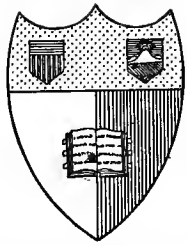
WHITMAN AND TRAUBEL

WILLIAM ENGLISH WALLING



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FOREWORD

DOES the spirit of Walt Whitman live in any of the writers to-day? Has he a successor? Is that successor his biographer and literary executor, Horace Traubel?

This question is being answered in the affirmative by a rapidly growing number of persons. And those who have become interested in Traubel feel quite as strong an admiration for his work as they do for that of Whitman. Let me quote a typical opinion, that of Eugene V. Debs:

Horace Traubel has the distinctest personality of any man of letters now before the American people. He can be likened to no other author or writer, living or dead. Although a loyal disciple and devotee of Walt Whitman, from whom he undoubtedly caught his earliest and deepest inspiration, he goes far beyond his revered master. He not only brings the old Prophet of Democracy up to date but he traverses untrodden fields and explores new realms in quest of the truth.

Horace Traubel has the clear vision of a prophet, the analytical mind of a philosopher, the daring imagination of a poet, the heroic soul of a martyr, and the unpolluted heart of a child.

WHITMAN AND TRAUBEL

Horace Traubel's work has only recently begun to take book form. Soon after Walt Whitman's death, Traubel, acting as Whitman's literary legatee, began his remarkable biographical study, "Walt Whitman in Camden," but the first volume was not published until 1906, and only three of the volumes out of a probable eight have been issued. For twenty-five years, as editor of *The Conservator,* he has developed Whitman's literary and social ideals, besides engaging in other literary and journalistic activity. But his first prose book, "Chants Communal," was published in 1904, and his "Optimos," which brought together the best of his poems, appeared only in 1911, and selections from his "Collects" in 1914. The larger part of his writings, and some of his best work, is still to be found only in the monthly *Conservator,* which he has now published for twenty-five years. It contains not only those poems that have appeared since the publication of "Optimos," but nearly all of his prose work. In every month's issue besides the "Collect," there are several book reviews, and these are among the most original, sympathetic, and profound of Traubel's writings—among the most remarkable series of book reviews ever published in the English language. The larger part of my quotations are taken from "Collects" and book reviews, and uncollected poems.

An adequate appreciation of Traubel demands

that the value of the work of Whitman should be brought before the reader's mind, that his genius should be characterized and his limitations pointed out. In discussing Whitman I believe I have avoided covering old ground and have adopted a new standpoint. I have sought not to criticize his poetry but to appreciate his philosophy. In performing this task I have made use of a new source, "With Walt Whitman in Camden," and have had the invaluable assistance of the author of that work —which is probably the most remarkable and valuable human document since Boswell's Johnson.

WHITMAN AND TRAUBEL

I

THE POET OF DEMOCRACY

WALT WHITMAN is now recognized as one of the greatest poets of all time. To the testimony of his contemporaries, such as Emerson, Tennyson, Rossetti, and Symonds, has been added that of the majority of later poets and critics.

Whitman is appreciated chiefly as the world's foremost poet of democracy. He contended from first to last that democracy, the masses of men, were his inspiration—that everything else, no matter how deeply felt, was secondary to that. Of late, however, his fame as the poet of democracy is in danger of being eclipsed, to some degree, by his fame as a lyric poet. His exaggerations, his deficiencies, and his crudities are all attributed to his democracy, while his marvelous poetic powers are supposed to arise directly out of the genius shared with other poets untouched by democracy. He is meeting the fate of Tolstoi, William Morris and many others whose social radicalism does not interest the merely aesthetic part of the public. The

vision, the inspiration, and the message of all these writers are supposed to be separable from their art. They were great, we are told, in spite of their ideas.

Yet Whitman's poetry and Whitman's democracy are inseparable. There was no Whitman outside of this, his great life principle. He insists upon this himself on every page. And if we follow his life and his writings carefully we find that his own interpretation is the right one.

In 1855 and 1856, within a year after the publication of his great work, "Leaves of Grass," Whitman wrote three brief notices of his own significance as a poet. [They were published in the volume, "In Re Walt Whitman," which appeared in 1893, immediately after his death.] These ideas are the same as those spread throughout his poetry and prose. He describes himself (in the third person) as "no dilettante democrat—a man who is part and parcel with the commonalty, and with immediate life."

"If health were not his distinguishing attribute this poet would be the very harlot of persons. Right and left he flings his arms, drawing men and women with undeniable love to his close embrace, loving the clasp of their hands, the touch of their necks and breasts, and the sound of their voices. All else seems to burn up under his fierce affection for persons. Politics, religions, institutions, art, quickly fall aside before them."

He pursues his self-description by means of a contrast between his own democratic manner of life and its opposite, the aristocratic manner:

"A person who does not associate with literary people—a man never called upon to make speeches at public dinners—never on platforms amid the crowds of clergymen, or professors, or aldermen, or congressmen—rather down on the bay with pilots in their pilot boat—or off on a cruise with fishers in their fishing-smack—or riding on a Broadway omnibus side by side with the driver—or with a band of loungers over the open ground of the country—fond of Brooklyn and New York." As Whitman by this time had already made a place for himself as editor of the *Brooklyn Eagle,* these democratic preferences were a matter of deliberate choice, not of necessity. He proceeds:

"No breath of Europe, or her monarchies, or priestly conventions, or her notion of gentlemen and ladies, founded on the idea of caste, seems ever to have fanned his face or been inhaled into his lungs." And he includes as "genteel persons" all who would make any claim whatever in that direction, the "college-learned," those "used to be served by servants," etc.

The importance of democracy to Whitman is that it must first be lived before it can be written about, and that the largest life can arise only out of the largest association with people.

A poet, like Tennyson, who has lived an aristocratic life, he contends, can only write from that pitifully narrow and false viewpoint:

"The spirit of the burnished society of upper-class England fills this writer (Tennyson) and his effusions from top to toe. . . . He meets the nobility and gentry half-way. The models are the same both to the poet and the parlors. Both have the same supercilious elegance, both love the reminiscences which extol caste, both agree on the topics proper for mention and discussion, both hold the same undertone of church and state."

Against the aristocratic note, which, as he points out, has prevailed to a greater or less degree in all previous poetry, Whitman proposes democracy:

"Other poets celebrate great events, personages, romances, wars, loves, passions, the victories and power of their country, or some real or imagined incident—and polish their work and come to conclusions, and satisfy the reader. This poet celebrates natural propensities in himself; and that is the way he celebrates all. He comes to no conclusions, and does not satisfy the reader."

But, while Whitman comes to no conclusions, and denies any "special" purpose, his work is purposeful to the last degree. His poetry, as he says, "eludes and mocks criticism" because its purpose appears exclusively in its "results."

"Every sentence and every passage tells of an

interior not always seen, and exudes an impalpable something that sticks to him that reads, and pervades and provokes him to tread *the half-invisible road* where the poet, like an apparition, is striding fearlessly before." [My italics.]

Whitman is not merely singing, then. He has a message at every moment of his song. As he so frequently says, he is a prophet or bard and wants to move the reader to action, and to life of a definite kind—democratic life.

"If Walt Whitman's premises are true, then there is a subtler range of poetry than that of the grandeur of acts and events, as in Homer, or of characters, as in Shakespeare—poetry to which all other writing is subservient, and which confronts the very meanings of the works of nature and competes with them. It is the direct bringing of occurrences and persons and things to bear on the listener or beholder, to *reappear* through him or her." [My italics.]

Thus Whitman is not satisfied, like previous poets, to write of characters, actions, and events. He wishes directly to create characters and to stir to action. In a word, he preaches, but he does not preach mere morality; as he says, he "animates to life itself."

When we turn to "Leaves of Grass" or the prose writings, we find that this description of Whitman by himself is the true one; that it was his demo-

cratic life and democratic view of the poet's function that shaped all his work.

The leading note in all his writings is his exaltation of the individual (everyman). The following is, perhaps, the most illuminating passage on this point:

And nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's self is. . . .
And I say to any man or woman, Let your soul stand cool and composed before a million universes. . . .
I hear and behold God in every object, yet understand God not in the least,
Nor do I understand who there can be more wonderful than myself.

The individual is both the beginning and the end of all Whitman's writing and all his thought. He solves the central problem of philosophy by refusing to regard either religion, spirituality, or materialism as basic—as when he says (in the "Song of the Open Road") that *all religion and all solid things* must fall away before *individuals.* The same thought is continued in the "Song for Occupations":

We consider bibles and religions divine—I do not say they are not divine,
I say they have all grown out of you, and may grow out of you still,
It is not they who give the life, it is you who give the life. . . .

List close my scholars dear,
Doctrines, politics and civilization exurge from you.

He recognizes that the material aspect of life is of equal importance with the spiritual:

Behold, the body includes and is the meaning, the main concern, and includes and is the soul:
Whoever you are, how superb and how divine is your body, or any part of it!

And again:

I accept Reality and dare not question it,
Materialism first and last imbuing.

Whitman often uses the expressions of religion; but his deep sympathy with the leading agnostic of his country and his time, Robert G. Ingersoll, shows that he used such expressions with a poet's license and not at all in their ordinary meaning. There were few persons he admired more than he did Ingersoll, as may be seen from the following reference from "Walt Whitman in Camden" (Vol. III, p. 497):

"The main thing is that he has done his divinely appointed job: O the dear wonderful man! He was sent by high heaven to save the race and he has done it."

"But God? God? Well, there are *other* divinities: they are not of the hell and damnation sort: they are not of the legs and arms sort—the personal sort: they yet remain, more firmly on their throne, in the race, than ever: they continue their supremacy. Bob (Ingersoll) does not intellectually account for them: He has them in his heart: they are one part of his noble protest—whether he knows it or not." [My italics.]

It is difficult to believe that Ingersoll himself would have objected to "divinities other than God."

