

LETTERS

ANGRY YOUNG MEN

... BOTH Mr. Tynan and Mr. Osborne ... are angry about education, about the dear old public schools, those hot-beds of homosexuality, those breeders of privilege—"the education that will assure (the middle classes) of the best places under the sun." I suppose it's useless to point out to Mr. Tynan that his statement that young people in jazz-clubs are "drawn from every class except the top one" is made to look pretty silly by the public-school men who are jazz-band leaders. Useless, too, I'm afraid, to ask Mr. Osborne how *traditional* privileges can be *bought*, or to say that George Orwell's comments on his use of the words Socialism and Toryism might seem positively bad-mannered. So instead I want to join in and make some splendid sweeping statements.

No young person believes in hat-raising: very few wear hats.

The only reason that Mr. Osborne is able to get on with his job as an artist is that wicked capitalist society has allowed him to make enough money out of his plays to be economically independent, and wouldn't we all like to be *that*. (If I'm wrong about this I'd like to know *how* Mr. Osborne has the opportunity he didn't have before.)

The difference between *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* and *Look Back in Anger* is that the first seems like a true picture of what went on inside the house in Carlton, Victoria, during the lay-off, while the second seems like a false one of what went on in the Porters' one-room flat in the Midlands. I'm even more ignorant about cane-cutters than I am about sweet-shop owners, but I could believe in the situation of the one, while I couldn't in that of the other. I'm not saying that the characters in *Look Back in Anger* were incredible—they weren't: only that they were in such an unlikely and melodramatic situation that a lot of the play's point was lost because of it. I don't *care* whether Jimmy Porter is drawn exactly from life or not: I can't believe in him and his wife and his sweet-stall, that's all, while I *can* believe in the barmaids and the cane-cutters. Anyway, the sweat of the common man doesn't smell any different from the sweat of the aristocrat: everyone sweats. It's not sweat that interests me in either of the plays, it's the people who do the sweating.

So please let's have the plays and the films about what goes on inside people's houses, but make it convincing. ...

JULIAN MITCHELL

Cirencester
Gloucestershire

I WAS intrigued by Mr. Osborne's obsession with the so-called "Class War" (October ENCOUNTER). His complex-ridden article in which he spends much of his time calling the class he adores a mass of "totem worshippers" has certainly turned me into an angry young man. Angry with Mr. Osborne. I was brought up and still live in a working-class society. My relations are so working class that they consider people who run public houses to be "Middle Class."

I would like to know how much contact Mr. Osborne has with the working class *now*? Or is he content to be the idol of an immature middle-class public? He talks of other people's "forced accents"; Mr. Osborne's accent would be regarded with even greater suspicion by a working man. He must remember that to keep in contact with the masses it is essential that there is no outward sign of being an intellectual. I refer him to Peter Wildeblood's excellent article "What Clothes the Wazir Wore..." The average Englishman of any class respects intelligence but he *admires* courage and integrity, hence "the idiot heroes" of "Reach for the Sky" and "The Battle of the River Plate."

If Mr. Osborne is really interested in social issues, which I doubt, it would be better that, instead of becoming a coffee bar discussion point, he became a realist and a public bar discussion point. There is no need for him to prostitute his undoubted talent, a little more contact with reality is all that is required; but, alas, I feel he is too far gone on the road to "middle-class security."

DICK DOBSON

Winchester
Hants

JUDGING from press portraits, Mr. John Osborne must be a kindly young man well disposed towards the "damned human race." But I think, nay, I am convinced, that he is utterly misguided in ascribing

some sort of superiority to republics over monarchies. For is it not in the republics that corruption flourishes? Is it not the republics which are standardised, regimented? Is it not the republics which maintain hated secret police systems, inquisitions, and other institutions characteristic of reigns of terror? If I had to choose between republics and monarchies I would not hesitate a single second in casting my vote for the latter. It certainly should be apparent to all who have eyes to see and ears to hear that with the exception of Switzerland (of which country I unfortunately have no first-hand information) it is the monarchies of Europe where there is still some freedom and some common decency left.

Mr. Osborne is right in saying that civilisation, by which I assume he refers to the much advertised Western species, has lost faith in itself, but it won't regain that faith by substituting republics for monarchies. That would merely be jumping from the frying pan into the fire. May God forbid adding that tragedy to the many others to which the republics of the world have led us.

