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EDITORIAL

FROM the days of Thales it has been a common taunt against philosophy that it is a form of star-gazing without relation to earthly things. Yet it would be strange if the study which Plato defined as "the contemplation of all time and existence" had nothing to say of that portion of time and existence that is passing before our eyes. As a matter of fact the revolutionary changes that are going on and taking different forms about us are each proclaimed in the name of a philosophy of life—a theory of what makes life worth living, and of the means to attain it. If, moreover, the main issue that is being fought out in the politics of nations at the present moment is that of democracy *versus* one or other form of dictatorship, the relation between it and the main issue of philosophy leaps to the eyes.

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From the days when Parmenides declared that all things are one and the heart of the world at peace, Heraclitus that things are many and that war is the father of them all, the problem of philosophy has been to see how these two elements in things can be united, how the unity and order of the whole can be made compatible with the freedom of the parts, permanence and stability with the freshness of new creation. Have unity and peace their principle in the depths of human life itself because it partakes of the wider harmonies of Nature at large whose child it is? Or have they for ever to be enforced from without? There were those who saw in the Great War just the struggle between these two principles. On the one hand was a new Heracliteanism whose chief prophet was Nietzsche. Pitted against it was a new Parmenideanism of an innate

reasonableness in men strong enough in the end to permeate and take the sting out of their differences: all that was needed was that the world should be free from the menace of force in order to give reason scope to operate. On the one hand, as Lord Sankey put it the other day, belief in *one* man (or one class), on the other hand, belief in *man*. What has changed all this and clouded this great hope?

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It would take more than a few editorial paragraphs to tell the whole story, if it could ever be told at all. But one or two things stand clearly out. What has been called "the art of living together," as the highest and more difficult of all the arts, requires, as they do, long preparation. It is the child of a long tradition and of self-discipline in peoples. It cannot be acquired by any one at a moment's notice. In the second place, for a century now the question has been no longer merely a political one. Men have found that political freedom is bound up with economic. Besides the domination by individuals or classes, there was the domination by industrial circumstances and by the power that control of them gives. Yet this too might yield to reason; and the turn of the century seemed to open a way of extending the reign of reason and conscience over the abuses of industry by the establishment of social services and safeguards against the appeal to naked force. Into this prospect of orderly progress broke the War. One might have thought that it would have taught on a large scale the futility of force. So to some extent it did. It awakened a new sense of the solidarity of mankind and of reason as the only way. Unfortunately the lesson was little more than skin deep. Force was relied upon for the maintenance of peace. The belief in it was scotched but not killed. The War itself had even accustomed men to the idea of it as a means of getting their ends, and when the political and economic hopes the War had stimulated were delayed the idea recurred.

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It is unprofitable to ask Who began it? Whoever did forgot that force begets force, and can in the end beget nothing else, and now the appeal to it is spreading like a conflagration from nation to nation on the Continent. Whether the flames will be allowed to leap the Channel depends on the wisdom and firmness of our Government. Meantime philosophers may see in these revolutions something that goes far deeper than a conflict between parties. It is the conflict which Whitehead has described in his great book *Adventures of Ideas*, as that between Force and Persuasion. If, as he say, "The creation of the world, that is to say the world of civilized order, is the victory of persuasion over force," then it is no less than the

existence of that world that is at stake. Are what the same writer calls the "gentler modes of human relation" and the "inherent persuasiveness of ideas" *alias* "the divine persuasion," which religion calls Grace, to be allowed to continue their creative work, or are we to be doomed to the stagnancy and stale repetition which is all that a dictated culture can offer to our afflicted hearts? Let us not deceive ourselves by specious arguments which strive to make the worse appear the better cause. The truth that the recurrence of force, however unavoidable, is the disclosure of the failure of civilization, confronts us in its austere simplicity and shatters all such sophistries.