

A Synopsis of *Evolution and Consciousness*:  
*The Role of Speech in the Origin and*  
*Development of Human Nature*

This paper reports briefly the principal theses developed in *Evolution and Consciousness*. Since its object is not to defend the opinions expressed in this book, but merely to acquaint those who have not read it with what it proposes, little effort will be made to allege evidence or to try to meet objections. The reasoning that led to its conclusions cannot very well be omitted altogether, but will be reproduced here only minimally and in truncated form.

I

The purpose of *E & C* is to develop a philosophic theory of the origin and the subsequent evolution of the specifically human characteristics. This refers in the first instance to the human ability to experience consciously. For consciousness is the fountainhead of all that is typically human: from consciousness follow the individual's experience of selfhood and his capacity for perceiving reality as such, and therefore also the ability of groups to organize themselves and govern their relations in accordance with social, political, economic, legal, moral, familial, religious, intellectual, and other culturally perpetuated institutions. The human characteristics also include, however, individual and collective aberrations that are peculiar to conscious life and that make human nature seem almost self-contradictory. Thus, *E & C* attempts to account for what the purely biological theories of evolution have not explained sufficiently well: how the human mind acquired its individual and social peculiarities, how its origin conditions its later development, and why such development can take dysfunctional as well as healthy forms.

The hypothesis tested in *E & C* is that the ability of individuals to experience consciously is not transmitted genetically, but is developed by them culturally, as a necessary consequence of their learning to speak. Likewise, the acquisition of consciousness by the human species did not result from the natural selection of the experiential structures and functions of the organism, but from the acquisition of speech. Accordingly, *E & C* tries to explain how speech may have originated out of infrahuman communication, how this development would have necessarily brought about the emergence of a species characterized by conscious life, and how consciousness thereafter continued to evolve, in accordance with the evolution of the properties of

speech, until human nature developed the social and cultural characteristics—and the dysfunctional forms thereof—that it has continued to exhibit down to our own day. The salient points of the argument are as follows.

II

*E & C*'s first premiss is the observation that experience can be either conscious or lacking in consciousness. Note that I am concerned with *experience*, not simply with knowledge. The emotional aspects of experience are not a whit less experiential than the cognitive ones; moreover, there is no experience that does not include both the cognitive and emotional components into which it can be artificially analysed. Now, the distinction between *experience* and *conscious experience* contains a crucial implication: that consciousness is not a distinct experiential function; it is only a *quality* that may accrue to the functions of the human experiential apparatus. We are equipped with experiential abilities to see, hear, touch, imagine, and so on, which we typically exercise in a conscious way. But evidently, it is also possible for us to exercise them without the benefit of consciousness. The difference is not in *what* is experienced, but in *how* it is experienced. But this difference is all-important, and is what defines the specifically human form of life: if there is a difference in kind between the human mode of life and that of the higher animals, despite the fact that both are equipped with essentially the same experiential apparatus, the reason is the difference between the two modalities of experience. Consciousness is what transforms the animal into the human level of life.

All experience, be it conscious or not, makes objects present to the experiencer. But as we can observe by reflecting on our own experiences, conscious



experience renders present to the experiencer, *simultaneously*, both the *objects* of experience and the *activity* of experiencing such objects. This is why it is impossible to experience anything consciously without the experiencer being aware that he is experiencing it. Now, I have not said that consciousness consists in experiencing one's own experience; were it so, we could be conscious of nothing but ourselves, which is obviously not true. What I have pointed out is rather that whenever we experience anything—be it ourselves, our experience, or an object other than ourselves and our experience—it is not only the object that becomes present to us; our own act of experiencing becomes present to itself as integral part of the experience of the object. Thus, conscious experience is distinguishable by *self-presence*; it is definable as the kind of experiential activity that is *present to itself*.

The direct consequence of the human ability to experience consciously is that human beings have a sense of their own reality and selfhood. The reason is that, if conscious experience simultaneously reveals both an object and the fact that such object is being experienced, then conscious experiencers are thereby in a position to discriminate—indeed, they cannot but discriminate—between (a) the *object* of their experience, and (b) their *act of experiencing* the object. In every act of conscious experience, therefore, the experience includes, besides the object, the fact that the object is *other than* the act of experiencing it. But to experience an object simultaneously as (a) whatever it is, and (b) as other than our experiencing of it, is the same as to experience the object as *real*. Moreover, if one is able to experience an object as *other than* one's experiencing of it, one is in a position to experience that one's own activity of experiencing is real. That is, our act of experience is other than its object. One will therefore experience oneself as an experiencer. But to experience oneself as an experiencer—or as the active agent who does its own experiencing—is to experience oneself as a *self*.

All other aspects of human life naturally flow from these two. Since human beings experience their own reality and their selfhood, they also experience each other's. The specifically human form of *society*—characterized by the fact that its members are related by some degree of awareness of their mutual reality and selfhood, of their mutual sameness and kinship—is but the obverse of the human ability to experience consciously and

to have a sense of reality and selfhood.

Many clues converge on the suspicion that natural selection cannot account for the emergence of the conscious level of experience. I will mention only one: that consciousness does not consist in experiencing a particular type of object that other experiential functions cannot attain to, but in experiencing in a peculiar way exactly the same objects that the same experiential functions (of both humans and animals) attain to in non-conscious experience. For this suggests that consciousness is an *acquired* ability, much like dancing a jig or reading cuneiform. (*Quare*: But acquired abilities such as dancing and reading are not developed invariably by every member of the human species. Could consciousness be the distinctive mark of human nature, yet acquired? Good question. Read on.) But if consciousness is acquired, the appearance of consciousness in the human individual cannot be merely the result of the maturation of genetically inherited organic functions; it must be the outcome of the individual's developing the ability to use its experiential apparatus in the peculiar manner that is required for consciousness. Likewise, the consciousness of the species could not have originated through mere organic selection, but as the result of the species having learned to use its organic experiential endowment—above all, presumably, the brain—in a special way. But whether by the individual or the species, how could the acquisition of consciousness come about?

The hypothesis developed in *E & C*—that consciousness is generated by speech—is not an *a priori* possibility excogitated by an unruly imagination. It naturally suggests and recommends itself to anyone who considers two observable facts, one about speech, the other about consciousness.

*Speech* is the basic form of human *communication*; it makes use of various systems of signs, or *languages*, that typically involve making and hearing vocal sounds. But we may omit here all consideration of the languages and physiological mechanisms of spoken communication, because what concerns us is rather the *mental act*, the *communicative activity* that is embodied in the making of the significant vocal sounds of human speech. We can best proceed to study this activity by considering certain characteristics common to all communication, whether animal or human.