A. R. KOCK

Helsinki, Finland

MR. OSBORNE is not, as Mr. Wildeblood recommends, "down in the Isle of Dogs, all ears." He is in genteel Chelsea, all eyes for the popular dailies, using the political education they give him to make cheap sneers at Conservatives. (How many Socialist intellectuals since Priestley have cared a damn for the working classes anyway?)

When the Labour government gets in, it will be an uneasy day for Mr. Osborne. He will have nothing left to sneer at. But perhaps by then he will be living comfortably enough on the rewards of escapism, sentimentality, and first-rate drama.

G. L. PLAYFAIR

*Pembroke College
Cambridge*

For Osborne and Tynan I sigh,
Their Anger may fade bye and bye,
But their thinking is such
That I fear very much
They will remain immature till they die.

MICHAEL KING-SMITH

London, S.W.7

AS ONE of those non-intellectual types whom John Osborne did not expect to be in contact with when he wrote his article "And They Call It Cricket," might I add my comments to your correspondence pages?

I found the article curiously inconsistent—even for its avowed purpose of "making people feel"... Just how dead is the "royal symbol"? Not as dead as he thinks, certainly—you can't persuade a "mob" to rush forward in the Mall on the strength of a

dead tradition; anyway, isn't this mob chiefly composed of those same lower-middle class people whom he goes on to describe with obvious affection: "Even if they did get drunk and fight, they were responding; they were not defeated."

"Responding," I suppose, must include indulging that deep subconscious loyalty to the Crown which is the despair of socialist intellectuals.

In any case, these same intellectuals don't seem to have anything much to offer as a replacement for the royal "circus"—even supposing that the latter ceased to exist as the apple of the public's eye. How do you interest the so-called "masses" in Mr. Osborne's "complex social concepts"? Answer: by turning your social concepts into a circus, complete with demagogic figures to replace royalty; hardly an attractive prospect.

I was puzzled at the reference to "idiot heroes" (as portrayed in "Reach for the Sky," etc.). Why "idiot" heroes? Is there anything basically idiotic in defending oneself against a savage and powerful enemy? This nation always turns its heroes into significant myths, and very significant they are; even Mr. Osborne might find himself the subject of a legend one day, if he ever finds a good cause to fight for. To me, the depressing thing about the "young angries" is their complete lack of patriotism; they will always attack the habits and institutions of their own country, leaving its many enemies severely alone. This, I think, is the real origin of the "loss of faith" bemoaned by Osborne—the honest proletarian mass, with their royal circuses and what-not, haven't lost their faith in our civilisation; only intellectuals with plenty of time for introspective thinking do that.

Mr. Osborne seems to be attempting to identify his own views with those of the "masses" and not succeeding.

P. W. MOIR

*Stanmore
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"THE UNSERVILE STATE"

WHEN I was a rather intellectual schoolboy and when socialism was still a thing intellectual schoolboys had the right to get excited about, I was present on a very distressing occasion. Our school debating society invited a distinguished alumnus, Mr. G. D. H. Cole, to debate socialism with a well-known Conservative M.P. On the very day of the debate, the latter gentleman was gripped by a real or diplomatic illness and, instead of coming, sent a "substitute." Cole, who spoke with his usual felicity and took his subject with proper seriousness, was thus followed on the platform by the "substitute," who turned out to be some minor propagandist from the then unreformed Tory headquarters who proceeded to do his by-election street-corner stuff before this very critical audience. The culminating point of his "disproof" of socialism was, if I remember rightly, a set of statistics which proved that State-owned railways somewhere in Australia had lost money. Cole was rightly dis-

gusted; and we, the hosts, were profoundly ashamed.

I had forgotten this story until I opened the October number of *ENCOUNTER* and read Mr. Richard Wollheim's review of *The Unservile State*; and now it has come back to me. For here is a book which, for all the imperfections inherent in a collection of essays of this kind, does at least break away from the current platitudes of political cross-talk, and does show that there are some really first-rate minds among a relatively young generation of professional economists and others, who are prepared seriously to rethink the implications of a liberal society, and what this should mean in terms of current British politics. And what do we get from *ENCOUNTER* of all places?—a review that Mr. Morgan Phillips would hardly pass if produced as a hand-out from one of the lesser hacks at Transport House.

