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Naturalism or Idealism?

The history of mankind knows of certain questions that are at once very old and always new: they are very old because any way of life contains an answer to them, and always new because the conditions on which those ways of life depend are constantly shifting and may at critical stages change so much that truths safely accepted for generations may become open problems causing conflict and bewilderment.

Such a question is the contrast between naturalism and idealism with which we are dealing today. The meaning of these words has been blunted by usage; they cause many a misunderstanding, and only through laziness do we put up with such catchwords. But their inadequacy cannot conceal the great contrast which lies behind them and which sharply divides men. This contrast concerns our attitude to the whole of reality and the resulting task that dominates our life; it concerns the question whether man is entirely determined by nature or whether he can somehow - or indeed essentially - rise above it. We are all agreed on the very close ties between man and nature which he should not abandon. But it has been argued and is still being argued vehemently whether his whole being, his actions and sufferings, are determined by these ties or whether he possesses life of another kind which introduces a new stage of reality. The one attitude characterizes naturalism, the other idealism, and these two creeds differ fundamentally both in their goals and in their pursuits of them. For if the additional life of man exists only in his imagination, we should eradicate all traces of it from human opinions and institutions. Instead, we should aim at the closest ties with nature and develop to a pure state the natural character of human life; for thus life would restore the ties with its true origins which it severed unjustly and to its lasting damage. But if one recognizes in man a new element beyond nature, the task will consist in giving it the strongest possible support and contrasting it clearly with nature. In this case life will take up its main position in the new element and look at nature from that point of view. This contrast in attitudes emerges nowhere as clearly as in the place of the soul in the two systems. Nature, of course, has its share in the life of the soul and in numerous manifestations deeply influences human life. But this natural life of the soul is peripheral, mere appendix to the material phenomena of nature. Its only purpose is the preservation of physical life, for man's higher psychological development, his cleverness and resourcefulness, compensate for the brute strength, swiftness of movement, or sharpness of the senses in which animals excel. But even in its extreme form this life has neither purpose nor content in itself; it remains a conglomeration of disparate points. It does not coalesce in an inner community of life, nor does it constitute an inner world peculiar to itself. Thus action is never directed toward an inner purpose but toward the utilitarian purpose of preserving life. Naturalism, if it remains true to its purpose, reduces human life to that norm. Idealism, on the other hand, maintains the emancipation of inwardness; according to it the disparate phenomena of life coalesce in an all - embracing inner world. At the same time, idealism demands that human life should be governed by its peculiar values and goals, the true, the good, and the beautiful. In its view the subordination of all human aspiration to the goal of usefulness appears an intolerable humiliation and a complete betrayal of the greatness and dignity of man. Such divergent and even contradictory attitudes seem to be irreconcilable: we have to choose between harsh alternatives.

With regard to this choice the present time is undeniably divided against itself, particularly since profound changes in the setup of life have brought new aspects of the problem to light. Centuries of tradition had accustomed us to striving primarily for an invisible world and to valuing the visible world only to the degree of its relation to the invisible world. To the medieval mind man's home is a transcendental world; in this world we are merely travellers abroad. We cannot penetrate it, nor does it give us any scope for achievements or hold us by any roots. In such a conception nature easily appears as a lower sphere which one approaches at one's own peril. When Petrarch had climbed Mount Ventoux and was enraptured by the splendour of the Alps, he had serious doubts whether such delight at the creation was not an injustice to the Creator and did not deprive Him of the worship due to Him alone. Thus he took refuge with St. Augustine to regain the security of a religious mood.

These things have changed. We set greater store by the world of immediate experience and many things have helped to make it completely our home. Science has been the leader in this movement, for it has brought about a closer relationship with nature, resulting in many new impulses that have not only enriched parts of our life but have deeply affected its totality. The speculative and subjective thought of former ages was unable to analyze sensual perceptions and did not penetrate to the essence of things. Moreover, its recognition of certain regularities in nature lagged far behind the discovery of mathematical laws of nature first formulated by the genius of Kepler. And not only did it fail to penetrate nature, it failed equally to turn its powers to the use of man and to the advancement of his welfare. Occasional technical inventions were the result of chance rather than superior insight; on the whole, man remained defenceless against nature. Only a century ago men were still awkward and powerless in this regard. In that age of great poets and thinkers, how much time was wasted with overcoming natural obstacles, how inconvenient was travelling, and how cumbersome postal services. In all these respects our age has seen changes never dreamed of by history before. The accumulation of scientific knowledge since the seventeenth century was brought to a triumphant conclusion in the nineteenth. By unravelling the separate strands of natural processes and tracing them back to their ultimate elements, by formulating the effects of these elements in simple formulas, and finally by using the idea of evolution to combine what had been separated, scientific research has given us a closer and more direct experience of nature in all its aspects. At the same time the theory of evolution has shown man's dependence on nature: understanding himself in nature, his own essence appeared to become clearer to him.