There is no harm in saying—since in a figura-



tive sense it is true—that communication is the transmission of messages. No harm, that is, as long as it is not taken too literally. For what communicators do is not actually to pass along something called a message: what they do is to enable their communicands to share in their—the communicators'—experience. Thus, a sparrow perceives a hawk and—instinctively, as part of the functions genetically inscribed in its organism—it utters sounds that communicate to its fellows its experience of the hawk. A householder aroused at midnight perceives a masked intruder and utters sounds into his telephone that communicate to the police his experience of a burglar. (Of course, unlike the sparrow the householder utters the sounds deliberately, intending to make his experience known.) Correspondingly, upon perceiving—that is, experiencing—the audible or other signs made by communicators and modulated by them in accordance with their experience, animal or human communicands undergo that form of experience we call 'receiving a message,' but which in fact consists in being apprised of—that is, in experiencing—the experience that had prompted the communicator's (automatic or deliberate) sending of the message. Thus, in both animals and humans to communicate is to behave in certain ways that, upon being experienced by the communicand, make it possible for the communicand to *experience*—vicariously, to be sure—the *experience* communicated by the communicator. What communicators communicate is their *experience*.

That the languages or systems of signs used by human communicators are vastly more complex and qualitatively different from those of animals is true, but irrelevant to present purposes. What matters, and what defines the essential difference between spoken communication and animal communication, is something else.

All we can observe in the processes of animal communication can be quite adequately explained without the supposition that when animals communicate they intend to do so; indeed, even some forms of human communication (for instance, through spontaneous body language) require no such supposition. To speak, however, is more than to communicate one's experience. It is to communicate it (a) intending to communicate it, and (b) experiencing the causal role played in the communicating process by the communicator's own sign-making activity. Let us sum this up in the

formula that human beings communicate *assertively*. The distinctive quality of their communication is *assertiveness*. When they communicate their experience they *mean* what they communicate and they *assert the experience* that they communicate. Or which is the same, when you receive my message you experience what I *say* that I experience; and I so say because I want you so to *experience*. Needless to say, the possibility thereby also exists that I may assert my experience falsely or distortedly, for the very reason that I want you to have an erroneous experience of what I experience.

The hypothesis that speech generates consciousness begins to suggest itself when to the foregoing observations concerning the assertiveness of speech we add another one concerning consciousness: that conscious experience, too, is characterized by assertiveness in relation to its object. For what I described earlier as the fact that consciousness enables us to experience the real as real may also be described as the fact that conscious experience is the kind that *affirms* its object. When we sense an object and perceive it as real—as being truly itself rather than a figment of our own creation—our experience does not merely *receive* the object. Our experience also *gives credit* to it, as it were, for being whatever it is and for being real. In other words, the experience 'says' or 'states' that the object is itself and is other than our experiencing of it. Thus conscious perception—or *perceptual consciousness*—may also be described as *assertive experience*. Non-conscious sense perception, by contrast, would deliver exactly the same object as conscious experience does, but would be a *non-assertive* form of experience. The assertion involved in perceptual consciousness is, of course, an assertion of the object directly and in itself; it is not achieved through the mediation of words or other signs. More fully defined, it is *immediately assertive experience*. Well, the possibility leaps to the eye: perhaps human beings acquire the ability *to experience assertively* (i.e., consciousness), as a collateral but necessary consequence of their acquiring the ability *to communicate their experience assertively* (i.e., speech).

An experienter who has learned to perceive consciously, moreover, naturally develops the higher level of conscious or assertive experience we call *understanding*. Whereas the assertiveness of perceptual consciousness is not self-evident, the assertiveness of human understanding is quite obvious; for understanding re-



quires us to *say* and to *state* (to ourselves, but to others also, if we wish) our experience of reality in actual words (whether imagined words only, or also in audible ones). Or more precisely, to understand is to state to ourselves *meaningfully*, and *by means of words*, the experience of the same reality that we state to ourselves merely *factually*, and *altogether tacitly*, when we simply perceive it. More fully set out, therefore, the hypothesis of *E & C* is that speech generates, first, perceptual consciousness, which is immediately assertive of reality in its factuality, and that subsequently it generates understanding, which asserts the experienced object meaningfully through the mediation of words.

I need hardly say that the genesis of consciousness is described in *E & C* as a purely natural phenomenon; nor do I invoke any sort of body-mind dualism. The process was of course a long and gradual one, and I reconstruct it in the book in some detail. Here, however, it should suffice to mention two aspects of the question.

First, why is speech capable of transforming the ability merely to experience into the ability to do so assertively? Though the process was very complex, the principle that explains the process is breathtakingly simple. When communication is assertive, the activity of communicating makes it necessary for communicators to confront their own experiencing. That is, their communicative activity requires them to experience their experiencing activity. Why? Well, let us recall that every communicator, whether animal or human, communicates his experience. But if the communicator communicates his experience assertively—which means, I repeat, intending to communicate it, and in consequence of his *experiencing* (not necessarily consciously) his power to communicate—it follows that he must experience himself as a communicator *of his experience*. But if so, an assertive communicator is one who has learned to experience himself as an experiencer; that is, he has learned to experience consciously. Mere communication does not change the nature of the communicator's experience, but assertive communication does.

Let me make the same point in a different way, in case it should be useful. Human communicators communicate their experience intending to communicate it. But this is possible only if they *experience* the communicative nature of their communicative behaviour. Or if you wish, it is possible only when a

communicator learns to experience himself as a communicator—hence, when he becomes able to *experience* that he communicates *his experience*. Thus, when a communicator communicates assertively, his activity brings about automatically the coincidence of (a) the communicated experience, and (b) the experience of communicating it. This coincidence is the origin of the self-presence of consciousness. When an aboriginally non-conscious experiencer learns to speak, his activity of speaking forces him to experience, besides objects, the fact that such objects are experienced by him. Hence, once he learns to speak, it is only a matter of time before he learns to experience consciously.

Perhaps we can now understand why consciousness can be acquired, yet constitute the foundation of human nature and the mark of humanity. If consciousness is generated by speech, then consciousness is acquired with the same invariability as genetically transmitted characteristics are. For speech is transmitted invariably from one generation to the next. The transmission of speech is thus a quasi-genetic mechanism whereby the humanity of human beings is transmitted to human offspring. The prior transformation of animal, non-assertive communication into human, assertive communication may be safely presumed to have resulted from natural selection. But the emergence of consciousness was not brought about through natural selection; it was rather the incidental result of the emergence of speech through natural selection. This means that the emergence of consciousness was also the emergence of both a new mode of reproduction and a new evolutionary mechanism. The evolution of human nature is free from the limitations of natural selection and can proceed by purely socio-cultural means. But note also: this implies that man is a *zoon politikon*, a social animal, in a much more radical sense than Aristotle suspected. The human individual owes only his organism to the physiology of his parents' reproductive functions; his humanity he owes to the entire *socio-cultural matrix* that generates him—a most important segment of which is constituted, however, by parents, caretakers, and the relatively small number of socializers who bring him up to adulthood.

But this takes us to the next question. The acquisition by our species of the ability to speak did not result solely in the emergence of consciousness in individuals, but also in the emergence of conscious socio-

cultural life, i.e. of societies and cultures of the specifically human type, in which the fundamental relationship among its members is created by their experience of themselves and each other as experiencing *selves*. Why should the generation of consciousness by speech have entailed the parallel appearance of the type of society and culture that in fact accompanies human life? To answer this question we must analyse further the nature of the kind of experiential life that had come into being once our hominid ancestors had developed the ability to speak.