Mr. Wollheim gives himself away in the first paragraph, in his use of the dichotomy between "Right" and "Left" to describe differences between certain of the contributors to this symposium. What possible relevance has the "Right"-"Left" terminology to the problem of freedom? If Mr. Wollheim had created any confidence in his ability to follow sustained political argument one might recommend to his attention the chapter on "Liberty" in Bertrand de Jouvenel's *Sovereignty*. But certainly in the modern world one can no more take seriously a writer who suggests that politics is comprised by "Right" and "Left," than one would a cartographer who suggested that east and west were the only things that mattered, and north and south were just illusions.

On the particular points that Mr. Wollheim makes, he gives both himself and his prejudices away by taking statements completely out of their context, hoping they will be understood and condemned in a quite different context which his readers will supply for themselves. And it is not hard to do this with Peter Wiles who has, as *ENCOUNTER* readers know, a gift for paradox which demands some measure of alertness if it is not to be misled. But even Mr. Wollheim can hardly have been confused by Mr. Graham Hutton, whose worst enemies have never accused him of lack of clarity. If, instead of attempting to show that Liberals are hard-hearted grinders of the faces of the poor, Mr. Wollheim had said that what disturbed the authors of the book was the relevance of a structure of taxation and of social services to a situation in which the coming of a deliberately planned policy of full employment had completely altered the nature of the demands made upon economic policy, and also the composition of the groups who most required aid—would not all your readers have agreed that this was something that might legitimately exercise people's minds? Even the Labour Party is prepared to rethink the question of "pensions"; and even if there may be good reasons for keeping all existing social services equally available (or, as with rent control, not equally available) for all, this is hardly a self-evident economic or social proposition, let alone a self-evident moral one.

Why the building up of new forms of private

property (and the wider distribution of existing property upon which Mr. Wiles lays emphasis) should not be "a direct achievement" of government policy, but can only be a "secondary product," is something which is presumably self-evident to Mr. Wollheim, but may well not prove so to anyone else.

It is perhaps in his comment on the proposal for tax-relief for school fees that Mr. Wollheim gives himself away most glaringly. The proposal is a controversial one—though if the state is saved money one cannot see why a proportion of it should not be freed to those who save it. But one can be open-minded on this. What is inexcusable is the statement that the issue to-day is not "private v. public, but class v. classless" in education. At bottom, it is a question of freedom in education, against the egalitarianism which says: (a) that differences between children either do not exist or are irrelevant to their education, and (b) that parents may spend their money on anything they like, from pushpin to poetry, but if they choose to spend it on their children's education they are to be regarded as moral pariahs compared with those upright citizens who bring in the profits to the distillers, and Vernons, and Littlewoods, or "go to the dogs." But I forgot: "going to the dogs" is precisely what Mr. Wollheim's political friends have in mind for us.

MAX BELOFF

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[Mr. Wollheim replies:

I find Mr. Beloff's letter rather hard to reply to: mostly because I can't distinguish between the arguments and the jokes. Take, for instance, the story with which it opens—is there supposed to be some formal similarity between what was wrong with the argument of the Conservative “substitute” and what is wrong with my argument, or is the whole thing just an elaborate way of saying that I'm no good? To take particular points:

1. I don't say or think that “Left” and “Right” are the only categories that can be applied to modern political doctrines. But I think that under certain conditions (conditions of political moderation, e.g., Great Britain to-day), they can be applied. Moreover, it seems to me that, since these are the categories in terms of which both the people and the parties ordinarily think and act, wherever they can be applied they should be applied.

2. If “taking statements completely out of their context” (that well-known gibe) doesn't mean quoting part of a book instead of the whole of it, it means, presumably, misquoting it. But if I am guilty of this, why doesn't Mr. Beloff let us have an example? Which of the propositions that I attribute to the symposiasts is not in fact held by them?

3. ... If instead of attempting to show that *Liberals are hard-hearted grinders of the faces of the poor*... Of course I try to show no such thing. In the first place, I deal with only one section of the Liberal party: and secondly, even here, though I disagree with their views, I say that there are honest and disinterested reasons that might lead one to hold them.