The change of concepts was accompanied by a change of the realities of life. Technology seized upon the results of science and caused a revolution in man's relationship with his environment. Former ages had held that his position in the world was essentially determined and not subject to change; man had to suffer whatever dark fate or the will of God had decreed. Even if he could - and was expected to - alleviate suffering in individual instances, he was no match for the totality of suffering and there was no hope of either tearing up evil by the root or making life richer and more joyous. In our age, however, we are translating into action the conviction that by common effort mankind can raise the level of life, that a rule of reason can gradually replace the tyranny of irrational forces. Man may again feel victorious and creative. Even if his powers are limited at any given moment, that moment is only one in a long chain. The impossibilities of a former age have been realized in ours. We have witnessed surprising breakthroughs in our own age and can see no limit to this progressive movement. Man's existence has been immeasurably enriched; it has become an attraction and a challenge for him.

Technological progress becomes even more exciting when it enters into the service of the social idea which demands that not only a small élite but humanity at large should profit by it. This demand creates an entirely new challenge, requiring tremendous energy but also giving rise to new complications and harsh contrasts which, in turn, intensify the passion of man's work in this world and enrich its meaning. The transformation of environment has become the purpose of human life; life seems real only insofar as it deals with things. Man no longer needs the escape to an invisible world in order to find and realize exalted goals.

These facts are indisputable. Our material environment and our relation to it have assumed tremendous importance. Any philosophy and any course of action based on it must reckon with this fact. But naturalism goes beyond this fact, for it maintains that man is completely defined by his relationship with the world, that he is only a piece of the natural process. That is a different contention which requires careful examination. For history has taught us that our judgment is easily confused and exaggerated when revolutionary changes upset the old balance of things. Facts and opinions are confused by man, who is helpless against error and passion. At such a time, it becomes an urgent task to separate the facts from the interpretations given to them. Naturalism, too, is subject to such a scrutiny when it turns a fact into a principle, sees the totality of human life determined by man's closer relation to nature, and adjusts all values accordingly.

The chief argument against such a limitation of human life is the result not of subjective reflection but of an analysis of the modern movement itself. The emergence and the progress of that movement reveal an intellectual capacity which, whether it manifests itself as intellectual and technical mastery of nature or as practical social work, proves the existence of a way of life that cannot be accounted for, if man is understood as a mere natural being. For in coming closer to nature man shows himself superior to it. As a mere part of nature, man's existence would be a series of isolated phenomena. All life would proceed from and depend on contact with the outside world. There would be no way of transcending the limitation of the senses. There would be no place at all for any activity governed by a totality or superior unity, nor for any inner coherence of life. All values and goals would disappear and reality would be reduced to mere actuality. But the experience of human work shows a very different picture.

Modern science has not been the result of a gradual accumulation of sensual perceptions but a deliberate break with the entire stock of traditional knowledge. Such a break was deemed necessary because the old concepts had been too anthropomorphic, whereas a scientific understanding of nature presupposed an acknowledgment of its complete independence from man.

But our concepts could not have formulated the independence of nature unless thought had emancipated itself from sensual impressions, and through analysis and new synthesis created a new view of nature. This re-creation was caused by the search for truth and the desire to identify with things as they are and thus to bring about an inner expansion of life. But how could nature be conceived in such a manner without the element of chance and distortion, inherent in the perspective of the individual, unless thought could operate independently of sensual perception? Logical thought, striving for a unified conception of the universe, transformed the immediate sensual perception; it provided the sensual existence with the foundation of a world of thought. Man's tremendous intellectual achievement of a conception of nature in its totality proves his superiority over the natural world and the existence of another level of reality. Thus we may say that naturalism with its emphasis on nature is refuted nowhere with more cogency than in modern science as it transformed nature into an intellectual conception. The more we recognize the intellectual achievement and inner structure of modern science, the clearer becomes the distance from naturalism.

The superiority of man to mere nature is also proved by modern technology, for it demands and proves imaginative anticipation and planning, the tracing of new possibilities, exact calculations, and bold ventures. How could a mere natural being be capable of such achievements?

