails. The question may be asked, Is there a similar sociological fact? Is there anything analogous to this in the sociological realm? Well I think there is, and it's this. There is the fact that modern industrial society is based through and through on the principle of altruism. It doesn't feel much like it, you say—well I couldn't agree more, but I am talking about altruism, not as a feeling or even as an awareness, but as a fact. Here too, the fact is nonetheless a fact because it is forgotten or ignored. However much we choose to ignore it, it remains a fact that in modern society, structured as it is upon a more-or-less universal division of labour, everyone works, not for himself, but for everyone else, and conversely each relies upon everyone else for what he consumes. I need not labour the enormous contrast between our own time and earlier agricultural communities. A single worker may spend most of his

day say, producing half a hole in a line of steel plates passing before him on a conveyor belt. Conversely the mind reels before the task of computing the number of human beings who must have been concerned, in one way or another, in the production and marketing of a single package of cereals: design and manufacturer of the agricultural machinery; design and manufacture of the jigs and tools for producing that machinery; large scale farming; and then the same all over again for the manufacture of the packages, the packaging itself, transport and manufacture of vehicles for it; wholesale and retail marketing, and finally the erection and maintenance of the large supermarket where our steel-worker's wife eventually picks up her package of cereals. Those are still only a selection. What is unquestionable is that the principle on which it is based is that of all for each and each for all, of each individual human unit participating in a vast whole, which we call industrial society.

I ask you to keep that in mind while I now go on to consider a third contemporary ideal, or demand, or complaint, or slogan, or war-cry (they are becoming very much the same thing) in addition to the two I've already mentioned. If *participation* and *alienation* are being very much insisted on, so, in the same breath, is *equality*; or rather, the ideal of social equality is not so much insisted on as it is pre-supposed, taken for granted. It is pre-supposed for instance, every time the suffix "ism" is added to the word "elite", to produce the vogue word *elitism*. Whatever his income, his class, his nationality, his race, his colour, political and social equality is assumed to be the inalienable right of every human being, as much, or even more so, as hot and cold water and a refrigerator. Now I'm very far from thinking that it is not an inalienable right: what I do think we might do with advantage is to take a rather closer look than usual at the *idea* of equality, before we start embodying the *ideal* of equality in elaborate schemes of social engineering; an analytical look at it in fact. That is what I now propose to do. It will mean limiting myself rather severely to a single aspect of a subject which has many other as well, but I believe it's the best way. I believe it will be best for me to deal with one aspect in depth, rather than to skim the surface only of a good many: the more so, because if I'm right, an inveterate intellectual habit of skimming rather than digging is part of the trouble. I am here not because I have a programme of social reform, but because I've been suggesting for a long time now, that we need to begin thinking about things in general in a rather different way. At worst then, what follows may serve as an illustration of the sort of ideas which may come to the fore if we start thinking about sociology in that different way.

So let me begin by asking, what do we mean by equality (equality, in

the most general sense, not simply between human beings, but equality between any two or more units)? Consider an example: a student has lost his text-book, he asks another student in the same course if he has seen it lying about anywhere. 'Yes', says the other, 'I saw one lying on the floor in the Students Union; here it is. Had yours got your name in it?' 'No'. 'Well *this* one has no name in it'. 'It must be mine then'. 'Wait a minute', says the second student, 'How do you know? Everyone in the course has got one'. And, of course, the question that has to be settled is not just whether the book that has been found is "the same" as the one that was lost: all the copies of that book are "the same" as each other, they're equal in every respect, they're identical with each other. But how do we distinguish *this* kind of identity from the kind of identity between the lost book and the found book, which the first student must establish before he can claim it as his property? Well we generally call the latter kind "numerical" identity, if we're philosophers, and if we're not philosophers we don't bother to have any name for it at all. Because one can only use such a notion for the purpose of avoiding confusion, or clearing it up when it has occurred. That's for the very simple reason that we're talking about identity as though it were a *relation*, and "numerical identity" is no relation at all. To say that a thing is identical with itself is to say nothing about the relation because, for the purpose of a relation, you've got to have two or more things. Moving backward then from numerical identity (which is no relation at all) the first thing you come to is this—what shall I call it?—"replica" identity. Replica identity, or uniformity, is the relation that comes as near as possible to being no relation at all. When we say of two or more things, copies of the same book for example, that they're identical with each other, we are saying that the only relation between them is that they are *not* "numerically" identical, that they are two and not one. The only relation between them is their separateness, their side-by-sideness in space, their isolation. Now we do not always use the semi-learned word "identical", we sometimes use the commoner word "equal", as though it meant identical, equal in all respects. The one book is exactly equal with the other. What I'm trying to bring out with all this is that the closer any two or more units come to being equal with each other in all respects, the truer it is to say that the only relation between them is their separateness.

