

Ultimatum

Eviction notice to the mandarins of Europe! Get out!

Get out, Anatole France, you Epicurus of homeopathic remedies, Jaurès-colored tapeworm of the Ancien Régime, wilted Renan tossed with Flaubert and served in a phony seventeenth-century salad bowl!

Get out, Maurice Barrès, you feminist of Action, a Chateaubriand whose walls are bare, a thespian go-between for countries made of cardboard, mildew of Lorraine, seller of dead people's clothes who wear what he sells!

Get out, Bourget, you meddler in souls, lighter of lamps no-one asked you to light, pseudo-aristocratic shrink, abject plebeian snob who underlines with a chipped ruler the commandments of the church!

Get out, merchantman Kipling, you poetry pragmatist and junk heap imperialist, England's epic to answer Majuba and Colenso, Empire day of soldierly slang, tramp steamer of second-rate immortality!

Get out! Get out!

Get out, George Bernard Shaw, vegetarian of paradox, charlatan of sincerity, ice-cold tumor of Ibsenism, hustler of makeshift intellectualism, Kilkenny cat of yourself, Calvinist *Irish Melody* with the *Origin of Species* as the lyrics!

Get out, H.G. Wells, tin man of ideas, a cardboard corkscrew for the bottle of Complexity!

Get out, G. K. Chesterton, with your sleight-of-hand Christianity, your keg of beer by the altar, and your adipose cockney dialectic whose horror of soap has been clouding clear minds!

Get out, Yeats of the Celtic brume wafting around a sign pointing nowhere, sackful of flotsam washed up on the shore of shipwrecked English symbolism!

Get out! Get out!

Get out, Rapagnetta-D'Annunzio, banality in Greek letters, "Don Juan in Patmos" (trombone solo)!

And you, Maeterlinck, fire of Mystery that died out!

And you, Loti, a cold bowl of salty soup!

And you too, Rostand-tand-tand-tand-tand-tand-tand-tand!

Out! Out! Out!

And drag everybody I've forgotten from out of the woodwork!

Clean all this crap from out of my sight!

Out with all of you! Out!

*

What's your claim to fame, Wilhelm the Second, left-handed German king with no left arm, Bismarck with no lid to hold down the fire?

And who are you, David Lloyd George, with your socialist mane of hair, dunce with a liberty cap stitched out of Union Jacks?

And you, Venizelos, a buttered slice of Pericles that fell on the floor, buttered side down?

And all the rest of you, whoever you are in the Briand-Dato-Boselli mush of political incompetence, a bunch of war-slop statesmen who were slop long before the war began! Each and every last one of you! Trash, refuse, provincial ruffraff, intellectual scurrility!

And all you national leaders, bare-assed incompetents, overturned garbage cans at the door of Contemporary Inadequacy!

Clear all this crap from out of my sight!

Set up some straw-stuffed suits in their stead!
Clear them out! Out once and for all!
Ultimatum to all of them, and to all the rest who are just like them!
And if they don't want to leave, then make them take a shower!

*

All are to blame for the general failure of everything!

The general failure of everything is to blame for all them!

Failure of people and destinies – complete and total failure!

Parade of nations, I spit on you!

You, Italian ambition, a mere lapdog called Caesar!

You, British “organization”, with Kitchener at the bottom of the sea ever since the war began!

(It's long, long way to Tipperary, and a jolly sight longer way to Berlin!)

You, German culture, a rancid Sparta dressed with the oil of Christianity and the vinegar of Nietzscheization, a sheet-metal beehive, an imperialistic horde of harnessed sheep!

You, subservient Austria, medley of subraces, a K-brand doorjamb!

You, Von Belgium, compelled to be heroic, now go wipe your hand and wash the seat of your pants!

You, Russian slavery, Europe of Malays who won a coil-spring freedom only because the coil snapped!

You, Spanish “imperialism” that adds pizzazz to politics, with your bullfighters around the corner (their souls dressed in sanbenitos) and your fighting spirit buried in Morocco!

You, United States of America, bastard synthesis of Europe's scum, garlic of the transatlantic stew, nasalized pronunciation of tasteless modernism!

And you, two-bit Portugal. monarchical vestiges rotting a republic, extreme-unction-compunction of Disgrace, artificially in Europe's war but really and truly humiliated in Africa!

And you, Brazil, “sister republic”, great joke of Pedro Álvares Cabral, who didn't even want to discover you!

Throw a cloth over all this!

Lock it up with a key and throw the Key away!

Where are the ancients, real men, guiding forces, defenders?

Try the cemetery, where their names are chiseled in stone!

Today's philosophy is Fouillée having died!