The social movement, too, reveals man as not entirely limited by a given order, but as a being that perceives and judges a given situation and is confident that it can change it essentially by its own efforts. We have come to set greater store by material things, but we value them not because of their sensual characteristics but because they serve us to enhance life and to dominate the world completely. We do not aim at an increase in sensual pleasures but at a situation in which any man and all men together can develop their full strength. The mere mention of a social idea implies common interests beyond the egotism of the individual, and this idea would never have reached the power it has had it not been conceived of both as a duty and as a privilege. The ethical element inherent in it gave it the power to win over minds, to attract enthusiastic disciples, and to prevail even over reluctance. But there is no place at all for such an ethical element in the realm of mere nature; thus the mere existence of a social movement refutes naturalism.

These considerations lead to the conclusion that naturalism is by no means an adequate expression of the modern way of life. On the contrary, that way of life has outgrown its origins and has revealed far greater spiritual independence than naturalism could acknowledge. Life itself has contradicted that interpretation of life. The fact that environment means more to us does not mean that we are a mere part of it. Naturalism makes the mistake of ascribing to nature itself the changes the mind effected in it. The mistake resulted from concentrating on the effects and ignoring the power which alone could produce them.

Still the fact remains that mind needs environment as an object to work on, and to that extent it is dependent on it. But does not such a situation confront life with an intolerable conflict? The transformation of the environment has released vast intellectual energies which fortify the claim of life for happiness and satisfaction. Will life not feel intolerably confined if man must deal only with the outside world, if he may never return to himself and use the results of his stupendous labours for his own welfare? The achievement itself is limited narrowly if its object is invariably outside ourselves and can never be taken into our own life. Scientific research in an external object can never lead to true, complete, and inner knowledge. As long as we regard man simply as a being next to us, there can be no inner community of mutual love. Energy that is not dominated by, and does not return to, a centre, will never constitute the content of life; it leaves us empty in the midst of bustling excitement. This is a common and painful modern experience.

But is not such a sensation of emptiness itself proof that there are more profound depths within us which demand satisfaction? Thus we are faced with the question whether life does not somehow go beyond the position reached so far, whether it could not return from an occupation with outside objects to an occupation with itself and to the experience and shaping of itself. Only life's own movement can give such an answer; let us see whether it is in the affirmative.

I think we can say confidently that it is. We need only regard clear and indisputable individual phenomena as a whole and appreciate that whole in its full significance in order to recognize that there is indeed a great movement within us which generates an essentially new way of life. Hitherto our discussion had seen life as something between subject and object, between man and world, between energy and thing. However, the thing was touched only from the outside; it remained inwardly foreign to us. But now intellectual activity takes a turn to the effect that the object is taken into the process of life, is incorporated into the soul and excites and moves us as part of our own life. The artist's creative activity, for instance in Goethe, is an example of this.

We call such creativity objective, but that is not to say that the outside world is pictured in its sensual being without any addition of the soul; rather, the external object becomes part of the soul. There is a fruitful relation of energy and object; they combine, enhance one another, and create a new complete living entity. In such life a soul is breathed into the object, or the soul that is in it is made to sound, and in effecting the object, energy loses its initial indeterminate character and assumes full definition. The poet appears as a magician who gives to things a language in which they proclaim their own being, but they come alive only in the soul of the poet, only in an inner world.

Something similar to this artistic process occurs in practical life, in the relationship of men as it finds its expression in law and morality. The other man who at first seems a complete outsider is taken into the circle of our own life when we become capable of identifying ourselves with him. Nowhere is the process of making the seemingly strange your own as marked as in love, the highest relationship of two individuals. For here the gap between oneself and the other is completely bridged; what was strange becomes an integral part of one's own life. Nor can we love our people, our country, or the whole of mankind unless we find in them our own life and being. In another direction the search for truth leads to a broadening of our inner life. For how could we desire so powerfully to recognize the object unless it did not somehow exist within our own life, unless the toil spent on it did not contribute to the perfection of our own being?

Thus the beautiful, the good, and the true agree in that the object becomes part of the inner process of life, but this cannot possibly happen without deep changes in the structure and meaning of that process. For now life is dealing primarily with itself; energy and object meet in it and demand a balance. However, there can be no balance unless both are comprehended in one whole, which finds its life and perfection in them. Thus life enters into a relationship with itself, it is structured in itself in different degrees and begets within itself a new depth, a comprehensive and persistent energy. If this happens, the whole can be present and effective in each detail. It is only in this way that convictions and attitudes are possible, and character and personality can manifest themselves in their manifold activities. The integration into the process of life gives to the object a new and higher form, and so life is not merely the representation or appropriation of a given reality; it enhances and creates; it does not find a world, but must make a world for itself.

