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ANTHONY had spent the morning at the offices of the organization, dictating letters. For the most part, it was a matter of dealing with the intellectual difficulties of would-be pacifists. 'What would you do if you saw a foreign soldier attacking your sister?' Well, whatever else one did, one certainly wouldn't send one's son to murder his second cousin. Wearisome work! But it had to be done. He dictated twenty-seven letters; then it was time to go to lunch with Helen.

'There's practically nothing to eat,' she said, when he came in. 'I simply couldn't be bothered to cook anything. The unspeakable boredom of making meals!' Her voice took on a note of almost malevolent resentment.

They addressed themselves to tinned salmon and lettuce. Anthony tried to talk; but his words seemed to bounce off the impenetrable surface of her sullen and melancholy silence. In the end, he too sat speechless.

'It's just a year ago to-day,' she brought out at last.

'What is?'

'Just a year since those devils at Basel...' She shook her head and was silent again.
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Anthony said nothing. Anything he could say would be an irrelevance, he felt, almost an insult.

'I often wish they'd killed me too,' she went on slowly. 'Instead of leaving me here, rotting away, like a piece of dirt on a rubbish heap. Like a dead kitten,' she added, as an afterthought. 'So much carrion.' The words were spoken with a vehement disgust.

'Why do you say that?' he asked.

'Because it's true. I am carrion.'

'There's no need for you to be.'

'I can't help it. I'm carrion by nature.'

'No, you're not,' he insisted. 'You've said it yourself. When Ekki was there . . .'

'No, I wasn't carrion then.'

'What you've been once, you can be again.'

'Not without him.'

He nodded. 'Yes, if you want to be, you can. It's a matter of choosing. Choosing and then setting to work in the right way.'

Helen shook her head. 'They ought to have killed me. If you only knew how I disgust myself!' She screwed up her face into a grimace. 'I'm no good. Worse than no good. Just a lump of dirt.' After a pause, 'I'm not even interested in Ekki's work,' she went on. 'I don't like his friends. Communists. But they're just beastly little people, like anyone else. Stupid, vulgar, envious, pushing. One might as well have the fun of wearing a chinchilla coat and lunching at Claridge's. I shall probably end by selling myself to a rich man.'
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That is, if I can find one.’ She laughed again. Then, in a tone of more bitter self-contempt, ‘Only a year to-day,’ she resumed, ‘and already I’m sick of it all. Utterly sick of it and pining to get out of it. I’m disgusting.’

‘But are you entirely to blame?’

‘Of course I am.’

Anthony shook his head. ‘Perhaps it’s also the fault of the work.’

‘What do you mean?’

‘Organized hatred—it’s not exactly attractive. Not what most people feel they really want to live for.’

‘Ekki lived for it. Lots of people live for it.’

‘But what sort of people?’ he asked. ‘They’re of three kinds. Idealists with an exceptional gift for self-deception. Either they don’t know that it’s organized hatred, or else they genuinely believe that the end justifies the means, genuinely imagine that the means don’t condition the end. Ekki was one of those. They form the majority. And then there are two minorities. A minority of people who know that the thing’s organized hatred and rejoice in the fact. And a minority that’s ambitious, that merely uses the movement as a convenient machine for realizing its ambition. You, Helen—you’re neither ambitious nor self-deceiving. And, in spite of what happened this day last year, don’t really want to liquidate people—not even Nazis. And that’s why the chinchillas and the orchids seem so attractive. Not because you actively long for them. Only because this particular alternative is so unsatisfactory.’
There was a silence. Helen got up, changed the plates and set a bowl of fruit on the table. ‘What is the satisfactory alternative?’ she asked, as she helped herself to an apple.

‘It begins,’ he answered, ‘with trying to cultivate the difficult art of loving people.’

‘But most people are detestable.’

‘They’re detestable, because we detest them. If we liked them, they’d be likeable.’

‘Do you think that’s true?’

‘I’m sure it’s true.’

‘And what do you do after that?’

‘There’s no “after,”’ he replied. ‘Because, of course, it’s a lifetime’s job. Any process of change is a lifetime’s job. Every time you get to the top of a peak, you see another peak in front of you—a peak that you couldn’t see from lower down. Take the mind-body mechanism, for example. You begin to learn how to use it better; you make an advance; from the position you’ve advanced to, you discover how you can use it better still. And so on, indefinitely. The ideal ends recede as you approach them; they’re seen to be other and more remarkable than they seemed before the advance was begun. It’s the same when one tries to change one’s relations with other people. Every step forward reveals the necessity of making new steps forward—unanticipated steps, towards a destination one hadn’t seen when one set out. Yes, it lasts a lifetime,’ he repeated.