Understandably, we tend to assume that our selfhood is the precondition of our having conscious experience. Understandably, I say, because *after* human organisms have acquired selfhood this is exactly how they appear to themselves. Since we now experience ourselves—we are apt to reason—as conscious selves who do our own conscious experiencing, we must have been selves even before we developed consciousness. Well, the premiss is correct, but the conclusion is absurd. As we have seen, we can experience ourselves as selves only if we experience ourselves as experiencers—that is, only on condition that we be conscious. Selfhood is not the antecedent, but the consequent, of consciousness. And a human organism is not aboriginally a person—though it personalizes itself as the natural result of its developing the ability to experience consciously. Moreover, as observation confirms, a human self does not appear suddenly and once for all; it is built up gradually, through the accumulation of conscious experience. We come into being as the unique person each one of us is, only as we *identify* ourselves to ourselves as the agents who have had a peculiar set of conscious experiences in the past, who typically experience reality as we now do, who expect to experience it in certain ways in the future, and who experience our own behaviour in reaction to the world as we have done in the past, as we now do, and as we may in times to come. Thus, we construct our identity as a self through the same means that our organism develops its consciousness, namely, through assertive communication. We become what we are through our *saying* to ourselves—in thought, word, and deed—what we are. Or which is the same, we acquire our identity through *self-definition*. An important consequence follows from this.

All things have a certain *identity*, a coherent,

continuous, and integrated set of characteristics that defines their self-sameness; and ordinarily this identity is given to them by whatever physico-chemical or biological process brings them into being. But this is not true of the selfhood of human beings. The human organism does, to be sure, begin with a certain organic identity, namely, its genetic endowment. But if it is true that consciousness is generated in human beings by a socio-cultural process—namely, the transmission of speech from one generation to the next—then human beings do not inherit even their consciousness from their biological progenitors, let alone their selfhood and personal identity. Between human parents and offspring there always is, in a deeper sense than the idiom imagines, a 'generation gap.' That consciousness is not inherited through the transmission of an immature or elementary seed of consciousness that can thereafter grow and mature on its own should be plain from all that has been discussed above: what parents (as the personators of the entire society) give to their offspring (besides, of course, the human organism) is the ability to speak. The speaking human organism's consciousness, and thereafter its selfhood, are manufactured by the organism itself. The identity of human persons is *self-given*. And this is what enables us to understand the peculiarities of human motivation—which in turn is what explains why culture and society, of the specifically human type, are the necessary concomitant of consciousness.

Conscious life is insubstantial, ethereal, flimsy. And it comes into the world utterly dispossessed. For the selfhood of human beings begins literally at zero—that is, with their being aboriginally *nothing*—for the very reason that human beings do not inherit their selfhood. Thus, the 'I' is born needier, hungrier, and more dependent upon the world and others of its species than mere organic life. Before it can *be* itself, it has to create its identity as a self. But this also means that our task of defining ourselves so as to create our identity is not simply a possibility but a vital human need; self-definition is the human equivalent of biological self-preservation. The satisfaction of this need is the specifically human motive, and the one that qualifies all the other wants and needs that may animate conscious behaviour. Indeed, the human need to be oneself and to maintain one's identity may even supersede all other wants and needs: human beings can choose aforethought to die for



reasons, good or bad, that have nothing to do with biological advantages to their organism but with the way in which they experience themselves.

The same need may be described as the need for *meaning*. Human beings cannot rest content with using their experience of reality to adapt biologically so as to survive biologically. They must make sense out of their experience of reality so that they can adapt to themselves and survive as selves. Therefore, if they need some sort of explanation of the world, it is not because they have—as has been estimated by many, from Aristotle to modern scientists—a built-in inclination to penetrate the secrets of nature and repeat to themselves its valuable truths. It is rather because they have a need, created by the very process that creates their consciousness, to explain themselves to themselves—which they cannot do without devising at the same time a satisfying interpretation of their situation within the world.

The origin of *culture* as part of human evolution should now be clear. There are two complementary reasons why the emergence of culture is but the obverse of the emergence of consciousness. The first is that a society's culture, being the repository of speech, is literally the matrix or womb within which the consciousness of each of its individual members is generated. The second is that all cultural institutions are at bottom nothing but institutions of self-definition. That is, they are means whereby human beings formulate, accumulate, develop, maintain, repair, and transmit from one generation to the next the assertions—about reality, about their place in reality, about themselves, and about each other—that enable them to make sense of the world and themselves. Culture is not only the reproductive organ of consciousness (insofar as it transmits speech), but also the genetic pool, as it were, of human identity (insofar as it transmits the assertions that human beings can take advantage of to construct themselves). These assertions are the beliefs, convictions, opinions, impressions, prejudices, conclusions, estimates, and guesses, that taken all together make up a culture's idea—or ideas—of the human situation and the nature of reality. All the cultural institutions of a society are therefore intimately related to each other by virtue of their common function: human self-definition. They all embody, perpetuate, and regulate a proposed—or a coercively recommended, or a prescribed, as the case may be—complex interpretation whereby the members of the

society are instructed in what the world is like, in how to live within it, and in how to live with themselves and each other. In brief, they teach us, in the broadest sense, 'the meaning of life.'

The assertions by means of which human beings individually and collectively define themselves and construct their identity are innumerable. But they can be classified according to a certain logical order. Some are far-reaching principles and maxims, whereas others are less consequential statements of policy or particular rules. Some are immediately relevant to human self-definition, while others are only remotely so. Although the institutions of self-definition make up a seamless web, it is possible to break down human culture conceptually and to analyze human life into various social components. Now, if we decant a culture's institutions of self-definition and pour off the many layers that make up the more superficial levels of the culture's life, the residue is what we call 'religion.' For *religion* embodies not simply instruction about 'the meaning of life,' but about the absolutely *fundamental* meaning of life. Nothing can be more fundamentally important for conscious experiencers, however, than to experience their identity—their existence as selves—as a *meaningful* one; we have seen why this is more valuable for them than organic life itself. And yet, human beings cannot become acquainted with their own reality as selves without sooner or later becoming aware of the contingency of their selfhood. The certainty that this 'I' which is myself will eventually 'lose' the consciousness and the organism on which it depends implies that no interpretation of world and self would be truly fundamental unless it included an interpretation of the mortality of human life. Religion, then, to put it more fully, is that institution of self-definition that is concerned with interpreting the fundamental meaning of life *and* death.

I call attention to the procedure I have followed to arrive at this conception of religion. In a good many theories of religion, though scarcely in all, the tacit assumption is made that the defining characteristics of the phenomenon of religion are to be found in *what* human beings think, feel, or believe; the question *why* they think, feel, or believe as they do is not usually raised. And this means that some answer has been taken for granted. This approach condemns its practitioners to the delusion that, if they can find a common element in the *contents* of all religions, they have isolated the na-



ture of religion. They seem unaware that this procedure permits them to take the measure of all religions by the standard of whatever preconceptions about the nature of religion they may harbour. Now facts concerning the contents of the varieties of religion are, I need hardly say, indispensable to the study of religion. But, to paraphrase Leibniz, the fundamental issue is: why religion *at all*? Why not rather *nothing*? But if so, religion is not definable by its contents, but by its functions, its role in human life; and such role can be ascertained only by examining human nature. The idea of religion I have proposed is of this sort, and has been derived from an analysis of the origin and nature of conscious life.