4. I don't quite understand whether the achievement that Mr. Beloff claims for *The Unservile State* is that it deals with a certain problem (that of the social services) or—as seems more likely from what he says—that it *presupposes* a certain answer to it (in that full employment makes these less necessary). If the first, there is no originality here: if the second, no merit.

5. *Why the building up of new forms of private property (and the wider distribution of existing property upon which Mr. Wiles lays emphasis) should not be “a direct achievement” of government policy, but can only be “a secondary product,” is something which is presumably self-evident to Mr. Wollheim, but may well not prove so to anyone else.* My point is simple. The State can produce conditions under which the accumulation of private property is possible, or easy, or even attractive. But it cannot accumulate property for its citizens in the direct way in which it can take it from them. I made the point only (a) because those to whom creation of new property seems such a desirable end might find it less desirable if the means to this end were made explicit (and of course they might not), and (b) because it seems to be somehow symptomatic of Liberal policy nowadays that it promises to produce conditions which can at best be only consequential upon conditions which it can directly produce.

By “By gives himself away most glaringly,” Mr. Beloff means, I suppose, “expresses himself clearly.”

I wish that the same could be said for him. Whether, for instance, I subscribe to the egalitarianism that so distresses him, I really don't know because I can't understand it: it sounds to me most like a parody of traditional liberal theory. Incidentally, what rebate does Mr. Beloff propose for those sturdy individualists who refuse to sponge and batten on our public galleries, museums, and libraries?

A distinguished Liberal-Conservative thinker of our day once suggested that the rôle of a political party in a modern democracy is that of “selling” a policy to the electorate, and the freedom of the electorate is that of buying whichever it chooses. If this account is correct—and I personally believe it is—it follows that any policy a party advances should spring from, or relate to, the hopes, wants, needs, interests, and fears of existing people, as these are actually experienced. If a policy does not do this, however honourable or ingenious it may be, it is ultimately frivolous. In this sense *The Unservile State* seems to me a frivolous book. On re-reading what I wrote about it, I now see that some of the frivolity must have leaked out of the book and seeped into my review. It is this frivolity that made Mr. Beloff so very angry. I am sorry about this: if only because when Mr. Beloff is very angry, he is very hard to reply to.]

THE DEMISE OF COCKNEY

MR. WILDEBLOOD's claim (October issue) that Cockney, as spoken in 1957, is not a debased language, cannot be upheld. Just as some landscapes, as, for instance, America suburbia, are unpaintable, so certain types of urban speech, with Cockney prominent amongst them, have become degraded beyond all chance of literary use.

The primary reason for the debasement of Cockney is, of course, that of class. Unlike the Irish and American Southern speech which Mr. Wildeblood mentions, and unlike English North Country and Scottish speech, Cockney has degenerated into a purely lower-class language and as such has lost validity in an increasingly classless society. It is no accident that, to find a tough, living, literary gangster speech, an English writer like Raymond Chandler had to go to California. The English variety, radio, and television entertainers who to-day employ full-blooded Cockney only as a comic turn, probably understand the response of their mass audience rather better than does Mr. Wildeblood.

Being a lower-class speech only—and this is one of Cockney's fatal defects—it cannot be used to communicate beyond its narrow frontiers. Attempts to carry it across the class gap have always remained artificial, whether in the case of Eliza Doolittle or Mr. Wildeblood's esoteric play upon minor thieves' argot. Moreover, having been degraded in social status to a lower-class medium, Cockney has become correspondingly impoverished and inflexible. Admittedly it still lends itself to picturesque epithet. Few things are more satisfactory to listen to than the pungent Cockney repartee of a London bus conductor: yet can one imagine even

simple abstract ideas expressed adequately in Cockney? It is significant that even children from rigid Cockney homes are to-day bi-lingual. The point here is not, as Mr. Wildeblood observes, that such children shift their accent and syntax kaleidoscopically back from standard English on leaving the school gates. Far more important is the fact that at the grammar school or technical school the brightest among them drop Cockney as fast as they can, in fact flee from it. This is the reason why Cockney is to-day being steadily weakened. Mr. Wildeblood's contention that it is assimilating American mass-entertainment speech is surely nonsense: it is being affected and replaced by it, as a visit to the dance hall soon shows.