‘There can’t be any “after.”’ There can only be an
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attempt, as one goes along, to project what one has discovered on the personal level on to the level of politics and economics. One of the first discoveries,' he added, 'one of the very first one makes, is that organized hatred and violence aren't the best means for securing justice and peace. All men are capable of love for all other men. But we've artificially restricted our love. By means of conventions of hatred and violence. Restricted it within families and clans, within classes and nations. Your friends want to remove those restrictions by using more hatred and violence—that's to say, by using exactly the same means as were the original causes of the restrictions.'

He smiled. 'Can you be surprised if you find the work a bit unsatisfying?'

Helen looked at him for a little in silence, then shook her head. 'I prefer my chinchillas.'

'No, you don't.'

'Yes, I do. I'd rather be a lump of dirt. It's easier.'

She got up. 'What about some coffee?' In the little kitchen, as they were waiting for the water to boil, she suddenly started to tell him about that young man in advertising. She had met him a couple of weeks before. Such an amusing and intelligent creature! And he had fallen violently in love with her. Her face brightened with a kind of reckless, laughing malice. 'Blue eyes,' she said, cataloguing the young man's merits, as though she were an auctioneer, 'curly hair, tremendous shoulders, narrow hips, first-rate amateur boxer—which is more than you ever were, my poor Anthony,' she added

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parenthetically and in a tone of contemptuous com-
miseration. 'In fact, thoroughly bed-worthy. Or at
least he looks it. Because one never really knows till
one's tried, does one?' She laughed. 'I've a good
mind to try to-night,' she went on. 'To commemorate
this anniversary. Don't you think it would be a good
idea, Anthony?' And when he didn't answer, 'Don't
you think so?' she insisted. 'Don't you think so?'
She looked into his face, trying to detect in it the signs
of anger, or jealousy, or disgust.

Anthony smiled back at her. 'It isn't so easy, being
a lump of dirt,' he said. 'In fact, I should say it was very
hard work indeed.'

The brightness faded out of her face. 'Hard work,'
she repeated. 'Perhaps that's one of the reasons for
going on trying.' After a pause, while she poured the
water into the percolator, 'Did you say you were having
a meeting to-night?'

'In Battersea.'

'Perhaps I shall come and listen to you. Unless,'
she added, making an effort to laugh, 'unless, of course,
I've decided to celebrate the anniversary in the other way.'

When they had drunk their coffee, Anthony walked
back to his rooms, to put in a few hours' work at the
new pamphlet he had promised to write for Purchas.
Two letters had come by the mid-day delivery. One
was from Miller, describing the excellent meetings he
had been having in Edinburgh and Glasgow. The other,
without an address, was typewritten.

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'Sir,' it began, 'we have been keeping an eye on you for some time past, and have decided that you cannot be allowed to go on in your present disloyal and treacherous way. We give you fair warning. If you make any more of your dirty pacifist speeches, we shall deal with you as you deserve. Appealing to the police will not do any good. We shall get you sooner or later, and it will not be pleasant for you. It is announced that you are speaking to-night in Battersea. *We shall be there.* So we advise you, if you value your yellow skin, to keep away. You do not deserve this warning, but we want to behave sportingly even towards a skunk like you.—Yours faithfully,

'A GROUP OF PATRIOTIC ENGLISHMEN.'

A joke, Anthony wondered? No, probably serious. He smiled. 'How virtuous they must be feeling!' he said to himself. 'And how heroic! Striking their blow for England.'

But the blow, he went on to reflect, as he sat down in front of the fire, the blow would fall upon himself—if he spoke, that was to say, if they weren't prevented from attacking him. And, of course, there could be no question of not speaking. No question of calling on the police for protection. Nothing to do but practise what he had been preaching.

But would he have the strength of mind to see it through? Suppose they set on him, suppose they started to knock him about? Would he know how to stand it?

