A little over 100 years ago, at the opening of the Great Exhibition of 1851, Prince Albert said: ‘We are living in a period of most wonderful transition, which tends rapidly to accomplish that great end to which all history points - the realization of the unity of mankind’. His words - lofty, vague, and optimistic - conjure up a picture of what we were like (or, rather, of what our ruling classes were like) in the middle of Queen Victoria’s reign. For a time, as our Empire spread round the world, it was possible to imagine the whole of mankind united under the beneficent rule of British gentlemen. Then, we were the richest country in the world, although these riches were based upon poverty, disease, and misery on a scale which we would now find intolerable.

The contrast with the cultural climate of today would be most apparent in three respects: in those days, glaring social inequalities were accepted; there was a complacent belief in human progress of which our society was the highest embodiment; and the Church had a powerful influence in public life. And yet already, in the second half of last century, counter-forces were at work: the labour movement began to take shape, Darwinism shattered our complacency about human superiority, and the Church, by tending to support the established order and reject scientific discoveries, alienated both the common man and many intellectuals.

During this century we have learned to reject authority, or at any rate to challenge those who claim authority to produce evidence to validate their claims. This happened with religion first, with medicine rather later, and it may well next be the turn of the law. The great debate between Herbert Spencer, T. H. Huxley, and the bishops ended in a defeat for religious dogmatism, but it can also be seen to have helped the Church to redefine its proper sphere of authority. In medicine, the new generation of scientifically trained doctors demands rigorous standards of verification: some of our most eminent physicians are shocked to discover that the weight of their personal opinion is no longer considered a sufficient support for their clinical pronouncements. The next field to be influenced by the demand for verification may well be the law: perhaps even judges are not infallible. There is talk of research on the range of sentences which are imposed for apparently similar crimes, and on the comparative effects of different forms of punishment on the criminal’s subsequent behaviour.

This realization of the fallibility of personal opinion, and of the need for experimental testing of received ideas, has altered the way we look at many of the social problems which I mentioned in previous talks. We no longer set out with the assumption that we know which institutions are harmful. Instead, we approach problems such as crime, or promiscuity, or alcoholism by first trying to understand them more fully. We begin by observing the situation as objectively as possible with the aim of identifying the social antecedents of particular events or patterns of behaviour. Value judgments
still have to be made before we decide upon any form of intervention; but nowadays these value judgments are seldom couched in terms of absolutes. Rather, we state our reasons for saying that in these particular circumstances a particular change is desirable. By limiting and defining our intentions in this way, we make it easier to measure the success or failure of a given intervention.

It may seem that in these talks I have dwelt too much on the black side, shown myself to be too preoccupied with social and individual pathology. Perhaps it is because I am a clinician that my attention keeps returning to the indicators of malaise; but social scientists, too, are notoriously more interested in studying situations of crisis and stress than tranquil, smoothly functioning institutions. One reason, of course, is that like the clinician they are never invited to interfere with a successful institution.

**Criteria for Social Advance**
For a moment, let me consider this unfamiliar exercise: how would I start to describe the positive achievements of our society? First, I should have to declare my criteria. Following Durkheim, I should count it a gain whenever rational judgment, rather than emotion or rigid dogmatism, determined public decisions; and also a gain whenever the narrow self-interest of individuals or local groups gave way to an acceptance of the common interest of a larger community. In the field of psychology, my criterion for social advance would be the accessibility, for everyone in our community, of the means to develop their innate capabilities.

This last sounds an extravagant idea. In our diversified and complex society we fairly readily acquire certain skills and certain types of specialized knowledge at the expense of renouncing many others; but there are some other attributes of personality which also require to be developed, and which would enhance us all; but we have never yet been able to make their development possible for the majority in our society. These rare attributes include intellectual curiosity, tolerance and consideration for others, spontaneous emotional responsiveness to people and to ideas, and aesthetic taste and creativity.

