

CHAPTER VI

THE ROAD TO PUGWASH

In his work "The Foundations of the Moral Life", Baruch Spinoza, the philosopher of exaltation and reality, the fighter for freedom of thought, writes:

"Since reason demands nothing which is opposed to nature, it demands, therefore, that every person should love himself, should seek his own profit - what is truly profitable to him - should desire everything that really leads man to greater perfection and absolutely that everyone should endeavour, as far as in him lies, to preserve his own being."

This was written in the 17th century.

Almost 300 years later, the fight for freedom of thought has not yet been won, and a man whose circumstances of life are almost totally different, nevertheless echoes in his own philosophy the views of Spinoza. Cyrus Eaton has said: "A man's first moral obligation is to earn his living and his second is to be intelligent...."

to succeed, be your own psycho-analyst. Ask yourself what do I like doing, then keep on doing what you like" (The Commercial and Financial Chronicle, April 12, 1956).

One can readily understand why Spinoza is one of Eaton's favourite philosophers. Quite aside from Eaton's respect for his ^{Spinoza} courage in the face of excommunication and the heretical nature of his ideas, there is a close affinity of attitude as is indicated by the quotations above. Moreover, Spinoza, like Eaton, combined austerity of spirit with realism. Spinoza revered reason and his religiosity had a quality of informality, a belief in the unity of man and the universe, akin to the view held by Einstein. Eaton's own slogan, "No regrets, no fears", is a reflection of a fundamental attitude towards life. He could not have overcome major defeats and an excess of calumny over the course of nearly 80 years had not this slogan been genuinely operational.

A further examination of Mr. Eaton's philosophy reveals its unique quality. It isn't just a simple extension of Rockefeller's philanthropy, code of hard work and business theology. It isn't just the incorporation of the American liberal tradition, cemented during the Roosevelt regime, because this tradition was antipathetic to big business - although not to private enterprise, as such. And it certainly isn't socialistic or communistic because Mr. Eaton believes passionately in the capitalistic system; moreover, he is strongly opposed to government intervention into business affairs. One fact emerges - Cyrus Eaton is a realist, a materialist and, pre-eminently, a rationalist. All the other factors of influence are there - the

Rockefeller gospel of business, the liberal humanist approach to people and ideas, but overriding all these is a very basic view of life - almost a philosophy of basics. This is borne out by the fields in which his major business activities operate - utilities, steel, iron ore, coal, railways, etc. He is not interested in secondary industry and manufacturing. This almost total and exclusive concern with the basics of the economy is a unity with the man's political philosophy. One can speculate that having been thwarted in his attempts to build a steel empire, he asked himself a simple question - What is more basic than steel which itself is the backbone of a modern industrialized society. And the answer of course is 'iron ore', and this is precisely the area into which Eaton embarked on a large scale. Without iron ore there is no steel.

Similarly, Eaton's attitude to national and international politics came to have the same rational, pragmatic approach. We cannot have war, he says, because in nuclear war there are no winners. The Russian system is good for the Russians - let them have it. Our system is good for us. We both exist. Therefore let us coexist. China cannot be ignored simply because we do not like her politics. Again let us coexist. Labour is a force to be reckoned with in the industrial scene. Again let us accept the reality and coexist. Capitalism itself cannot exist without this coexistence. If I am going to grow in the world of business and finance then I must control the basic elements of our economy - iron ore, steel, railways and coal, power, cattle, etc. Again we see the rationalist mind at work.

Coupled with this realism is a passionate interest in matters of

was completely over the heads of the audience.' The professor replied, 'I always aim my address at the place where their heads should be!'

Eaton's philosophy is not a recent development but the consequence of his early training and influence plus his experience in business and politics. Philosophy and science had always interested him, but his political and economic experience in the period of the Great Depression must have assisted in consolidating an earlier penchant for realism. At the age of 16, in 1899, Cyrus' aptitude in science won him a high school graduation prize at Amherst Academy: the complete works of Charles Darwin and Thomas Huxley. They still repose prominently in the library at Acadia Farms and it is a fair assumption that their prominence is a reflection of their significance to him.