Today's art is Rodin having survived!

Today's literature is that Barrés means something!

Today's criticism is that there are idiots who don't call Bourget an idiot!

Today's politics is the fatty degeneration of organized incompetence!

Today's religion is the militant Catholicism of pious bartenders, the French cuisine enthusiasm of pickled minds like Maurras's, the exhibitionism of Christian pragmatists, Catholic institutionalists, nirvanic ritualists, advertising agents for God!

Today's war is a game of one side passing the buck and the other side washing its hands.

I'm suffocating in the middle of all this!

Give me some air!

Open all the windows!

Open more windows than all the windows in the world!

Not one great idea, inspired notion, or imperial ambition worthy of a born emperor!
No idea of structure, no sense of the larger Edifice, no concern for Organic
Creation!

Not one measly Pitt, nor even a pasteboard Goethe, nor a Napoleon of Nuremberg!
Not one literary movement that's so much as the noonday shadow of Romanticism!
Not one military action that smells even remotely like Austerlitz!

Not one political movement that rattles with the seeds of ideas when you shake it, O
you modern Gaius Gracchuses who patter at the window!

Vile age of quasi- and second-rate individuals, of lackeys full of lackey ambitions to
become lackey kings!

Lackeys who don't know what Ambition is, bourgeois in your desires, spurning the
shop counter of Instinct! Yes, all you who represent Europe, all who are world-renowned
politicians, all who are leaders among the European literati, all who are anyone or anything
in this whirlpool of lukewarm tea!

Strong men of Lilliputian Europe, pass by as I shower you with my Contempt!

Pass by, you seekers after household comforts, seamstresses - male and female-
in your dreams, who take as your model the plebeian D'Annunzio, aristocrat of the golden
loincloth!

Pass by, you social, literary and artistic trendsetters, the tail side of the coin of
creative impotence!

Pass by, you milksops who need to be ists of one or another ism!

Pass by, radicals of the Piddly, yokels of Progress, whose ignorance stands on the
pillar of audacity and whose impotence is propped up by neotheories!

Pass by, anthill giants, drunk on your bourgeois brat personalities, smug in the good
life you filched from your parents' pantry, and your nerves all tied up by heredity!

Pass by, half-breeds, pass by, weaklings who proclaim only weakness, pass by
ultra weaklings who proclaim only might, bourgeois boys who shrink before the he-man at
the fair and yet hope to create something out of your feverish indecision!

Pass by, epileptic dung-heap without grandeur, hysterical trash heap of plays and
shows, social senility of the individual concept of youth!

Pass by, mildew of the New, merchandise that's shabby before it leaves its
inventor's head!

Pass to the left of my Disdain as it turns right, all you creators of "philosophical
systems", you Bergsons, Boutroux, and Euckens, hospitals for the incurably religious,
pragmatists of metaphysical journalism. charlatans of ponderous fabrications!

Pass by and don't come back, you Paris provincials, Pan-European bourgeois,
pariahs whose ambition is to look important!

Pass by, decigrams of Ambition, great only in an age that counts greatness by the
milligram!

Pass by, you tawdry throwaways, lightning-lunch artists and politicians, high-riding
servants of the Moment, postillions of Opportunity!

Pass by, "refined sensibilities" whose refinement is to have no backbone; pass by,
constructors who frequent cafés and conferences, passing off piles of bricks as houses!

Pass by, you suburban intellectuals and street-corner emotionalists!

Pass by, finery that's just tinsel, grandeur of the mediocre, triumphant megalomania
of the villagers of Europeville! You who confuse the masses with humanity and grandees
with nobility! You who confuse everything and who, when you're thinking of nothing,
always say something else! Chatterboxes. half-wits, dregs and scraps, pass by!

Pass by, would-be half-kings, sawdust rulers, feudal lords of the Castle of Cards!

Pass by, posthumous Romanticism of liberalists far and wide, Classicism of Racine's fetuses in alcohol, dynamism of rinky-dink Whitmans, of beggars begging for a few cents of inspiration, of empty heads that make noise by banging against the walls!

Pass by, after-dinner hypnotists, masters of the woman next door, commanders who can't command more than a few men in a barracks!

Pass by, self-satisfied traditionalists, truly sincere anarchists, socialists who invoke your worker status to get out of working! Habitues of revolution, pass by!

Pass by, eugenicists, organizers of a pinchbeck life, Prussians of applied biology, neo-Mendelians of our sociological ignorance.

Pass by, vegetarians, teetotalers, Calvinists who won't bug off, killjoys of our dilapidated imperialism!

Pass by, scribes of *vivre sa vie* at the grungiest corner bar, you Bernstein-Bataille Ibsenoids who play the strong man on stage.