'He tried to work on the pamphlet; but the personal
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questions insistently recurred, thrusting aside those remoter and impersonal problems of colonies and prestige, markets, investment, migration. He visualized the horrible expression of anger on the men's distorted faces, heard in his fancy their violent insulting words, saw hands, lifted, falling. Would he be able to prevent himself from flinching? And the pain of blows—sharp, excruciating, on the face, heavy and sickening on the body—how much would he be able to bear, for how long? If only Miller were here to give advice and encouragement! But Miller was in Glasgow.

Doubt of himself grew upon him. To stand there, letting himself be struck, without hitting back, without giving ground—he would never be able to do that.

'I shan't have the guts,' he kept repeating, and was obsessed by the fear of being afraid. Remembering the way he had behaved at Tapatlan, he blushed with shame. And, this time, the disgrace would be public. They would all know—Helen with the rest.

And this time, he went on to think, this time there wouldn't be the excuse of surprise. They had given him warning—'even to a skunk like you.' And besides, he had been training himself for months past to cope with just such a contingency as this. The scene had been rehearsed. He knew by heart every cue and gesture. But when the time actually came, when the pain was no longer imaginary but real, would he remember his part? What guarantee was there that he wouldn't hopelessly break down? In front of Helen—when Helen was
standing hesitant on the threshold of her own life, perhaps also of his. Besides, if he broke down, he would be discrediting more than himself. To break down would be to deny his convictions, to invalidate his philosophy, to betray his friends. ‘But why are you such a fool?’ a small voice began to question; ‘why do you go and saddle yourself with convictions and philosophies? And why put yourself in the position of being able to betray anyone? Why not go back to doing what nature meant you to do—to looking on from your private box and making comments? What does it all matter, after all? And even if it matters, what can you do? Why not quietly resign yourself to the inevitable, and in the interval get on with the job you can do best?’

The voice spoke out of a cloud of fatigue. For a minute he was nothing but a dead, dry husk enclosing black weariness and negation. ‘Ring them up,’ the voice went on. ‘Tell them you’ve got flu. Stay in bed a few days. Then have yourself ordered to the south of France by the doctor . . .’

Suddenly he laughed aloud. From sinister, from insidiously persuasive, that small voice had become absurd. Carried to such a pitch, expressed so ingenuously, baseness was almost comic.

‘Unity,’ he said in an articulate whisper.

He was committed to them, as a hand is committed to the arm. Committed to his friends, committed even to those who had declared themselves his enemies. There was nothing he could do but would affect them all,
enemies and friends alike—for good, if what he did were
good, for evil if it were wrong. Unity, he repeated.
Unity.

Unity of mankind, unity of all life, all being even.

Physical unity, first of all. Unity even in diversity,
even in separation. Separate patterns, but everywhere
alike. Everywhere the same constellations of the ulti-
mate units of energy. The same on the surface of the sun
as in the living flesh warmed by the sun’s radiance; in
the scented cluster of buddleia flowers as in the blue sea
and the clouds on the horizon; in the drunken Mexican’s
pistol as in the dark dried blood on that mangled face
among the rocks, the fresh blood spattered scarlet over
Helen’s naked body, the drops oozing from the raw
contusion on Mark’s knee.

Identical patterns, and identical patternings of patterns.
He held the thought of them in his mind, and, along with
it, the thought of life incessantly moving among the
patterns, selecting and rejecting for its own purposes.
Life building up simpler into more complex patterns—
identically complex through vast ranges of animate being.

The sperm enters the egg, the cell divides and divides,
to become at last this man, that rat or horse. A cow’s
pituitary will make frogs breed out of season. Urine of
a pregnant woman brings the mouse on heat. Sheep’s
thyroid transforms the axolotl from a gilled larva into
an air-breathing salamander, the cretinous dwarf into a
well-grown and intelligent human being. Between one
form of animal life and another, patterns are interchang
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able. Interchangeable also between animal and plant, plant and the inanimate world. Patterns in seed and leaf and root, patterns built up from simpler patterns existent in the air and soil—these can be assimilated and transformed by insect, reptile, mammal, fish.

The unity of life. Unity demonstrated even in the destruction of one life by another. Life and all being are one. Otherwise no living thing could ever derive sustenance from another or from the unliving substances around it. One even in destruction, one in spite of separation. Each organism is unique. Unique and yet united with all other organisms in the sameness of its ultimate parts; unique above a substratum of physical identity.