It is interesting to turn to Eaton's own words describing the influences that created his philosophy. In a speech for the 50th Annual Banquet of the Hippocratic Society, at the University of Western Ontario on January 13, 1961, he said:

"I know that the modern scientific doctor is thoroughly trained in the disciplines that deal with the human body. None of you needs any advice from me on that subject and, in any case, I would be incapable of giving it. I think I can counsel you a little, though, on your activities outside of what is strictly your vocation. You have a great deal to give to society by serving as philosopher and citizen, as well as physician, in the tradition of Osler and others of his school.

"I should like to urge everyone to read some of Osler's nonmedical

writings, especially three of his speeches that have deeply affected my conclusions on life and on man's place in society and the universe. They are his Harvard address on "Science and Immortality", his Yale address on "A Way of Life", and his Edinburgh address on "Man's Redemption of Man". Like me, you may be led by a reference of Osler's to turn to John Tyndall's Belfast Address, on his inauguration as President of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. I have read and re-read the Tyndall Address, and regard it as one of the best statements that has ever been made on the scientific intellect. Tyndall, in turn, may send you in search of Lange's History of Materialism, a monumental philosophical work that has made a lasting impression on me.

"From Osler, Tyndall and Lange, I gained a desire to make a more detailed study of Hippocrates, the Father of Medicine, from whom your Society takes its name; his master, Democritus; Empedocles, another great pupil of Democritus; and Epicurus and Lucretius, two of his later followers.

"More than two thousand years ago, these philosophers set themselves the courageous and difficult task of freeing mankind from the myths and illusions which are so easy to accept and so difficult to remove from the path of scientific progress. Hippocrates, a man of the highest integrity and the purest morality, matched skill in science with zeal in opposing the superstitions that hold disease as the product of demons and see the cure in supernatural intervention.

"By pure reason, and without facilities for observation and experiment, Democritus and Empedocles came close to elucidating the

origin and structure of matter, whose secrets our advanced nuclear scientists of the Twentieth Century are only now gradually narrowing to the final point. This same pioneering pair thought through much of the theory of evolution and natural selection, which Darwin demonstrated and Huxley expounded in the modern scientific manner barely a century ago. Huxley's surpassing ability as essayist and lecturer, as well as surgeon-scientist and philosopher, can be credited with accomplishing more than the work of anyone else in the English-speaking world to destroy the buttresses of superstition and to establish the importance of the scientific viewpoint.

17 / That the mind of mankind can stand still is demonstrated by the long ages that passed between the postulations of Democritus and Empedocles and their modern scientific proofs. The frailty of the human mind, the weakness of the body and the sluggishness of the spirit all too often combine to persuade man to accept superficial explanations of life and to follow the course that calls for the least use of his intellect and energies. Superstition still persists, even in this age of scientific enlightenment, as was discovered when a public figure of the prominence of William Jennings Bryan, three times the nominee of his party for the Presidency of the United States, made himself the self-appointed prosecutor of the school teacher / 1 scopes / for teaching his classes the theory of evolution in the 1920's....

"I hope I have convinced you that I derive solid satisfaction from reading the doctors and scientists. I also hope that many of you will learn to look to books as sources of entertainment and consolation, and not solely for information and education. Poetry,

history, philosophy, all make great companions. If you need this layman's urging reinforced by a member of your own profession, consult Osler's injunction to let no day pass without contact with the world's best literature....

"The scientists and the physicians have, as you probably know, been playing a prominent part in the Pugwash Conferences. Some of these gatherings bring scientists together from the major nations to exchange ideas on disarmament in the nuclear age. Other meetings are held at Pugwash to enable college presidents and deans and other scholars representing a wide variety of disciplines to reawaken one another's intellectual powers. The scientists become philosophers and the philosophers scientists. The goal is to preserve and strengthen all that is best in religion, art, literature and music, not only to add to the happiness of life, but also to encourage the sense of brotherhood that was exemplified by the Good Samaritan. Race, creed and color know no differences at Pugwash.