Tango of savages, if at least you were a minuet!

92. Pass by definitively, pass by!

Come before my utter Loathing, you grand finale of fools, come grovel under the soles of my Disdain, you joke of a fire, a flickering flame crowning a tiny dunghill, dynamic synthesis of Today's congenital inertia!

Grovel and crawl on your knees, you impotence that makes noise!

Grovel, you cannons that boom a total lack of any ambition beyond bullets, of any intelligence beyond bombs!

For this is the sordid equation of shotgun internationalism:

$$\frac{\text{VON BISSING}}{\text{BELGIUM}} = \frac{\text{JONNART}}{\text{GREECE}}$$

Proclaim loud and clear that nobody's fighting for Freedom or Justice! They're fighting in fear of everyone else! And their leaders are all of a few millimeters tall!

Warmongering gobbledygook! Hindenburg-Joffrean crap! European toilet of All The Same in puffed-up disagreement!

Who believes in them?

Who believes in their counterparts?

Make those *poilus* shave!

Take away the herd's helmets!

Send everyone home to peel symbolic potatoes!

Give this mindless pandemonium a bath!

Couple this war to a locomotive!

Tie it to a leash and go show it in Australia!

Men, nations, objectives: all a huge zero!

All are to blame for the failure of everything!

The failure of everything is to blame for all them!

Completely, utterly, and unequivocally:

SHIT!

Europe is thirsty for Creativity! She's hungry for the Future!

Europe longs for great Poets, great Statesmen, great Generals!

She wants the Politician who will consciously forge the unconscious destiny of her People!

She wants the poet who ardently seeks Immortality and couldn't care less about fame, which is for actresses and pharmaceuticals!

She wants the General who will fight for the Constructive Triumph, not for the victory that merely defeats others!

Europe wants many such Politicians, many such Poets, many such Generals!

Europe wants these Able Men to embody the Great Idea, the idea that's the Name of her anonymous wealth!

Europe wants a New Intelligence to be the Form of her chaotic Matter!

She wants a New Will to raise an Edifice out of the random stones of contemporary Life!

She wants a New Sensibility to rally the self-serving egos of today's lackeys!

Europe wants Masters! The World wants Europe!

Europe is sick of not existing! She's sick of being the outskirts of herself! The Machine Age is searching, groping, for the advent of Glorious Humanity!

Europe yearns, at least, for Theoreticians of What-Will-Be, for Singer-Seers of her Future!

O scientific Destiny, give us Homers for the Machine Age! O Gods of Matter, give us Miltons for the Electrical Era!

Give us Self-Possessed Souls, Whole and Strong, Subtle and Harmonious!

Europe wants to go from being a geographical designation to a civilized person!

What we have now, eating away at Life, is just manure for the Future!

What we have now cannot endure, because it's nothing!

I, from the Race of the Navigators, declare that it cannot endure!

I, from the Race of the Discoverers, disdain whatever's less than the discovery of a New World!

Who in Europe has the slightest clue where the next New World will be discovered? Who knows how to set out from a modern-day Sagres?

I, at least, am a tremendous Yearning, the very same size as what's Possible!

I, at least, stand as tall as Imperfect Ambition – imperfect but lordly, not the ambition of slaves!

I stand before the setting sun, and the shadow of my Contempt falls over you as night!

I, at least, am man enough to point the Way!

And I will point the Way!

ATTENTION!

I proclaim, in the first place,

The Malthusian Law of Sensibility

The stimuli to sensibility increase in a geometric progression; sensibility itself increases only in an arithmetic progression.

The importance of this law is obvious. Sensibility – used here in its widest sense – is the source of all civilized creativity. But creativity can fully flourish only when that sensibility is adapted to the milieu in which it operates. Creative output is great and strong to the extent that this adaptation occurs.

Sensibility, though it varies somewhat due to the pressures of its current milieu, is basically constant, being determined in a given individual from birth, in function of heredity and temperament. Sensibility, therefore, progresses *by generations*.

Civilization's creations, which are what constitute our sensibility's "milieu", include culture, scientific progress, and changes in political conditions (in the broadest sense of the term). Now these creations – and most especially cultural and scientific progress, once it gets under way – do not result from the work of generations but from the combined and interactive work *of individuals*, and although this progress is slow at first, it soon reaches a point at which, from one generation to the next, there are hundreds of changes in these new stimuli to our sensibility. But sensibility itself, in the same period, takes only one small generational step, since the father passes on to the son only a fraction of his acquired qualities.