Thus life faces not only the outside world, but itself. It creates its own realm of the mind. By combining with each other, the different movements produce an inner world, and this inner world, through a complete reversal of the initial situation, becomes the point of departure for all intellectual activity. This world is not a private world; the good, true, and beautiful are not peculiar to each individual. We live in a common world and the individual achievement is valid for all and becomes their possession. In this consists the greatness of that new world. The new life in the individual has a universal character, and in the quest for this life the individual more and more finds his true self and abandons his limited point of departure. Mere self-preservation becomes increasingly less satisfying.

If we look more closely at this development of life and consider its energies and forms, the complete reversal it caused and the new tasks it created, we cannot really doubt any more that it is not a mere figment of man's imagination designed for his pleasure and comfort. It is obviously a new level of reality which creates new tasks for man. The movement toward the new goals, the development of a more intimate basic relationship with reality, and the grafting of an infinite life onto human existence cannot possibly be mere human creations. Man could not even imagine such things. There must be an impulse of life from the universe that embraces and carries us and gives us the strength to fight for the new reality, to introduce it into the world of natural reality, and to participate in the movement of the universe.

Without being rooted in the actuality of the universe, our aspirations could never gain a firm foothold and direction. Life on our level could not exist within itself and enhance itself unless the totality of reality exists within itself and is in an inward motion.

The importance of man and the tension of his life increase immeasurably in this process of change. Belonging at first to the level of nature, he rises to a new level of reality in which he is active with the energy of the whole, and so he does not remain a mere part of a given order but becomes a stage on which worlds meet and search for their further development. And he is more than a stage. For although that movement of the world cannot arise out of him, it cannot be activated on this stage without his decision and action. He cooperates in the totality of worlds so that limitation and freedom, finiteness and infinity, meet in him. The world ceases to be foreign to him, and with the whole of its life it becomes his own and inmost essence.

It is this development of life to its full self-realization which idealism seizes upon and on which it models its goals and concentrates its efforts, even though the level of nature remains and man's intellectual life can develop only in constant intercourse with it. But this does not dispose of the fundamental contrast that idealism, unlike naturalism, understands not mind by nature but nature by mind.

The ever-renewed conflict between the two convictions is due to the fact that the new world, however much it must be effective from the bottom of our souls, can be gained only in a constant struggle that always creates new complications. It is not only the individual who has to make this world his own; mankind at large has to fight for its more definite form, which is not given to us but has to be discovered and realized by ourselves. History knows of many approaches to this goal, but none has proved perfect in the end. We experience the world of the mind at first only separately and vaguely; it is our task to achieve a comprehensive form to give it a fully definite character and make it a complete and safe possession. Now at high points of history, humanity has made the attempt at such a synthesis of life that would embrace and give form to the whole of being. Success may seem to attend such an effort in its first surge, but soon obstacles arise, and as they grow it becomes clear that life does not in its entirety fit the measure prescribed for it.

Individual movements free themselves from the projected structure, and the period of positive creation and coalescence of the elements is followed by a period of criticism and disintegration, so that the search for the unity of life leads to a new synthesis. Thus, epochs of concentration and expansion follow upon each other, and both serve man's aspiration for a spiritual content of life. Past achievements will always appear too small, and the need for spiritual preservation of life will always lead to a new effort. In such tenacity of purpose, such continuous progress, and such struggle with infinity the tremendous greatness of mankind is realized.

The experience of European civilization since the Greek era has revealed this process with particular forcefulness. Greek life has its lasting importance in the cheerful energy with which it engaged upon an original synthesis of the entire range of our existence. It did so by means of art, in particular fine arts, and this synthesis served as a point of departure for the manifold ramifications of civilization. Science tried to determine the permanent artifice of the cosmos behind the chaos of shifting phenomena. Action was to turn the human commonwealth into a strictly measured and well-constructed work of art, and the individual was to combine in perfect harmony all the manifold energies and desires of his soul. These endeavours resulted in a thorough patterning of life. Activity was aroused everywhere, a balance of conflicting sides was achieved together with stability and an inner cheerfulness. All these achievements have become a permanent gain. But mankind could not stop at this. The experience of life created greater tasks, greater contrasts and conflicts than could be solved by it. It became apparent that an end had been set abruptly and prematurely, and that the soul had depths not fully sounded by it. The whole had rested on the assumption of the immediate presence and irresistible power of the intellect in human life, and a weaker age came to doubt this presence. A period of disintegration followed. The manifold elements separated, but despite all its negative aspects, this period prepared for a new synthesis. Such a synthesis appeared in original Christianity, where the whole of reality was subordinated to the moral idea, and the variety of life was made subject to the moral obligation. But considering man's moral frailty and the lack of reason in the human world, the strength for the solution of such a task had to be derived from a superhuman order. Thus, the moral synthesis had at the same time a religious character and together with it affected the entire range of life. This concentration led to an enormous deepening of life; it created a pure inner world and first established the absolute supremacy of mind over nature.