And minds—minds also are unique, but unique above a substratum of mental identity. Identity and interchangeableness of love, trust, courage. Fearless affection restores the lunatic to sanity, transforms the hostile savage into a friend, tames the wild animal. The mental pattern of love can be transferred from one mind to another and still retain its virtue, just as the physical pattern of a hormone can be transferred, with all its effectiveness, from one body to another.

And not only love, but hate as well; not only trust, but suspicion; not only kindness, generosity, courage, but also malevolence and greed and fear.

Divisive emotions; but the fact that they can be interchanged, can be transferred from mind to mind and retain all their original passion, is a demonstration of the fundamental unity of minds.
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Reality of unity, but equal reality of division—greater reality, indeed, of division. No need to meditate the fact of division. One is constantly aware of it. Constantly aware of being unique and separate; only sometimes, and then most often only intellectually, only as the result of a process of discursive thought, aware of being one with other minds, other lives and all being. Occasionally an intuition of unity, an intuition coming at random, or sought for, step by step, in meditation.

One, one, one, he repeated; but one in division; united and yet separate.

Evil is the accentuation of division; good, whatever makes for unity with other lives and other beings. Pride, hatred, anger—the essentially evil sentiments; and essentially evil because they are all intensifications of the given reality of separateness, because they insist upon division and uniqueness, because they reject and deny other lives and beings. Lust and greed are also insistences upon uniqueness, but insistences which do not entail any negative awareness of the others from whom the unique being is divided. Lust only says, ‘I must have pleasure,’ not ‘You must have pain.’ Greed in its pure state is merely a demand for my satisfaction, not for your exclusion from satisfaction. They are wrong in emphasizing the separate self; but less wrong than pride or hatred or anger, because their self-emphasis is not accompanied by denial of others.

But why division at all? Why, unavoidably, even in the completest love, and, at the other end of the scale
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of being, even in that which is or seems to be below right and wrong, why must the evil of separation persist? Separation even of saint from saint, and separation even of mere physical pattern from mere physical pattern. One man cannot eat for another. The best must think, must enjoy and suffer, must touch, see, smell, hear, taste in isolation. The good man is merely a less completely closed universe than the bad; but still closed, even as the atom is closed.

And, of course, if there is to be existence—existence as we know it—being must be organized in closed universes. Minds like ours can only perceive undifferentiated unity as nothing. Unescapable paradox that we should desire that \( n \) should be equal to one, but that, in fact, we should always find that one is equal to nought.

Separation, diversity—conditions of our existence. Conditions upon which we possess life and consciousness, know right and wrong and have the power to choose between them, recognize truth, have experience of beauty. But separation is evil. Evil, then, is the condition of life, the condition of being aware, of knowing what is good and beautiful.

That which is demanded, that which men come finally to demand of themselves, is the realization of union between beings who would be nothing if they were not separate; is the actualization of goodness by creatures who, if they were not evil, would not exist. Impossibility—but none the less demanded.
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'Born under one law, to another bound.'

He himself, Anthony went on to think, he himself had chosen to regard the whole process as either pointless or a practical joke. Yes, chosen. For it had been an act of the will. If it were all nonsense or a joke, then he was at liberty to read his books and exercise his talents for sarcastic comment; there was no reason why he shouldn't sleep with any presentable woman who was ready to sleep with him. If it weren't nonsense, if there were some significance, then he could no longer live irresponsibly. There were duties towards himself and others and the nature of things. Duties with whose fulfilment the sleeping and the indiscriminate reading and the habit of detached irony would interfere. He had chosen to think it nonsense, and nonsense for more than twenty years the thing had seemed to be—nonsense, in spite of occasional uncomfortable intimations that there might be a point, and that the point was precisely in what he had chosen to regard as the pointlessness, the practical joke. And now at last it was clear, now by some kind of immediate experience he knew that the point was in the paradox, in the fact that unity was the beginning and unity the end, and that in the meantime the condition of life and all existence was separation, which was equivalent to evil. Yes, the point, he insisted, is that one demands of oneself the achievement of the impossible. The point is that, even with the best will in the world, the separate, evil universe of a person or a physical pattern can never unite itself completely with
other lives and beings, or the totality of life and being. Even for the highest goodness the struggle is without end; for never in the nature of present things can the shut become the wholly open; goodness can never free itself completely from evil. It is a test, an education—searching, difficult, drawn out through a lifetime, perhaps through long series of lifetimes. Lifetimes passed in the attempt to open up further and a little further the closed universe that perpetually tends to spring shut the moment that effort is relaxed. Passed in overcoming the separating passions of hate and malice and pride. Passed in making still the self-emphasizing cravings. Passed in constant efforts to realize unity with other lives and other modes of being. To experience it in the act of love and compassion. To experience it on another plane through meditation, in the insight of direct intuition. Unity beyond the turmoil of separations and divisions. Goodness beyond the possibility of evil. But always the fact of separation persists, always evil remains the very condition of life and being. There must be no relaxation of the opening pressure. But even for the best of us, the consummation is still immeasurably remote.