Reflections of this kind on the abstract notion of equality may sound at first like a rather trivial academic exercise, but I believe they are not so. I believe they are not so because if you take them in conjunction with what I've said earlier about, for instance, the economic structure of modern society, you

are digging down to the roots of the characteristic malaise of modern society; and I cannot put that better than was done in a book that appeared last year, called *The Passing of the Modern Age*, where the author describes this malaise as "integration contradicted by disintegration".

Now there is one thing to be noticed about the notion of absolute equality, or identity. It is also the foundation of all merely *abstract* thinking. Abstract thought looks at a number of diverse and separate units—individual trees, or chairs, or human beings—and concentrates exclusively on the respects in which they appear identical with each other. That apparent identity is indeed precisely what it "abstracts" and gives a name to. And yet it is quite unreal. The diversity, the disintegration, is real; the integration is only a convenient fiction.

The opposite of abstract thought is imagination, which deals not with identities, but with resemblances; not with side-by-sideness, but with *interpenetration*; and if we want to see the whole system of abstract thought, in which we're so deeply immersed, from outside of itself, so to speak, we must begin by seeing it in the light of imagination, which is what I have been trying to get you to do. By the way, if anyone is in doubt about our immersion in abstraction and equality as abstraction, he need only to take a look at the educational policy of the British Labour Party. It calls for equal opportunity for all. Yes, but that's not enough; there must also be equality in the final results. As long as the schools continue to turn out a few who are better educated than the rest, the hated "class consciousness", it is insisted, will continue to survive. Political equality is not enough, the real aim is personal and social uniformity. Well, of course, there is a reason for it. There is a reason for everything, including fatal road accidents. You haven't got in Canada quite the same nagging echo of defunct social status, with its roots going back to the feudal system and beyond, back to the hierarchical social structure that was based not on merit, nor even on wealth, but simply on the blood stream. So you're not in as good a position as the British Labour Party is to appreciate the disadvantages of class-consciousness. But I only took the demand for uniformity in education—ending in the belief that uniformity is the *object* of education—as an example. How many well-intentioned programmes of integration seem to suffer from the same disability, so that they turn out in the end to have been programmes of disintegration!

In the case of aesthetic participation, I spoke of an historical development, and I emphasized that that development can be seen as a diminishing awareness of participation, culminating in total unawareness, which is what

we have today. This is what, in fact, I have mainly written about, especially from the point of view of the history of language, and of myth, as the earliest form of human consciousness to which we can look back with any confidence. Others who are better known, have also treated myth from this point of view; a few, like Cassirer, have interpreted the history of language in a somewhat similar light. It is above all when we observe the historical process at work in the development of language that we see how this diminution of participation has accompanied the increasing prevalence of abstract thought. Indeed, they are virtually one and the same thing. It's the increasing power and the predominant use of abstract thinking reflected in the altered meanings of his words which have brought about man's isolation from nature; an isolation which is both a curse and a blessing, or perhaps it would be better to say, a potential blessing. It is a curse because it involves his apprehending nature, not as a nursing mother, or as a fecund and benevolent companion, but as an inhuman and meaningless mechanism. It is a blessing inasmuch as our very existence, as fully individual beings, depends on it.