But though this life remains valid in our world, its original form has encountered increasingly strong opposition ever since the beginning of the modern period. A new humanity full of high spirits found in it too little for the development of its power. At the same time, a desire for a universal culture that would embrace all branches of life with equal love, felt confined by that moral-religious synthesis. Hence a new synthesis arose, in which the basic idea is the unlimited development of all energies and in which the enhancement of life has become its purpose. This urge has set in motion whatever appeared to be at rest. Constant progress has affected not only nature, but man himself. Nothing seems to be more characteristic of man than his ability to rise toward the infinite by the powers of his mind despite his natural limitations. This life is still flooding about us from all sides and is penetrating ever more deeply into the ramifications of being. However, at the bottom of our souls and at the height of intellectual effort, new doubts are beginning to arise about this solution. First we have begun to doubt whether the entire range of being can really be turned into an upward movement, and whether this movement itself does not create new problems and complications that it could not cope with; whether the release of all energies has not conjured up contrasts and passions that are threatening the sanity of our existence. And even if we could suppress these doubts, other and greater ones arise from the question whether the transformation into incessant activity really exhausts life and satisfies the soul.

For if motion does not find its balance in a state of rest superior to it from which it can be comprehended, the possibility of life's existence within itself disappears. We can no longer assign any content to life; it is a constant and impatient longing for the remote which never returns to itself and forms itself. Nor can we defend ourselves against a boundless relativism, if the truth of today is superseded tomorrow. The restlessness and haste of such progressive activity cannot prevent a growing emptiness and the consciousness of it. Despite the greatness of technical achievements in particular fields, man in the entirety of his existence is doomed to decline: the powerful and individual personality will gradually disappear.

But as soon as we realize the limitations and defects of this modern synthesis of life, we cease to believe in it. The old order will disintegrate and the contrasts will again emerge in full power. Self-assured activity once more will give way to brooding reflection; we shall once more enter from a positive into a critical period.

If life thus lacks a dominating unity and a centre, while at the same time the transformation of the outside world achieves splendid triumphs, it is understandable if the balance of life is lost, and external successes gradually come to dominate the picture. The achievement makes us forget the power that produced it. Education works from the outside to the inside, and in the end man appears completely a product of his environment because the central energy could no longer cope with the affluence of the outside world. In such an atmosphere naturalism wields power over souls, and we fully understand how it gains ground as the expression of a peculiar situation. But it is precisely through our understanding of it that we are more firmly convinced that it is not the whole truth of human experience.

Its attempt to reduce man entirely to the level of nature can succeed only so long as human existence does not bring forth new energies and goals. But since we have recognized that man represents a new degree of reality which makes intellectual activity possible, we can no longer simply return to nature. The new reality may temporarily be lost in the consciousness of man, but the results of history are embedded in his soul, in the midst of all struggles, doubts, and errors. Even in the midst of negation they have put him far above the level of mere nature, and naturalism appears to be sufficient only because it borrows widely and unscrupulously from idealism. If these borrowings disappear and naturalism has to rely on its own resources, its inadequacies become glaring. There will be a decisive rebellion against an intolerably shallow view of life, accompanied by a strong movement toward idealism and the search for a new synthesis of life.

For certainly the new and strong desire for life's existence within itself and for a rich inner world cannot be satisfied by a return to an earlier stage. There may be imperishable truths in the older syntheses of life, but how can we explain the tremendous shocks and the feeling of uncertainty about the whole of life if those truths, as they have been historically transmitted, contained the final truth? We have considered the deep changes that the modern age has brought about, and we have recognized the closer concatenation of man with his environment and the greater importance of that environment. At the same time, we have seen the harsh obstacles met by the striving for a complete intellectualization of existence, we feel the deep gap between the immediate being of man and the demands of intellectual life, and we realize that we must revise our image of man in order to reach the point of intellectual creativity. We can no longer hope to set the whole of existence in motion at one stroke. First of all we must try to form a nucleus of life and to fortify that position; then we shall have to cope with environment and gradually encroach upon it. The new insights and tasks of the modern age will be fully utilized in this endeavour, especially the tremendous progress made in human welfare which we owe to science. Only we must not assimilate these new elements in their immediate sensual form. We shall have to extract the nucleus of truth, and this can be done only in the context of our entire historical experience. Any conviction that is to carry mankind needs an open mind for the movements of the time, but such open-mindedness should not lead to helpless drifting in their wake.

