

similarly inclined *Plato To-Day* seems an ephemeral effort), Dr. Popper ought to have resisted the temptation to project without restraint the issues of the present day upon a past society as dissimilar from ours as Plato's Greece or Hegel's Germany.

Dr. Popper's attempt to rewrite the intellectual tradition of the West in terms of a Catalaunian battle between freedom and tribalism leads him into the same prophetic fallacy which he combats so valiantly in others. What is it but another version of the hated thing, historicism, to assert that mankind is manifestly moving from the "closed" toward the "open" society? Had Dr. Popper confined himself to discovering an undulatory motion, his position would be much less open to the accusation that his main thesis is simply another example of too much reliance on a "self-evident truth." The preface to the American edition seems to indicate that Dr. Popper has become somewhat less confident: "Most of my positive suggestions and above all the strong feeling of optimism which pervades the whole book struck me as more and more naive, as the years after the war went by" (p. viii). But he strongly rejects the possibility that his "depression" which, by the way, "has passed, largely as the result of a visit to the United States" (*ibid.*), may have been due to a wrong premise.

It is likely that his renewed confidence is inspired by the belief that the United States is the most successful example of what he calls "piecemeal" engineering, in contrast to the "total," planned variety. It does not seem to have occurred to Dr. Popper that even in a liberal society, socio-economic acts do presuppose antecedent, if unconscious, choices between fundamental values. The instrumentalist approach in which he seems to see the ideal *modus vivendi* of a free community requires, no less than any other method, an agreement as to *ends*. With us, such agreement is, of course, the result of democratic compromise, not of dictation. But that is not the same as saying that our social engineering moves outside a given frame of general, if changing, predilections.

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The Prodigal Century. By HENRY PRATT FAIRCHILD. (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc. 1950. Pp. xvii, 258. \$3.75.)

This volume develops two major themes—our prodigality in the nineteenth century and the problem it left for the present one. The argument runs as follows:

Mankind was presented an unparalleled opportunity in the nineteenth century by "the synchronization of access to the land of a whole hemisphere on the one hand, with the creation of the physical instruments

for exploiting that land on the other hand" (p. 58). In the face of this great possibility for the improvement of his lot, man chose to reproduce his kind in a degree hitherto unknown, to waste the resources of the earth in the most prodigal manner imaginable, and to support his actions with an economics of scarcity, a political theory approaching anarchy, a philosophy of positivism, and a religion of progress. So great was the legacy of the nineteenth century, however, that we were not able to destroy completely the opportunity it presented. Today we may still attain plenty, peace, and freedom; but to do so we must reach a common agreement as to the meaning of life ("our own deliberate, realistic, consciously purposeful theory of progress"), and then develop the leadership and the followership to realize our dream.

The author's development of the theme of prodigality is quite convincing, and the statistics and facts mustered in substantiation are impressive. In his treatment of population growth and its significance, he is especially provocative, and a very definite service is rendered when such significant and fundamental data are called to the attention of social scientists.

However, there would hardly be justification for the book if it merely developed the idea that we had failed to make the most of our opportunities. Rather, its justification must lie in its presentation of courses of action which will facilitate the intelligent exploitation of the opportunities remaining. In this connection Professor Fairchild's proposals are reducible to the following: "the principle of cooperation must be substituted for the principle of competition as the basis for organizing social life in its economic aspects, as well as in others" (p. 248). When this rather simple substitution is made, war, poverty, and slavery will disappear and peace, abundance, and freedom will reign. But how, the skeptical might ask, can this simple substitution of co-operation for competition be made? The answer given by Professor Fairchild is brief and self-explanatory. We collectivize our economy and develop a consumer's psychology. It is consoling to know that such change could be realized peacefully within the framework of our existing political structure, and that total economic planning does not necessarily involve the loss of individual liberty. But it is somewhat disconcerting to learn that the realization of plenty, peace, and freedom through collectivization is contingent upon men's acquiring in the twentieth century those traits of character whose absence in the nineteenth century made them prodigals.

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