

Stuart Whipps
England And The Octopus, Britain And The Beast

Two channel video

Question

Well, what is it all about? What exactly is the matter and who is to blame, and what's to be done about it anyway.

Fable

There is something pitiful as well as disgusting about the disorder of the scene of last night's orgy. The fun of the frolic, the assault and battery, the wild scramble for the money among the muck, all seemed to the luckiest participants in it rather glorious while it lasted. No doubt to a few it may seem glorious still — those lucky few who after the initial remorseful awakening have been able to steel away from the disordered scene to other and still unblemished places. But to the deserted commonality, by whose labors the orgy was made possible, and whose own share of the fun was precisely nil, the morrow's dawn upon the waste and ruin is indeed an unpleasant one.

Optimistic Thought

There is a clean new world awaiting us just round the corner, and it is not likely to be attained by any of the fashionable faiths current to today. The communists and the fascists and the older political parties can only think in political terms.

What is wrong with the Conservative party is that it seeks to conserve the wrong things, with the Liberals and the Radicals that they are respectively neither, with the Communists that all Marx and no Morris has made them dull boys, and they haven't thought ...

Prophecy

The danger of proletarianism is near

No art that is only one man deep is worth much; it should be a thousand men deep. The modernists are only one idea deep at the moment; it is a good idea; but they shouldn't regard the pattern of social life with the grim purposefulness of American police chiefs contemplating a gang clear up.

The great majority — the unburied dead — are a perpetual drag on all progress whatsoever.

A gimcrack civilisation crawls like a gigantic slug over the country, leaving a foul trail of slime behind it.

Observation

There is a much larger section than you would believe who regard all beauty as not only silly (there's no money in it) but as morally suspect (just look at them poets).

Let him, then, first read *The Republic* by Plato — it will be good for him in any event and quite independently of the special purpose that has caused me to recommend it — and there learn how the soul of man is wax to take the impression of its environment.

Let a boy grow to manhood among beautiful sights, harmonious sound, and just institutions, and his soul will give forth beauty, harmony, and justice. Let him grow up in the midst of brutality and violence, among squalid sights and ugly sounds, and he will be unjust and violent in his dealings, his soul will give forth ugliness, and he will not know how to come to terms with gentleness and beauty.

Platitude

Don't give the brutes bathrooms. They keep coles in the bath.

Midnight struck so time in the latter part of the last century, perhaps as late as the nineties and the day breaks very slowly — so slowly indeed that the watchers have wondered if the dawn would ever come. But now there are bars and streaks off light such as have not been seen for generations: there are still dark banks of cloud, sullen and oppressive, but they are shot through and pierced with the morning light, and are no longer the unbroken masses that they were.

Basic Proposition

The products of the machine are ugly; therefore let us abandon the machine in favour of handiwork. The towns are bad; therefore let us live in imitation villages.

In his gaily subversive book, *The Almost Perfect State*, Don Marquis states the case for beauty with his usual piercing levity:

"The artists, who know more than anyone else about play, which is art, which is creation, must be the leaders and the guides."

"The world exists for the purpose of producing artists, in order that artists may produce new worlds."

"Artists should be listened to, artists should have charge of the world and govern it, because they and they alone understand something of what it is all about."

"In the Almost Perfect State after the short time each day has been put in at work that is necessary to keep humanity living, the remaining time may be devoted to work calculated to make humanity glad it is living. First Utility, then the joyous super utility of artistic creation."

"Don't be such an ass as to be sure this will all arrive tomorrow. Don't be such an ass as to be sure it will never arrive."

Question

When will it arrive?

Answer

When human nature changes.

Sneers

What makes you think it will change?

Dignified Rejoinder

It always has.

Query

By what method will it be changed?

Reply

By wanting it to change.

Outcry from the back of the hall!

All this talk of art is dangerous, it brings the ears so forward that they act as blinkers to the eyes.

Recapitulation of basic proposition

The products of the machine are ugly; therefore let us abandon the machine in favour of handiwork. The towns are bad; therefore let us live in imitation villages.

Second Proposition

The products of the machine are ugly; therefore let us learn to understand the machine so that we may draw beauty from it. "The towns are bad; therefore let us learn how to make them good."

Maxim

We have seldom mistaken beauty for ugliness in a woman's face if our poets and painters are to be believed, and we are as much at the mercy of the first awakening of spring as ever we were. Beauty is not absolute, but there are certain canons of beauty that are unalterable.

Prophecy

When the millennium arrives, when battleships are turned into floating world-cruising universities, perhaps their guns, as a last act before being spiked will be allowed to blow to dust the hideous, continuous, and disfigured chain of hotels, houses, and huts which by then will have completely encircled these islands.

A motto for the wall

I wish I liked the human race;
I wish I liked its silly face;
I wish I thought what frightful fun,
When it is introduced to one.