All that is *merely* spiritual, ideal, or intellectual, Whitman rejects because it is not sufficiently human, does not represent the whole man.

In many passages this thought of the all-importance of *the whole man* recurs. Undoubtedly the following—which we can never read too often—is the best:

When the psalm sings instead of the singer,
When the script preaches instead of the preacher,
When the pulpit descends and goes instead of the carver that carved the supporting desk,
When I can touch the body of books by night or by day, and when they touch my body back again,
When a university course convinces like a slumbering woman and child convince,
When the minted gold in the vault smiles like the night-watchman's daughter,

When warrantee deeds loafe in chairs opposite and
are my friendly companions,
I intend to reach them my hand, and make as much
of them as I do of men and women like you.[1]

It is in this exaltation of life itself, of sheer personality, as against everything that limits or restricts it, that Whitman develops his well-known poetic power and that abandon which confounds all merely rational analysis.

We can see this thought at its best, and in a condensed form, in Whitman's description of the poet:

He is no arguer, he is judgment (Nature accepts him
absolutely),
He judges not as the judge judges but as the sun
falling round a helpless thing,
As he sees the farthest he has the most faith,
His thoughts are the hymns of the praise of things. . . .
He sees eternity in men and women, he does not
see men and women as dreams or dots.[2]

It is unnecessary to dwell either upon the poetry or upon the democracy of such passages as these. But Whitman is more than a mere idealist of democracy—he is a militant partizan. His revolutionary spirit is shown, both in his poems and in some of his conversations with Traubel just before his death, to have proceeded very much further than the general public realizes. Could any rational revo-

lutionist go farther than Whitman did in his message "To the States":

To the States or any one of them, or any city of the States, *Resist much, obey little,*
Once unquestioning obedience, once fully enslaved,
Once fully enslaved, no nation, state, city of this earth, ever afterward resumes its liberty. (Whitman's italics.)

Not only was Whitman a rebel but he was a militant rebel and believed in fighting. Of course he was opposed to war, but the Civil War, being directed against slavery, was to him a righteous war, though he is filled with sympathy rather than hatred towards that South with which he was engaged in a life and death struggle.

Slavery—the murderous, treacherous conspiracy to raise it upon the ruins of all the rest,
On and on to the grapple with it—Assassin! then your life or ours be the stake, and respite no more.

(Lo, high toward heaven, this day,
Libertad, from the conqueress' field return'd,
I mark the new aureola around your head,
No more of soft stral, but dazzling and fierce,
With war's flames and the lambent lightnings playing,
And your port immovable where you stand,

With still the inextinguishable glance and the clinch'd and lifted fist,
And your foot on the neck of the menacing one, the scorner utterly crush'd beneath you,
The menacing arrogant one that strode and advanced with his senseless scorn, bearing the murderous knife,
The wide-swelling one, the braggart that would yesterday do so much,
To-day a carrion dead and damn'd, the despised of all the earth,
An offal rank, to the dunghill maggots spurn'd.)[3]

That Whitman was a rebel both by temperament and conviction we can see also in his lines in which he pictures the "free city,"

Where the men and women think lightly of the laws,
Where the slave ceases, and the master of slaves ceases,
Where the populace rise at once against the never-ending audacity of elected persons,
Where fierce men and women pour forth as the sea to the whistle of death pours its sweeping and unript waves.[4]

So we find that by opposition to laws Whitman means nothing less than readiness to enter into actual physical combat against them.

All aspects of present civilization, since all are

connected, necessarily come under the criticism of the revolutionist. So Whitman demands that the individual shall examine each and every part of the culture that is handed down to him and be ready to reject it all:

Are you not of some coterie? some school or mere religion?
Are you done with reviews and criticisms of life? animating now to life itself? . . .
Has it not dangled long at the heels of the poets, politicians, literats, of enemies' lands?
Does it not assume that what is notoriously gone is still here? [5]

His conception of liberty, and still more his conception of equality, prove that his democracy is absolute. Consider only his exclamation: "By God! I will accept nothing which all cannot have their counterpart of on the same terms" ("Song of Myself"). A large part of his writing may be regarded as nothing else than an elaboration of this passionate declaration, and any sincere student must admit that in all his work and life he lived up to this principle of social equality.

Perhaps even more fundamental in Whitman's thinking than this insistence upon social equality, is his faith in the *future* of men; the past and the present are not to be allowed to block the way:

What is known I strip away,
I launch all men and women forward with me into the Unknown.[6]

Nearly everybody feels the inspiration of Whitman's poetry. The majority admit the essential soundness and the depth of his democratic message. But many persons now believe that both Whitman and his social philosophy were limited by time and place. They feel that he was an extremist in his Americanism and that he grasped and appealed to the people of his time rather than to our generation.

We shall examine the measure of truth contained in this view in the following chapter. The present book has been written because of the belief that if Whitman's message is to have its *full* effect, it must indeed be re-stated over and over again—as Whitman himself proclaimed.

But before we try to pass beyond the farthest point reached by Whitman, before we enquire if any one has successfully attempted to develop his thought and enlarge the world he gave us, we must be sure that we do full justice to his work. And many of the conversations written down by Traubel show that he was not only far from being provincially American, but that he was equally far from ignoring the new civilization that was just foreshadowing itself in his later days and is only now becoming a practical certainty of the not distant future.

Whitman's Americanism exalted the United States chiefly because it was a great free space belonging to the whole world, where democracy could and would be most easily and quickly developed. In this great field neither Americans nor American traditions were to be preferred. They must take an even chance with the immigrants and their civilizations so far as these were suited to survive under the free and democratic conditions of humanity's newest area of development.

When one of his visitors—in 1888, the date of the "Traubel Memoirs"—proposed that immigration should be restricted Whitman made this vigorous protest:

> In that narrow sense I am no American—count me out. Restrict nothing—keep everything open: to Italy, to China, to anybody. I love America, I believe in America, because her belly can hold and digest all—anarchist, socialist, peacemakers, fighters, disturbers or degenerates of whatever sort—hold and digest all. If I felt that America could not do this I would be indifferent as between our institutions and any others. America is not all in all—the sum total: she is only to contribute her contribution to the big scheme.[7]

No thought occurs more frequently in Whitman's conversations during the period recorded by Traubel (in "Walt Whitman in Camden") than this:

America is for one thing only—and if not for that for what? America must welcome all—Chinese, Irish, German, pauper or not, criminal or not.[8]

Both Whitman's democracy and his Americanism—and to him they were one and the same thing—led him to a standpoint that embraced the whole world and all humanity. "Real democracy," he declared, meant "a world democracy" (Vol. II, p. 317) and he asked "Can any sound man believe in a patriotism that means 'America alone?'" (Vol. III, p. 160.) Here is another passage where the same thought occurs:

No man is a democrat, a true democrat, who forgets that he is interested in the welfare of the race. Who asks only, what is best for America? instead of what is best for man—the whole of man? Is a man a citizen of Camden only? No—no, indeed. And if not of Camden, not of New Jersey, nor even of America. No—no—no—no: a man is no democrat if he takes the narrow in preference to the broad view. He may talk of democracy, of the people, but it's all a lie—all false—nothing but nuts crackling under a pot.[9]

Not only was Whitman thoroughly international in his outlook, but as a democrat he felt that the peoples could be relied upon to bring about a world federation, and that there were already premonitory symptoms of a "general, divine war," which would

overthrow the tyrannies that stand in the way of this great consummation. In his poem, "Years of the Modern," he asks:

What whispers are these, O lands, running ahead of you, passing under the seas?
Are all nations communing? Is there going to be but one heart to the globe?
Is humanity forming en masse? for lo, tyrants tremble, crowns grow dim;
The earth, restive, confronts a new era, perhaps a general divine war. . . .
The perform'd America and Europe grow dim, retiring in shadow behind me,
The unperform'd more gigantic than ever, advance, advance upon me.

In his internationalism Whitman was both practical and uncompromising. For example, he had no feeling against the Negroes. He believed they would be eliminated like the Indians, and that their blood would become mingled with that of the whites. In these views he faced what he considered to be the truth entirely aside from his personal feeling about it. For he was an ardent admirer of mixed breeds. He describes and lauds the "creoles" of New Orleans, and then concludes:

I have considered the problem from all sides. It is wonderful the readiness with which French and

Negro, or Spanish and Negro, will marry—interlock—and the results are always good. It is the same with the Injun and Nigger—they too will ask no questions: they, too, achieve equally fine reproductivities.[10]

So we see that Whitman's internationalism was, indeed, universal. But it was also practical. He realized that if the nations continued to build up artificial barriers hostility would result, while free intercourse would lead inevitably towards a world-state. So he rejected national egoism or nationalism absolutely. Traubel records him as follows:

"I am for free trade—absolute free trade: for the federation of the world. . . ."

"But isn't it our first duty to take care of ourselves—our America?" "Yes—that's right," replied W.: "Take care of your family, your state, your nation—that's right from a certain standpoint: some people seem ordained to care for one man, for a dozen men, for a single nation: and some other people—of whom I hope I am one—to care for them all. All sounds so damned much better than one—don't you think? The whole business done at once instead of a little patch of it here and there! I don't want the brotherhood of the world to be so long a-coming. I can wait till it comes—it is sure to come—but if I can hurry it by a day or so I am going to do so." [11]

It is true that Whitman bases his international

conception of Americanism largely on the existence—at least in his days—of an empire of unoccupied land in this country (Vol. II, p. 34). But we cannot doubt that his internationalism had far deeper roots than this. If he had lived to reach our conclusion that the world cannot go on indefinitely making small farmers out of its surplus population, there is no ground whatever to suppose that he would have deserted his democracy or his internationalism on this account, and there is some very definite evidence for believing that his economic and social ideas would have become more radical and more Socialistic, the direction in which they were tending in his later days.