"My lifelong studies of science and philosophy, under the inspiration of the great physicians I have enumerated, provided much of the impetus for the Pugwash movement. I have been particularly happy to collaborate with such men as the grandsons of Darwin and Huxley in the work at Pugwash. The present Sir Charles Darwin and Sir Julian Huxley are also both frequent visitors in my home. Sir Julian claims not only Thomas Huxley for an ancestor, but also the Matthew Arnold family, a rare combination of science and the humanities.

"This is a time of acute crisis in the world. Osler described the spirit of hatred and bitterness that prevailed everywhere in

Great Britain against the Germans, at the end of World War I, as a paroxysm of delirium. Throughout the United States, and to some extent in Canada, public opinion is today animated with this same fear and hatred of communism, particularly as exemplified by the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. Powerful minds and exceptional courage are required to make reason and common sense prevail. The dangers of this latter-day paroxysm of delirium far outstrip its earlier manifestations.

"The tremendous scientific advances of the past twenty years have, for the first time in history, placed in mankind's hands the power to wipe itself out almost instantaneously and simultaneously to obliterate every other form of life on earth. Can man be prevented from misusing nuclear fission and fusion and missiles? After the glorious triumphs of science and medicine, is the human race going to destroy itself by the hydrogen bomb?"

Here we have a panorama of the materialist-realist philosophical tradition.

A. Bustace Haydon of the University of Chicago, a leading contributor to The Humanist and an architect of the "Humanist Manifesto", dedicated his book Biography of the Gods to Cyrus Eaton. The views associated with The Humanist were to a large degree shared by Eaton and his writings of the 1940's clearly indicate this. In The Humanist in 1945, he expressed approval of certain British liberals' view that "a new synthesis of all our knowledge is needed to bring into proper perspective with the rest of our thinking the discoveries of the last two generations in the fields of biology, psychology, anthropology,

See p. 12, 14 of the Future Letter - 1942

chemistry and physics." Yet Eaton would not and does not accept socialism as the answer to a more equitable social order. "While conceding that socialism has its merits, I personally prefer private property in a true democracy, and further believe that, under whatever system, hard work (mental or manual) and discipline of mind and emotion, not the system itself, lead man to the highest and best of which he is capable." In a concluding paragraph of the same article in The Humanist Eaton said, "Here in America, 'the land of the free and the home of the brave', our first task is to strive for the emancipated mind. Clearly, in the United States of today, it is not prudent, particularly for the statesman, the editor and the teacher, to question the prevailing orthodoxy, based though it is on oriental superstitions that cannot much longer sustain the western world. Somehow, we in America must become free enough to seek the truth and brave enough to utter it."

In an interview with Wes Lawrence in The Cleveland Plain Dealer, October 26, 1956, Eaton's attitude to reading was further expounded. "My chief interest in books is their content." Further in this interview Eaton revealed his great interest in the writings of the naturalists, John Burroughs and John Muir. His favourite authors are the Greek historians Herodotus and Thucydides; the British historians Macaulay, Hume and Green; the American historians Parkman and Prescott; the poets Homer, Shakespeare, Milton, Burns, Shelley, Keats and Byron; the essayists Lamb, Addison, Emerson and Hazlitt; writers such as Lafcadio Hearn and Plutarch, Dickens, Thackeray, Conrad, Gilbert Murray and Matthew Arnold; the Russian novelists Tolstoy,

Turgenev and Dostoevski; and numerous French novelists, philosophers and essayists. With still other writers and philosophers like John Dewey and George Santayana, Eaton had personal acquaintance. Thus we can construct a picture of a man whose passion for literature, philosophy and history is enormous. In most cases a pattern emerges and that is Eaton's bent towards realism and rationalism.

There is considerable evidence to indicate Eaton's ultimate rejection of formal or institutionalized religion. As he said in a welcoming address to the Pugwash International Conference on Continuing Education, August 15, 1960, "My great-grandfather served as minister of the local Baptist Church 160 years ago. Where he devoted his talents to preparing people for the world to come, I have rather looked upon it as my responsibility to try to make the world of here and now a more attractive place in which to live."