Hence civilization is bound to reach a point when the reigning sensibility is no longer adapted to the milieu that stimulates it, and so there's a breakdown. This is what has happened in our present age, whose maladaptation is responsible for our incapacity to create anything great.

Our civilization was only slightly maladapted in the early phase of its history, from the Renaissance to the eighteenth century, when our sensibility's stimuli, largely cultural, progressed slowly and initially affected only the upper strata of society. The maladaptation increased during the second phase, from the French Revolution into the nineteenth century, when the stimuli, now largely political, progressed much more quickly and reached a far broader spectrum. In the phase running from the mid-nineteenth century to our own day, the maladaptation has increased vertiginously, for the major stimuli – the creations of science – have developed so rapidly that they far outstrip our modest gains in sensibility, and science's practical applications reach every level of society. And so a huge gap has opened between our *sensibility's stimuli*, whose progression has been geometric, and *sensibility itself*, which has obeyed an arithmetic progression.

The end result is our present age's maladaptation and creative incapacity. We must, at this point, either accept the death of our civilization or else opt for artificial adaptation, since natural, instinctive adaptation has failed.

To prevent the death of our civilization, I proclaim, in the second place,

The Need for Artificial Adaptation

What is artificial adaptation?

Answer: an act of sociological surgery, a violent transformation of sensibility so that it can keep pace (at least for a while) with the progress of its stimuli.

Our sensibility, because it's maladapted, has become chronically sick. It's useless to try curing it; there are no social cures. The only way to save its life is by operating. The naturally sick state resulting from its maladaptation must be replaced, through surgery, by an artificial vitality, even though this will require mutilation.

What must be eliminated from the contemporary psyche?

Answer: the human spirit's latest *structural acquisition* – i.e. the last general acquisition made by the civilized human spirit before the inception of our current civilization. And why the *last* such acquisition? For three reasons:

- a) since it's the last structural change in our psyche, it's the easiest to eliminate;
- b) since each civilization is formed in reaction to the previous one, the principles of the previous civilization are the ones most antagonistic to the present civilization and hence most liable to hinder its adaptation to the special conditions that have arisen since its formation;

c) being the latest structural acquisition, its elimination won't wound the general sensibility as severely as the elimination – or attempted elimination – of an element more deeply rooted in the psyche.

What is the last *structural acquisition* of the general human spirit?

Answer: the dogmas of Christianity, since their fullest expression occurred in the Middle Ages, which preceded immediately and for some centuries the dawning of our own civilization, and since Christian doctrines are contradicted by the sound teachings of modern science.

Artificial adaptation will occur spontaneously, once we eliminate from the human spirit those structural acquisitions that derive from its immersion in Christianity.

I proclaim, therefore, in the third place,

Anti-Christian Surgical Intervention

What this amounts to, as we shall see, is the elimination of the three preconceptions, dogmas, or attitudes that Christianity has infused into the very substance of the human psyche.

What this means concretely:

1. Abolition of the Dogma of Personality – of the notion, in other words, that our Personality is separate from other people's. This is a theological fiction. Our personality results (as we know from modern psychology, especially since greater attention has been paid to sociology) from interaction with other people's "personalities", from immersion in social movements and trends, and from the affirmation of hereditary characteristics, which derive for the most part from collective experience. In the present, the future, and the past, therefore, we are part of others, and they are part of us. For Christian self-centredness, the greatest man is the one who can most honestly say, "I am I"; for science, the greatest man is the one who can most sincerely say, "I am everyone else".

We must operate on the soul, opening it up to an awareness of its interpenetration with other souls, in order to arrive at a concrete approximation of the Whole Man, the Synthesis-of-Humanity Man.

The result of this operation:

a) *In politics*: Abolition of democracy as conceived by the French Revolution, whereby two men run farther than one man, which is false, since *only the man who's worth two men runs farther than one man!* One plus one does not equal more than one, unless this "one plus one" forms the One that's called Two. Democracy will be replaced by the Dictatorship of the Total Man, of the Man who in himself is the greatest number of Others, and hence The Majority. We will thus arrive at the True Meaning of Democracy, absolutely contrary to its current meaning, or rather, lack of meaning.

b) *In art*: Abolition of the notion that every individual has the right or duty to express what he feels. The right or duty to express what one feels, in art, belongs only to the individual who feels as various individuals. This has nothing to do with "the expression of an Age", touted by those who don't know how to feel for themselves. What we need is the artist who feels through and for a certain number of Others: some from the past, some from the present, some from the future, and all of them different. We need the artist whose art is a Synthesis-Summation of others rather than a Synthesis-Subtraction of others from himself, which is what the work of today's artists is.

c) *In philosophy*: Abolition of the notion of absolute truth. Creation of the Superphilosophy. The philosopher will become the interpreter of crisscrossing subjectivities, with the greatest philosopher being the one who can contain the greatest number of other people's personal philosophies. Since everything is subjective, every

man's opinion is true for him, and so the greatest truth will be the inner-synthesis-summation of the greatest number of these true opinions that contradict one another.