Nothing in the nature of consciousness requires, therefore, that a society's fundamental institutions of self-definition include, for instance, the 'idea of the holy,' or the experience of a '*mysterium tremendum et fascinans*,' or of the difference between 'the sacred and the profane,' or 'an indefinite and generalized feeling of remoteness,' let alone the concept of an extramundane realm, or supernatural entities or forces of any sort. Theories of this sort unwittingly perpetuate a secular version of the old Western theological prejudice that man-made religion is definable as the kind of doctrine that approximates the first article of the Christian creed. In my terms, however, Greek philosophy would be an example of religion: it performed, for those who professed it, exactly the same function that the popular Greek religion did for other Greeks. Likewise, modern Western science is not simply a method and a tradition of inquiry: it is in the first place a cultural institution that creates, sustains, and perpetuates a community with a distinctive identity, a normative worldview, and even a characteristic mystique. Its largely inarticulate, underlying 'philosophy' amounts to an interpretation—albeit an agnostic one—of 'the most probable' meaning of life and death. Or, to take another instance: the secular common sense of those in Western culture today who think of themselves as 'non-religious' performs a like *religious* function, however different its contents may be from what we ordinarily think of as 'religion.' But our traditional idea of religion is much too provincial. It needs revision and expansion so as to signify accurately the reality to which it refers.

It follows that religion, in the sense of the term proposed in *E & C*, is the royal road towards understanding the evolution of the human species during

historic times; the later chapters of *E & C* begin to cross the threshold of this question. For religions exhibit in distilled form the processes whereby human nature, having appeared, continued thereafter to evolve in accordance with the same principle that had brought it into being—namely, the generation of consciousness by speech.

But to grasp why this should be maintained, and the avenues it opens up, we must go well beyond what we have studied so far about the nature of speech. We have learned that speech is assertive communication; now, however, we need to observe that we can communicate our experience assertively in two quite different ways, and at two different levels of assertiveness. (The second, as we shall see, evolved out of the first.) I will now describe the two levels of speech.

The first way in which we can assert our experience is with *direct* and *immediate* reference to the reality that constitutes the context of the assertion. For instance, if I meet a dangerous situation and say to my companion, 'Look out! Danger!' my communication would be true speech—because it was assertive sign-making—but it would assert reality directly and immediately. But, second, the assertiveness of my speech would have been of a very different kind if, in relation to the same events, I had instead said, for instance, 'This situation is dangerous!' When we speak, as we say, 'in complete sentences,' the direct reference of the assertion is to a stated *theme* (in this instance, 'this situation'); correspondingly, my speech asserts a *thesis* ('is dangerous') in direct relation to such theme, and only indirectly in relation to reality. Why should we say that the assertion is made directly about the theme, and only indirectly about reality? Because it is the theme as stated, not reality itself, that provides the immediate context of the assertion. To be sure, my assertion does *ultimately* refer to the reality signified by the theme. But the assertion refers to such reality only through the mediation of the stated theme—whereas in the first kind of speech nothing is interposed between the reality and what the speaker asserts about it.

The point may not be easily grasped. I will therefore propose it in different terms in a moment. But first I will suggest some labels. In both forms of human communication a thesis is asserted, and the thesis ultimately refers to reality. But it is only at the second level of speech that the speaker stipulates a theme in relation

to which the thesis is directly and immediately asserted. Accordingly, let us call the former *non-thematic speech*, and the latter *thematic speech*. But again, what is the functional difference between the two?

All experience bears reference to some reality; and all speech communicates one's experience. But one's experience can be communicated (whether to oneself or to others) in either of two different ways. One way is by pointing to reality directly by means of the very words that assert one's experience of it: 'Danger!'. This is non-thematic speech. The other is by first converting reality, also by means of words, into an object of speech or theme, and then making an assertion in relation to the theme: 'That object hanging above you, Damocles, should cause you some concern.' This is thematic speech. When one speaks thematically, the theme ultimately refers to reality, of course; otherwise there would be no value in asserting anything in relation to the theme. But the theme has its own reality, within my mind, as an element of my speech: the theme *is not* the reality itself. The context of thematic assertions is therefore created by the speaker, within his own speaking mind. At the level of non-thematic speech, on the contrary, the context of the assertion is not provided by anything in the speaker's speech or mind, but is identical with the reality he is making an assertion about. Thus, as I have said, when we speak thematically we speak about reality indirectly, by making assertions in direct relation not to reality itself but to a stated theme.

The difference between the two levels of speech should be especially evident if we consider their respective consequences for experience. Non-thematic speech serves to generate the faculty of immediate or perceptual conscious experience; thereafter, non-thematic speech can be used to communicate one's conscious sense perceptions. But that is all; non-thematic speech does not of itself create or facilitate an additional form of experience. In contrast, if the speaker also learns to make assertions with direct and immediate reference to themes, and with only indirect and mediate reference to reality, he becomes able to experience reality in a new, more useful, and more satisfactory manner than by merely experiencing it wordlessly, at the level of simple conscious perception. This higher level of experience is what we call *understanding*, which can be achieved only by our communicating *thematically* with ourselves

about reality. Of course, we can speak about reality thematically with others also, if we so wish. That is, we can share our understanding of it—an excellent way, incidentally, of promoting and deepening understanding in ourselves.

We today use both forms of speech, though thematic speech is by far the more frequently resorted to; it is also the one on which we depend for *interpreting* reality to ourselves and each other. If we could speak about reality in no other way than by pointing towards it by means of words, we could say very little about it. To make *intelligent* remarks about it, we must first *thematize* it. There is no reason, however, why at an early state of evolution human beings should not have been able to speak only at the more elementary level; we can easily imagine a prehistoric hunter who knew no more complex a way to speak than to say the Neandertal equivalent of, for instance, 'Deer; watering hole; spear; come; quick!' If he *meant* or *intended* what he said, his communication would have been true speech; but so far he had learned to assert his experience only with direct and immediate reference to reality in its raw, concrete state. The fact that speech in us today is not a single-layer communicative activity, but two, indicates that speech evolved in two stages. Out of the ability to make assertions about reality, but strictly in the context given to speakers by reality itself, evolved the ability to make assertions about reality in a context and under conditions determined by the speakers themselves.

But two different levels of speech generate consciousness at two different levels: if speech evolved in two stages, so must have consciousness. This has already been broached above, but I will now add a few details. Non-thematic speech sufficed to generate conscious sense perception. But the primitive ability to speak (non-thematically) evolved into the ability to speak *with oneself* (i.e. to *think*). And the ability to think, for reasons that will be mentioned presently, in turn made thematic speech possible. The latter development ultimately led to the emergence of that further level of conscious experience we call the ability to *understand*. Unlike conscious sense perception, understanding is a *mediate* conscious experience of reality, since it is the ability to interpret reality by telling ourselves a *worded* story about it. Thus, speech first gave *assertiveness* to experience, converting it into consciousness. But eventually it gave it more: it also gave it *wordedness*, converting





mere perceptual consciousness into the ability to experience the world meaningfully by means of words.