As a nation, we can mark up some local gains. Several times during this century Britain has magnanimously come to terms with a formerly subject people—as with South Africa after the Boer war, and with the countries of our former Indian empire. On other occasions, for example in Ireland after the rebellion, in Cyprus, in many of the former colonies, we have learned to yield more or less gracefully.

Within our own society we are still deeply divided by differences of class, and yet these differences have been considerably reduced since 1900. Attitudes of subservience towards members of the upper classes are now less frequently shown, or expected. Each world war was followed by a stride forward towards greater social equality, stimulated, I believe, by the sense of solidarity we experienced as a nation through sharing hardships and dangers in common. We look back now with pride to 1940 when we as a nation stood alone against apparently overwhelming odds: but in the perspective of history perhaps equal importance will be given to the years immediately after the war. This was the time when our people attained a new level of responsible concern for their fellow-citizens, a concern which found expression in the provisions of the Welfare State.
This climate of opinion also made it possible for us to take the lead in community planning, in which architecture is informed by the findings of sociological research in the design of urban environments which will be both attractive and functional. In our social legislation during this century we have shown that we still have a particular aptitude for evolving institutions such as the Medical Research Council and the BBC, which show a compromise between complete autonomy and governmental control, a compromise which may not be logical, but which seems to work.

**Considering Our Future**

I should like now to consider what changes may come about in British life during the rest of this century. I propose to consider our future first from the standpoint of the biologist, and then from that of the social historian, before venturing to speculate about the influences these changes may have upon our national character. Biologists are accustomed to thinking in very long time-perspectives. The physical evolution of our species has been slow and prolonged; but during the centuries of recorded history something new, and unique to man, has entered the picture. This is man’s ability to transmit ideas from one generation to the next, and to add to these ideas. All of our leading biologists, men like J. Z. Young, Medawar, Waddington, and Huxley have emphasize this new element in human development; they insist that social and psychological innovations now predominate over the much slower processes of biological change in the continuing evolution of mankind.

These new concepts in evolutionary theory have been advanced with great imaginative force by the late Teithard de Chardin, who viewed all the millennia of biological development as merely preparing the way for man’s spiritual and intellectual evolution, which has scarcely begun. He has compared the mounting acceleration of human thought to the thrust of a rocket when its second-stage motor begins to fire. Teilhard has been taken to task for using language and concepts which belong more to poetry than to science; his merit is that he conveys the excitement and the scope of the new possibilities before mankind. All this, however, belongs to the realm of speculation; and this speculation is darkened by the constant reminder that man has discovered, and perfected, the means of his own destruction—and may yet employ them.

Although biologists agree about the enormously increased rate of human psycho-social evolution, they tend still to think in terms of generations, if not of centuries or millennia. When we lower our horizon to the limits of the present century we can more confidently predict the outcome of certain dominant trends in recent social and political history. Until quite recent times, every important culture had its own traditions, its own cosmology, its own interpretation of the nature and significance of man (which was usually formulated in terms of man’s relationship to God). But during the last 100 years, and with increasing momentum during the last few decades, something new has supervened. We have seen the growing acceptance, in every culture, of a similar way of thinking, based upon the scientific method.

**Expansion of Scientific Knowledge**
It is difficult for a non-scientist to realize the full force of the torrent of scientific discovery. Professor Oppenheimer recently expressed this vividly. He said that the pursuit of scientific knowledge as a whole-time occupation is so new a phenomenon that 93 per cent of all full-time scientists who ever lived are still alive. He went on to illustrate the enormous increase of information in every special field of inquiry. This explosive expansion of scientific knowledge, crossing all national frontiers, and its application to agricultural and industrial production and especially to communications introduce something new into human experience. They are creating a mental climate favourable to new forms of political organization, world-wide in their scope.

It is no longer utopian to envisage a single world government administering the affairs of mankind: our own future history as a nation must be seen in relation to developments on these lines. The greatest obstacle is no longer a material one: the technical resources are already available to make this possible. The obstacle now lies in men’s minds: it lies in the fact that we are still obsessed by age-old fears and enmities. I do not underestimate this difficulty. We are all well aware of our conscious fear, fear of what the other side will do with their weapons of annihilation. There are genuine conflicts of interest between nations which give rise to rational anxieties. But in addition to this, we are prone to ascribe evil intentions to each other; and I believe that we do this because we have not come to terms with the evil within ourselves.