Another factor in the debasement of Cockney is, I fear, that it has been socially derided for too long and somehow this unpleasant contempt clings; while staunch Cockneys, who in turn treat standard English as "sissy," only limit their own powers of expression by this. Lastly, it is safe to say that Cockney is debased because its whine is æsthetically so ugly—it can be claimed as one of its sins that its diphthongs gave rise to the drawl of its equally obnoxious counterpart, Mayfair English, now also on the way out.

The very survival of Cockney may be deceptive. The other day, watching a set of boys on a council estate play impromptu football on an asphalt pitch, I was struck by their changed bearing. A decade ago they would have knocked around in shirt-sleeves and fluttering waistcoats. To-day they wore well-cut jeans or stove-pipe trousers, with high-necked sweaters in bold colours, Italian style, and careful and expressive hair-dos. In appearance, they had lost the old class uncouthness; yet, when they shouted, the cacophony of wild Cockney vowels and dropped consonants became a secret language. But no sooner had a brisk games-instructor appeared than the same youths dropped as if magically into standard English, non-U variety, to which the touch of Cockney accent gave genuine and pleasant local colour.

Cockney's demise is sure. Eliza Doolittle, to-day, would not be a Cockney but a young lady from subtopia, speaking standardised English in the allegedly wrong or non-U manner. And in cultural terms the central task of to-day is surely to infuse this great mass of non-U standard English, the real English majority tongue of to-day, with some of the infectious literary quality evidently possessed by the idiom of Marlon Brando and the characters of Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams. It is an interesting task which, for example, Kingsley Amis in *That Uncertain Feeling* has already tackled with some success. Cockney is dead: long live non-U English.

T. R. FYVEL

London, N.W.1

L'AFFAIRE DJILAS

In my article on "Djilas and the Yugoslav Dilemma" for your October issue, I mentioned that as a prisoner in Mitrovica, Djilas is not permitted to obtain books on contemporary history. This infor-

mation, received from a reliable source during my recent visit to Belgrade, was the occasion for an unfavourable comparison between the conditions of Djilas' imprisonment by the present Yugoslav régime and by the pre-war monarchy.

It has since been reported, on equally good authority, that Djilas in prison is working on a biography of the 19th-century Montenegrin poet, ruler, and prelate, Njegos, and that he has no difficulty in obtaining books for this purpose or for the study of Western languages. I therefore hasten to clear the record of the present-day Yugoslav treatment of political prisoners to that extent.

Unfortunately, the political news from Yugoslavia gives no occasion for similar corrections of my critical remarks.

RICHARD LOWENTHAL

London, N.W.8

YOUR three contributors on "L'Affaire Djilas" (ENCOUNTER, October), writing from different angles, arrive at a conclusion of tremendous importance. What emerges is that economic options cannot be kept isolated from administrative questions: it is no longer useful to take a stand in favour of an economic system until the administrative content has been defined. We have previously been intoxicated by the "panoramic" approach to economic problems—the magnificent, world-embracing analysis of writers like Marx, Sombart, and Weber. In the works of these economists we have accustomed

ourselves to "broad social movements" representing "underlying economic realities" moving inexorably to "inevitable goals." Nor should we underestimate these contributions. It will never again be possible to write a book on history or economics which does not owe something to Marx (even if it is only a keen distaste).

Twenty years ago to state a belief in the "social ownership of the means of production" was to make a useful contribution to a debate on economics. Now, we are entitled to very little recognition of our prescience unless we go on to define the methods by which this objective will be secured. The latest Soviet text-book on economics (1955) is perhaps unaware of how little it has said when it observes: "In State enterprises, which are the property of the whole people, the share of the social product going to the worker for his personal consumption is paid out in the form of wages. The State lays down in advance fixed wage-scales."

The questions that are relevant to the present stage of the debate on Socialism go far beyond this. We want to know in exact administrative terms who the State is; what is the composition of the management of the State enterprise; by what *exact* representative machinery do the workers participate both in the organisation of the industry and the distribution of the product of their labour. If a political speaker in Hyde Park or on a platform tries to evade these questions, shout him down.