2. Abolition of the Preconception of Individuality. The notion that each man's soul is one and indivisible is another theological fiction. Science, on the contrary, teaches that each of us is an ensemble of subsidiary psychologies, a clumsy synthesis of cellular souls. For Christian self-centredness, the greatest man is the one who in himself is most coherent; for science, the greatest man is the one who is most incoherent.

Results:

a) *In politics*: The abolition of every conviction that lasts longer than a mood, the death of firm opinions and points of view, and the consequent collapse of all institutions that rely on "public opinion" being able to last more than half an hour. The solution of a problem in a given historical moment will depend on the dictatorial coordination (see previous section) of the current impulses of that problem's human components – a purely subjective method, to be sure. The past and future will cease to exist as factors that matter for the solution of political problems. All continuities will be broken.

b) *In art*: Abolition of the dogma of artistic individuality. The greatest artist will be the one who least defines himself, and who writes in the most genres with the most contradictions and discrepancies. No artist should have just one personality. He should have many, each one being formed by joining together similar states of mind, thereby shattering the crude fiction that the artist is one and indivisible.

c) *In philosophy*: Abolition of Truth as a philosophical concept, even if the concept be only relative or subjective. Reduction of philosophy to the art of having interesting theories about the "Universe". The greatest philosopher will be the artist of thought (which will no longer be called philosophy but "abstract art") who has the greatest number of systematized, unrelated theories on "Existence".

3. Abolition of the dogma of personal objectivity. Objectivity is a rough average of partial subjectivities. If a society is made up, say, of five men – *a*, *b*, *c*, *d*, and *e* – then the "truth" or "objectivity" of that society may be represented as

$$\frac{a+b+c+d+e}{5}$$

In the future each man will, increasingly, realize this average in himself. And so each man, or at least each superior man, will tend to be a harmony in the midst of many subjectivities (one of which will be his) to arrive as close as possible at the Infinite Truth to which the numerical series of partial truths ideally tends.

Results:

a) *In politics*: Sovereignty of the person or persons who are the best Realizers of Averages, eliminating the notion that anybody at all can proffer opinions on politics (or on anything else), since only those who embody the Average will be entitled to opinions.

b) *In art*: Abolition of the concept of Expression, to be replaced by that of Interexpression, which will be possible only for those who are fully aware that they express the opinions of nobody (those, in other words, who embody the Average).

c) *In philosophy*: Substitution of the concept of Philosophy by that of Science, since Science – given its "objective character", its adaptation to the "outer universe" – is the Average of subjectivities and, consequently, the concrete Average of philosophical opinions. Philosophy will disappear as Science advances.

Final, overall results:

a) *In politics*: A Scientific Monarchy that will be antitraditionalist, antihereditary, and absolutely spontaneous, since the Average-King may appear at any time. The People's scientifically natural role will be merely to define current impulses.

b) *In art*: Instead of thirty or forty poets to give expression to an age, it will take, say, just two poets endowed with fifteen or twenty personalities, each of these being an Average of current social trends.

c) *In philosophy*: Philosophy's integration into art and science. Philosophy as a metaphysical science will disappear, along with all forms of religious sentiment (from Christianity to revolutionary humanitarianism), for not representing an Average.

But what is the Method, the collective operation, that will bring about these results in the society of tomorrow? What practical Method will set the process in motion?

The Method is known only to the generation in whose name I shout and for whose cause Europe, in heat, rubs her body against the wall!

If I knew the Method, I myself would be that entire generation!

But I only know the Way; I don't know where it will lead.

Be that as it may, I proclaim the inevitable coming of a Humanity of Engineers!

More than that, *I absolutely guarantee the coming of a Humanity of Engineers!*

I proclaim the imminent, scientific creation of Supermen!

I proclaim the coming of a perfect, mathematical Humanity!

I shout out loud its Coming!

I shout out loud its high Work!

I shout it out loud, for its own sake!

And I shout out, *firstly*:

The Superman will not be the strongest man but the most complete!

And I shout out, *secondly*:

The superman will not be the toughest man but the most complex!

And I shout it out, *thirdly*:

The superman will not be the freest man but the most harmonious!

I shout this out at the top of my lungs, on the European coast where the Tagus meets the sea, with arms raised high as I gaze upon the Atlantic, abstractly saluting Infinity.

Álvaro de Campos.