Sociologically speaking I believe the principle of equality to be both a curse and a blessing in very much the same way, and for very much the same reasons. It is a blessing, and an indispensable one, where it belongs, particularly for instance, in the rule of law: it is a curse when it takes the bit between its teeth, or goes to and fro like a roaring lion, seeking what it may devour, because then it involves the reduction of human relations to side-by-sideness, as I've called it, and so it eliminates mutual participation. So you see, if you look at the evolution of consciousness in the light of that principle or process of participation-versus-isolation, as I do, you inevitably see it not only as applying to the relation between man and nature, but also to the relation between human beings themselves. There is the same transition from unindividualized to individual consciousness, and that also is borne out by the historical study of language. But it is not borne out only by the historical study of language, nor need you go anything like as far back as that will take you, in order to observe the process at work; I'm often amazed when I read a novel written as recently as 150 years ago at the totally different experience on which personal relations were obviously based; family bonds, common ancestry, position in the social hierarchy—these were still matters of immediate inner experience and therefore matters of course for everyone, in a way that has altogether faded from us. For instance, we laugh at Lady Catherine de Burgh in *Pride and Prejudice*, and so did Elizabeth Bennet, but Jane Austen accepts her *fundamental* assumptions as a matter of course. The idea, for instance, of there

being any sort of equality between Lady Catherine and Elizabeth, or between Elizabeth herself and her coachman, except perhaps at the moment of death, would have been as preposterous to Jane Austen as Lady Catherine's are to us. In other words we assume the contrary as a matter of course: *they* could not do so, because in their whole way of thinking and feeling, you could not possibly be a gentleman or a lady unless you were born one; everything depended, not on yourself, but on the blood in your veins and arteries. Go back a little further still and you come to that concretely participating bond that united the members of the clan or the tribe. There's a note in one of Scott's novels, I think in *Waverley*, giving an account of a conversation with a Scottish clansman who was asked how he felt about the head of the clan, "I'd cut my bones for him", the man replied. It just makes no sense to interpret this sort of relation simply in terms of exploiter and exploited. We're dealing with a different kind of human being from ourselves. We think only with our brains, but *they* were still thinking partly with their blood as well; and thinking with your blood is the real meaning of what is loosely referred to as "instinct".

Another thing you'll notice in the older books is that the negative emotions like envy, resentment, hatred of superiority, whether real or assumed, petty tyranny, snobbery, all come into play between individuals occupying *the same* rank in the social hierarchy, practically never between one rank and another. They are symptoms of a demand, not for political equality (which is already enjoyed by members of the same class), but for social uniformity. And this, or course, is one of the disadvantages of the supersession of the principle of hierarchy by the principle of equality. However idle and foolish he might be, the airs and affluence of the eighteenth-century fop, the Victorian dandy, and, even later, almost within my own memory, the Edwardian toff, were taken for granted, and often much admired by the Cockney in the gutter. There was mostly very little resentment against what was called "the quality". But once the principle of equality has been extended to cover everyone, there is nothing to restrain everyone from having those negative feelings about everyone else. At least there is nothing given in the nature of things, and requiring no effort on the part of the individuals concerned.

Let me just epitomize the point I've been trying to emphasize with the help of that little digression. Firstly, confused as they now are in most people's minds, equality and uniformity are two entirely different principles, and the demands for them are differently motivated. It will be found that, whereas the idea of equality is rooted in the strength of the superpersonal idea of jus-

tice, the demand for uniformity is rooted in the meanness of the personal sting of envy. Secondly, if we contemplate human society historically, we find ourselves looking back into a state of affairs where a saving *instinctive* awareness of mutual participation underpins the social structure. We find, as a matter of history, that the social structure itself was not the product of a social contract made between individuals constituted like ourselves, but that it arose out of the bloodstream, out of the *life* of human beings, of human beings very unlike ourselves; just as man's existence as an individual being has arisen out of the organic and hierarchically structured unity of the life of nature. But we also see this participation inextricably associated with political and social inequality. We find a continuing awareness of participation going on just about as long as we find an *inner* experience of inequality going on, or one could say, an experience of inequality as hierarchy.

So now if we turn and look again at our own time, we find that inexorable, almost universal, demand for equality: a demand which (confused as it may be) I am convinced arises out of the deepest nature of human beings as they are *now* constituted. The practical question is then, is it possible to retain the kind of participation that makes human society possible without abandoning the relatively new principle of equality, of social equality. There are few more important questions, because the plain truth is that if it is *not* possible, democracy as an experiment has failed.