The Djilas affair goes right to the heart of all the furious debate that is raging in this country over the future of nationalisation. The economic arguments have been stated to the point of tedium; we know now about the economics of large-scale production and of the integration (rather than the cut-throat competition) of road and rail transport. We know that coal-owners are as dead as the dinosaur. We know that electricity can better be generated in a few big plants (publicly owned) than lots of little ones (privately owned and Emmett-like).

What we now want to know is how, in the words of Kardelj, this kind of socialist enterprise will further the development of a new type of relations between human beings. Nor are we particularly helped by the kind of platitude that stands at the opposite end of the spectrum from the "social ownership of the means of production" one, i.e., the "Socialism stands for human values" statement that is uttered by at least six hundred parliamentary candidates at five-yearly intervals. As far as the delicate web of human relationships goes, Jane Austen will always have much more to say than any politician one cares to name. The task of the economist-politician (and all who support his approach) is to make human values articulate in administrative structure: to ensure that citizens gain an increasing share in the organisation of their daily lives—politically and industrially—by systems of self-government based on trade unions, works councils, consumer committees, and through more traditional methods like Parliament. All this may sound rather dull; but it is the only answer to the horrors that Djilas has depicted.

ALAN THOMPSON

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"A HISTORY OF PUNCH"

As AN anthropologist, Mr. Gorer is naturally disappointed that my *History of Punch* does not devote much space to his special interests; similar objections could be raised by experts in other fields. There is a mass of work still to be done and I hope somebody will study *Punch* "as part of the social history of the period," as I hope somebody will study it as evidence for the history of fashion; but these will be contributions to other subjects, not to the understanding of *Punch*. The magazine has long suffered from this assumption that its only interest is as raw material for work on something else. I wanted to focus on what had actually appeared in its pages.

I had no room for a general discussion of humour and I had to omit far too many contributors. As the book was unabashedly personal, I did not think it necessary to follow each judgment with some such phrase as "Of course, this is only my opinion" or "We cannot all think alike, can we?" though this is apparently how Mr. Gorer thinks adults should be addressed. I did not "tell the enquiring reader what he ought to think" but I told him what I thought, hoping to stimulate him into agreeing or disagreeing, but only after looking at *Punch* afresh. I was trying to modify the stock picture of *Punch* which has been formed by taking the worst features of all periods and compounding them into a single image. The bad work in the paper has masked the good and the good is far more accomplished and varied than many people realise.

Other reviewers have noticed a schoolmasterly tone. It must be a recent development. Nobody ever thought me schoolmasterly while I was teaching. Of course nobody would attribute Mr. Gorer's disappointment to personal pique, especially as my criticism of his contributions was that they were too like the old *Punch* and not enough like himself. One's fans may irritate but never pique.

R. G. G. PRICE

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"THE TOYNBEE MILLENNIUM"

IN THE "Letters" section of the August and September ENCOUNTER the verdict appears to be unanimously against Trevor-Roper's attack on Toynbee. Yet so far the criticisms are limited to undocumented statements that Trevor-Roper is wrong or went too far—and above all that his manners were deplorable (*especially* for a Regius Professor of History Designate at Oxford).

Without venturing into this last intra-mural domain, is it really so undesirable to show strong feeling and dot it's in a public polemic on occasion? And do not your readers' complaints about Trevor-Roper's manners obscure his central point without dealing with it at all? That Toynbee is a man of exceptional talent, industriousness, and importance in contemporary thinking is denied by few, certainly not by Trevor-Roper. In his angry but *not* undocumented polemic, Trevor-Roper is calling

attention to something else which ought to be at least of equal importance: that Toynbee's approach is neither that of a historian nor that of a dedicated supporter of the one advanced and free civilization that does in fact exist in the world to-day.

Since Toynbee, alongside with Albert Schweitzer, is one of the two great Tory prophets of our time, why not concentrate on this and not on relative manners, reputation, or profundity?

GEORGE FISCHER

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Boston, Mass.

I HAVE followed with great interest the correspondence in your paper consequent upon the publication of Mr. Trevor-Roper's striking article. As Mr. Stillman, of New York, now brings my name in, I trust you will allow me to say a few words.