By the same token, the emergence of thematic speech is what introduced into human nature the need for meaning. For it was only when understanding and interpretation became possible that absence of understanding—hence, absence of self-definition and identity—could be consciously experienced as an unsatisfied need affecting one's very selfhood. The other side of the same coin was the emergence of that level of culture—culture as we know it today—in which thematic assertions and narratives interpreting the world and ourselves are handed down from one generation to the next. Religions and 'philosophies' became, as they have remained, the carriers and the manifestation of the most fundamental convictions on which all other socio-cultural institutions rest.

Again, the question precisely how non-thematic evolved into thematic speech, and immediate consciousness into the self-defining or interpretative consciousness, will not be dealt with here except in the one respect that is indispensable for present purposes. Consider the difference between non-thematic and thematic speech. What had to be added to the former, if the former was to become the interpretative tool that is the latter? What made thematic speech an instrument whereby the mere conscious perception of reality could rise to that level of experience that satisfies our need for self-identity through our situating of ourselves within an interpreted world? According to *E & C*, it was the ability to organize our manifold conscious perceptions in a way that should make them meaningful because it consisted in reducing the strange to the familiar and the alien to the intimate—in other words, because it related our experiences of the world to our immediate conscious apprehension of ourselves. And such ability to organize the multiplicity of our conscious sense experiences is, by another name, the *categories* of speech and thought, the various ways in which we relate theses to themes. Thus, thematic speech emerged when human beings, after they were conscious, developed the ability to think (i.e. to have immediate conscious experience of themselves, and in particular of the reality, efficacy, and purposiveness of their conscious activities), and then learned to use these experiences as categories. Or which is the same, when they learned to organize their experiences of the world by relating them as theses to themes

in accordance with concepts of reality, causality, purposiveness, and so on, that they had previously developed out of their conscious experience of themselves.

In this account of human evolution, therefore, when human beings developed thematic speech and became able to understand they simultaneously acquired the need to define themselves and the means to satisfy that need—namely, thematic speech. And as integral part of the same process, religion had come into being as the fundamental socio-cultural institution of self-definition. But something else had come into being as well: the fundamental *assumptions* or *non-consciously held presuppositions* on which self-definition—religious self-definition in the first place, but therefore all other cultural institutions also—would thereafter necessarily depend. This means that the entirety of mankind's subsequent cultural history has been conditioned by the way in which the institutions of self-definition originated. But why should self-definition have been born under the sign of dependence on certain presuppositions? And what was the nature of such presuppositions?

To learn to relate a thesis to a theme as what the theme *is*, or else as what the theme *brings about*, or as what the theme *wants*—we shall be concerned here only with the three most important categorical concepts, namely, *reality*, *causality*, and *finality*—is to learn to organize our perceptions of the world through the instrumentality of thematic assertions and narratives that satisfy our needs as conscious experiencers only because, as we had previously noted, they 'make sense.' But now we know *why* they make sense. They make sense because our ideas of 'being real,' of 'bringing about' (or 'causing'), and of 'wanting' (or 'goal seeking') are part of our direct and immediate experience of ourselves once consciousness is awakened in us by speech. That is, thematic speech is possible only because non-thematic speech first makes it possible for us to experience consciously such aspects of our own consciousness as our *otherness to objects*, our *causal agency*, and our *purposiveness*. Well, for that very reason, to learn to speak thematically is automatically to become equipped with certain presuppositions about reality, causality, and finality that derive from the self-presence of our most primitive levels of conscious experience. Acquiring these presuppositions is simply the obverse of acquiring thematic speech.

According to *E & C*, therefore, we do not first



learn the meaning of 'reality,' 'causality,' and 'finality' from our experience of the outer world, but from our most elementary and fundamental conscious experience of ourselves. It is only after we have learned thus to experience ourselves that we can learn to understand the reality and the causal and purposive processes observable in the world by reference to what we have already learned about our own. The consequence, however, is that although the interpretations developed by a culture's institutions of self-definition may otherwise vary widely, they all must be contained within the boundaries of certain assumptions that are implicit in the interpreters' uncritical practice of thematic speech. For human thought can develop its interpretations—its religions, its philosophies, its sciences, and the undisciplined but socially powerful quasi-mythological interpretations called a culture's 'common sense'—only by means of thematic speech. And to speak thematically is by definition to make use of the presuppositions embodied in the thinker's tacit or explicit, sophisticated or vague—and, as we are about to consider, *adequate* or *inadequate*—but in any event effective, idea of how to relate theses and themes in accordance with certain presupposed categorical concepts.

It is for this reason that the utmost significance attaches to an observable yet commonly neglected fact: that there are profound differences among human cultures in how its members speak thematically. The human species is divided into two groups whose speech is guided respectively by two considerably different ideas of what speakers must do in order to assert a thesis in relation to a theme. First I will mention why the fact that there are variant forms of thematic speech is of great moment; then I will analyse the fact; finally I will describe some of its consequences for mankind.

The fact is important because two different ways of speaking carry two different sets of assumptions about reality, causality, and finality. This implies that at some point in the course of evolution human beings must have developed two quite different orientations. The two orientations were, as they remain, institutionalized in and manifested by two kinds of religion. Accordingly, there are two different types of culture. This means that at at some prehistoric, though likely late, stage of evolution the human species became differentiated into two races distinguishable by variations in the form of their consciousness and speech.

Moreover, the two forms of thematic speech, and the two sets of assumptions they imply, are not equally adequate; for they embody two unevenly adequate forms of immediate conscious self-experience. Therefore, the two orientations that human cultures have taken differ also in adequacy. The difference can be measured by the respective effectiveness of the two types of religion, and of all the institutions of self-definition that derive from them, in helping human beings procure a healthy identity. The measure of such health is in turn the degree to which such institutions contribute to the adjustment of human beings to themselves, to each other, and even to the physical environment in which they live.

The result is that, although some cultures are not afflicted by institutionalized forms of neurotic experience and behaviour, some are. If examples of the latter are required, Western civilization will do nicely. But *cultural neuroses* are explicable. Some human groups started out with the benefit of reasonably adequate assumptions about reality, causality, and finality, whereas others, such as our own, hark back to less auspicious beginnings. But all this will now be studied in a little more detail.

