

more elaborate social institutions, will somehow have created a race of better and brighter human beings. Man's Final End is not in the eternal timeless Now, but in a not too distant utopian future. In order to secure the peace and happiness of their great-great-grandchildren, the masses ought to accept and their rulers need feel no qualms in imposing, any amount of war and slavery, of suffering and moral evil, in the present. It is a highly significant fact that all modern dictators, whether of the Right or of the Left, talk incessantly about the golden Future, and justify the most atrocious acts here and now, on the ground that they are means to that glorious end. But the one thing we all know about the future is that we are completely ignorant of what is going to happen, and that what does in fact happen is often very different from what we anticipated. Consequently any faith based upon hypothetical occurrences a long time hence must always, in the very nature of things, be hopelessly unrealistic. In practice, faith in the bigger and better future is one of the most potent enemies to present liberty; for rulers feel themselves justified in imposing the most monstrous tyrannies on their subjects for the sake of the wholly imaginary fruits which these tyrannies are expected (only an implicit faith in progress can say why) to bear some time, let us say, in the twenty-first or twenty-second century.

b) As theory, pure science is concerned with the reduction of diversity to identity. As a praxis, scientific research proceeds by simplification. These habits of scientific thought and action have, to a certain extent, been carried over into the theory and practice of contemporary politics. Where a centralized authority undertakes to make plans for an entire society, it is compelled by the bewildering complexity of the given facts to follow the example of the scientific experimenter, who arbitrarily

simplifies his problem in order to make it manageable. In the laboratory this is a sound and entirely justifiable procedure. But when applied to the problems of human society, the process of simplification is a process, inevitably, of restraint and regimentation, of curtailment of liberty and denial of individual rights. This reduction of human diversity to a military and quasi-mechanical identity is achieved by propaganda, by legal enactments and, if necessary, by brute force—by the imprisonment, exile or liquidation of those persons, or those classes, who persist in their perverse desire to remain themselves and are obstinate in their reluctance to conform to the pattern which the political and economic bosses find it, at the moment, most convenient to impose. Philosophically, this ironing out of individual idiosyncrasies is held to be respectable, because it is analogous to what is done by scientists, when they arbitrarily simplify an all too complex reality, so as to make nature comprehensible in terms of a few general laws. A highly organized and regimented society, whose members exhibit a minimum of personal peculiarities, and whose collective behavior is governed by a single master plan imposed from above, is felt by the planners and even (such is the power of propaganda) by the planees to be more “scientific,” and therefore better, than a society of independent, freely co-operating and self-governing individuals.

c) The first step in this simplification of reality, without which (since human minds are finite and nature is infinite) scientific thought and action would be impossible, is a process of abstraction. Confronted by the data of experience, men of science begin by leaving out of account all those aspects of the facts which do not lend themselves to measurement and to explanation in terms of antecedent causes rather than of purpose, intention and values.