Mr. Stillman recalls how a Leyden bookseller pointed me out to him as "the man who demolished Toynbee." His comment is that he, Stillman, had not known that Toynbee was demolished. But did I ever make that claim myself? When the last essay I devoted to *A Study of History* (after the appearance of the concluding four volumes) was reprinted in my volume of essays *Debates with Historians*, I added to it the following footnote:

"Since writing this article I saw an advertisement page in the *N.Y. Times Book Review*: 'Have you seen what they are saying about Arnold Toynbee?' I quote some of the headings of the seventeen extracts from reviews (among which I spotted only one written by a learned historian): 'Amazing and monumental... An immortal masterpiece... The greatest work of our time... A literary and intellectual phenomenon... Probably the greatest historical work ever written... A landmark, perhaps even a turning point.' This chorus of praise is a chastening reminder of the very restricted influence exercised by professional criticism. The effect it had on me was nevertheless a heartening one. I have sometimes felt the uncomfortable thought stirring: 'Is it still worthwhile?' Apparently it is still worthwhile. For we must never abdicate before misdirected popular enthusiasm."

This should be enough to show that I preserved my sense of proportion. It ought to make clear also that I and other critics of the great work (I include expressly Mr. Trevor-Roper) have been activated by other motives than those of "envy," and that our "passion," "rudeness," or "fury" might be more justly described as impatience and indignation resulting from concern for high values of our civilisation. Mr. Stillman can see nothing here but Western-civilisation chauvinism. I have indeed spoken of "this Western civilisation of which I am a son and which I love." Before I admit that this is chauvinism, I should have to be convinced that the universalism for which we are advised to desert it is a more fruitful source of great mental and social achievements. It may be a beautiful aspiration, but until it has proved itself to be something more than that, let us remember the injunction of the evangelist: "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

One great achievement of Western civilisation is respect for clear thinking, for logical and truthful arguing. *A Study of History* (for all its remarkable qualities, which I have never denied) offends against this continually and glaringly. And its offence is the more heinous, its potential influence the more dangerous, because its eloquent author assures his readers all the time that he is conducting a severely scientific, empirical investigation. It is this pretence, this make-believe, against which I have from the first directed my criticism. In 1946, and again in 1949, I pointed out that the "facts" on which Toynbee professed to base his system were not facts, that they were subjective combinations or interpretations of facts, that his foundations were therefore shaky and insecure, and the system a fantasy.

In the essay I mentioned before, which was written in 1954, I observed that Toynbee, while denouncing and ridiculing professional historians as a class, had never come to grips with the very precise and fundamental expositions in which I (and many others) had shown his work to consist of "fallacious arguments and spurious demonstrations." After the essay had been published in the *Journal of the History of Ideas*, New York, I heard that Toynbee had sent in a reply, and a friend who saw it before I did myself wrote to me: "this comment covers one page, in which he simply agrees with you." Indeed, when the next number of the *Journal* reached me, I found that the "comment" did not deserve to be called a reply. It was dis-

tressingly vague. The tone was unexceptionable ("my old friend Professor Geyl"), but my criticisms were consistently evaded. This is a way of conducting a debate which is not in accordance with the best traditions of Western civilisation; it gives one no favourable impression of the new civilisation which Toynbee and his admirers want to substitute for it.

In the essay itself I had already remarked that prophets do not argue, and I continued: "It is too late in the day" (after he had missed the opportunity of his chapter on historiography) "to issue an express challenge to Toynbee to prove that, for instance, his reading of 19th-century Italian history, which according to my demonstration did not warrant the conclusions he drew from it, was right after all; or to do the same for his reading of North American history, which I argued was hopelessly wrong, so that his laws and large theories fell to the ground." He had not done so then, he did not do so in the one page comment. He will never do so.

Nor does Mr. Stillman make an attempt to refute criticisms in any other way than by heavy sarcasm or innuendo. He mentions only one concrete point about Afrikaans, as a cultural language. It is a very minor point, and the transparent intention is to create the impression that these petty-minded critics of the great work can only make a great to-do about *minutiae*. This is another example of the familiar method of evasion. I am only too sure that an express challenge to prove me wrong, even on that question, but especially on the large matters of Italian or American history, or on whatever subjects I have touched upon in the course of my critical handling of *A Study of History*, will evoke

as little response from the disciple as it has from the master.