Consider the way in which we English speakers—indeed, *all* Indo-European speakers—make thematic assertions. It is a most unusual way to speak. It is not, however, altogether peculiar to the IEs; for it is characteristic also of speakers of at least one non-IE language, namely Sumerian. The importance of this exception should be evident, if we call to mind the decisive role played by the Sumerian tradition in the formation of the religion of the Old Testament. At any rate, we IEs make thematic assertions under the supposition that the relationship in our speech between the thesis and the theme—or, as we conceive them instead, between the subject and the predicate—*duplicates* or *reiterates* the relationship that obtains in the world between the reality signified by the thesis and the reality signified by the theme. If every IE thesis is a verb, then, and if every IE thematic assertion attributes a verbal predicate to a subject, it is because we IE speakers suppose that the function of the thesis is to re-state what the subject *itself* is or does, whereas that of the theme is to re-state that which *itself* is or does what the thesis signifies. Our idea of thematic speech, then, is not only relatively rare, but if we come to think of it also strange: it implies that



speech merely *repeats* what reality itself is. (More about this in a moment, and about why it is so strange.) Observe, moreover, that we feel constrained to speak in this verbally predicative way. Given our idea of speech, it is impossible for us to speak in any other way, since our idea of speech means that to do so *is* what to speak is. This is why the languages used by those who speak in this way include one or more special verbs, the principal one of which is 'to be,' that preserve the speech pattern of verbal predication even when the reality signified by the predicate is neither an action nor assimilable to an action. I call this the *apodictic* form of thematic speech.

Apodictic speech is grounded on a defective self-perception on the part of the speaker, and is therefore a defective form of speech. For those who speak apodictically do not assert the thesis under the guise of its being *what the speaker asserts*—though, in fact, that is precisely what the thesis is—but rather as its depicting *what reality itself is or does*. The theme, for its part, is not asserted as what in fact it is—namely, *that which the speaker is making an assertion about*—but rather as *that which in reality is or does what the predicate signifies*. This is why, as I have said, apodictic speakers speak as if speech were not *an original assertion of the speaker's experience of reality*, but as if it were a *repetition of what reality itself 'states' to us about itself*. Apodictic speech is strange and fantastic, then, because it implies a sort of culturally induced mass hallucination: we imagine, in effect, that reality *speaks* to us. We do not actually hear voices emanating from things, yet we suppose that in some valid sense, and albeit tacitly, reality *does* tell us about itself. For the same reason, apodictic speech is confused and self-contradictory: when apodictic speakers say something, their speech is guided by the implicit supposition that they are not truly *saying* anything. For they are not asserting it originally; they are only echoing it. To take an extreme instance: 'What I am telling you is not my opinion; it is an objective, scientifically ascertainable truth.' Or: 'What I am telling you is not what I say; it is what God says.' Many amongst us are capable of uttering—and accepting—propositions like these without adverting in the slightest to the self-contradiction they contain.

Our idea of speech, then, causes us to project the distinctive characteristic of speech—its assertiveness—onto reality. Once we project it, however, it is

not easy to avoid the construction that reality is inwardly constituted by a sort of solidified formulation or intelligible meaning, of which human thoughts and words are but an insubstantial and approximate reflection. Indeed, since Greek philosophical times the conclusion was explicitly reached that the inner structure of reality is that of a *logos*, or that it is speech-like. Mediaeval and modern philosophy gave us several elaborations of this doctrine, but no radical departures from it. Even today, scientists assume unquestioningly the same idea, though they are more likely to express it in metaphors such as the 'hidden secrets' of Nature or the 'laws that regulate the inner structure of reality' rather than in more sophisticated philosophical concepts.

I must make this clear. Apodictic speakers do not necessarily deny, if they are pressed, that when they speak they do in fact assert what they experience, or that they assert it relation to what they want to speak about. But they do not assert the thesis, or propose the theme, mindful that such is the nature of thematic speech, let alone *because* it is. Thus, they are not altogether ignorant of the assertiveness of speech; they are simply unclear, insufficiently vividly aware of it. Theirs is a distorted rather than altogether false perception of what they do when they speak. This explains among other things why, though they suspect that there is a difference between human and animal communication, they find it so difficult to determine what the real difference is and search for in the characteristics of language rather than in those of speech. But theirs is also a dysfunctional way to speak, the kind of speech that promotes misinterpretations of world and self. Since apodictic speech betokens a certain cloudiness in the conscious quality of the speaker's experience, and since consciousness is characterized by the self-presence of the activity of experiencing, I refer to this defect as *absent-mindedness*. The apodictic speaker speaks as if he were not speaking, because he perceives himself a little too dimly; he cannot perceive his own reality nearly as readily as he perceives that of the world. Absent-mindedness presents him with more than his fair share of problems in managing his selfhood.

Absent-mindedness is, of course, culturally self-perpetuating. As long as the cultures developed by apodictic speakers fail to become conscious of the pathology of their speech—and therefore of their religions and other cultural institutions of self-definition—



they could hardly fail to pass on to the next generation any but their own idea of speech. Conversely, although a culture's institutions of self-definition, and in particular its formal and informal religious beliefs, can change in most important ways, their foundations tend to be perpetuated invariably, almost as if with genetic determinism. For the culture's fundamental assumptions about reality, causality, and finality are perpetuated, automatically and non-consciously, through the transmission of speech.

I refer to the form of speech observable in other human cultures as *depositional* speech. In the great majority of human cultures speakers are undoubtedly quite as aware as we IEs are that their experience refers to reality, and that therefore the assertion of their experience ultimately refers to, and is validated by, the experienced reality. The great difference is that depositional speakers take responsibility for asserting their experience originally. Reality, they assume, is altogether mute; they do not fancy that to speak is to allow reality to assert itself through the speaker's voicing of what reality itself asserts to them. Where we would say 'The flower is red,' depositional speakers say 'The flower, red.' The apposition of the thesis to the theme is meant to convey: '[In relation to] the flower, [I affirm] red.' And instead of 'The dog barks,' 'The child drinks milk,' and the like, they use constructions that, though otherwise variable, uniformly lack the implication that the relationship of 'doing' or 'being' between the thesis and the theme parallels an analogous relationship between corresponding aspects of reality. They would therefore say 'The dog, a barking,' 'The child, a drinking of milk,' and so on, meaning '[In relation to] the dog, [I assert] a barking,' and '[In relation to] the child, [I assert] a drinking of milk.' etc. Thus depositional speakers do not project onto reality the assertiveness of their speech; they are much too aware that the activity of speaking is their own, and exclusively their own. Effortlessly and spontaneously, they perceive accurately and without confusion the nature of speech. Or more precisely, they speak in the light of an idea of speech that in fact corresponds to the nature of speech; and this implies that their consciousness of their own speaking activity is reasonably accurate and clear. They are not absent-minded. The self-presence of their conscious experience reaches a normal level of intensity. Their humanity is not handicapped.

Let us now return to the main argument. We saw earlier that non-thematic speech transforms the mere experiencer into an experiencer capable of immediate consciousness—or conscious sense perception—of both self and non-self. And after experiencers develop immediate consciousness, their immediate conscious experience of their own abilities to speak and experience enables them to develop thematic speech; that is, they acquire the ability to thematize reality and to assert theses in relation to themes in accordance with categorical concepts derived from their immediate conscious experience of their own activities of experiencing and speaking. But now we have observed that thematic speech appeared in two forms, and that one—apodictic speech—grows out of a deficient, absent-minded form of self-perception, whereas the other—depositional speech—results from a reasonably clear-minded one. And let us remember also that the categorical concepts that make thematic speech possible constitute, by that very fact, so many assumptions about reality, causality, and finality that are presupposed by whatever self-definitions—i.e. world- and self-interpretations—speakers may individually and collectively develop through the exercise of thematic speech. What can be concluded from all this?