Here is a territory on which religion and psychiatry meet. Religion talks in terms of guilt, and of the way in which the seven deadly sins obscure our vision of God’s purpose for mankind. Psychiatry also deals with guilt and with the conflicts in our own personalities which prevent our seeing things clearly. Both the religious and the psychiatric interpretations of our present predicament suggest that we shall be freed from fear of each other only when we recognize, and abate, our own destructive impulses.

An involuntary bias of this kind often has its origin in experiences of childhood. In an earlier talk I deplored the emotional impoverishment of the family groups in which many children in our community spend their formative years. These children grow up with personalities crippled by the economics of scarcity: scarcity above all of affection and emotional security, which renders them liable, in later life, to personal isolation, suspicion, and despair. It may be instructive to compare this situation with that of thirty, fifty, or 100 years ago, when a much higher proportion of children grew up in homes which were not only emotionally but also materially impoverished. We have made progress in reducing the amount of severe poverty in our society; our next task is to try to ensure that children are not deprived of the emotional sustenance which they need in order to develop into well-balanced beings.

**Emotional Reactions of Large Groups**

It is a commonplace that large groups of people tend to react in an even more emotional, less rational, way than individuals. As individuals we have been learning how to recognize the limits of our rationality, and how to extend these limits. As nations, we shall have to learn to do the same. The first step in this direction is to realize that there are some aspects of our own thinking and behaviour which other people can judge more clearly than we ourselves are able to do; the next and greater step is to accept other people’s judgments about our behaviour. I believe that Britain
is well placed to give a lead to other countries in this process of self-abnegation because we have succeeded in accepting the loss of a great deal of our former power and influence without losing our self-respect.

Misfortune, when it is not overwhelming, can make a person more self-critical, more insightful, less egocentric. Perhaps something of this kind has been altering our own national consciousness during the last generation, in which we have seen the progressive dismantling of the British Empire. We are gradually learning to stop thinking of ourselves as one of the Great Powers. The concentration of military power in the hands of the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. has completely changed our role, as the Cuba crisis clearly demonstrated. For some days we became acutely aware of ourselves as an island armed like Cuba with the rockets and hydrogen bombs of a much stronger allied power and subject to swift annihilation if war should break out.

In our own social history we may expect the continuation of our halting progress towards a more equalitarian society. If the methods of scientific experiment and validation become increasingly adopted by social scientists—as I believe they will—future experiments in social reform will tend to be designed on experimental lines, so that, whether they succeed or not, they will add to our knowledge. Neither science nor sociology, however, can provide the values which ultimately inspire such interventions. I suggest that the ultimate value behind attempts to remedy the diverse patterns of social failure is simply this: a belief in the individual worth, and dignity, of every human being. This is a value to which both humanists and Christians subscribe.

New Emphases in Education
As I see it, the new problems which we shall have to face during the next few years will not be unique to Britain, although the way we tackle them may be influenced by our particular history and resources. We can expect, for example, some new emphases in education. During the rest of this century the mountainous accumulation of scientific information is likely to continue. Pupils of the future cannot possibly digest all facts. Fortunately, this is a task which we shall soon be able to delegate to computers and electronic storehouses of factual data. Machines will relieve us of the drudgery of calculation and free us to devote more time to other studies: to learning the principles on which scientific hypotheses are based; to cultivating an appreciation of literature and the arts; and to developing a clearer understanding of our own personality and our deeper motivations. This will not be achieved simply by letting the teaching of psychology and human personality development take its proper place beside biology in school and university curricula. Insight into the workings of one’s own mind can best be acquired through experience in groups, or in an individual relationship discussed personally with one’s teacher. This type of learning, which is similar to that of a disciple and his guru, or an apprentice and his master, already forms part of the training of every would-be psychotherapist. It cultivates a self-awareness which will, I believe, become part of the intellectual equipment of every well-educated man and woman.