For one part of his creed of Americanism, as we have seen, was that America was destined to do far greater things, to solve far more difficult problems in the future than it had in the past. This is another view that is constantly repeated in his conversations with Traubel:

> America is yet to achieve things of which these men little dream! All the real problems, the fundamentals, are yet ahead of us—will have to be tackled by us or by our children or theirs: not skin-ticklers, like the tariff, but life and death challenges which will line us up fiercely on this side or that.[12]

And Whitman indicated very definitely what the nature of these "real, fundamental problems" was:

Against the things we call successes I see other, counter, tendencies working—an increased indisposition of certain classes to do the honest labor of the world, and the solidification of the money powers against the fraternity of the masses. Either one of these might, both of them are sure, to ruin the republic, if nothing appears to contravene them.

So when Traubel talked Socialism to him he was always to the last degree responsive. Traubel reports:

I said: "Walt, you'll be a revolutionist yet!" He was grave over it. "I have been: haven't I been?" Then he shook his head: "I see a stirring time coming but I won't be in it: but you'll be in it—you're in it already: you'll have to fight big enough for us both: I'll steady your right arm: you'll feel me with you."

Then he added: "I do not forget what you drove so hard at me yesterday—the day before—that what you want I want too: what you youngsters want is what I want too: I never had it driven at me in just that way before, but now that you have done it realize that you are nearer right than I have been in some of my suppositions." [13]

Whitman was fully alive to the existence of the "social problem," though in America it was almost non-existent in his youth, and was only beginning to become important in his old age. He realized that "the gap between the rich and the poor" was "grow-

ing worse and worse" and was fully prepared for a revolutionary solution (Vol. II, p. 282). Indeed he seemed on the very verge of Socialism, though wholly opposed to the idea of a Socialist Party. He explained himself on this last point as follows:

> The labor question was not up then [in Civil War times] as it is now—perhaps that's the reason I did not embrace it. It is getting to be a live question—some day will be the live question—then somebody will have to look out—especially the bodies with big fortunes wrung from the sweat and blood of the poor. That is all so—all of it so. Yet I do not feel as if I belonged to any one party.[14]

At this time (1887) there was no Socialist movement of any moment either in America or England. But even if there had been, we have every reason to believe that Whitman would have refused it his support, however strong might have been his sympathy with its principles. For he was *personally* a fervent individualist: not an organization man, he was opposed to all movements of a partizan character no matter how democratic or popular they might be. This is one of the characteristics in which he differs most profoundly from Traubel. The reason is not far to seek. Nearly everybody in this country claimed to be a radical democrat in those days; and usually with considerable plausibility. Americans who were privileged and regarded themselves

as such were very few in numbers a generation ago; now the outspoken opponents of democracy are numbered by the millions.

Yet we must necessarily take Whitman as he was when he lived, not as he probably would be if he were alive to-day. And, after all, he was not a socialist but an individualist. The nature of his individualism I shall discuss in the following chapter.

II

THE INDIVIDUALIST

WHITMAN believed without qualification in democracy and equal opportunity. In the deepest sense he was a social democrat. But he did not contemplate social solutions for political problems and was even unaware of the existence of a social problem until his later years. His outlook was subject, necessarily, to the limitations of his generation. Moreover, an ultra-sympathetic nature like Whitman's is influenced not only by the conditions and opinions of its time, but still more deeply and subtly by the human types, the characteristics and feelings these conditions had produced. Consequently he was an individualist not only in his politics but even in his feelings and his subconscious self. The people of his time were nearly all individualists of one kind or another; therefore he was the ultra, arch, universal individualist.

Two of the dominant notes of his work sufficiently characterize his social philosophy—his insistence that love and comradeship are the solution of all social problems, and his optimism, which

was so extreme that it apparently excluded the need for any great social change.

He offered us "fervid comradeship" as "the counterbalance and offset of our materialistic and vulgar American democracy" and exposed his meaning fully when he said that this comradeship was to rival in intensity "amative love," that is the attraction between the sexes.

Such a simple and exclusive solution of humanity's problems by the regeneration of the individual precludes all interest in or effective criticism of faulty social arrangements. Whitman attacked existing institutions and culture ceaselessly, but he never reached the conclusion that opinions, feelings, and character of the individual are themselves largely the result of social conditions—and that a universal "fervid comradeship" cannot arise without a revolutionary change in the social system.

And Whitman's optimism reached a point where it threatened to extinguish that "divine discontent" which underlies all progress. We see this in the lines:

And I or you pocketless of a dime may purchase the pick of the earth,
And to glance with an eye or show a bean in its pod confounds the learning of all times,
And there is no trade or employment but the young man following it may become a hero,

And there is no object so soft but it makes a hub for the wheel'd universe.[15] [My italics.]

The lines I have placed in italics clearly preach contentment to the poorer classes. The need of an industrial or social democracy was certainly not fully realized by the individual who held the key to the whole universe on such easy terms as these. We see the same thought again in the lines:

They go! they go! I know that they go, but I know not where they go,
But I know that they go toward the best—toward something great.[16]

If all are headed for the best, if nobody is going in the wrong direction, then why should we trouble ourselves about the future of democracy? In accord with this universal toleration Whitman has a kind word even for the reactionary and anti-democrat. In theory, that is, he will not blame them—though he is ready to have them killed, as his unqualified endorsement of the Civil War (above quoted) demonstrates. Indeed both Whitman's doctrine of universal love and that of universal optimism are largely theoretical. They are deeply and sincerely felt, but we find him tangled up with the current metaphysics of his generation, which he evidently adopted bodily and without any serious

criticism. That is, his social panaceas of love and optimism represent genuine intellectual conclusions and convictions, but they do not disclose his deepest nature, his personality; for they were shared with countless other Americans of his day (and ours) who neither brought any such message as his nor were ready to receive it when it arrived.

Intellectually Whitman seemed to accept even that thoroughly undemocratic doctrine of metaphysical idealism, which was implicit in the American thought of his day, as we see in the following passage:

> The culmination and fruit of literary artistic expression, and its final fields of pleasure for the human soul, are in metaphysics, including the mysteries of the spiritual world, the soul itself, and the question of the immortal continuation of our identity. In all ages, the mind of man has brought up here—and always will. Here, at least, of whatever race or era, we stand on common ground.[17]

This reads to us to-day as if it were written a thousand years ago. In another passage there is a regular summary of the leading abstractions of past ages, the very abstractions which are the center of attack for the democratic philosophy of our time:

> And lo! to the consciousness of the soul, the permanent identity, the thought, the something, before

which the magnitude even of democracy, art, literature, etc., dwindles, becomes partial, measurable—something that fully satisfies (which those do not). That something is the All, and the idea of All, with the accompanying idea of eternity, and of itself, the soul, buoyant, indestructible, sailing space forever, visiting every region, as a ship the sea.[18]

This philosophical Absolutism, this finality, has been found to be the most serviceable of intellectual tools for leading the people away from the infinities of real life, for confusing their minds, for making them satisfied—with abstractions. Nobody has insisted more strongly on the good of material life, on the boundless possibilities of the future on this earth, than did Whitman. He simply failed to see the contrary implications of the current metaphysics—which he had made his own.

We must not leave the impression, however, that Whitman was retrogressive—even in his metaphysics. The really important thing to be noted after all is that his personality is always larger than his ideas—and *nearly* always dominates them. Only a few pages further on from the passage I have just quoted he returns to his thoroughly revolutionary thought—diametrically opposed to all permanence:

For you too (America), as for all lands, the struggle, the traitor, the wily person in office, scrofulous wealth, the surfeit of prosperity, the demonism of

greed, the hell of passion, the decay of faith, the long postponement, the fossil-like lethargy, *the ceaseless need of revolutions,* prophets, thunder-storms, deaths, births, new projections and invigorations of ideas and men.[19] [My italics.]

Similarly, when addressing Christ and other founders of religions, the great Greek writers, Dante, Michael Angelo, Shakespeare, Kant and Hegel, he says:

Ye powerful and resplendent ones! Ye were, in your atmospheres, grown not for America, but rather for her foes, the feudal and the old—while our genius is democratic and modern. Yet could ye, indeed, but breathe your breath of life into our New World's nostrils—not to enslave us, as now, but, for our needs, to breed a spirit like your own—perhaps (dare we to say it?) to dominate, even destroy, what you yourselves have left! On your plane, and no less, but even higher and wider, must we mete and measure for to-day and here. I demand races of orbic bards, with unconditional uncompromising sway. Come forth, sweet democratic despots of the west![20]

It is difficult indeed to escape the impression from this and other passages that Whitman believed that we are on the verge of an entirely new civilization and a new age—far in advance of the America of his day. He stands for outright rebellion, for the

populace "that rise up at once against the never-ending audacity of elected persons," for "the ceaseless need of revolutions, prophets, thunderstorms, birth, death, new projections and invigorations of the ideas of man," and for the destruction of the old culture.

But when we ask what is to be put in the place of the old civilization we find nothing definite, except a sort of an idealization of the America he knew—that of 1840 to 1890. Asked by Traubel whether he saw a way out of our social problem he replied, "I look forward to a world of small owners." Traubel asked him whether a world of no owners at all was not better, and insisted on an answer. At first Whitman said: "I don't know. I haven't thought it out: it *sounds* best: could it *be* best? Could it be made to work?" But he finally admitted: "I have to believe it: if I don't believe that I couldn't believe anything." (Vol. III, p. 315.)

The question at once arises whether Whitman—even in this instance—was not admitting communism only as an *ultimate* society without much practical relation to the immediate future. That this was probably his real feeling is indicated by a statement made a few days later:

"Sometimes, I think, I feel almost sure, Socialism is the next thing coming. I shrink from it in some ways: yet it looks like our only hope."

In a word, Whitman admitted the probability of Socialism, but assumed no positive relation towards it.

How then, did he propose to bring about the great revolution he expected? The means he chooses show that he failed entirely to realize the true nature of the change to come. For he refuses to put his faith in modern popular movements and calls instead for "orbic bards"; in place of the modern "cause," he preaches a modernized revival of Hebrew prophecy.