Much earlier in his career the direction which his views on formal religion were taking is illustrated in a letter he sent to the Editors of Fortune magazine, September 1942, following a series of essays published on the question:

"But what of the many who question or deny the existence of God and immortality? Included in their ranks are such profound philosophers as Dewey, Russell, Santayana, and Maydon, along with large numbers of the 76 million Americans who acknowledge no relationship to any religious body. Why have these given up or refused to adopt traditional religion, with its promise of consolation to the grief-stricken, strength to the weak, forgiveness to the sinful, rest to the weary, and eternal life to the faithful?

"Those in this second group who have gone far enough with their thinking to reach conclusions are convinced that reason, however weak, is our sole guide and that man, standing alone, must work out his own salvation. They see traditional religion as a continuous delusion, promising everything but delivering nothing, offering imaginary remedies for mortal ills that might really be cured by well-directed effort. By them, belief in God and belief in immortality are recognized as the chief buttresses of superstition, which have again and again stood in the way of the adoption of practical measures for improving the health, the intelligence, and the character of mankind. Pointing to the graveyard of the gods of the past, they assert that the gods of the half-dozen living religions, of which Christianity is but a small part, are all earthborn and will perish. They agree with the late President Eliot of Harvard that the religion of the future will contain nothing of the supernatural.

"Whatever the religion of the future, it will not succeed where the religions of the past and the present have failed unless it represents the sum total of all the knowledge we can assemble about man and the world in which he lives. It must be a synthesis of the best thinking, not of the theologians and the philosophers alone, but of the scholars from other fields, of artists and writers, and of those whose main concern is the practical affairs of the world. The scientist, for instance, may someday be able to throw new light on the questions of God and immortality. If there is a divine force that makes for righteousness, may not the astronomer or the physicist be our best hope of finding it out? If there is life after death,

should we perhaps not look to the physician or the biologist to demonstrate it?...."

In 1946, Cyrus Eaton protested an effort by Clare Booth Luce to perpetuate the fallacy that unbelief is synonymous with communism. In a letter to The New York Herald Tribune, November 24, 1946, he wrote: "A careful canvass persuades me that 75% of American scholars, scientists and historians do not believe, with Mrs. Luce, that life on this planet is a prelude to heaven or hell or that we are children of a personal heavenly Father. Their conviction is that we should strive for the abundant life here and now, without reference to the supernatural or to the hypothetical hereafter. Yet, not for a moment do most of them hold that Communism is an ideal or even a desirable form of society.... Mrs. Luce is at great pains to point out that members of the Communist Party are atheists. From this it does not follow, however, that all Communists have always been atheists, nor that all atheists are always Communists...."

When Life Magazine did a series on world religions, Eaton wrote a letter to the correspondence column in which he said: "There is nothing that the people of the United States need more than an education in world religions and an emancipation from the superstition and ignorance that prevail among us concerning man's place in the universe...."

It is of great interest that one of the books which Eaton quotes as having influenced him is Frederick Albert Lange's History of Materialism, published in English in 1925 with an introduction by Bertrand Russell. The first edition appeared in 1865 and Lange died in 1875. (d)

Lange's words, "Never, indeed, will our efforts be wholly in vain. The truth, though too late, yet comes soon enough; for mankind will not die just yet. Fortunate natures hit the right moment but never has the thoughtful observer the right to be silent, merely because he knows that for the present there are but few who listen to him", are indeed close to Eaton's own views.

Lange's book is a monumental and prophetic work in which there are bold and independent social views like the political unity of Europe, emancipation of labour and the hope for a peaceful revolution. He had an intense belief in the "reality of ideals" and his criticism of materialism was based on the fact that we only know through our senses so that materialism tends to be driven back to sensationalism. If it is to avoid this it must in the words of Russell develop its own "dogmatism of an a priori metaphysic".

As a trustee of the University of Chicago since 1930, Eaton was close to the critical role this university played in the development of the first atomic pile under Fermi in 1942. His interest in Russia also goes back to the University of Chicago and to Samuel H. Harper, son of the University's first president, who was a prodigious student of Russian affairs.