What can be concluded has been anticipated above: that the two forms of speech carry somewhat different assumptions about reality, efficient causality, and finality. When the human species began to develop thematic speech, a very few groups—one being that of our proto-IE ancestors—were a little disadvantaged by absent-mindedness. Quite possibly, the cause may have been some degree of organically conditioned deficiency in their experiential abilities. Whatever the cause, they were not highly conscious of the assertiveness of their (non-thematic) speech; when they developed thematic speech, it was therefore the apodictic kind. Their absent-mindedness was much the same handicap that afflicts us today, with but the difference that we have inherited it from them, and perpetuate it, principally if not exclusively through cultural rather than genetic transmission—that is, through the transmission of apodictic thematic speech. Other human groups enjoyed a more intensely self-present degree of consciousness: they became depositional speakers. Thereafter the two divisions of mankind developed different types of culture, and in the first place different types of religion, in

accordance with the presuppositions embedded in, and perpetuated by, their respective forms of thematic speech.

<sup>apodictic</sup> The traditions developed by thematic speakers I refer as *ontic* cultures; those created by depositional speakers I call *phenomenal* ones. Suffice it to state here baldly what in *E & C* is derived at some length from an analysis of the two forms of speech: the different orientations of the ontic and the phenomenal cultures have contributed very unevenly to the health and welfare of mankind. If some societies such as our own manifest cultural neuroses, mentally unhealthy forms of human experience and behaviour, the cause is to be found in their having been established by—or in a few cases, in their having become acculturated to—apodictic speakers. I will now mention a few of the principal ways in which the presuppositions that condition the form of thematic speech affect the world- and self-interpretations developed respectively by two forms of culture that correspond to the two forms of thematic speech.

Let us consider the presuppositions about reality that are carried implicitly by apodictic speech. An absent-minded consciousness perceives that it itself is real—i.e. is other than its objects. But such defective consciousness does not perceive its reality so clearly as to realize that that it is real in exactly the same sense as objects are real. It will, therefore operate under the impression that there are degrees of reality in the world: the objective and the subjective. The first is solid, reliable, and fixedly true, whereas the latter is but the doubtful, insubstantial shadow of the former. Those cultures that began with this assumption would in time proceed to take the next logical step: to become convinced that objective reality itself is not univocally real, but that there are degrees of objective reality and that the objective world we experience is imperfect in the order of objective reality. Why should it be so? Because to say that a certain objective reality can be experienced is to say that it can become a subjective *appearance*. Thus, although in comparison with the subjective world of mere experience the objective world is real, it is not absolutely or 'really real.' It has only an apparent or relative reality. It follows that an 'ultimate' level of reality must be supposed, a reality that is absolute, that transcends the empirical world, and that is therefore radically unknowable, ineffable, and unimaginable—and, if

so, also mysterious and awesome as well.

Without exception, all the religions developed aboriginally the by IE peoples, together with Sumerian religion, have been dominated by some version or other of the idea of the 'transcendent.' But I explain that the transcendent or 'really real' reality need not be conceived as a personal one, or even as a concrete entity; it may be, and in most ontic religions it is taken to be, a vague and abstract 'something' that is absolutely 'other.' Or it may be an irresistible 'force' whose location in the absolutely 'elsewhere' has nevertheless all-too-tangible but predetermined and utterly unavoidable consequences 'here below.' For the self-perception of apodictic speakers also inclines them to think of causality as compulsion or necessitation. Transcendent reality is therefore identical with transcendent power; the transcendent force is necessarily omnipotent. Hence another fundamental concept invariably found in the ontic religions: *fate*. ('Fate,' I remind you, comes from the Latin *fatum*, 'what has been spoken'). Whatever happens, happens because somehow it has been incontestably commanded to happen ~~to happen~~.

Every consideration leads the ontic mind to the same conclusion. As noted earlier, speech is in effect the *repetition* of what reality tells us to say. Well, why does reality tell us what to say? And why does it tell us to say precisely what it does tell us and not otherwise? Only because it itself has been asserted originally by some sort of transcendent Speech or Word. The speaker's own assertiveness having gone unnoticed by him, it reappears as a mysterious Voice from beyond that tell things what to tell us—or which is the same, that tells things what they *are*. Moreover, once the apodictic speaker has heard the Voice, it is all the more difficult for him to question his assumptions—because to question the implications of his speech is no longer to question merely *his* voice: it is to question *the Voice*. And the latter is unquestionable, because it is the Voice that determines omnipotently that everything we experience must be such as it is.

So far as I have been able to determine, the concept of fate has not been developed autochthonously by any of the religions created by depositional speakers. Some scholars hold a contrary opinion; but the reason, I think, is that they are hindered by lax criteria of what constitutes fate. For instance, if one fails to discriminate between man's evident inability to escape every possible



compulsion, and man's being subject to absolute necessitation by a transcendent personal or impersonal force or will, it is not difficult to conclude that Confucius' 'mandates of Heaven' amount to an oriental version of the IE fate. Now, a very few, closely related, religions developed by depositional speakers, signally the religions of the Akkadians, the Assyro-Babylonians, the Old Testament, and Islam, do share with the IEs the transcendence-omnipotence-fate complex—but not because they excogitated it aboriginally. Enough is known about the history of these religions for us to conclude that they all *acquired* it through acculturation. In most of these instances the wellspring was Sumerian religion; and Iranian religion taught pre-Islamic Arabia to believe in fate even before the Old Testament suggested to Muhammad a more consoling form of the same belief. To be sure, some of these religions also modified and added to the concepts of transcendence, omnipotence, and fate; the principal such development was of course that which resulted in Mosaic monotheism. This does not gainsay the correlation I have noted between a culture's form of speech and the native presuppositions upon which the culture proceeds to define itself.

I will mention separately the apodictic speakers' presuppositions concerning finality, which lead to a peculiar idea of morality. We are all familiar with it, of course, for obvious reasons: I refer to the idea that to do what is right is to *comply* with rules that are enjoined upon human beings. Whether the injunction comes from necessities inscribed in human nature, from a personal God who legislates morality for human benefit, from a cosmic, impersonal order or 'law' of Nature, or from any other transcendent source, is by no means constant among the ontic religions of apodictic speakers. What is constant is that morality is a matter of *abiding* by principles or rules that are not of human making; human beings merely discover them..

Since we are not responsible for *creating* the difference between good and evil, but only for *enforcing* it upon ourselves, morality demands no more initiative than may be required for accurate ascertainment of, and faithful and full compliance with, rules that have been somehow predetermined for us. The full extent of our moral obligation is to ensure that, applying the pertinent general moral principles to the particularities of the case, we in fact do exactly—preferably willingly, eagerly and cheerfully, but in any event precisely—as we

are supposed to do. Since ascertaining what one is *supposed* to do implies that one's own inclinations are irrelevant to a determination of what one ought to do, it invariably turns out that 'what we are supposed to do' really means: what those other people whom we endow with moral authority tell us that we are supposed to do. The morality of the ontic cultures is a form of collective irresponsibility in masses of individuals who are sincerely willing to do what is right—whatever it may be—but who are tragically unable to do anything but what someone else, or everybody else, says that they ought to do. Cultural neurosis, I think, is not an inadequate characterization of this state of affairs.