That was why I thought it worth while to try and analyze the notion of equality with some care and precision: because it seems to me that the future of democracy will depend on whether or not there are soon to be enough people about with sufficient understanding to grasp the respects in which all human beings are equal, and enough imagination to apprehend the respects in which they're not. It needs to be grasped that they are equal precisely in the regard that they are independent or, if you prefer, alienated and isolated from one another. Every single one of them is entitled to have assured to him his separate existence as an independent being, free of any such paternalist or authoritarian control of his choices, as was inseparable from the hierarchical construction of society, and free also from such other interferences as mass-disseminated propaganda disguised as news. And this equality, this political liberty he is entitled to, just because he is *now* capable not only of participating with his fellow-men, but also of *not* participating. Participation is no longer instinctive; it comes only as a result of conscious effort. But insofar as they genuinely participate with one another, human beings are *not* equal, because they are not merely side by side but are interpenetrating.

We had a glance at one domain in which they're willy-nilly interpenetrating to a degree that has not previously been approached in the history of mankind; that was the economic domain, where everyone produces for everyone else and consumes the product of everyone else. But there can be no equality in economic co-operation *as such*; it depends on a combination of different skills, of skilled and unskilled labour, managers making decisions and issuing orders which are obeyed, and so forth; otherwise it just won't work.

The same is true at the other end of the scale, in the life of the mind; there is no equality here, and it is on the *inequalities* that participation in a large measure depends. This man's capacity for growing wiser participates in that man's acquired wisdom: an ability to learn dovetails in with an ability to teach; the creation of works of art with their appreciation, and so forth. And the survival of democracy depends not on abolishing or castrating these activities because they entail or disclose inequalities, but on devising a social structure nervous and flexible enough to accommodate them within the overall guarantee of political equality to which I have referred. And that, in its turn, will, I am convinced, be achieved (if it is achieved) only out of a much deeper understanding of what human beings are in their fullness than is to be found anywhere today in the proliferating departments of sociology.

Perhaps I've been unfortunate in the bits of sociology that I've come across, but a sociology that is based on behaviourist psychology, and very probably on experiments with rats, whatever benefits it may confer, is almost by definition totally abstract, since it has pre-selected for study precisely the areas over which men are uniform, the respect in which they are identical. At best therefore, all the hurrahs, both of the researcher and of the sociologist who applies his findings, will be for discoveries within that area. At worst, this willed abstraction of psychological identity will be carried to its logical conclusion in the extremer sort of philosophical Marxism, where words like "bourgeois" are applied pejoratively, not only to capitalism, but also to any kind of individuality, and ultimately to the very fact of self-consciousness.

I spoke of the survival of democracy and suggested the need for a social structure nervous and flexible enough to reconcile the principle of political equality with economic and spiritual diversity. I cannot, of course, tell you how to build such a structure: I can only tell you, in my opinion, the best place to go for advice on it, and that is to the three-fold sociology of Rudolf Steiner. The habit of pointing to Steiner, by the way, is another feature which has been observed on by a good many reviewers of those books of mine, as well as by one or two who have written on them at greater length. If you

want my justification for doing so, you will find it in a book called, *Romanticism Comes of Age*, where I endeavour to show that we had in this man a portent, I don't think that's too strong a word, of an incredibly learned and well-informed mind, which did not simply confront abstract thinking with its opposite, imagination (as many poets have done both in the old world and in the new, as all the alienated do subconsciously, and a few of them explicitly), but whose genius succeeded in combining the two in an altogether new and intimate way.