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"THE MONTESI AFFAIR"

ONE MIGHT quarrel at length with Wayland Young's sentimental distortion of Italian life and character (September issue) but this, at least, is a matter of opinion. It is a matter of fact that *maleducato* means, not "ill-educated," but badly brought up or bad-mannered, while calling a person *tu* on early acquaintance, far from being the custom, is considered in most circles *molto maleducato*.

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[Mr. Young comments:

Certainly *maleducato* means bad-mannered, but what is interesting is that this is the word which *does* mean bad-mannered. A boorish, loud, or inconsiderate person is held by the Italian language to lack not breeding, not feeling, but education. As to *tu* and *lei*; I said it was used at once between people of the same age and standing. I've no doubt you could find "circles" where it was hardly used at all. There is a censorious, stuffy, and narrow, lower middle class in Italy, as there is everywhere, but its values are less widely spread through the whole community than they are here. That was one of the points I was making.]

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BOOKS

Drinkers of Infinity

THE Babylonian's universe was an oyster with water underneath and more water overhead supported by the vaulted firmament. It was of moderate dimensions and safely closed in on all sides like a babe in the womb. From the 6th pre-Christian century onward, during the heroic age of Greek science, the oyster was gradually prised open and the earth set adrift, a huge ball floating unsupported in the air. The Pythagoreans set the ball spinning; Aristarchus of Samos set it revolving round the sun; the atomists and Epicureans dissolved the world's boundaries in the infinite.

This exhilarating development lasted for about three centuries; when the energies of the heroic age were spent, the reaction set in. Plato shut the lid of the universe again, and Aristotle transformed it into an air-tight system of nine concentric crystal spheres, enclosing each other like the skins of an onion. The planets moved on smaller spheres, like ball-bearings between the layers of skin, and the outermost skin, that of the *primum mobile*, was the boundary of the world.

The Aristotelian model was improved on by Ptolemy, but the principle remained the same. For nearly two millennia, the universe went into the deep freeze. Then, in the 16th century, the thaw set in. It is at this point that Professor A. Koyré's book on the cosmologies of the Renaissance picks up the thread.*

The scientific and philosophic revolution, which makes the year 1600 appear as a kind of watershed in the history of European civilisation, can be approached from various angles. Professor Koyré's approach is defined in his introduction:

The revolution . . . can be described roughly as

* *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe.* By ALEXANDRE KOYRÉ. *The John Hopkins Press*, Baltimore, 1957. *Oxford University Press*, London. 40s.

bringing forth the destruction of the Cosmos, that is, the disappearance . . . of the conception of the world as a finite, closed, and hierarchically ordered whole (a whole in which the hierarchy of value determined the hierarchy and structure of being rising from the dark, heavy, and imperfect earth to the higher and higher perfection of the stars and heavenly spheres), and its replacement by an indefinite and even infinite universe which is bound together by the identity of its fundamental components and laws, and in which all these components are placed on the same level of being. This, in turn, implies the discarding by scientific thought of all considerations based upon value-concepts, such as perfection, harmony, meaning, and aim, and finally the utter devalorisation of being, the divorce of the world of value and the world of facts.

Within its self-imposed limits the book is a model of scholarliness without pedantry, of clarity without over-simplification. It starts with that lonely, late mediæval forerunner of the New Philosophy, Nicholas of Cusa, and ends with Newton. Bishop Nicholas (1401-1464) was the first to kick against the lid of the mediæval universe; he asserted that the world had no boundaries, and consequently neither periphery nor centre. It was not infinite, merely "infinite," that is, unbounded. He was no mathematician, and one must beware of reading a too literal interpretation into such intuitive guesses; but in so far as intuition is concerned, Cusa's self-contained universe that is neither closed-in nor infinite, has an unmistakable kinship with the finite, relativistic universe which, through the curvature of space, returns into itself. But more important: by denying that the world has a centre or a periphery, Cusa denied its hierarchic structure, denied the lowly position which the earth occupied in mediæval cosmology, the confinement of the evils of "change and decay" to the sublunary sphere—as opposed to the pure and immutable higher heavens: