

# RELIGION *and the* REBEL

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*by*

*Colin Wilson*



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For

NEGLEY AND DAN FARSON

**Colin Wilson**, novelist, critic, historian and philosopher, was born in Leicester in 1931. His novels and non-fiction books share a common interest in consciousness and the meaning and purpose of existence. His philosophy, which he called “New Existentialism,” is built on an optimistic approach to “Old Existentialism.” His first book, *The Outsider*, was internationally acclaimed and became an instant bestseller. Wilson’s work has been translated into more than thirty languages. He died in Cornwall in 2013.

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## A RETROSPECTIVE INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

IT IS STRANGE to re-read a book after more than a quarter of a century. When *Religion and the Rebel* came out in 1957, it was hatcheted by the critics, and sank without a trace. As a result, I could never bear to re-read it. Doing so after twenty-seven years has been, on the whole, a rather pleasant surprise.

My first book, *The Outsider*, had appeared in 1956, and I was catapulted into an instant and rather unstable celebrity. Both in England and America, it stayed on the bestseller lists for week after week, and was quickly translated into a dozen or so languages. But the reasons for its success had very little to do with the book itself. One was that it appeared in the same week as John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*, and the critics hailed us as England's new literary generation — the generation whose appearance everyone had impatiently anticipated since the end of the war. Added to this was the fact that I was 24 at the time of publication, and had never attended a university; popular journalists were impressed by the praise of 'intellectual' critics — like Cyril Connolly and Philip Toynbee — and I was compared to D. H. Lawrence, Byron and even, God help me, Plato. The publicity — associated with the label 'Angry Young Man' — irritated the respectable critics, who seized the first opportunity to retract their praise of myself, Osborne and various other young writers who had been tarred with the same brush. *Time* ran a gleeful full-page account of the slaughter of *Religion and the Rebel* with a headline 'Scrambled Egghead.'

When Robin Campbell of Ashgrove Press told me he wanted to reprint the book, I opened it for the first time since 1957, and started to read in the spirit of a bather dipping his toe into icy water. Within a page or two, the misgivings had vanished, and I was fascinated by this insight into the workings of my mind at 25. There was another bonus — for the first time I understood the miscalculation that had left me wide open to the barbs of the critics. I talk about 'the Outsider' as if he is a precisely definable type of human being, like an Eskimo or a cannibal. The truth is, of course, that most people contain an element of 'outsiderism' — a sense of alienation from society — and many people I discuss as Outsiders — Scott Fitzgerald, William Law, Bernard Shaw — could just as easily be labelled Insiders. For me now, this constant use of the term Outsider gives the book an element of oversimplification.

But in spite of that, there is nothing in the book that I now feel inclined to retract. Looking back on that self of almost thirty years ago, it seems to me that he was stating a real problem, and that his analysis was relevant and acute. I continued this analysis in another four books of the 'Outsider cycle' — *The Age of Defeat*<sup>2</sup>, *The Strength to Dream*, *Origins of the Sexual Impulse* and *Beyond the Outsider*, while a postscript, *The New Existentialism*, forms a convenient summary of the basic ideas of the series. The debacle of *Religion and the Rebel* at least taught me to stop throwing around the word 'Outsider'.

What I notice, the moment I begin reading, is that I then had a far more narrow and intense view of the problem than I have nowadays, and that this gives the book a sense of passionate involvement that is lacking in the later volumes of the series. I have only one minor reservation. On Page 1, I state

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<sup>1</sup> Colin Wilson's introduction from the 1984 edition.

<sup>2</sup> In America *The Stature of Man* — the American publisher wanted an 'up-beat' title.

that what the Outsider is in rebellion against is the ‘Lack of spiritual tension in a materially prosperous civilisation’. And throughout the book I am inclined to lay most of the blame at the door of prosperity and materialism, and to equate these with the ‘decline of the west’. ‘Outsiders appear like pimples on a dying civilisation’. Yet I also knew perfectly well that religious rebels like Pascal, Law, Kierkegaard and Newman were not simply ‘virtuous men’ who, like Noah, refused to be seduced into sin. They were contemplatives by temperament; they felt, like Socrates, that the unexamined life is not worth living. And the people they disapproved of were usually people who just happened to have been born with a different temperament. This now leads me to feel that my attack on the ‘sick civilisation’ was a little too violent.

How, then, do I now see the problem? As a matter of *individual* discipline. I have recently written an enormous *Criminal History of Mankind*, and it confirms my feeling that the ‘Outsider’ is probably better off nowadays than at any time in history. He may loathe western civilisation, but at least he can survive on National Assistance, and spend his days, if he is so inclined, reading Nietzsche and Kierkegaard and writing denunciations of materialism. But such negative exercises do not seem to me particularly useful. The real problem is to learn those mental disciplines that can raise us momentarily into states of ‘mystical’ perception — the insight that Chesterton called ‘absurd good news.’ In this book, I quote with approval the remark of Shaw’s Captain Shotover that the materialists — like Boss Mangan — strangle out souls, and that when we have the courage of our convictions, we shall kill them. I now feel that this is overstating the case. The Mangans might once have forced the ‘Outsiders’ to work sixteen hours a day for starvation wages, and so ‘prevented them from having the aspirations’, but those days are fortunately long past. For most modern ‘Outsiders’ — and I still know a great number of them — the real problem is to find the disciplines that will lead to self-transformation.

Two or three years after writing this book I became acquainted with the psychologist Abraham Maslow, and with his recognition that ‘peak experiences’ — the moments of ‘absurd good news’ — seem to happen frequently to people who are healthy and optimistic. The peak experience is a sudden glimpse of objective awareness, and it always takes the same form: a sudden recognition of *how lucky we are*. It confirmed what I had stated in my first two books: that one of the main enemies of the Outsider is self-pity, a tendency to look for somebody else to blame for his problems. Most of us spend our lives stuck in what I have called ‘the swamp of subjectivity.’ Crisis tends to jerk us out of the swamp, (as I discovered when I contemplated suicide — as described on this volume.) It makes us aware that if we lack ‘spiritual tension’, the cause lies within ourselves, not in the ‘botched civilisation’.

Maslow’s concept of the peak experience was a milestone on my own road to the solution of the ‘Outsider problem’, and my discovery of the philosopher Husserl was even more important. They made me realise that a central part of the answer is to deliberately keep ourselves at a high level of motivation and purpose. It is recorded that when Samuel Beckett was a young man, he spent most of the day in bed because he could see no reason to get up. That is a fairly reliable formula for slipping into moods of ‘life failure’ in which you become convinced that all effort is futile. Our reaction to crisis shows us that the mind contains a kind of ‘muscle’, a ‘contractile faculty’, which tenses when we experience the sense of ‘power, meaning and purpose’. This ‘muscle’ can be deliberately strengthened by concentration exercises. Graham Greene experienced the sense of absurd good news when he played Russian roulette with a revolver, and there was just a click as the hammer descended on an empty chamber. It *jerked* him into ‘objectivity’. I have always found that if I try to imagine such an incident with enough force, I cause a contraction of that inner muscle, and an instant ‘peak experience’. (I have spoken of this more fully in a recent small book, *Access to Inner Worlds*.)

An equally important insight came from a remarkable physician named Howard Miller (whose work I have described in a book called *Frankenstein’s Castle*.) As a result of experiments with hypnosis, Miller came to the conclusion that what might be called the ‘controlling principle’ in man — the controller of intensity of consciousness — lies in the ordinary conscious mind, and not (as D. H. Lawrence thought) in the solar plexus or the instincts. This insight is closely connected to the recognition that has come about through the science of ‘split brain physiology’, that we have *two*

people living in our heads, in the left and right cerebral hemispheres, and the person you call 'you' is the 'conscious self' living in the left brain. The right-brain self is a stranger, and is also the source of so-called 'psychic powers' and of the peak experience. Yet it is the left-brain ego, the conscious self, which is the controller of awareness. Why, then, can we not induce the peak experience at will? Because through some absurd misunderstanding, due to its narrowness, this 'controlling ego' *does not realise it is in control*. It believes itself to be passive and helpless, so it is inclined to lie in bed all day praying for peak experiences. In *The Outsider*, I quote Hemingway's story *Soldier's Home*, in which the soldier home from the war recalls those moments when, during crisis, 'you did the one thing, the only thing' and it always came out right. And this is because in moments of crisis, the controlling ego is *galvanised* into sudden wakefulness and suddenly remembers that *it* is in control, and can have peak experiences whenever it likes. Over the years, I have come to recognise that the real solution to the 'Outsider problem' is to induce that basic insight again and again until it finally takes root, and we grasp that we *already* possess the power. This is why the mystics felt that there is an element of absurdity in the visionary experience, a sudden realisation that made them want to kick themselves and shout 'Of course!' The solution lies in the recognition that the left-brain is the *gatherer of power*.

'Visionary consciousness' and the sense of 'absurd good news' is the starting point of *Religion and the Rebel*. And that is why when I re-read it, I was not upset by its crudities. It is true that I would like to rewrite it, removing 90% of its references to 'the Outsider'. And there are many pages that I would now like to re-cast: (for example, it seems to me that the facts about Wittgenstein's homosexuality that have emerged since I wrote the book explain a great deal about the self-hatred that resulted in the perverse 'reductionism' of his later work.) I also find that its romanticism is hard to take — its conviction that the Outsider is a lonely beacon of integrity in a sea of cheapness and futility: but that is surely inevitable when a man of fifty-two reads a book by a man exactly half his age. Still, on the whole, I find the speculations of that earlier self exciting, and his analysis of the problem basically accurate. It seems to me that he was correct in believing that mankind would develop a new religious consciousness. What he could not have foreseen was that it would happen so easily and naturally. By the mid-1960s, the works of Hermann Hesse — which were almost unknown in the English-speaking countries when I discussed them in *The Outsider*— had become best sellers again. A new generation plunged with enthusiasm into the disciplines of Buddhism, Hinduism, yoga, transcendental meditation and even ritual magic. No doubt many of these movements— like the psychedelic revolution — were mere fads, but there can be no doubt that the impulse behind them was a dissatisfaction with the quality of 'everyday consciousness', and the feeling that it ought to be possible to change it.

This, I suspect, will be regarded by historians of the future as the second great revolution of the 20th century, and one whose consequences may be far more important for man's future evolution than the one that took place in Russia in 1917.

## AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION

**T**HE OUTSIDER was an incomplete book. It was intended to document and order a subject which, for personal reasons, I find particularly absorbing: the subject of mental strain and near-insanity.

Over many years, the obsessional figure whom I have called the Outsider became for me the heroic figure of our time. My vision of our civilisation was a vision of cheapness and futility, the degrading of all intellectual standards. In contrast to this, the Outsider seemed to be the man who, for any reason at all, felt himself lonely in the crowd of the second-rate. As I conceived him, he could be a maniac carrying a knife in a black bag, taking pride in appearing harmless and normal to other people; he could be a saint or a visionary, caring for nothing but one moment in which he seemed to understand the world, and see into the heart of nature and of God.

The more I considered the Outsider, the more I felt him to be a symptom of our time and age. Essentially, he seemed to be a rebel; and what he was in rebellion against was the *lack of spiritual tension* in a materially prosperous civilisation. The first nine books of Saint Augustine's *Confessions* are an Outsider document, and Saint Augustine lived in a disintegrating Roman society. It did not seem a bold step to conclude that the Outsider is a symptom of a civilisation's decline; Outsiders appear like pimples on a dying civilisation. An individual tends to be what his environment makes him. If a civilisation is spiritually sick, the individual suffers from the same sickness. If he is healthy enough to put up a fight, he becomes an Outsider.

The study of the spiritually sick individual belongs to psychology, but to consider him in relation to a sick civilisation is to enter the realm of history. That is why this book must attempt to pursue two courses at once, probing deeper into the Outsider himself, while at the same time moving towards the historical problem of the decline of civilisations. One way leads inward, towards mysticism; the other outward, towards politics. Unfortunately, I have almost no turn for practical politics, so the emphasis in this book is on religion and philosophy. Where the road disappears into the thickets of political theory, I leave it, and hope that someone less averse to politics than I am will press on where I have shirked the problem.

Various critics have objected — with some justification — that the term 'Outsider' is loose; that a word which can be applied to Boehme as well as Nijinsky, to Fox and Gurdjieff as well as Lawrence, Van Gogh and Sartre, is almost meaningless. But my use of the term 'Outsider' is deliberately vague. The ultimate question that, for me, lies behind the Outsider is: How can man extend his range of consciousness? I believe that human beings experience a range of mental states which is as narrow as the middle three notes of a piano keyboard. I believe that the possible range of mental states is as wide as the whole piano keyboard, and that man's sole aim and business is to extend his range from the usual three or four notes to the whole keyboard. The men I dealt with in *The Outsider* had one thing in common: an instinctive knowledge that their range *could* be extended, and a nagging dissatisfaction with the range of their everyday experience.

This, I must admit, is the urge that underlies all my thinking and writing. I state it here so that there shall be no doubt in any reader's mind about the central preoccupation of my book.

The publication of *The Outsider* brought me some interesting insights. It received more attention than I or my publisher had expected, and, quite suddenly, I became involved in all kinds of activities. For many months after it was published, I had almost no time alone, caught up as I was in a round of interviews by reporters, lectures, broadcasts, reading and answering letters, invitations to dinner, and so on. The result was exactly what I had been afraid of: I found myself losing the preoccupations that had led me to write *The Outsider*. Strangers who claimed to be Outsiders wrote me long letters explaining their symptoms and asking for advice, until I began to suspect parody. In this whirl, I discovered that I ceased to be aware of the states of consciousness that lie beyond my ordinary two or three notes. In my own terminology, I had started to become an Insider.

I record this because it is of central importance to the theme of this book. Most men I know live like this as a matter of course: working, travelling, eating and drinking and talking. The range of everyday activity in a modern civilisation builds a wall around the ordinary state of consciousness and makes it almost impossible to see beyond it. The conditions under which we live do this to us. It is what happens in a civilisation that always makes a noise like a dynamo, and gives no leisure for peace and contemplation. Men begin to lose that intuition of 'unknown modes of being,' that sense of purpose, that makes them more than highly efficient pigs. This is the horror the Outsider revolts against.

Some years ago, in Winchester Cathedral, I came across a pamphlet by Mr. T. S. Eliot; it was an address which Mr. Eliot had delivered in the Cathedral, and it had the unpromising title: 'On the Use of Cathedrals in England.' For three quarters of the pamphlet, Mr. Eliot talks like a studious country parson about the relation of the cathedral to the parish churches. And then, towards the end, he speaks of the position of the dean and chapter, and his pamphlet suddenly becomes an impassioned plea for leisure in a modern civilisation. He attacks the view that the dean and chapter should be general runabouts, preaching sermons all over the parish, and emphasises that good theological thinking requires quiet and contemplation. He adduces his own example to strengthen his point: he has always worked as a publisher to give himself the necessary leisure for writing, and any permanent value which his work may possess (he modestly claims) is due to the fact that he wrote only what he wanted to write, under no compulsion to please anyone but himself.

I remember being excited by this at the time. T. E. Lawrence had made the same point in *The Seven Pillars*: '... of these two poles, leisure and subsistence, we should shun subsistence... and cling close to leisure... Some men there might be, uncreative, whose leisure is barren; but the activity of these would have been material only... Mankind has been no gainer by its drudges.'

For my own part, I found that I preferred working as a navvy or washing dishes to life in an office; for although I had no more than the normal reluctance to face hard work, I had a very real fear of that deadening of the nerves and sensibilities that comes of boredom and submitting to one's own self-contempt. I was sticking down envelopes with a damp brush one afternoon, when a young man who seemed to enjoy being a civil servant commented: 'Soul-destroying, isn't it?' A commonplace phrase, but I had never heard it before, and I repeated it like a revelation. Not soul-destroying, but life-destroying; the stagnating life-force gives off smells like standing water, and the whole being is poisoned. Desmond — that was his name — always looked well groomed and efficient, and I never saw him lose his temper. My own predisposition to boredom and irritable wretchedness inclined me to divide the world into two classes: people who disliked themselves, and people who didn't. And the former disliked the latter even more than they disliked themselves.

Such experiences were the groundwork of all my analyses, my starting point; and all my thought aimed at discovering some solution that would enable the people who disliked themselves to find reasons — or methods — of overcoming self-contempt, without numbing themselves into complacency. I called the people who disliked themselves Outsiders. Boredom, I knew, meant not having enough to do with one's life energies. The answer to it, quite simply, lies in extending the range of the consciousness: setting emotions circulating, and setting the intellect working, until new

areas of consciousness are brought to life in the way that the blood starts flowing again through a leg which has gone numb.

That was just the starting point. It is not enough to have leisure; leisure is only a negative concept, the wide, clear space where one can build decent houses after knocking down slums. The next problem is to begin to build. I found it tiresome to work for an employer in a factory or laundry, and envied those men who can make a living by doing the things they enjoy. But closer acquaintance with such men — writers, artists, journalists — has usually proved to me that they have knocked down one slum only to build another — slightly more to their own taste, but still a slum. From the point of view of spiritual health, I do not think there is much to choose between the workman who has worked in the same factory for forty years and is spiritually warped and stunted in consequence, and the novelist who writes the same kind of novels for forty years and has a house on the Riviera.

It is unnatural to work for forty years in the same factory, but no more unnatural than it is to be born. Nature is dead; every act of will is unnatural, against nature. The more one has to fight against, the more alive one can be. That was why, for me, the problem of living resolved itself into the question of choosing obstacles to stimulate my will. Instantly, I came to recognise that our civilisation is flowing in the opposite direction; all our culture and science is directed towards enabling us to exercise as little will as possible. Everything is made easy; and if, after a week of office routine and travelling on buses, we still feel the need to work off excess energy, we can always enjoy ourselves playing all those games involving artificial obstacles, where the will is applied to beating another team of cricketers or footballers, or simply to wrestling with the imaginary Sphinx who sets the newspaper crossword puzzles. We have also invented a form of thought that fits in with this abdication of the will. We call it abstract philosophy. It is essentially the product of Western civilisation.

There was an element of disguised autobiography in *The Outsider*; obviously, since I spent most of the book calling on other men to bear witness to my own beliefs. Underlying the whole argument there was the belief that real philosophy should be the result of applying the analytical faculty — the mathematical faculty — to the stuff of one's own experience. Too much experience flows over us like water through a channel: it means nothing to us; we are unchanged by it, unconscious of it. For years before I wrote *The Outsider* I had kept a journal in which I had been mainly concerned with applying mathematical analysis to my own experience, and making a note when I read something that showed the same preoccupation. There was a slow, deliberate accumulation of material that I was able to transfer almost unchanged into the book. That material was chosen — naturally — to exclude myself.

But it is time now, before launching into further analysis of other writers, to explain my own relation to my data. What I wish to give is as full an account as possible of how the problems of the Outsider came to preoccupy me. Some of the difficult issues to be found in the next three hundred pages of the present volume could easily become totally obscured without such a preface. Besides, my existentialist premises demand it. Philosophy is nothing if it is not an attempt to take one's own experience apart under a microscope.

When I was eleven years old, my grandfather gave me a tattered and coverless science-fiction magazine. (This was in the second year of the war, and I had never seen such a thing before.) It was here that I discovered a name of which I had never heard: Albert Einstein. It was difficult to determine, from the references in the stories, precisely what Professor Einstein had done, but every writer in the magazine mentioned him at least once, and the Letters to the Editor were sprinkled with his name.

The stories themselves excited me more than anything I had ever read. They were mostly about Experiments that got Out of Hand. There was one about a scientist who made a speck of grey protoplasmic matter, which was somehow thrown into the sea and grew larger as it ate up the fishes, until finally it developed a habit of engulfing passenger liners or depopulating small islands. There was another about a scientist who made an Atomic Fire that was inextinguishable, and went on burning until it threatened to burn up the whole world.

I had never read anything like it. Compared to boys' papers and comics, it was erudite and intellectual. And one had a feeling of far more serious issues at stake than in stories about football games and ragging in the Lower Fourth. ('Yarroo, you rotter! I'll tell old Quelchy!') There was talk about positrons and cyclotrons and the theory of probability. Not to mention Professor Einstein.

I found Einstein's own little volume, *Relativity, the Special and General Theory*, and conscientiously plugged away at it, skipping the mathematics and wondering what the devil he meant by 'orientation.' But Sir James Jeans was easier; his explanation of the Michelson-Morley experiment simplified everything. From then on I thought I understood relativity. I enjoyed a certain amount of consideration among the boys at school as a consequence of tangling up the physics master on obscure questions about the speed of light in a moving co-ordinate system. They nicknamed me 'Professor,' and relied on me to waste as much of our physics lectures as possible by objecting that Newton was out of date and discredited. But secretly I admired Newton, for I imagined him as occupying a place in the hierarchy — Archimedes, Galileo, Newton, Planck, Einstein — which would one day include myself.

But my curiosity was not confined to purely scientific questions. Sir James Jeans begins *The Mysterious Universe* with a passage that might have been a sermon on Pascal's text: 'The eternal silence of these infinite spaces terrifies me.' This, and other passages of speculation, produced a sense of mystery that was so intolerable to me that I once wrote a twenty-page letter to Sir Arthur Eddington, asking him if he could please explain to me what the universe was all about. When I asked the local librarian where I could find his address, she told me that he had died earlier in the year. I was not wholly disappointed, since I had come to the conclusion that he was unlikely to know the answer anyway. This was in 1944.

I see now that it was Jeans and Eddington who were responsible for my sudden mental awakening at the age of twelve; at the time, I thought of Einstein as 'the master.' I believed that Einstein had taught me the impossibility of making a final judgement on anything. I tried to explain to school friends that space was infinite and yet bounded; and it seemed to me that the possibilities of human life were also infinite and yet bounded: that within its framework of endless repetition, anything could be done. It was to be another five years before I read *Zarathustra* and discovered that Nietzsche also recognised Eternal Recurrence as the foundation of an essentially optimistic philosophy.

But this notion was of secondary importance compared to that of the Will to Power. This is so central to my way of thinking that I should perhaps explain at some length how my ideas on the subject originated.

In some popular textbook of psychology, I had read summaries of the systems of Freud, Jung and Adler. Freud's insistence on childhood influences and the sexual urges seemed even then to be nonsense; Jung's theory of types struck me as equally irrelevant. But Adler's idea of the Power Instinct came to me as a revelation; it seemed to tie together all my observations of human beings, to add the final touch to the edifice that Einstein had begun. A great deal of a child's time is spent in being treated unfairly and wondering about the rights and wrongs of the case; also in observing that, although all adults seem to him to be equally self-possessed and balanced in judgement, yet there are some who are badly spoken of by others, or labeled as shifty, dishonest or stupid by one's parents. It is all very confusing. It leads the child to realise that he cannot leave the business of making judgements entirely to the adult world. And when such a child tries to form his own judgements, the real confusion begins. In most issues between adults, there seems very little to choose. It is less a matter of rights and wrongs than of individuals with their own will to self-assertion. So my summary of the situation went like this: 'right' and 'wrong' are relative terms; they have no final meaning; the reality behind human conflicts is only a will to self-assertion. Nobody is right; nobody is wrong; but *everyone* wants to be thought right.

Adler's use of the term 'inferiority complex' supplied me with my fundamental idea. I decided that the desire of every human being is to appear in as good a light as possible to himself. And since the opinions of other people affect the way we see ourselves, we seek to preserve our complacency by winning their respect or friendship. Of course, there is another way: to cut oneself off completely

from the opinion of other people and build a wall around one's own self-esteem. The lunatic who believes he is Napoleon or Christ has done this — so I felt. The difference between the lunatic and the sane person is only that the sane person prefers to get other people to co-operate in maintaining his delusions.

There came a day when I took up a pen and settled down to writing a long essay about these ideas. I began it in a new school notebook that had written inside the cover 'Colin Wilson, Form 2C,' and underneath it, in block capitals printed in red ink: 'These notes are based on the relativity theory of Albert Einstein, and the system of Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler.'

The writing of that essay was an unforgettable experience. Years later, when I read in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* of Jouffroy's feelings of terror while analysing his own unbelief,<sup>1</sup> I remembered that night in 1944 when I wrote my 'Essay on Superiority' at a single sitting. It seemed that I had penetrated deeper into unbelief than any other human being; that by questioning too deeply, I had cut myself off from the rest of the human race. My brother came to bed in the same room while I wrote. Towards three o'clock in the morning, I turned off the light and climbed into bed beside him, feeling at the same time an awful fear that God would strike me dead in the night. I felt that I had destroyed in myself a certain necessary basis of illusion that makes life bearable for human beings. I had done this in the name of 'truth'; and now I felt no elation, only a sort of fatigue of the brain that would not let me sleep. Truth, it seemed, had no power of intensifying life; only of destroying the illusions that make life tolerable.

I still remember my surprise when I woke up in the morning and found I was still alive. God either didn't care, or didn't exist.

This was the beginning of a long period in which the key word, for me, was 'futility.' During this period, I felt that 'futility' was the final comment on human life. It was the worst and most depressing period of my life. It was not a case of my ideas depressing me; there was a social maladjustment for which the ideas provided the excuse. At thirteen I should have had friends — especially girl friends. Instead, I spent three years in my bedroom, reading and writing. The sexual desires I knew at the time were mere physical urges; there was no need or desire for friendly human intercourse. My admiration went to a certain ideal of cold brutality of intellect; while I wondered with despair where the motivation for such an attitude could lie, if not in the realms of delusion and self-assertion that I despised. When I read some sage or philosopher proclaiming that human beings are hopelessly deluded, I wondered what reason he had for saying so, other than a deluded wish to be admired for his cynicism. Human life seemed a vicious circle; the desire for life a delusion. I asked myself: Who made the delusion? and decided that, whatever inscrutable aim inspired the Great Delusion-Maker it presupposed human futility and vanity. I was not ever certain that the Great Delusion-Maker himself might not be inspired by delusions.

Added to this was the exhaustion of reading and thinking too much; also, of course, the sexual unfulfilment. Shaw comments in one of the later prefaces that most young men need sex several years before it is socially convenient for them to have it. This, I think, is especially true nowadays, and the consequence is a residue of sexual hunger that may take years of libertinism to assuage. At all events, I believe that sex played as important a part as my eschatological doubts in making me wretched in my early teens.

I wrote as an antidote to misery or boredom. I became ashamed of the 'Superiority' essay, and wrote further essays in which I sought a more technical terminology. The central theme was always the same: that men are machines driven by emotions, that the 'desire for truth' is always some less creditable urge disguised by the emotions; that 'truth' would be as useless to human beings as bookcases are to cows. I find the two little notebooks of 'Subjective Essays' filled with speculations on the nature of human impulses, and can see now that these speculations were an attempt to track down the element of free will in man. In the essay on Fanaticism, I state that the fanatic is the luckiest of all living beings, for he is driven by the most intense delusions. Somewhere — in Wells's *Outline of History*, I think — I have seen those huge Egyptian statues of Amenhotep III that are

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<sup>1</sup> vide *The Outsider*, pp. 123-4.

called the Colossi of Memnon; and in them I saw my symbol of the real philosopher, the man who could say that his reason was not prejudiced by emotion; huge, eyeless, immobile. Only in the dead, I felt, was there no emotional prejudice; consequently, only the dead may be called sane. And somewhere in the essays, I acknowledge that free will may exist, but in such a small degree as to be hardly knowable. I found myself confronted by an urge to analyse my way to truth that concluded in a recognition that truth is of no use for survival.

I had other pursuits that kept me from complete abdication of will. From the age of eleven, physics and chemistry had been my major interests, and by the age of twelve I had made the spare room into a laboratory in which I spent most of my weekends and evenings; the pocket money I earned from a paper round was spent on chemicals. Then, in the August holiday of 1944, I conceived the idea of writing a book which would summarise, in formula and laws, all my knowledge of chemistry and physics. The scheme fascinated me so much that I soon made it more ambitious, and decided to write chapters on Astronomy, Geology, Psychology, Aeronautics, Philosophy and Mathematics. I had bought, at some church bazaar, six volumes of a self-educator with ‘courses’ on all these subjects. With the help of this and books from the local library, I began my attempt to summarise all the scientific knowledge of humanity. I wrote it in notebooks that held about fifteen thousand words each, and had filled six of these before it was time to go back to school. It was my first book, and I worked on it continuously and systematically — the best possible training for a writer.

In those years of the ‘Subjective Essays,’ the greatest impact on my mind was Bernard Shaw. I had seen Gabriel Pascal’s film of *Caesar and Cleopatra* without being particularly impressed; it reminded me too much of Shakespeare, whom I had always found unreadable. But during the first week of the B.B.C.’s Third Programme, I switched on the radio one evening to hear Mr. Esmé Percy’s voice declaiming:

Friends and fellow brigands. I have a proposal to make to this meeting. We have now spent three evenings in discussing the question Have Anarchists or Social-Democrats the most personal courage? We have gone into the principles of Anarchism and Social-Democracy at great length. The cause of Anarchy has been ably represented by our one Anarchist, who doesn’t know what Anarchism means...<sup>2</sup>

It was the beginning of the third act of *Man and Superman*. Even now, after more than ten years, I find it impossible to read this act without a curious feeling of awe. It was a totally new experience. I will not pretend that I was enthralled. I was not; I was partly bored, and could not follow a lot of it. But I was astounded that another man had actually thought and written about the problems that preoccupied me. Up till then, I had had a little private game with myself in which I examined everyone I met and tried to decide how close they were to seeing the world as I saw it; there was always an element of self-congratulation in the fact that I felt certain no one ever had. I was already beginning to enjoy that first terror of feeling myself completely alone. It had become a commonplace of my thinking that no man asked himself what life was about; or if he did, answered with arrant nonsense or wishful thinking. (I once asked my grandfather — during an argument about the existence of God — if he understood the purpose of life, and he told me solemnly that he did, and that he would explain it to me when I was fourteen. Nothing I could say would draw him out. Unfortunately, he died when I was eleven.) Now I heard Shaw speaking quite plainly about the purpose of life, and answering that it was a will to self-understanding. It sounded plausible. It seemed paradoxical enough. And the devil expressed my central obsession with the idea of futility and purposeless repetition:

. . . Where you now see reform, progress, fulfilment of upward tendency, continual ascent by Man on the stepping stones of his dead selves to higher things, you will see nothing but an infinite comedy of illusion. You will discover the profound truth of the saying of my friend Koheleth, that there is nothing new under the sun. Vanitas vanitatum...

And Don Juan interrupts impatiently:

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<sup>2</sup> Shaw, G. B.: *Complete Plays* (London, Odhams, 1951)

. . . Clever dolt that you are, is a man no better than a worm, or a dog than a wolf, because he gets tired of everything? Shall he give up eating because he destroys his appetite in the act of gratifying it?<sup>3</sup>

I went to bed that night with a sort of mental numbness. I felt that something of tremendous importance had happened to me, something which I could not yet fully grasp. During the night, I woke up and put out my hand to my brother; the bedclothes had slipped off him and he was as cold as tin. For a moment I believed him dead, and it seemed the natural and inevitable result of knowing too much and prying too deep. It was an immense relief when I covered him up and he grew warm again; and as much a surprise, in its way, as the morning I woke up and found I was still alive.

I listened to the repeat of the play the following evening, all six hours of it, and borrowed it from the local library and read it through the day after that. I think that no other forty-eight hours of my life has given me such a sense of a mental earthquake. Subsequently I read through all the plays (although not, at that time, the prefaces). The English master at school told me that an admiration for Shaw was something that often ‘happens’ in the teens, and disappears after five years or so. I find that, after twelve years, Shaw still seems to me the greatest figure in European literature since Dante.

Shaw was less of a mental tonic than might be expected. At that time, a sense of exhaustion and greyness seemed to wash around on the edge of my mind. I made a habit of wandering into churches and engaging the priest in arguments about the existence of God and the purpose of life. Sometimes, if the argument went on too long, I left the church feeling a little dizzy, and with an underlying certainty that stupidity and futility were the inescapable warp and weft of living. These periods of depression sometimes lasted for days. (One such priest, I remember, advised me to read nothing but newspapers for a year, telling me that I was suffering from mental indigestion from reading too much. I was delighted later when, in Fox’s Journal, I read about the priest of Mancetter who advised him to take tobacco and sing psalms.<sup>4</sup>) I had passed beyond my period of militant atheism. The idea that there was no God no longer gave me a feeling of freedom. In my childhood I had been greatly given to praying mentally while I walked around; I was an incorrigible talker, and enjoyed keeping up a one-sided conversation when there was no one else to talk to, frequently apologising to God when my attention was distracted and I lost the thread of the discussion. Now I would have been glad to pray — except for the gloomy certainty that it would be mere emotional dishonesty. I had begun to read T. S. Eliot’s poetry at this time, stimulated by some remark of the French master about his obscurity. In the first few lines I read, I found the words:

And I pray that I may forget  
These matters that with myself I too much discuss  
Too much explain.

and

Teach us to care and not to care Teach us to sit still.<sup>5</sup>

Immediately I felt I knew what he was talking about. After that, I tended to repeat *Ash Wednesday* as a form of mental prayer. It furnished a sort of antidote to depression and exhaustion that Shaw could not provide.

When I was sixteen, I left school, having passed my School Certificate. I had wanted to take some job where I could study for a B.Sc. (My chief ambition was still to be a scientist.) Unfortunately I needed five credits to be exempt from matriculation; I only had four, and had to take the maths exam again. In the meantime, I took a job in a warehouse; it involved weighing crates of wool when they came into the warehouse, keeping a number of girls and machines supplied with hanks of wool, and ‘weighing out’ the wool when it had been wound on to spools. I was not particularly miserable, but the hours were longer than any I had known before — from eight till six, with a break for lunch — and the work was heavier. After a while, the job began to bore me, and I

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> *The Outsider*, Chapter 8.

<sup>5</sup> Eliot, T. S.: *Collected Poems* (London, Faber, 1936; New York, Harcourt, 1936)

tried various remedies to counteract my growing detestation for it. I read a great deal of poetry, because I found it relaxed me and refreshed me; I planned short stories and a long play while I worked, and wrote them in the evenings. After two months, I passed my maths exam with the necessary credit, and left the warehouse without regrets. I hated hard work.

In comparison, my job as a laboratory assistant at my old school seemed like a holiday. But I now found that I had lost all interest in science. I had written three acts of an immensely long play, designed as a sequel to Shaw's *Man and Superman*, and was convinced that I could make a living as a writer. I had my first short story published at about this time — it was in a factory magazine printed in Yorkshire. An uncle who worked in Durham had submitted the story for me, and the editor had written saying he thought I had talent, and would be glad to receive further contributions. The magazine collapsed about a month later, but by then I had conceived and begun to write another half-dozen short stories and some one-act plays. I wrote a long dialogue, set in the Temple at Jerusalem, between Jesus (aged sixteen) and a member of the Sanhedrin, putting my own arguments into Jesus's mouth, and the views of the priests with whom I had talked into the old man's. (I left this lengthy play on a bus shortly after I had finished it and never recovered it.)

I was causing an increasing dissatisfaction among the science masters at school. I spent most of my 'study time' in the library, writing plays and short stories, and most of my physics and maths lectures reading *The Pickwick Papers* under the desk. It is a sign of the patience and amiability of the headmaster that no one called me to account until the yearly exams made it impossible to ignore my complete loss of interest in science. Even then, I was exhorted to mend my ways, and told that I could stay on conditionally. I explained that I wanted to be a writer. They sympathetically paid me two months' wages and sacked me.

It would be untrue if I gave the impression that my term as a laboratory assistant was a period of peace and relaxation. I found too much leisure more of a nuisance than too little, and suffered agonies of boredom. I had a standing feud with one of the masters, who was adept at inflicting petty indignities and irritated me intensely. I frequently took days off, alleging illness, and spent them cycling out to Warwick or Matlock or Nottingham to work off my surplus energies. The periods of depression came more frequently and lasted longer. I had begun to keep a journal, inspired by some B.B.C. programme about Marie Bashkirtseff. Now I filled page after page every evening with expressions of my boredom and frustration, analyses of the books I had read (I had begun to read Ibsen, Pirandello and Joyce; I hated *Ulysses*) and diatribes against the people I disliked. Once, when an English master had been scathing about an essay I had written denouncing the concept of Shakespearian tragedy, I covered twenty pages of the journal before my indignation had subsided enough to allow me to sleep. I wrote the journal with the idea of ultimate publication, as I had no doubt that every word I had ever written would one day be of interest to students. I filled ten large-sized notebooks in just over a year, and then one day destroyed them all in a fit of disgust. I also had innumerable short stories and plays rejected by publishers, and finally stopped sending them out, finding that the remote possibility that they might be accepted scarcely justified the depression which I underwent each time they were returned. The underlying feeling of futility was still my major problem. My one-act plays were comedies, and most of the short stories owed their style to *The Pickwick Papers*, and I disliked myself for writing such stuff. Occasional attempts to write like Poe made me feel worse. I wrote with a sense of obsession, hating the medium. I also knew most of T. S. Eliot's poetry by heart now, but it had no notable influence on my style.

The worst insight came during the long Easter holiday of 1948. I had been reading far too much — out of boredom — and spent a whole day reading Janko Lavrin's little book on Russian literature. It is not very cheerful reading, with its descriptions of the stories of Chekhov, Saltykov's *Golovlyov Family*, Goncharov's *Oblomov*. I went into the kitchen to switch on the stove to make tea, and had a blackout. It was a strange sensation. I stood there, fully conscious, clutching the stove to keep upright, and yet conscious of nothing but blackness. There was an electric sensation in my brain, so that I could readily have believed that I had been given an electric shock. It was as if something was flowing through me, and I had an insight of what lay on the other side of consciousness. It looked like an eternity of pain. When my vision cleared, I switched on the kettle and went into the other

room. I could not be certain what I had seen, but I was afraid of it. It seemed as if I were the bed of a river, and the current was all pain. I thought I had seen the final truth *that life does not lead to anything*; it is *an escape from something*, and the ‘something’ is a horror that lies on the other side of consciousness. I could understand what Kurtz had seen in *Heart of Darkness*. All the metaphysical doubts of years seemed to gather to a point, in one realisation: What *use* is such truth? Later in the day, I went out cycling; there seemed to be a supreme irony in every manifestation of life that I saw. Eliot’s lines from *The Waste Land* ran in my head:

On Margate sands.  
I can connect  
Nothing with nothing.  
The broken fingernails of dirty hands. . .<sup>6</sup>

Later, I wrote about it in my journal, with a sense that the futility had now come its full circle; for until then, writing in my journal had been the one action that did not seem futile; now I was recording my certainty of the futility of *everything*. And yet I recorded it with a compulsive sense that everything should be told.

I think I recognised how far the source of these periods of exhaustion was physical. It seemed a further reason for nihilistic unbelief. All things depended upon mere physical energy. Therefore, there was no will.

I had seen the word ‘nihilism’ somewhere, and asked the English master at school what it meant. ‘Belief in nothing,’ he told me, and at once I thought I had found a name for my own state of mind. It was not just *lack* of belief in *anything* — it was active *belief in Nothing*. I cannot now understand the significance that that word ‘Nothing’ carried for me then. I remember, though, how I discovered the *Tao Te Ching* in a compilation called *The Bible of the World*, and read:

There is a thing inherent and natural,  
Which existed before heaven and earth.  
Motionless and fathomless,  
It stands alone and never changes;  
It pervades everywhere and never becomes exhausted.  
It may be regarded as the Mother of the Universe I do not know its name.  
If I am forced to give it a name,  
I call it Tao, and I name it Supreme.  
Supreme means going on;  
Going on means going far;  
Going far means returning.

Therefore Tao is supreme; heaven is supreme; earth is supreme; and man is also supreme. There are in the universe four things supreme, and man is one of them.<sup>7</sup>

I was certain that ‘Tao’ was my positive principle of Nothingness. The line ‘Going far means returning’ I took to mean a recognition that all thought chases its own tail: *vanitas vanitatum*. As to the last section, with its ‘Man is supreme,’ my already Swiftian views on the stupidity and futility of human beings led me to decide that ‘Man’ was a mistranslation for ‘I’; that, in fact, Lao-tse was merely expressing his inability to escape complete solipsism. I could not (and still do not) accept the view that Taoism is a humanism.

My solipsism I had arrived at by reading of Berkeley and Hume in some textbook of philosophy. I remember explaining to a group of friends in the playground at school why a bar of chocolate existed only in their own minds. Berkeley, added to Einstein and Eliot’s *Hollow Men*, made a vertiginous mixture.

Then, quite suddenly, my ‘nihilism’ received a check. A day came when I seriously contemplated suicide. It was during the long, hot summer of 1947, when I was working as a laboratory assistant. I

<sup>6</sup> Eliot, T. S.: *Collected Poems* (London, Faber, 1936; New York, Harcourt, 1936)

<sup>7</sup> *The Bible of the World*, ed. Robert O. Ballou (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1940; New York, Viking, 1939)

arrived home one evening in a state of nervous exhaustion, and tried to 'write away' my tension in my journal. I found writing simply an aid to reflection, a crutch for my thoughts. And after about an hour of writing, I found my resistance slowly returning. I thought clearly: This must cease immediately; *I will not go on living like this*. I was all too familiar with these revivals of strength that was sucked away again the next day. Then I saw the answer: Kill myself.

It cheered me immensely. I cycled to my evening classes with a feeling of having at last learned to master my destiny. I arrived late, and listened to the professor's sarcasms without interest. It was our evening for analytical chemistry practice. A glass tray contained a mixture of powders which we had to separate. I took some in my watch glass, sniffed it, tested it in a Bunsen flame, and then went into the other room to the reagent shelves. Glass bottles contained cobalt chloride, silver nitrate, potassium iodide and various acids. In the middle there was a bottle of hydrocyanic acid. As I took it down, my mind made a leap, and for an instant I was living in the future, with a burning in my throat and in the pit of my stomach. In that moment, I was suddenly supremely aware that what I wanted was not less life, but more. The sensation of drinking the acid was so clear that it was almost as if it had actually taken place. I stood there for a second with the bottle in my hand, but the experience was so vivid that it seemed to last for hours. Then, as someone stood beside me, I put it back, vaguely, as if I had taken it by mistake, and reached down for the methyl red. In one second, I had seen something that I have striven to see all my life since.

My insight that evening did not last for long, perhaps because I was too anxious to cling to it. I remember the feeling of having been suddenly awakened to the possibilities of my own will power, and the dreamlike quality of the rest of the evening. And when I got home, I did not try to write about it. For the first time, I had a sense of something too real to write about. Later, when I came to analyse the experience in my journal, I recognised it as one of many such experiences which I had had, differing only in degree. I did not discover Hermann Hesse until six years later; I am certain that if I had, *Steppenwolf* would have become the bible of my teens. Hesse recognises these fluctuations of insight as being the very stuff of the artist's life. At any time in my adolescence, asked what is the final goal of life, I would have replied without hesitation: Insight. Later deliberations have made me less certain.

My year as a civil servant was the dreariest I had yet known. In my journal, I wrote that the chief qualification for a tax collector is an ability to simulate work. I hated pretending to file Schedule A forms that did not need filing. I envied Shaw when I read in Hesketh Pearson's biography that he had been so efficient as an office boy that his employers had refused to accept his resignation. I was frankly incompetent and outspoken about my dislike of the job. I took half a dozen books to the office every day and read them when I had finished filing. In slack periods I slipped out to the local library and stayed there for hours at a time. I was an appallingly bad office boy. The head of the office was a pleasant, middle-aged Londoner; when he had nothing to do he asked me into his office, and 'talked philosophy' — which meant that he told me long, rambling stories about his life to illustrate his own incorrigibly optimistic point of view. Whenever I had to be reprimanded for some oversight or piece of incompetence — which was pretty frequently — he delegated the job to his second-in-command (a good-tempered Scot, who also took a lenient view of my inefficiency). After six months in the Inland Revenue office, I took the examination for establishment in the Civil Service. I can still remember my despair when I received the letter congratulating me on having passed. I celebrated my establishment by writing a long, pessimistic story about the end of the world; I produced it in a single eight-hour sitting one Saturday afternoon. No one ever liked the story, and I destroyed it later. It was distinctly indebted to Wells's *The Star*.

The only occurrence of importance in my year as a civil servant was my definite abandonment of Dickens as a master of style. One day, in a state of boredom and disgust, I began a story in the 'stream of consciousness' style and found that it expressed my emotions so well that from then on I experimented with it continually.

I had always detested the idea of National Service, but my period in the R.A.F. came as a relief. The first eight weeks of square-bashing were so hectic that I had no time to think, and my mental faculties enjoyed the vacation. This was followed by a tedious month spent in a Birmingham training

camp, where I had little to do except learn to be a Clerk, General Duties. I had not chosen it myself — the clerking job — and I resented it. Finally, I was posted to a station near Nottingham, and given a little office all to myself, where I was as bored as I had been in the tax office. One day, in a state of wild irritation, I was thoroughly rude to the adjutant, who, instead of sending for the guard, asked me sympathetically why I disliked office work so much. He hoped to get me transferred to some medical unit where I might exercise my incompetence among malingerers who were hoping to escape parades. He had been unlucky in having had a series of inefficient clerks whose oversights had brought unending complaints from G.H.Q., and hoped to exchange me for better or worse. Somehow, he overshot his mark, and a month later I found myself on my way home with my discharge papers. The whole story is unprintable. I left the R.A.F. with a delighted recognition that one's salvation can lie in proceeding to extremes of indiscretion and ignoring the possible consequences. It was the first time I had had a chance of putting Mr. Polly's advice into practice, and it had worked.

The sheer joy of walking out of the R.A.F. gave me a great sense of emotional release. I determined that I would never go back into an office. I sent in my resignation to the Civil Service, and received a long letter pointing out the gravity of what I was doing, and asking me to reconsider it. I stayed at home for a month until my discharge pay ran out, and then left home with a haversack and hitchhiked north. I had intended to find work, but found myself so reluctant to begin that I delayed until the last of my money was spent. Then I hitchhiked home again. In my fortnight's wanderings I had approached a dozen or so theatres with the idea of training to act in repertory. Luckily, no one had any time for me. At home I worked for a fortnight on a building site, and then set out again, this time travelling southward. I wanted to spend a night at Stonehenge — for no particular reason — and then head for Southampton, where I hoped I might be able to get a boat to India. Two R.A.F. policemen saw me emerging from a haystack wearing a grubby R.A.F. uniform (without shoulder flashes) and arrested me. I explained that I was not a deserter, but I had no discharge papers and they didn't believe me. I was sent home again.

I took a number of jobs in quick succession. I worked on a fairground, selling tickets for a gambling machine. I met a girl with whom I carried on an affair for the rest of the year. It was my first sexual experience, and it contributed to the tremendously optimistic state of mind that I experienced all that year. I took a building job that involved wheeling a thousand barrow loads of concrete a day up an inclined plank and along a trench to a half-finished building. After a week I handed in my notice and took a job in some government scheme for training farm labourers. For the rest of that summer, I worked on various farms in Leicestershire, learning to milk cows — electrically and by hand — make hay, shovel cow dung into barrows, harness and unharness horses, and dislike the English countryside intensely. Luckily, my dislike did not survive my period as a farm hand.

I had ceased to read Eliot; I even gave away all his works, alleging that he was 'morbid' and 'anti-life.' Instead, I carried Synge around with me, and read Herrick, Rabelais, Boccaccio, Blake — and, of course, Shaw. I preferred Joyce's Buck Mulligan to Stephen Dedalus. My interest in comparative religion also developed, and I read Buddhist and Hindu texts for the first time. My first reading of the *Bhagavad-Gita* was so important to me that I had my copy bound in leather and carried it around with me wherever I went. The idea of entering a monastery also became increasingly attractive. Not necessarily a Christian monastery — I did not count myself a Christian, in the sense of believing in redemption by Christ, Rather, the monastery symbolised serenity and time for meditation. Yeats's 'storm-beaten old watch-tower' would have done as well. My most acute problem, I felt, was to discover a means of escaping work, escaping the complications of having to find food and drink and a change of clothes. I started instruction in Catholicism, feeling that to become a Catholic would be the first step toward a monastery. But what I read of the strenuous life in monasteries discouraged me. My final disqualification, of course, was my failure to see any need for Christ. The need for God I could understand, and the need for a religion; I could even sympathise with devotees like Suso or St. Francis, who wove fantasies around the cross, the nails, and all the other traditional symbols. But ultimately I could not accept the need for redemption

by a Saviour. To pin down the idea of salvation to one point in space and time seemed a naive kind of anthropomorphism, like portraying Lao-tse's Unchanging with a beard and white hair.

The solution seemed simpler. As an adolescent, I had been puzzled and made wretched by a feeling that sudden moods of vision and insight — what Wordsworth calls 'the glory and the freshness of a dream' — could not be retained or recalled at will. The Buddhist and Hindu scriptures prescribed simple disciplines for retaining them. It was a short step from there to deciding that most men lead such dull and second-rate lives because the concept of a spiritual and intellectual discipline is so foreign to them. Even the men who talk about the need for discipline never practice it; at any rate, this was what I felt at the time.

By the time I had been back in civilian life for six months, I had begun to see my personal problems more clearly. Previously, my chief enemy had been boredom. I thought I had found an answer when I left the R.A.F. Hitchhiking into London from Wendover one day, lines from Rupert Brooke running in my head:

Thank God, that's done! and I'll take the road,  
 Quit of my youth and you,  
 The Roman road to Wendover  
 By Tring and Lilley Hoo,  
 As a free man may do. . .<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Brooke, Rupert: *Collected Poems, with a Memoir* (London, Sidgwick & Jackson, 1929; New York, Dodd, Mead, 1930, under the title *Collected Poems*)

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