A little earlier in this lecture I myself was looking at the concept of equality in a decidedly analytical and abstract way, but that kind of analysis was only rendered possible by the historical imagination that had interpenetrated it. And that is where the importance of history comes in; I mean of history, not just as an abstract study, but as what the Dutch historian Johann Huizinga called an "existential encounter". We study, or we ought to study, history not simply for the purpose of producing more and more specialized books, or dissertations, but because the only possible way of grasping in any depth both what as individuals we are, and where we are, is by grasping with imagination, where we came from and how we got here. We must realize that our important abstract thought arose out of the imaginal, instinctive awareness of participation that preceded it; and we must realize that our important ideals of liberty and equality, however vigorously they function in revolts against the establishment, were themselves originally nurtured and grew out of a different kind of establishment, which itself had grown out of the whole nature of the human being. It was a nature, it was an establishment involving paternalism and hierarchy. We no longer want the paternalism or the hierarchy, but we still want the roots from which they sprang and from which we spring. Cut flowers fade, and we shan't have many flowers in the garden if we work on the principle that there are no such things as roots.

I might add that this has an important bearing on education, on theories of education, because in the development of the individual from childhood to maturity, the phylogenetic development of the whole race is reflected and, in a manner, repeated. It is the child who has been educated in a climate of respect and reverence for authority who will have some chance of growing up into a really free human being, capable of criticising that authority with judgement, as well as with passion and prejudice, not the deprived adolescent who has never heard that it is possible not to sneer.

I'm getting very near my conclusion and I'm wondering whether you will find anything I've said worth your consideration when you go away and

reflect on it, should you pay me that compliment, or rather I should say that further compliment, since you've already paid me the big one of asking me all this way to address you. I know there is one very grave objection to it. If the history, whether of mankind as a whole or of the individual human being, is an evolutionary process of participation followed by isolation, if it marks a slow growth from the dependence of original participation, through isolation, which is a kind of adolescence, to the spiritual adulthood of what I call in *Saving the Appearances*, "final participation", then unfortunately it is meaningful. And to see the world as a whole as having any meaning is enough in itself to infringe the taboo of which I spoke earlier, the embargo on admitting that the so-called "inner" world of human consciousness is as real and as old as the so-called "outer" world of nature. Until that embargo has been lifted, it will not be possible for many people to appreciate that imagination is the opposite, but not the enemy, of abstract thought, and that true knowledge depends on each of them penetrating the other. The idea therefore, of participation, vital though I believe it to be, will have little chance of taking hold. Participation is not graspable in terms of abstract thought alone, but only by the use of imagination in conjunction with it. Until, therefore, the taboo is discredited or, as I put it in *Saving the Appearances*, until "the idols are smashed", we shall go on with the cosy old twentieth-century image of history as the meaningless and absurd, and therefore of life itself as meaningless and absurd. How tired I am of it: how I should like to see it beginning to be replaced by the image of history as a process of transition from original to final participation; from the individual being shaped by the community, to the community being shaped by the individual, just as evolution for me is a process of transition from man being shaped by nature to nature being shaped by man. I should like to see, before I go the way of all flesh, the beginnings both of an ecology and a sociology based, not on ingenious abstraction, but on the concrete realities of nature and human nature.

If I am right, the possibility of its coming depends on the smashing of those Cartesian idols and they, in turn are protected by the taboo, or in other words, by the establishment. Infringing a taboo is not much fun for the infringer, that is, not until it has already largely ceased to *be* a taboo, then indeed, as in the case of sex, it's great fun. The infringer of *today's* taboos, on the other hand, will be lucky if nothing worse happens to him than being thought a crank or a maverick.

I expect there are a good many here who are likely to follow the teaching profession. Let me conclude by quoting a paragraph from the book I

have referred to, *The Passing of the Modern Age* by John Lukacs, which, incidentally, I recommend strongly to anyone who feels at all sympathetically inclined towards the general tenor of the rather wide-ranging observations I have been trying to put before you. It comes from the end of a chapter bearing the rather ominous title, "The Dissolution of Learning", and it runs as follows: "The sometimes hopeless slowness in the movement of ideas makes life difficult for the young who, even more than adults, are very much dependent upon the ideas of others. This is why the dissolution of learning will not at all eliminate their dependence on teachers, rather the contrary. And the great teachers of the future will be those who, through a kind of wisdom, will direct their attention to all kinds of public untruths, very much including those propagated by the established public intellectuals".

1. This paper is a slightly revised version of a talk given at Dalhousie University.