But I do not regard this cultivation of greater insight as the prerogative only of the university graduates of the future. I believe that its influence will spread throughout society, through newspapers, broadcasting, and whatever new mass media the future may discover. One has only to study the abstruse conventions implicit in modern
films, and in radio or television plays, to realize the considerable advance in sophistication shown by popular audiences during the last forty years. The new psychological sophistication, if it can be achieved, would be shown not by the use of neo-Freudian jargon, but by the recognition, in every-day speech and behaviour, of clues to people’s unconscious as well as their conscious motivation. It may seem incongruous to think of ourselves as a people becoming more psychologically perceptive. This seems at variance with our traditions, in which sensitivity has generally been subordinated to the predominance of rather philistine practical men and women; and yet there has always been a strong element of poetry and imagination in our country.

A by-product of this process of self-understanding is that it tends to make one less censorious of other people’s peculiarities, including those of our own teenagers. Eccentricity is a social asset in a world full of stereotypes. Perhaps there will be fewer misfits in our society if we learn to emulate the Indians in their remarkable tolerance for harmless eccentrics.

I have repeatedly referred to material, intellectual, and social changes which appear to have outstripped our imaginative grasp. Perhaps the outstanding example of this today is the hydrogen bomb. We know, intellectually, that these bombs have introduced a new factor into international politics; and yet many people do not seem to have grasped its full implications. Of course, in this, as in other matters, there are some people who recognize the significance of the new phenomenon before the rest of us, some who think ahead. But whereas in former times we were usually given at least a generation in which to get used to each new discovery, now important changes invade and transform social life several times in each generation. We shall have to get used to this.

A Lifelong Process
Because of the constant growth of knowledge, it is truer now than ever before that education is a lifelong process. This may have practical consequences: to take one example, today a doctor must pass strict examinations in order to be allowed to practise; but his knowledge will be out of date within ten years. Already many doctors are taking advantage of regular refresher courses in order to keep in touch with new developments. So far, these courses are optional, and as a result those who most need them are least likely to attend; perhaps before long every doctor should be required to study again, and to pass examinations again, at intervals of five or ten years. Nor will the Church be immune from this pressure for change. Far-sighted leaders of every denomination have seen that they must repeatedly re-examine their teachings in the light of contemporary knowledge and events if they are to continue to play a part in influencing men’s minds.

I have referred to the rapid growth throughout the world of scientific thinking and of its practical applications. This triumph of technology carries with it the danger of imposing a uniformity of material objects and of ideas. Paradoxically, this very threat may prove a godsend to the creative arts. During the present century many of our poets and painters have felt alienated from a society which seemed to deny them any essential role: but now they have a definite role again. Today, many commodities have become stereotyped and internationally interchangeable, and this has even
affected the arts. Action painting and abstract impressionism have been produced with depressing uniformity in every part of the world, but this universality has been accompanied by a sacrifice of emotional significance. An artist’s work expresses feelings which are at once intensely personal and communicable to others: but this communication is most effective when his experiences are linked with a particular place and time.

I suggest that the creative artist’s role in the future may be to keep alive the sense of significance in local and national traditions, and so to combat the deadening effect of uniformity. This, I believe, is the justification of even such small sub-cultural groups as the Lallans poets, who write poetry with a Scots accent. I confess that much of Lallans is Greek to me, and yet sometimes I catch the excitement of feelings which can only be expressed in one’s mother tongue; for example when Hugh MacDiarmid likens the moonlit earth to the tear-streaked face of a sleeping child in his line:

*Earth, thou bonnie broukit bairn.*

I admire Lallans verse, not only for the snatches of lyric poetry which are immediately intelligible, but as one facet of our many sided island culture. It is a reminder that we shall participate most fruitfully in the coming world community if we keep alive a good measure of our eccentricities, our private visions, and our peculiar variations on the pattern of mankind.