Meanwhile there are love and compassion. Constantly obstructed. But, oh, let them be made indefatigable, implacable to surmount all obstacles, the inner sloth, the distaste, the intellectual scorn; and, from without, the other's aversions and suspicions. Affection, compassion—and also, meanwhile, this contemplative
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approach, this effort to realize the unity of lives and being with the intellect, and at last, perhaps, intuitively in an act of complete understanding. From one argument to another, step by step, towards a consummation where there is no more discourse, only experience, only unmediated knowledge, as of a colour, a perfume, a musical sound. Step by step towards the experience of being no longer wholly separate, but united at the depths with other lives, with the rest of being. United in peace. In peace, he repeated, in peace, in peace. In the depth of every mind, peace. The same peace for all, continuous between mind and mind. At the surface, the separate waves, the whirlpools, the spray; but below them the continuous and undifferentiated expanse of sea, becoming calmer as it deepens, till at last there is an absolute stillness. Dark peace in the depths. A dark peace that is the same for all who can descend to it. Peace that by a strange paradox is the substance and source of the storm at the surface. Born of peace, the waves yet destroy peace; destroy it, but are necessary; for without the storm on the surface there would be no existence, no knowledge of goodness, no effort to allay the leaping frenzy of evil, no rediscovery of the underlying calm, no realization that the substance of the frenzy is the same as the substance of peace.

Frenzy of evil and separation. In peace there is unity. Unity with other lives. Unity with all being: For beneath all being, beneath the countless identical but separate patterns, beneath the attractions and repulsions.
CHAPTER LIV

lies peace. The same peace as underlies the frenzy of the mind. Dark peace, immeasurably deep. Peace from pride and hatred and anger, peace from cravings and aversions, peace from all the separating frenzies. Peace through liberation, for peace is achieved freedom. Freedom and at the same time truth. The truth of unity actually experienced. Peace in the depths, under the storm, far down below the leaping of the waves, the frantically flying spray. Peace in this profound subaqueous night, peace in this silence, this still emptiness where there is no more time, where there are no more images, no more words. Nothing but the experience of peace; peace as a dark void beyond all personal life, and yet itself a form of life more intense, for all its diffuseness, for all the absence of aim or desire, richer and of finer quality than ordinary life. Peace beyond peace, focussed at first, brought together, then opening out in a kind of boundless space. Peace at the tip, as it were, of a narrowing cone of concentration and elimination, a cone with its base in the distractions of the heaving surface of life and its point in the underlying darkness. And in the darkness the tip of one cone meets the tip of another; and, from a single, focal point, peace expands and expands towards a base immeasurably distant and so wide that its circle is the ground and source of all life, all being. Cone reversed from the broken and shifting light of the surface; cone reversed and descending to a point of concentrated darkness; thence, in another cone, expanding and expanding through the darkness towards,
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yes! some other light, steady, untroubled, as utterly calm as the darkness out of which it emerges. Cone reversed into cone upright. Passage from wide stormy light to the still focus of darkness; and thence, beyond the focus, through widening darkness into another light. From storm to calm and on through yet profounder and intenser peace to the final consummation, the ultimate light that is the source and substance of all things; source of the darkness, the void, the submarine night of living calm; source finally of the waves and the frenzy of the spray—forgotten now. For now there is only the darkness expanding and deepening, deepening into light; there is only this final peace, this consciousness of being no more separate, this illumination...

The clock struck seven. Slowly and cautiously he allowed himself to lapse out of the light, back through the darkness into the broken gleams and shadows of everyday existence. He rose at last and went to the kitchen to prepare himself some food. There was not much time; the meeting was at eight, and it would take him a good half-hour to reach the hall. He put a couple of eggs to boil, and sat down meanwhile to bread and cheese. Dispassionately, and with a serene lucidity, he thought of what was in store for him. Whatever it might be, he knew now that all would be well.