The corresponding presuppositions brought by depositional speakers to the construction of phenomenal religions and cultures will be yet more selectively dealt with here. I will only mention that in these cultures there is one, and only one, level of reality. And the reality of the real does not consist in its objectivity or in-itselfness but, on the contrary, in its *relativity* to other real things. If—arguing *per impossibile*—a certain reality should be absolutely self-sufficient, such reality would appear to depositional speakers as indistinguishable from *nothingness*. As for the nature of causality, the phenomenal cultures take for granted that compulsion and the exertion of force are peculiar to life, particularly human and animal life. There are causal processes in the world, of course, but they take place in a purely factual way, by virtue of the relationship that the characteristics of things bear to each other. The *Tao Te Ching* expresses this view more eloquently, perhaps, than many another phenomenal religion, but not uniquely; the Eskimo and the North American Indian traditions share this perception of reality, though they do not articulate it as lucidly as the Taoist does.

In the phenomenal systems of self-definition, therefore, it is not only man who is not subject to fate: the whole of nature escapes determinism. Causality is evoked by the 'harmonious' nature of reality, the fact that all things are interdependent and that the properties of things are interrelated. Therefore, the world is intelligible and unfolds logically. But logic, in the first place, is not a *necessity* that bends the consequent to the demands of the antecedent; it is *proportion* and *symmetry* in the flow of both thought and events. Thus, the universe is intelligible and sense-making, yet open-ended and unforeseeable; neither human nor cosmic

history have their end in their beginning, and in time all things are possible. Consistently with these assumptions, the phenomenal cultures cannot but suppose that morality demands above all responsibility, initiative, and creativity. To do what is right one must in the first instance decide *what* might be right. Or more exactly, one must create the opportunity for *doing* what one thinks might be right. Moral values are not appropriated, they are invented. Of course, by the very fact that human beings can create what is admirable and good, they can also create what is humanly repulsive and evil. The point is that, in either event, they create values and disvalues absolutely, starting at *nothing*, rather than merely appropriate a value or disvalue in whose creation they have no active role. (I have not said, I stress, that the values created by human beings are absolute, but only that they are created absolutely.)

For all these reasons, then, when I compare the two ideas of morality, I conclude that the moral responsibility of human beings is immeasurably deeper than the ontic peoples are willing or able to recognize. The morality of the ontic religions and cultures may be well-meaning and guileless. But it is also thoughtless and cheap. And it is dangerous to the species. Consider, if not, the perils to which it has ultimately brought mankind.

I mention this because, though *E & C* is predominantly concerned with the origin and prehistoric stages of human evolution, it does not altogether fail to consider that the evolution of the self-defining consciousness in historical times up to the present continued to be conditioned—albeit only in part—by the same assumptions with which it began. A culture's self-definition could change in striking and important respects, yet perpetuate the adequacy or inadequacy of the fundamental principles on which it is erected. *E & C* calls attention to, among others, the following example of this.

Modern Western civilization has created secular institutions of self-definition to replace, in part, originally Christian ones that are no longer universally deemed serviceable; indeed, many Christian believers agree that in a few respects the supersession of mediaeval Christian culture is not entirely regrettable. It could therefore be truthfully said that, apart from those members of our culture who retain the earlier Christian *Weltanschauung*, we no longer believe in fate. Even

Christians have considerably diluted in practice, though not in strict theological theory, the traditional Christian belief in fate. But it would be more accurate to say that we today do not typically believe in fate in its *Judaean-Christian* version. For most of us continue to suspect, though not always unshakeably believe, that we are at the mercy of overwhelming forces over which we have little or no control. Belief in economic and historical determinism, whether in capitalist or Marxist versions, in psychological determinism, in genetic determinism, in the determinism of our animal ancestry and, among the unlettered, even in the determinism of occult forces, continue to sap our ability to put wise and efficient use what freedom we *do* have, limited and uncertain though in fact it is.

And of course, we no longer worship Power. But we worship power, which is worse. Now, our cult of power does not always take a liturgical form; enriching our identity by identifying ourselves with powerful individuals and groups is one way. Sometimes our worship of power appears in pettily absurd guises; many people, it seems, vote for whichever candidate for public office is likely to win, because they do not want to back a loser. It also comes in dangerous ones, such as support of a war-mongering leader's policy not because one agrees with the merit of the policy, but because patriotism so requires. Indeed, it even shows in ridiculous ways, like public adulation of the *nouveau riche* and fascination with the notorious non-entities usually called 'celebrities.' Even the Stockholm syndrome betrays how almost any master can command the allegiance of those whose spontaneous attitude towards power is one of deeply-seated, largely non-conscious, awe and respect.

Our civilization's superstructures have therefore changed in important ways, but its foundations remain largely the same. We used to reason that we should not rely on our own power to compel the effects we desired, as it was better to enlist higher and wiser ones; for power only tends to prevail, whereas absolute power prevails absolutely. More modestly, perhaps, but no more wisely, we now depend on our own human power. This explains why, for instance, our instinctive response to almost every social problem is to enact a law threatening to inflict some sort of pain on whoever does not do what is right. But consider: is it true that human problems can be solved through the application of ei-



ther divine or human force, if only such force be sufficiently strong and intelligently applied? Are human beings, in fact, moved exclusively by the need to maximize pleasure and avoid pain—and if not bodily, at least mental, pleasure and pain? Is it true that human beings can always be forced to do what a superior power wills? Or is it not possible for them, if need be, and if they can bring themselves to do it, to choose death instead? And is the ultimate reality of the universe, transcendent or immanent as such reality may be, correctly conceived, either scientifically or theologically, as *energy*? To many of us in our culture, perhaps most, an affirma-

tive answer would seem self-evident. *E & C* suggests, however, that the reason why it may so seem is not that careful observation of the way in which the world actually functions so indicates, but that an absent-minded perception of ourselves inclines us so to assume. Unfortunately, in the face of contrary assumptions even the clearest lesson of past experience goes unheeded. Maybe *next* time, we endlessly hope, a little more money, a little more force, or a different form of it—a new God, if all else fails, or a re-interpretation of the old one—*will* work.

### III

*E & C* recognizes that the evolution of culture and the history of religions and other institutions of self-definition cannot be reduced to the simple unfolding of the assumptions with which self-definition originated in various human groups. I have already mentioned that acculturation, too, has played a crucial role in the development of human self-definition. As cultures enter into contact with each other, the opportunity arises for them to acquire from their neighbours, among other cultural artefacts, convictions about the world and about man's situation within it which they are unlikely to develop by virtue of their own assumptions alone. To demonstrate the point I need but refer to the world-wide dissemination of the Western scientific-technological-capitalistic orientation, during the last three centuries or so, to peoples whose speech-conditioned and speech-perpetuated assumptions would not have inclined to develop it by themselves. The study of these developments as integral part of human evolution during historical times is therefore undoubtedly most important. But it is outside the scope to which *E & C* has arbitrarily restricted itself. It is rather the inquiry towards which its author hopes to direct his efforts next.

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