This dual interest in the gigantic social experiment of Russian Communism and the most significant scientific event of our time play a strong role in Eaton's life. In an article in The Humanist, (No. 2) 1956, Edwin H. Wilson says: "We can be quite sure that Mr. Eaton has not changed his earlier views on socialism; few men today can more appropriately be called 'capitalists'. Nevertheless, as he pointed

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out to us, 'The two great events in my lifetime have been the Russian Revolution and the more recent development of atomic energy. Moreover, it ought to be apparent that war does not accomplish anything. Christianity attempted to destroy the Mohammedans by force, and then learned it had to live in the same world with them. Fighting the 'infidels' only confirmed them in their views; it did not change them.'"

We can now understand the sources of Eaton's social and political philosophy -- liberal, humanist, empirical, non-conformist. Added to this is his highly personal concept of religion which never quite relinquishes the absolute morality of his early Baptist training. Eaton's views might be summed up by the old American saying "Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition." This is illustrated by a story he tells about a Nova Scotia farmer who was complimented by a minister with 'Tom, the Lord has been awfully good to you in providing this marvelous vegetable garden.' And the farmer replied, 'You should have been this place when the Lord was working it alone' (Official Opening Address - Cyrus Eaton - Central Nova Scotia Exhibition, Truro, Nova Scotia, August 29, 1950).

deep to his rationalist and materialist

Anyone who is aware of the direction in which the intellectual stream of rationalism and materialism has moved knows that this system of values usually embraces socialism. Yet it is clear that Eaton is not communistic or even socialistic. Eaton has his own views on ^{the} social order. He has stated his own political beliefs on many occasions. His record of opposition to government intervention into the economy is legion. In talking to Eaton in Cleveland he re-affirmed this. He proceeds on the basis that if every capitalist acts

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rationality and humanly - and this means acting rationally in industrial affairs, in national affairs and international affairs - then his system of capitalism will prevail and flourish.

An integral extension of Eaton's personal philosophy is his attitude towards labour. Once again we have the approach of the realist, of the enlightened capitalist who deals with real forces on the basis of rational solutions to differences. In an article "A Capitalist Looks at Labour", University of Chicago Law Review, Vol. 4, No. 3, April 1947, Eaton describes this attitude towards labour. "The casualness with which we capitalists seem willing - nay, even eager - to invite the collapse of our economic system in almost every industrial dispute for the sole purpose of thwarting labor is utterly incomprehensible. Labor not only produces the goods and consumes a large part of them; labor also has the votes. In a democracy like ours, where the majority rules, therefore, capitalism cannot survive without the support of labor." Further he says, "To avoid extinction, if for no loftier motive, we who are capitalists will have to make immediate and radical changes in our attitude toward labor and our methods of dealing with labor. We will have to begin by muzzling such organizations as the National Association of Manufacturers and by recognizing, and sincerely regretting, that there is bad feeling on both sides. For every corporation officer who characterizes a union official as a crook there is a labor leader willing to label an industrialist a bandit.

"Our next step ought to be full and ungrudging acceptance of labor as human beings and as our partners who do the work. American

management has exhibited the greatest genius in mass production and mass selling that the world has ever seen, but no automobile manufacturer ever thought of making denunciation of motorists the keynote of a sales campaign. On the other hand, many are the scathing statements that have been issued from the skyscrapers of Detroit against the United Automobile Workers."

He manages to take a sideswipe at lawyers in this same article. "One of the worst sins committed by our corporation is entrusting the handling of labor relations to lawyers. The lawyer's whole outlook is colored by his constant searching of statutes and his intensive training in the artificialities of courtroom procedure. So far as I know, no appeal to the courts and no amount of flyspecking of statutes for technicalities to prove labor in the wrong ever settled a strike. Labor relations are human relations; they require the human, not the legal, approach."

