

PREFACE

To tell the world about the world. That, the world might suspect, must presumably be the purpose of such a book as this, on such a subject. The very suspicion of it might be enough to repel the serious reader, even if he himself would make no claim to have known it all before. To those with sufficient understanding already of the universal social complex this introductory essay (and that is all it is) can have little to offer.

But among the newer, still inquiring, generation there may perhaps be those who can find in it some food for timely thought. It is for them that, with a blend of arrogance and apprehension, its message is meant.

The apprehension and the arrogance go together. For the topics to be touched upon lie not along the frontiers of knowledge but among the very fundamentals of everyday life. It is not an XYZ book, but an ABC. Who indeed, without an overplus of self-assurance, could license himself for the attempting of such a book? And who, without a shudder of self-distrust, could then present his product to the shrugs or the inattention of the wise and the others who know?

When the new-born duckling discards its shell, it is as with an adult awareness of what water will be like, and aptitudes adequate to its adventurings in the river. With the human infant it is conspicuously different. For meeting the challenge of its environment it begins but imperfectly endowed. Only with experience and education are its insufficiencies abated; and then to no more than a certain extent. Yet man in the Free World is from a fairly early age faced fairly often with issues a proper grasp of which is sensibly to be looked for only in such as have a certain understanding of the field where the issues arise. For such an understanding he may consequently feel the need.

There is a sense in which education is something supplied, by those who have for longer been finding their way around, to assist the explorations of others who have been at it less long.

What to one must come as a discovery may long since have been familiar to another. Some in London, for instance, may have yet to identify the Nelson Column. In doing so, whether independently or with the help of a guide, it is their Topography that they will be improving. And, as there is a local urban, so is there also a global social Topography, in which all may have their gaps to fill. Instruction at school and university might in this regard do more than a little for the maturing individual, though doubtless never enough. And a type of teaching implies a type of relevant reading-matter. Hence these chapters.

A word must yet be said about the proper classing for such a book. It is plainly not History, or Politics, or Law. It is neither conventional Psychology nor standard-pattern Sociology. Not even from the philosophers will it be sure of recognition as coming within their professional purview. Yet there, one must dare submit, is where even so elementary-level a study must, if anywhere, essentially belong. For do not they, the philosophers, concern themselves, characteristically, with the presuppositions, and the place in the master-plan of systematic inquiry, of the various other subjects of sophisticated concern? Are not 'meta-history', for example, and 'meta-linguistics'—to name only two of the type—intrinsically philosophical, rather than restrictively scientific, in their approach? In so far as such subjects as these may be presentable as propaedeutics to the taking up of others whose names we know, it is to them that the new one here developed might claim to be closest akin. But in that case as propaedeutic to what? To International Law? To Government? To Civics? Perhaps it may best be assumed that, while for others too it might aspire to be of value, for the student of the setting in which diplomacy happens it would hope to be accepted as a *sine qua non*. 'Meta-diplomatics', then, this débutant discipline might logically, if with a smile, expect to be called!

An essay, then, for beginners, and for those on whose advice these depend. Yet not, after all, for them alone. Candour compels the admission that there have also been often in mind those sometimes conservative people, the architects of college curricula, without whose endorsement the would-be wise appreciator of the overall social process might never, in a given milieu, with given hurdles ahead, have effectively the opportu-

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nity to become a beginner, officially, at all. What in the relevant situations those academic legislators will pertinently consider is whether the subject here in question is either too formidable to be tackled, too trivial to be accommodated, or too simple and self-explanatory to merit recognition, even as an optional 'subsidiary', in the syllabus for a first degree.

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