A revival of idealism may well face many difficulties and obstacles, but the task is imperative and we cannot shirk it. Once mankind has attained an existence of life within itself it cannot resign it again; it has to use all its power and ingenuity to carry out that imperative demand. Once man has escaped from the fetters of natural life, he cannot possibly agree to them again; once risen to independent activity, he cannot again be the plaything of inscrutable powers; having penetrated to the universe and its infinity, he cannot again return to the limitations of a natural being; once the desire for an inner relationship to the world has stirred within him, external relationships will no longer satisfy him. Thus, there is an urge beyond naturalism in all directions.

The peculiar experiences and needs of our own time most strongly demand the revival of the movement toward idealism. The steady increase of work and the rush of the struggle for existence have obscured the meaning of life and deprived our life of a dominating goal. Can we hope to regain such a goal without a powerful concentration and elevation in the soul of man? There are senile features in the colorful picture of modern life, and there is a great urge for rejuvenation, for a production of pure and original beginnings. Would not such an urge be folly if man were wholly determined by the necessity of a natural process? The creativity of the mind has at all times been surrounded and often covered by petty interests, but it makes a considerable difference whether we can check such obscurantism or not. If we can, we need a goal that unites and elevates men; otherwise we are at the mercy of human pettiness, and there is far too much of it in our world today. In the confusion of everyday life little distinction is made between what is high and low, true or seeming, genuine or spurious. There is no sense of the substantial, no acknowledgement of the great either-or pervading human life.

We shall have to separate the wheat from the chaff and in an act of concentration gather whatever the time contains in good and important things, the wealth of good will and readiness to sacrifice, so that these things will unite for a common effort and give to life a content worth living for. But how can we carry out such a separation and such a collection unless there is an inner synthesis of life that lifts mankind above the insecurity of individual reflection?

The contrast expressed in the struggle of naturalism and idealism is not confined to the general outline of life; it is found in any particular realm which represents a totality of conviction. It makes a tremendous difference whether man submits to a given existence and tries to improve it only in spots or whether, inspired by the belief in an ascending movement of the universe, he is able to contribute independently to that movement, to discover new goals, and to release new energies. Literature is a case in point, as I shall indicate in a few words. Naturalism cannot give to literature an inner independence or allow it an initiative of its own; for if literature is only a hand of life on the dial of time, it can only imitate and register events as they happen. By means of impressive descriptions it may help the time to understand its own desires better; but since creative power is denied to it, it cannot contribute to the inner liberation and elevation of man. At the same time it necessarily lacks dramatic power, which cannot exist without the possibility of an inner change and elevation. But the perspective and the task change completely if literature acknowledges the possibility of a decisive turn in human life, of the ascension to another level, and if it feels called upon to help bring about that ascension. In that case it can help to shape life and to lead the time, by representing and simultaneously guiding what is rising in man's soul. Literature can clarify and confirm by drawing certain simple outlines in the bewildering chaos of the time and by confronting us with the chief problems of our intellectual existence and persuading us of their importance. It can raise our life to greatness above the hubbub of everyday life by the representation of eternal truths, and in the midst of our dark situation it can strengthen our belief in the reason of life. It can act in the way envisaged by Alfred Nobel when he gave to literature a place of honour in his foundation.

Thus there are strong reasons for our continued belief in idealism and for our attempt to give it a form that corresponds to the sum of our historical experiences. But such an attempt will never truly succeed unless it is considered a personal necessity and is carried out as a matter of intellectual self-preservation. Exhilaration, courage, and firm belief can arise only from such an acknowledgement of a binding necessity, not from a hankering after remote and alien goals, but from a belief in life as it is active within us and makes us participate inwardly in the large context of reality. Only such faith can enable us to cope with the enormous obstacles and fill us with the confidence of success.

Du musst glauben, du musst wagen,
Denn die Götter leihn kein Pfand;
Nur ein Wunder kann dich tragen
In das schöne Wunderland.

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