He pleads for dealing directly with labour. "The only recourse we capitalists have is to deal directly with labor ourselves.... We capitalists are overlooking a great reservoir of talent by not inviting these men onto the boards of directors of our corporations and the boards of trustees of our universities and other public institutions." Eaton describes what he calls "The classical example of managerial folly...in one especially vain and strutting corporation head who some years ago announced that he would retire from business before he would let his plants be organized. He wasted twenty million dollars of his stockholders' money in a futile fight against a strike for union recognition. Having spearheaded the attack on labor, he

tr expected his fellow industrialists to reward his company with more business, but found that they placed their orders with other concerns whose more dependable labor relations assured better delivery. Needless to say, he failed to keep his promise to retire, and, although business fell off, he and his fellow executives - none an owner of more than a nominal amount of stock - continued to pay themselves fancy salaries while giving the stockholders only a meager return on their investment. The only tangible result of his whole performance has been an occasional word of praise from Westbrook Pegler."

Eaton finally states his own credo once again. "I prefer capitalism and democracy to all other economic and political forms. I believe they will only survive as long as their leaders set an example of hard work and restraint toward those who are less well off. It is the job of capital to convince labor of the dignity and glory of the strenuous life. Hard work appeals to me as the only sure way to happiness, health, and good morals, for rich and poor, high and low alike. There is no spiritual reward to equal the one that comes from a good day's work, well done." Here the spirit of his early training, his reverence for a life of hard work, is once again illustrated.

Eaton does not accept the inevitability of internal contradictions destroying his system any more than he accepts the idea that the Soviet system will not undergo profound changes. On the question of the morality of business, Eaton, in private discussion, has suggested that if one finds oneself on a battleground one uses the weapons being used by others in the struggle or one perishes. Here again we have his utilitarianism, the hardy pragmatic approach. So

the young lad of seventeen who first heard Rockefeller say that one could do more for humanity as a wealthy capitalist than as a poor preacher has in fact done just that. The fact that he stands virtually alone in the front ranks of American big business does not unduly perturb him. His inner resources are strong and he answers to the dictates of a highly moral conscience. "No regrets, no fears," we realize is not an empty motto - it is an actual way of life.

Mr. Eaton is a patient as well as a far-seeing man. In reply to a question put to him by Edwin H. Wilson in The Humanist (1956, No. 2): "Does not the insecurity in today's world present you with a rather gloomy outlook?" Eaton's answer was: "In view of the hundreds of thousands of years it has taken the human race to get where it is, we should not be impatient if we find we cannot produce an enlightened people in a generation or two."

For many people, who simply know Cyrus Eaton by some of the lurid and distorted newspaper reports and by the official attacks on his activities, he appears a crank and what is more, a subversive crank. Yet, (as far as the record shows, everybody who has encountered Eaton publicly or privately, knows that he is anything but a crank. They may disagree with him, be opposed to him, but they recognize that he is a sober, thoughtful man who has taken his position only after the most exacting analysis.

The above picture is not meant to suggest that Eaton is a gross materialist without a sense of the spiritual values of life. On the contrary, he has an immense love and familiarity with poetry - which he can quote endlessly. He does not like the esoteric abstract poets

but the ones that sing and have content. Moreover, his materialism is tempered by his knowledge of its limitations - more akin to Russell's positivism.

So here we have the crux of Eaton's personal philosophy - "No regrets, no fears". This, and his respect for work, for people who earn their way by their own labours, represent his credo.

There is on record a further insight into Eaton's special attitude towards work which is psychologically revealing. He hands out to his staff a small booklet by William James, one time president of the American Philosophical Association, containing the following lines which sum up his own attitudes to work.

"The fatigue gets worse up to a certain point, when gradually and suddenly it passes away and we are fresher than before. We have evidently tapped a level of new energy, masked until then by the fatigue obstacle, usually obeyed. There may be layer after layer of this experience, a third and fourth wind may supervene. Mental activity shows the phenomenon as well as physical, and in exceptional cases we may find beyond the very extremity of the fatigue distress, a wealth of ease and power that we never dreamed ourselves to own."

Eaton is a man of great courage and faith and this too is part of the essence of the man. In a speech on Moscow television he said, "It is always dark before the dawn. We have passed through a night of tension, lack of understanding and bitterness, but I am an incorrigible optimist! I believe that the sun will soon rise, and we shall see better and happier days."

The totality of Eaton's life -- the power of money and the power

of ideas drove him along the road to Pugwash, that is, Pugwash in the international sense, as an experiment in rational negotiation and enquiry.