He is, in fact, almost a hero-worshiper, almost a believer in the great man theory, though the hero with Whitman is a prophet-bard instead of a statesman-soldier. In his future America "the Presidents shall not be the common referees so much as that great race of poets shall" and in preparation for this great function, Whitman's own scope of life, he claims, is "the amplest of any yet in philosophy." Yet, in apparent contradiction, this spiritual autocrat and law-giver is a democrat. "For every atom belonging to me, as good belongs to you."

Here we see into the very heart of Whitman's social philosophy. His rôle as the *prophet* of a new religion of democracy makes him take himself as the standard and the leader. No words can describe his greatness and universality. He contains all characters and experiences in himself. But others are "as good" as he. That is, all are essentially

alike. There are in reality no individuals in Whitman's world, only *the individual.* The only difference between persons is difference in size, as he definitely states. Individuals are all commensurate, larger or smaller, better or worse, and "size is only development," that is, requires nothing but time and opportunity. Essentially all persons have the same potentialities. Their differences arise chiefly from varying experiences. And these experiences are due to the accidents either of geographical location or of employment. Hence the crucial importance ascribed to geography and to occupations in all Whitman's writings. There are really no individuals, there is only Man in his varying occupations. And so Whitman feels the employments, understands them as perhaps no poet or writer ever did before. All human differences—with the exception of general differences in temperament—being traced to occupations, they become the source of the most profound and endless romance.

But the strength of Whitman's social philosophy is also its weakness. As individuals are supposed to be *essentially* alike, human relations are supposed to be essentially alike, and all are reduced to one type. Whatever their occupations, all human beings are, or should be, comrades, and no variation of this relation is of any moment. Even difference of sex is not to sub-divide this type-relation.

It follows that Whitman's concept of social rela-

tions and of society is as simplified and defective as his concept of individuals. Human beings are related two by two. The manifold forms of interdependence of the members of larger social groups and of communities are entirely secondary and must not materially modify the "comrade" relationship. Society—as an organized community—is really non-existent.

And, finally, this romantic interest in occupations leads him frequently into an ultra-conservative position. For he assumes that in America every occupation is as desirable as every other occupation. "Every employment is adorned." This is the essential social philosophy of his life and work. It is on a par with the effort of Carlyle and the Tory democrats to keep the lower classes contented by telling them that all work is honorable—though, of course, Whitman's motives were the very opposite to theirs, and he was led into this radically false view by his intense sociability and the traditional theories of abstract democracy of the small property holders.

To the end of his life he failed to recognize the overwhelming influence of *conditions*. When he said to Traubel: "My leanings are all towards the radicals: but I am not in any proper sense of the word a révolutionnaire. . . . I have always had a latent toleration for people who choose the reactionary course" (Vol. I, p. 193), he expressed his essential position. Individuals, in so far as they

differ fundamentally, are products of their own wills. Temperament and mental idiosyncrasy *and not occupation* decide whether a man is a radical or a reactionary. They both freely "choose" their course, and so (doubtless) the truth lies somewhere between them. This was the general view of Americans in Whitman's time and is the prevailing view even to-day, though obviously it is true only of differences *within* a given social class.

In many passages Whitman returns to this "ideological" social philosophy, as Marx would have called it, the diametrical opposite, that is, of the view that prevails to-day, not only among Socialists, radicals, social reformers, business men and economists, but even among the majority of the population in many countries. Underneath politics, we are told in Traubel's memoirs as well as in Whitman's prose and poetry, are "spiritual" forces; "The spiritual influences back of everything else—subtle, unseen, invisible, mainly discredited—they finally arbitrate the social order. That strange, inarticulate, force is not less operative in the institutions of society—in politics, literature, music, science, art—than in the physical realm." (Vol. II, p. 84.)

Yet one of the main currents in Whitman's thought, as we see even in the context from which the above quotation is taken, is his recognition of the importance of the material world. How are we to account for this seeming contradiction? Whit-

man often recognized fully the importance of the physiological side to the individual—but he usually gave a preferred position to the psychological—and only rarely did he harmonize the two. And, moreover, when he did harmonize the two aspects of our nature he rarely applied this inclusive standpoint to the economic problems of society, to the material things upon which both physiological and psychological development are so largely dependent. His discovery of the vast importance of the material universe was somewhat of a novelty in his time. He failed to work out all the implications of this very revolutionary discovery, because he was forced to spend a large part of his energy in defending even the half-way position he had reached.

At times he recognizes the importance of economic forces. But forthwith he apologetically explains them as only one among countless other factors. We see this in the following passage:

> One of the painful facts in connection with this human misery—a fact insisted upon by the men who know most and who know what to do with their knowledge—is that the evil cannot be remedied by any one change, one reform, or even half a dozen changes and reforms, but must be accomplished by countless forces working towards the one effect. Hygiene will help—oh! help much. But how will we get our hygiene? I am quite well aware that there are economic considerations, also, to be taken into account.

It strikes me again, as it always has struck me, that the whole business finally comes back to the good body—not back to wealth, to poverty, but to the strong body—the sane, sufficient body. . . .

I think all the scientists would agree with me, as I agree with the scientists, that a beautiful, competent, sufficing body is the prime force making towards the virtues in civilization, life, history. I think I now see better what you mean when you speak of the economic problems as coming before all the rest and though I have not stated it in that extreme way myself I do not doubt your position: I have great faith in science—real science: the science that is the science of the soul as well as the science of the body (you know, many men of half sciences seem to forget the soul).[21]

Here is a bundle of strange contradictions. The physiological is all important, he says, hygiene scarcely less so. This is a recognition of the very basis of the economic view. Yet wealth and poverty, he holds, are of little account, and he gives to economic considerations a wholly subordinate rôle.

The same contradictions appear at times in his views with regard to social evolution. In innumerable passages he seems to deny the evolution both of human individuals and of human society; everything great is spiritual and eternal, even democracy:

Take Democracy, for instance: The American, the average American, thinks he has a new idea. The truth is that even our proud modern definitions of democracy are antiquated—can be heard reflected in the language of the Elizabethan period in England —in the atmosphere created by Bacon, Ben Jonson, and the rest of that crowd. I would not like to say there might not have been latent in the utterances of that group of men the seed stuff of our American liberty—not to speak of the still older suggestions of it to be found in Greek and Roman sources.[22]

It need scarcely be pointed out that there was and could be no real democracy in Greece, Rome, or Elizabethan England.

Whitman's social philosophy was still the Utopian individualism of the eighteenth century. He believed in the "Idea" of the bard rather than in the movement of the age. So far was he from conceiving social evolution that as late as 1872 he actually said that "our political organization is firmly established as far ahead as we can calculate." And he failed altogether to realize that even "science" and "democracy" would have to be revolutionized and socialized, before they could serve as the basis of a real social democracy.

There are other passages where he gives us to understand that in America all political and social evolution has ceased, our constitution and political

institutions having reached perfection. In America are "the only stable forms of politics upon the earth" and in the United States "no innovations must be permitted on the stern severities of our liberty and equality."

No more fatal fallacy is conceivable than this idea of Whitman's that the America of small property owners that he knew was already leading the world into a new civilization. America may indeed come to lead the world, but this can only be in proportion as she moves as far away as possible from the civilization of small farms, in which she was merely repeating the early experience of other countries, towards that organization of industry where she may yet become a real pioneer. He was blind to the obvious truth that, while the geographical and physical conquest of the continent by the pioneers paved the way for civilization, it reduced the pioneers themselves in large measure to primitive functions, to mere primitive men. In many essential ways their tasks and manner of life were the same as those of the barbarian pioneers of ancient Germany, for example, and of all other pioneers since the dawn of civilization. Whitman was thus led to a complete reversal of the fundamental economic truth. For, as a matter of fact, *in so far as* the Americans were mere pioneers they were *necessarily* centuries or even millenniums behind the Europeans.

Yet here again, fortunately, is inconsistency. At times Whitman clearly recognized the evolution of society and the influence of this evolution over ideas and ideals. A good illustration is in his changing views about Emerson, who was undoubtedly the writer and philosopher who most influenced him. In 1872, he wrote in a letter:

> Emerson has just been this way lecturing. He maintains about the same attitude as twenty-five or thirty years ago (1842-1847, the period of Emerson's essays). It seems to me pretty thin. Immense upheavals have occurred since then, putting the world into new relations.[23]

Yet on several occasions during Traubel's conversations in 1888 Whitman used terms of the most extreme praise with regard to Emerson—referring to him as being "always right" and "almost ultimate."

This seemed to be a lapse into Whitman's earliest feeling for Emerson, acquired before the war, and on October 4th of the same year (1888) we find him taking up once more the view of his maturity, that of 1872. After having read a little from Emerson he said:

> As I read, an old feeling came back to me—a feeling returned after the lapse of many years—a feeling that the book is a little, just a little, antique. Then

after a brief pause and some evident thought: And here and there signs of preaching—just a little of it: don't you perceive it?[24]

One might say that Whitman's reverence for Emerson—and all that Emerson stood for—was such as to make a very severe test for his moral courage; and few men have more clearly had the courage of their convictions in most directions. He perceived, in 1872, that Emerson (like all intellectual leaders of past generations), must begin to mean less and less to us as the years go by. His consciousness of this fact was equally strong in 1888, but he hardly had the courage to give voice to his conviction. It was nothing less than intellectual awe that Whitman felt for Emerson—feeling that was justified both on the ground of the latter's intellectual attainments and capacity and because Whitman's purely intellectual development was far inferior. Nevertheless Whitman might have trusted his feeling about Emerson, even if he would not match his intellect against him.

We can only conclude either that Whitman never fully realized the great truth that all ideas and ideals are mortal, the products of social evolution, and lose their significance with time—or that he did not wish to face this truth, in view of its possible application to his own work.

III

HORACE TRAUBEL,

Forerunner of a New Literature

"A WHOLE new world has been born since Whitman's days and Traubel is of this world," says George D. Herron.

"Whitman himself would be the first to recognize this. Traubel walks in the light of a social vision which had not broken upon man even when Whitman went out into the larger quest."

Similarities in the work of Whitman and Traubel will strike the reader on nearly every page. But the differences are no less vital. The most fundamental distinction is undoubtedly the fact that Traubel is a Socialist, a part of the democratic movement, "the outspoken advocate and herald of communism," as a German critic expresses it.

Traubel says that Whitman felt that to stand for any particular movement, no matter how just it might be, was to limit himself, while he feels, on the contrary, that if a writer is strong enough, he ought to be able to keep all of Whitman's breadth of

vision and yet be a partisan of a cause on which he believes all the future of democracy—and of humanity—depends.

With this fundamental contrast of viewpoint it is impossible that Traubel should be a mere disciple of Whitman's. When some one compared Masefield to Whitman recently, Traubel made a protest which shows how he feels about such a relationship:

> Some one has spoke of John Masefield as the Walt Whitman of 1912. Which means—don't it?—that Walt Whitman was the John Masefield of 1855. This is like killing two men with one shot. But why kill anybody? Why kill Whitman with Masefield or Masefield with Whitman? Why not let them both live? [25]

Of course there can be no question that Traubel's chief significance to the general public up to the present has been that he is the foremost living interpreter of Whitman's work and life, as well as the chief continuator of many of his ideas and literary innovations. But Traubel has developed—along both lines. And, moreover, he already stands to a large and growing public for another thing as important as this noteworthy development of Whitmanism; he is probably the leading writer in this country, if not in the world, whose work is completely saturated with Socialism and, indeed, grows exclusively out of Socialism, in the broader sense of the word. It seems that in Traubel we have at last

a forerunner of those Socialist writers who are predestined, if we are ever to have a Socialist culture—not writers of the first rank who are incidentally Socialists (of whom there are many) nor Socialists who are able writers incidentally, but Socialist-writers or writer-Socialists, who are equally eminent in either capacity. If Traubel is indeed a forerunner of the literature of the future in this sense, his appearance has an almost revolutionary significance. For as Herron has pointed out, the purely literary product of such Socialist writers as William Morris (as opposed to their social writings) did not spring from the social movement.

The contrast between Traubel's standpoint and that of Morris has been drawn by Traubel himself, when he says of Morris:

> His speculative Utopias were wonderful. But he couldn't have lived in them. They were not made for mortal men and women but for immortal superpeople. I don't mean by this that he went too far. He went far enough with his dreams. But he didn't go far enough with his facts. He felt that he was dreaming beyond truth. But I can see all kinds of truth beyond any possible dreams. I have such faith in the democracy that I expect to see it so expanded as to make the best man's best dream vulgar and belated.[26]

The inspiration of Morris arose out of his beliefs as to what can be done with the people; Traubel's inspiration comes from what the people are doing with themselves. He is not an idealist, he is a realist.

Nothing can better suggest Traubel's view of literature than his own passionate reaction against the literature and the writers of the present day. A recent address to contemporary poets shows—magnificently—both his own position and the nature of this reaction:

You who put words on yourselves as chains. . . . You to whom a trust is given have betrayed it. I believe in the sacredness of the word. I want words to live. I want words to be creators. Some writers are so vital that they can't say "and " or "the" or "but" without thrilling you. There are some writers so dead they can't say immortality without a funeral. I want the living word. How can I get it? By using words instead of being used by words. By speaking out of my heart instead of out of books. By not trying to write. By living. . . .

Words are the cant of our religion. Words are the sophistry of our law. Words are the fog we lose our way in. We'd be safe if it wasn't for words. Words are our peril. Words are the obstacles in the way. If you want to be understood don't talk. Whatever you have to say, don't trust it to words. Try not to try. . . . To be considered clever. To be

a best seller. To go into many editions. To be invited to lecture in colleges. To be asked to write for the magazines. To be in demand. That's what you use words for. So as to be listed in the literary four hundred. . . . What are you doing with words? Giving them to life or giving them to death? Making them counterfeit or keeping them genuine? Not trying to get life from words? But rather giving life to words?

You writers who are trying to write. Stop trying to write. Then you can write. Live. Let the writing take care of itself. . . . You are not to produce a work of art. You are to produce a work of life. . . . You've got to give up everything to get life. The whole language if necessary. The whole fabric of delicate grace. All the flowers of speech. All the rhymes and lilts. All the niceties of manner and the assurances of routine. They must all go. All effort must go. You've not only got to be free of the alphabet. And not only free of the traditions. And not only free of the cliques. But you've got to be free of effort. You've got to cease trying. You've got to get where you have stopped caring or not caring.[27]

You wonder why the people don't care for what you say. I'll tell you why. Because the people are more interested in how you live than in what you say. You don't talk out of your lives. You talk out of books. You are not creators. You are beggars and borrowers and stealers. You don't build

from foundations. You only hang flowers on the walls. You are decorators. That is the reason the people have turned away from you. You first turned away from the people. . . . The poets meet together and tell each other what a poor lot the people are. How much the people need to be educated. How little the people know of essentials in the spiritual realm. How great a gap there is between the culturally saved and the culturally damned. How glorious it would be to have a world of poets rather than a world of people. . . . Poetry is no place for a man. It is only a place for a poet.[28]

Traubel is neither a poet's poet nor the poet of a privileged educated class. He is a people's poet. He will not confine his work to themes usually considered poetic, he will take in all the deeper and larger interests of man:

Before books and after books is the human soul,
Before the beauty and eminence of that which is written is the superior beauty and eminence of that which is written about,
Before the magnificence of the greatest book comes the majesty of the meanest soul.[29]

And the human soul, in a period such as that in which we are living, expresses itself most fully in some relation with the social movement of the times, and is necesssarily most deeply concerned with the tremendous social revolution that is impending:

I am hailed as the courier and promise of social regeneration. . . .
Drilled not by schools and traditions but in the stern clash of revolt.[80]

It might be supposed that Traubel's radicalism is merely the now familiar radicalism of half the poets and writers of the day; but he is not merely a vague and well-meaning radical, he is a militant revolutionist. His criticism of Masefield, a typical radical, would apply to all the rest. He complains that they are not democrats in their inner being, but merely strive to become democrats, and do democracy the honor of making it their ideal:

It seems like literary slumming. Like the humor of the people who put off their laces for a night and go into the east sides or south sides of cities for experience. You can't enter the temple by such a door. Starving yourslf to death is not the same as being starved to death. . . .[81]

Traubel does not believe that there is any such thing as poetry as a separate entity apart from all the rest of life. His view amounts to a complete rejection of nearly everything that we have hitherto considered as poetry and art:

Do you help me to live? That is the question I ask the author. . . . All other possible questions stand

aside for this question. I do not ask any man: Are you an artist? That will determine itself. I ask every man: Do you know how to live? Living is the only sufficient art. All other art falls short. . . . Do you pour yourself out to the world in floods of regenerating conviction? [32]

I say of poetry what Spinoza said of religion. To define it is to deny it. . . . I don't get enjoyment out of poetry whether or no. I get it out of life. If you can get life into a poem or a picture or a song, I enjoy it. I don't enjoy it as a poem or a picture. I enjoy it as life. If you don't bring me life you bring me nothing. If you bring me art for art's sake. If you bring me beauty that's its own excuse for being. I still say no. I can't get on to it. I know life for life's sake. I know life as its own excuse for being. But your detached mechanisms and your segregated graces miss the mark. All the poems may die. And all poetry may be left. . . . What it is that happens when I like something somebody says or writes I can't say. That thing working that way in my blood may be poetry in action. But if you ask me to put it to the proof I yield the case. I don't know what a man is. How should I know what poetry is? You can't confine poetry to words. But you can confine it to life. If the poet is the maker then poetry is creation. Creation may put itself into phrases. Or it may put itself into processes. If you enjoy life then you enjoy poetry. The poet gets into things. Gets behind things. Goes to roots. Hurries on ahead. Participates in the infinite reactions

of phenomena. . . . I doubt if what is traditionally called poetry to-day will go by that name in the future.[33]

Traubel is perfectly aware that his work is not all poetry in the old sense of the term, but suggests that it may be more welcome than the old poetry:

What can it be? you say: your poems are not poems
but they are good to have around.[34]

Traubel's admirers do not claim for his poetry the same inspired lyric quality that is found in Whitman. But they claim that it has other qualities. It is even more profoundly emotional, more completely and exclusively human. We cannot do better than to quote a critic of Traubel in *T. P.'s Weekly* on this point:

His poems are in the Whitman form. Rhymeless recitatives, rhapsodies and apostrophes, in simple, direct and often vehement language. We seek in "Optimos" in vain for purple patches and conceits such as abound in "Leave of Grass." Walt Whitman was called the "Good Gray Poet," but his poetry was never gray. Traubel has the same passion for humanity, the same loving faith in common, average men and women, and, although he chants his sentiments well enough, you never expect him to surprise you by bursting into song.

In spite of the high-seriousness of his poems, I find more originality and even more poetry in his prose —that quaintly flickering prose with its swift, vivid little sentences, and its readiness to give a helping hand to unliterary idiom and the fallen language of the streets. "Chants Communal" is a modern masterpiece. Certainly nothing has come to us from America with quite such an inspired ring about it since "Leaves of Grass." I wish some English publisher would have the sense to publish it and our people the sense to absorb its wisdom. "Chants Communal" pumps wisdom with the quick monotony of a mitrailleuse pumping lead, but every time it hits the mark it restores the faculty of life. Traubel would make the deadest soul enthusiastic about life.[35]

If we wish to understand what Traubel means when he says he does not regard himself primarily as a poet, let us read the reasons why he did not choose to regard a writer he admired as much as he did Tolstoy as being primarily a writer:

Tolstoy was not a great writer. He was something else great before he was a great writer. He was a force first of all. And then a force again. And then perhaps later on he was a writer. He was a greater writer for being a great force. He never seemed to me to write. He seemed to me to live. I never thought of him as writing. I always thought of him as living. The whole men are not technicians. They spend no time trying to be artists.[36]

The great men who write, to follow Traubel's thought (I am purposely dropping the term "great writer"), are those for whom words and writing are the merest tools. What has chanced to be written down, then, is the smallest part of such men and their lives, while they themselves are mere drops in the great ocean of humanity. In the face of this all-important fact mere words and phrases fall into comparative insignificance:

The written life has made light of the unwritten life,
The song that was sung has taken the place of the song that was left unsung:
We have united in the praise of words, in the adoration of the pageantry of phrases. . . .
Who can account for the mysterious emptiness of words? . . .
Words are stuffed and choked with their stale air,
And I can already brush dust off the newest words. . . .
When tried by the test of words life is bound to fail. . . .
Words never lead the soul, words always follow the soul,
Words are the appeal and the record but life is the hand that writes.[37]

In Traubel's view language and literature should be not mere vehicles of thought but vehicles of life and action. They must not only have life behind them, they must have life before them, and visibly

affect the life of the reader or listener. The real poet is "the master whose words are no more mere words but events and persons." Used in this way, as a means of communication from one active individual, to another equally active, words may be the most pregnant form of action:

> You say words do nothing. You call words to account. I see deeds that are empty and I see words that are full.[38]

So Traubel admires most of all those writers who are vital human forces—even if they are not in the first rank from a merely literary standpoint. Their work lives in human beings, if not in books. Among such forces he classes Tom Paine, Robert Ingersoll, and Wendell Phillips:

> Paine, Ingersoll and Phillips were all marvelously vital human forces. But they were not literary. Not professional. The polite arts were abhorrent to them. They always made that manifest. So that the esthetic historians who put the way a thing's done above what is done have never regarded them seriously. What did Paine ever do for the literature of the world? Or Phillips? Or Ingersoll? They ask me that as if it had some point. I'm not concerned with that. I only want to know what they've done for the world. The world's literature can take its chances. The fact is that, though they're

all dead, they're all very much alive still. And they've had plenty of time to die. Especially Paine: he's had time to spare. And they're still potent. Call them what you choose. It's always worried some people whether Walt Whitman should be called a poet. They're willing to call him something. And something big and worth while. But poet? No. They shrink from desecrating so sacred a word. So with the three men I'm talking about. . . . Phillips and Ingersoll both survive. They're walking delegates. They stir up strife. They keep the waters from stagnating. Being dead is not conclusive. For they still live. I'd rather be a moving factor in the average life than an essay in a book. Some reputations continue in a book. They have ceased to be entities. They have receded into a record. . . . Phillips was eminently impractical. Everybody said so. The practical man is so proud of himself. The business man. The man of business in politics. He wants to do things. He says he's the only one who can do them. But I notice he makes as many mistakes as anybody. . . . If a dream has any defects it's in seeing too far. If a fact has any defect it's in not seeing far enough. But nothing's so much a fact as an inclusive dream. And nothing's so much a dream as an inclusive fact. Give a man like Phillips time enough and he's more practical than the best executive of his generation. What the possibilist does he has to do right now or it's useless. What the impossibilist does he can take his time with because it's bound to be useful in the end.[39]

In Traubel's view then, as in that of Whitman, the poet's sphere is the universe, or rather, to avoid any suggestion of abstractions, the poet's world is the whole life of men—and not those chosen images, objects, feelings, or states of consciousness with which poets have hitherto been exclusively concerned.

There can be little question that Whitman's experiments in extending the realm of poetry to embrace the whole life of man (every trifle included) sometimes appear as mechanical and as failures even to his most ardent admirers. Such failures occur less frequently with Traubel, although he also seems, occasionally, to restrain a sort of transcendental opinion that *all* the distinctions that mankind has hitherto made between the significant and the insignificant, between beauty and ugliness, are worthless:

> For now I see that all the effort I spent trying to discover why lives are beautiful or ugly has shown me that all ugliness and all beauty finally must lapse in one transfiguration.[40]

Traubel's universality or humanism appears better in his social philosophy than in his esthetics, and especially the fact that he is willing to be a partizan—when the cause is sufficiently great, in his absorption in the daily life of the people, and in his

romantic feeling that there is no sameness or uniformity there, but a life that is always new and infinite in its variety and power, even under the tragic limitations of our present civilization:

> Some artists think they can't be artists if they are partizans. Every great artist is a partizan. The little fellows are afraid the revolution will master them. So they run away from it. The big fellows know they can master the revolution. So they welcome it.[41]

Whitman *idealizes* while Traubel *realizes* the life that is in the people. Whitman idealizes the actual commonplaces of life. Traubel realizes the infinitely greater beauty of the possible life that still lies undeveloped in the common man, a life which at present is either entirely suppressed or is only beginning to express itself. For example, he feels the deepest interest in all the literary channels by which the life of the people comes to expression, such as the popular newspapers. It may be doubted if any professional journalist gives a more serious or a broader attention to nearly everything with which the newspapers deal.

Traubel comes into intimate contact with a great many persons, as many as he can possibly manage to meet, whether casually or through mutual sympathies. But direct contact with very many individuals is impossible for an industrious writer, and

the great majority of books deal either with the past or with an abstract or literary view of life, so that Traubel, or any man in his position, is naturally reduced in some measure to a third means of meeting other minds and becoming acquainted with the lives of other persons—namely, the periodical literature of the day.

It is needless to say that Traubel's view of what really is significant in the news is thoroughly revolutionary:

I go about looking for good news. . . . Yes, good news. News of the people. News of the growth and revolt of the people. News of the fulfilments of the people. That's my good news. And I insist upon it wherever I am. Nothing less than this interests me. . . . I read the papers for good news. Not news. I want good news. And I don't care who you are, I ask good news of you. I don't ask you what you think of me. I ask you for good news. . . . Those upon whom all culture is founded. Those who plant and raise the trees but are kicked out of the orchard. They are my good news. And when I see them ready at last to take what belongs to them they become my better news. And when in a farther day they assume the earth they will become my best news. That's the only kind of news my heart is hungry for and is ready to receive. . . . I don't want news of your aristocracies whether of parlors or philosophies. That news is always bad news. I want news of the streets

and of peoples. That news is always good news. I know the peoples can't always invite their oppressors out. They won't be invited out. They have to be thrown out. That news is good news. I don't want to see anybody hurt. But I won't see my good news hurt. My good news comes first of all.[42]

Traubel has not "adopted" the standpoint of the masses, he is and always has been in every way one of them, and quite naturally feels as they do:

I repeat myself? So I do. But the evil, too, repeats itself. As long as the evil repeats itself I will repeat myself.[43]

As long as the evils of the time are in the forefront of the people's consciousness they have ever a fresh interest—to the people.

While Traubel, then, is one of the people, he claims that it is open to every one to be in the same position if he so desires. For the sentimentalist who cries out, "What can I do?" he has no use. To this man Traubel answers by pointing out what he himself has done, and has been ready to do, for the cause:

What can I do? I can give myself to life when other men refuse themselves to life. . . . What can I do? I can gather the fragments of my life together into one coherent life. . . . What can I do?

Believe in man. Go without income. Walk on my uppers. Give life one hundred per cent. of myself. Not care first what other people think of me. Care first what I think of myself. Not declare against the sins of the world and go on sinning. Stop sinning. Give up property for people. Not stake my private interest against the total human interest. Not be afraid of slander. Not feel bad when I am misunderstood. Expect to find all my neighbors arrayed against me. Remain contented when no one will come near me. I can starve. I can die. That is what I can do.[44]

The same thought, with similar autobiographical illustrations, is continued in another "Collect":

I always felt I had a particular thing to do in the world. I did not feel that I was an atomic accident. I never conceded that there could be uses for stars and no uses for people. So I started myself going. I assumed myself. . . . This put me in the line somewhere. Gave me a place. Set me right with my own consciousness. Made me realize myself. I did not worry from that time on over what I could do and could not do. . . . I was one of the stillest palest boys in my crowd. And I did not always or ever maybe blurt out what I thought of myself or my destiny. But I assumed myself before everything else. Whatever the surface of the stream may have said, underneath everywhere you would surely have seen in me this inveterate humbling pride.

Things have been against me. Most things for most of the time. But this has been for me. When the outlook was clouded the inlook was clear. When there was nothing else left this was left. I was often without a cent. But I was never without this. There may have been reason for it. But it endured and was triumphant. It was my flaming immortal fire. . . . I got to that stage very early and am likely to stay very late. I looked innocent as death but I was guilty as life. I had no intentions. I had not cleared myself up. I had not debated myself out. I did not know what I was to do. I did not have schemes to try upon society. I left all that for time and events to take care of. All I did was to assume myself. . . .[45]

Here are some more autobiographical lines, with the same moral, written by Traubel on the twenty-fifth anniversary of his monthly publication, *The Conservator:*

So I kept on: while my betters were doing the recognized things I was left with what was discarded:
I took my place in the ranks: I was happy: it's best of all to just serve unseen:
It's not half as much fun being the rose as the root: oh! how I like it down there in the ground!
It's not half as much fun eating the fruit as having been the cause of the fruit: oh! how I like it being a ray of the sun!
It's more my wish to be something very necessary yet totally unknown: to be required but denied:

That's how I've traveled my voyage: under cover:
invisible: never named by those who make out the
lists:
A mere atom, maybe, yet a necessary grain of sand:
perhaps the most needed item of all yet unspelled
in words.

Yet there is no admixture of humility in Traubel's feeling about himself—though his passionate desire to be at one with the average man or woman excludes all egoism. He continues:

The hidden cause: the veiled omnipotence: the cur-
tained fuel of the flame:
Oh! that was what I wanted to be: I'd give up all
for that: that would be my gladdest reward:
Not heavens with the saved nor hells with the damned
but mere days with their simple men and women:
I came from them: I've stayed with them: I've never
left the level: now we're still equal mates:
Talking of the same ideals: matching ourselves against
the same forces: stirred by the glow of the same
victories.

By the circumstances of his birth, then, by his character, by his intimacy with Whitman, by his work, by his associations, by his daily life and by his whole experience, Traubel is fitted for the rôle he has assumed, that of poet-prophet of democracy. If his writing is separated by a whole world from

that of other writers, with the partial exception of Whitman, it is because his life has been an entirely different life. His moral appeals are not those of the professional moralists, who drive their reader through a blind sense of duty to a far-off goal, but of a pioneer who has actually seen a new country and can convince every open-minded and sensible hearer that it is in all ways better than the old. The reason why his appeals draw nothing from the past and look wholly to the future is because they give us the personal experience of one who has projected his life almost wholly into the future. Take for example that typical "Collect," "What Are You Doing for the Cause?" A few passages will be enough to show that while there is nothing left in it of the old morality, Traubel's writing shows a depth of conviction, and radiates a power, perhaps beyond any message that has been at all adapted to our time or has proved even tolerable to modern ears. He writes:

What are you doing for the cause? Not for yourself. For all. Not to keep yourself going. To keep the race going. What are you doing for to-morrow that you didn't do yesterday for to-day? I don't say for what cause. I say for any cause. I don't ask you what you are doing with tasks I might set you. I ask what you are doing with tasks that you yourself set. I know what you do in eating and working at your trade and sleeping at night. You do

that in order not to die. Everybody does that. I ask you what you are doing in order to live. I know what you say. I read what you write. I have heard your promises. But this is not enough. This hardly tells me what I want to learn. I know what you do with what you have to do. I want to know what you do with what you don't have to do. . . .

Every man somehow belongs first to himself. Do I say that? Yes. Then I say something more. He also belongs first to the race. He stands for personality. There he's for himself. He stands for service and progress. There he stands for the race. I can't interpret his moods or his impulses. I can guess them. But their interior purport is beyond the reach of my vision. That is why I ask: What are you doing for the cause? And that is why I say: I shall not say what cause. The cause has done everything for you. What are you doing for it? . . .

You are doing nothing for the cause. You are making a living. But you are not making life. You are personal. You have not surcharged yourself with the general inspirations. . . . Making good because some one else makes bad. That is your code. . . . Letting any one do the work of progress. You doing nothing. That's the code. . . . You encourage them to go on. But you don't go on with them. . . . My ears know your voice. I can tell when you are around, though you say nothing. Little as you know it, I follow you through all the intricacies of your psychic retreats. Do you think you can cover your

tracks? Right or left, up or down, in or out, across or around: wherever you go I tally you. Every step you take is within my horizon. Do you resent my inevitable attendance? You say: I mean the same thing you do. And you say: I am with you, only not so fast. You say: You can count on me, too, but not too soon. You say: You can depend on my good will, but not too far. You've always some reason for holding back. Some reason for not putting up money or service. Some reason for withholding your confession. Somebody is always too violent for you. Too extreme. Too exacting. Too inevitable. You want at the same time to be and not to be. . . .

What are you doing for the cause? You do everything for the cause. You work for the cause as the sun sheds light. . . . You don't wait to hear some one else say the word first. You say it. . . . I never spend a minute trying to find out what my duty is. There is no duty. I'm just driven. There is no duty. I must keep on. When I say cause I say sun and stars and earth and air and food. I say love and those I love. I say that which makes life and is made by life. If I hesitated an instant there would be no cause again. . . .

I don't want you to say: I'll ask my wife or my husband or my father or my mother or somebody. I don't even want you to ask your own spirit. I want you to act. *I want you to answer before the question is put. I want you to spring before the challenge is issued.* [My italics.]

IV

THE HUMANIST

"Men, All Men, and Nothing but Men"

THE foundations of Traubel's social philosophy are not ideas at all, but a passionate, persistent and sincere interest in all the human units that compose the social whole. Whitman's social philosophy, as we have seen, was based in part on his social instinct, in part on current metaphysics; Traubel's is based almost wholly on social instinct—the only admixture of metaphysics being what he has taken over from Whitman. Whitman was profoundly interested in "the All," "eternity," "the soul," and so on. Traubel is touched with Whitman's dogmatic optimism and interest in "eternity," but his metaphysical side is less developed and is altogether dissolved and lost in his social feeling. For Whitman's "All" he substitutes "people," or "the crowd."

If we seek a phrase to cover Traubel's philosophy, we must call it a practical or concrete humanism. Human beings are not only the *goal* of his thought, they are its sole subject. But he does not carry this

idea out to its intellectual absurdity as Whitman so often does. He does not—as a rule—profess an *equal* interest in all human beings (as Whitman does). He does not—as a rule—profess an *equal* interest in all parts of human nature (as Whitman seems to do).

Yet, while Traubel turns his back on all systematic or formal philosophy, he is sub-consciously logical and systematic—more so than Whitman. He does not contradict himself. He finds no need to reserve that privilege for himself—as Whitman and Emerson did. The reason for the difference is that there is no vital contradiction between his individual philosophy and his social philosophy, as it was inevitable there should be in their time. He sees life steadily and he sees it whole.

Of course Traubel's philosophy is that of the writer and not that of the professional philosophers —with their conscious systems. But he acts entirely in the spirit of the new pragmatic philosophy when he rejects the claims of ordinary logic, and, like other inspired writers, substitutes a sub-conscious "organic" logic of his own. He does not try to think in those long-continued chains which so often result in dogmatism, even in the minds of the master philosophers that use that method. Like Emerson he allows all of life that spontaneously relates itself to a given moment of thought and feeling to come to expression at that moment. In his "Col-

lects" he is formally logical in so far as he never considers any position except in connection with its opposite, but his chain of reasoning never proceeds farther than this. Here is his logic: Let all of life as far as possible into each mood, but do not endeavor to tie together the thoughts and feelings of these moods into a system; for there are natural periods and rhythms in our thinking, as in the rest of our life, and the attempt to substitute a mechanical logic for this natural habit would result in the loss of the best fruits of our mental activity. This pragmatic habit of thought is the logical process of all poets and great littérateurs, as distinct from professional philosophers, but Traubel has held to it more consistently than have most other writers. He is consistently free from dogma. He has no system into which he might be tempted to force the facts. But neither does he contradict himself.

Traubel's almost complete freedom from doctrine and dogma is due to the fact that he is interested exclusively in actual persons. And all his philosophy is based on his plea that we should not reduce other individuals to any formula, nor allow ourselves to be so reduced—not even to the formula of "being free from formula." He says:

There's never any doctrine so dangerous to you as your doctrine. You may escape every other men-

ace. But that will throw you. Don't mistake a fragment of life for the total of life. That's first. Then don't drift with anything. Not even with God. Not even with the eternal verities. Not even with love. Start knowing for what, proceed knowing why, arrive knowing when. Of course this theory has its dubious elements. I can see how we must sometimes go on knowing nothing. How an inner impulse prepossesses us and compels our wholesale abandonment to a passion. The finest wisdom may consist in not comprehending that which you apprehend. In not being able to explain that which can't be denied. In not putting into words that which surges in your blood. In not making demonstrations which are not evidences. But then we go farther. We may say again that even if we must go on a journey we can't justify we may still remain master of the voyage. That though I can't realize the sea or the sky or the ship or the port I'm going to I may still stick to the wheel. In painfully unshackling ourselves from drifts we mustn't shackle ourselves with masteries. Getting free may become a creed. And being free may become another creed. . . . I want to be in the stream. I want the big stream to be in me. I want to take account of everything. I want everything to take account of me. I want life so orbic I can put my arms about it in an embrace of revelation. Yet I also want life so atmospherically liberated I couldn't include it in any finite definitions. I don't want any man or woman to be all hashed up into meaningless

inconsecutiveness. Neither do I want any man or woman tied into an all-consistent knot.[47]

The unprecedented width of Traubel's mental horizon is due to this refusal to adopt any exclusive doctrine:

It's not enough to say your motive was clean. I'm willing to admit that. But that wouldn't be an answer. . . .

Remember that nothing can be left out without peril to what's left in. Every atom of rejected truth is a threat leveled at the structure you have raised. You can't make up a decision alone from what you see. It's just as much your business to include what I see. It's not only not wise. It's not honest. Until you have been as hospitable towards what displeases you as towards what pleases you you are debarred from expressing judgment. This is the law and common sense of all conviction. This is the spirit of all fair controversy. This is the foundation of all faith. No matter how dispassionate you may superficially appear to be you are warped and corrupt. I've every right to demand that you study me. Unless you do study me you are neither my friend nor my enemy. You can't know where I stand or where you stand. You are adrift. Your feet may be on a rock. But you're adrift. Before you can say: I believe, you must know what I mean when I say: I believe. And you are required to wait till I've said my last word. As long as I seem to have some-

thing to add you must make room for me. You've got to live my life as well as your own life if you propose to live your life full and whole.[48]

As free as possible from all forms of authority, whether of words, ideas, or systems, Traubel does not allow his own favorite ideas to become a religion, and will not permit even the chief object of his thought and care, "the human race," to outweigh the ultimate reality, the living individual:—"You say everything must be done to preserve the race. I say only one kind of a race is worth preserving." Here indeed is "the one word clearly spoken" which "upsets all the figures of the schools" (to employ an expression of Traubel's).

If our revolutionary poet fails to succumb to the ultra-modern "welfare of the race" theory, or to the idea that "society" is God, we should not expect him to bow to the earlier religions, now less in vogue; we should not expect him to succumb to "science" or to "natural law," to "altruism" or to "God":

I think God has written a new will and made me his heir,
(Brother, you may feel as I do, and become yourself, too, that only heir). . . .
I think the natural laws have taken some time off and left me to run things for a while myself.

(Brother, you may feel as I do, and the natural laws will stand aside for you as they do for me).[49]

Against "natural laws" or theological paradise, Traubel asserts the individual self; he will accept no bounds of any kind either for himself or for others:

Only to let things go,
Only to stop fixing bounds for myself . . .
Only to see the farthest by not trying to see at all,
Only to hear divine voices by not listening for voices at all,
Only to be myself without making an effort to be myself at all . . .
Only to get beyond the cry of the strongest voice calling me back,
Only to get where no chase can any longer dog my quickened feet,
Only to wrench my despoiled self free from the habits of the ruly,
Only to salute the fraternity of a world lawlessly superior to law . . .
To be as I am before I become a social asset or an industrial fact. . . .[50]

The cult of "altruism" is probably less influential to-day than the dogmas built upon "science," "natural laws," or "the race," because it is less highly thought of than it formerly was among the upper classes, but it is still far from extinct.

Traubel adopts Ellen Key's denunciation of this outworn dogma of religious ethics:

> She daringly denounces the theory "that it is always the death of the soul to sacrifice others, and the life of the soul to sacrifice oneself." All depends. Depends upon whether sacrificing yourself helps the big thing along in the end. Upon whether sacrificing others may not be best for all in the end.[51]

A far greater danger to individual liberty, because it is usually unexpressed, is the tendency to lay undue stress upon institutions or institutional change. Traubel does not contemplate a social system where the individual will give way before any institutions whatever, either those already existing or others likely to be created. The individual is "to sign no single power away." The new society is to be built primarily not upon new institutions but upon new individuals, or even upon existing individuals, who when free from their shackles will be quite other than what they are:

> I declare that the social order is to be superseded by another social order:
> I know the quality of your folly when you go about the streets looking in the dust of noisy oratory for the complete state:
> I know very well that when the complete state appears it will appear because you bring it to others, not because others bring it to you,

> And I know that you will not carry it as a burden upon your back but as something unscrolled within.[52]

Existing institutions often seem to have such deep foundations and to have spread so far that it appears impossible to remove them, but this is an illusion:

> Nothing is impossible if we put all our force back of ourselves. We impeach the great frowning institutions. They laugh at us. We seem so harmless. But give us a little time. We will laugh at the institutions. . . . What is an institution to a man anyway? . . . Do not doubt your own inspiration. Are you afraid to be identified with your heresies? Your heresies are what takes you on. The best part of a man is that far-away thing in him which all his nearby friends warn him against.[53]

The boldest ideas of man often prove to be the soundest and greatest. One group of such ideas constitutes the germ of that revolution in human nature which is not only indispensable to bring about that general revolution in institutions known as Socialism but is the very essence of the change:

> The Socialist needs to revolutionize human nature. He is doing it. Or human nature is revolutionizing itself. Or rather he is not revolutionizing human nature—he is giving it a chance to be human.[54]

Traubel's conception of the individual, that is of human nature and its possibilities, which must be that of every thoughtful Socialist, is radically different from the prevailing view. If he regarded human nature as it is ordinarily regarded, there would indeed be little hope of its being revolutionized. The Socialist idea of human nature, however, differs from that ordinarily accepted in that it views the great bulk of man's impulses as being good from the beginning, certainly as being the source of at least as much good as his conscious reasoning. Traubel embodies this thought in one of his striking and typical poems, "I Go Where My Heart Goes":

I go where my heart goes: where else should I go?
With or without reason, I go with my heart:
Whether urged to go or warned to stay, I go with my heart:
In the face of everything bitter and sweet, false and true, I go with my heart:
Joyously into any shadow, victoriously towards whatever defeat, I go with my heart:
Being afraid sometimes to risk what I must become, yet being more afraid to remain what I am:
Often denying love to go with love, denying light to find light. . . .
Acknowledging the world I leave but ready and eager for the world I go to. . . .

If you don't go where your heart goes where do you go?—if you don't go to love where do you go?
And if you go east while your heart goes west what will fill up the mocking gap between? . . .
And you arraign the heart: you have discovered that the heart is a stumbling guide:
And you say that the heart needs eyes, which I say, too: who sees it better than I do?
And I say that the heart has eyes, which you do not say, too:
(Oh such eyes as the heart has! has life eyes? only such eyes as the heart has!) [55]

The same thought recurs again in a typical "Collect" entitled "It All Seems Reasonable to Me":

My reason goes where my heart goes. I don't want my reason to go where my heart can't go. Let the heart have its way. Don't be afraid of the heart. Reason reasons but reason can't see. . . .

Do our systems apply love? If they do they are reasonable. But if they apply profit. If they apply enmity, caste, law. If they apply anything that neglects love. Then they are unreasonable. No stolen dollar was ever reasonable. No stolen opportunity of life. No stolen prestige. Nothing that can be used by one to lord it over another. The black or white of your skin. The strength or weakness of your right arm. The genius or the mediocrity of your brain. The volubility or the reticence of your speech. All advantages and disadvantages. All talents and

superiorities. They are all unreasonable. None of them stand the test. The other thing alone stands the test. The total opposite. You may not be able to adjust it to your logic. But you can adjust it to your love. . . [56]

In proportion as conditions allow the free development and expression of a man's impulses, these impulses serve as connecting bonds between him and other human beings, so that all other bonds become superfluous. This emotionally or socially developed person leads a life in every way fuller and more productive, that is, a more reasonable life. Free relations with others gradually take the place of institutions, authorities and duties:

Walt Whitman says: "What others give as duties I give as living impulses." The duty is my claim on you. The impulse is your claim on yourself. . . . Duty is the major tyrant. Duty is the irrevocable insanity. Duty is the knife that severs. But when I say duty you will repeat it after me. We have wars because we have duties. And hates. And the quarrels of brothers with brothers. And the brawls of peace. And partizan schools in art. And pettifogging sciences. And the blind atomists of cosmic chance. They all belong. When we breathe that little two-syllabled remnant word of abled theisms the world flies apart. It's cut in two at the center. Duty is judgment. Duty is the sword and the bullet. It's standing armies and navies. It's threatening policies

and balances of hypocritic power. When I say duty I put you in jail. When you say it you put me in jail. Duty is the infinite inquisition. It's the denial of fatherhood. It's the refutation of love. What has the lover to do with duty?[57]

Yet Traubel believes that the more developed man of the new society, though more ruled by his heart than by his head, will no longer be governed by the same emotions that rule him now. He will pass *beyond* mere love and hate:

In the farther intimations of the spirit I am not wholly myself until I am set free from both hate and love.[58]

But he does not commend those non-resistant sentimentalists who are without love or hate only because they *fall short* of both:

I don't want to mislead the tyrannies. I want them to know I hate them. I want it to be understood that I am using hate as an inexorable weapon of annihilation. I am not to be bought off, fooled off, scared off or killed off. I say over and over again to the crowned wrong of my era: I hate you. And I say again and again: I'll stop at nothing to drive you off the face of the earth. And I say again and again: I will let the king live but I will raze his throne.[59]

Indeed the poet proceeds to reassure all those who feel that a wrong impression might be created by his continued use of the much over-used term, "love," by saying that in the last analysis, if a choice must be made between two evils, he prefers "hate" to "love" and the "bad" to the "good":

I am afraid of being thought too well of. I would rather be thought bad than good if I had to be thought either. Hate balances the disturbed fancies and fallacies of the physical world. . . . Love overlooks. Hate is omnivisual.[60]

It might appear to the casual reader that Traubel's work, in which the emotional aspect of human nature is regarded as predominant, could scarcely be held together by a coordinated social philosophy —beyond the revolt against all authority and the generous view of human nature I have just described—and, indeed, Traubel himself makes no claim to such a philosophy. His system, like that of other poets, is largely unconscious, but nevertheless all his work has a logic of its own. The starting-point of his thought is "life":

I put everything aside for life. Property. Honor. Wages. All go for life. My revolt is based upon life. Your resistance is resistance against life.[61]

This leads at once to the question: What does Traubel mean by "life"?

In an editorial entitled "Music and Sex" he gives us the beginning of an answer: "All of man's activities are to be viewed as intimately related, and no activity is to be accepted for its own sake but only in relation to life as a whole":

> Music must be saved by something not music. The creative musicians contain that something. That is why they are as a rule poised and equable. But the interpreting musician often loses himself in the mazes of his sentimental titillations. Gives way to them. Translates all life into rudimentary emotion. Does not hold on to things.
>
> That is taking big chances. May carry fatal penalties along with it. Like giving way to sex. Sex is divine. Sex may be devilish. You cannot trust sex alone or music alone. Sex for sex's sake. Music for music's sake. They are as bad as art for art's sake. . . .
>
> Musicians, the interpreters, seem to say: "There is no life. There is only music." So that when it comes to the communal things, to social prophecy, they seem to say: "There is no good and bad. There is only music." A musician said to me: "My business has nothing to do with public service. I am a musician. Music absorbs everything. Music is my life." But sometimes music may not be a man's life. Music may be a man's death.[62]

In the same way logic, and those closed systems of thought that ordinarily monopolize the name,

philosophy, are criticized (like music) as often leading away from life rather than towards it:

I am not sure of things. I am only sure of myself. My feet go their own way. . . . I am refuted every day I live. By every man I meet. By institutions and systems. By cataclysms and sea-tides. They all refute me. But I do not refute myself. I do not see why you should not be happy in spite of reasons. I do not see why any sort of a reason, why any accumulation of probabilities, should set aside, should refute me as a man, you as my brother, my comrade or my lover. One laugh may put all the planets to flight. One word fairly spoken may upset all the figurers of the schools. I acknowledge the telescope and the microscope. But nothing can bring anything as near to me as my own flesh. . . . You can bury me with quibbles. But I can resurrect myself with affirmations. You may have to have reasons. I don't. I am not made good in an argument. Nothing does so little for me as tradition and legality. Nothing so little as the idea that one thing is so because another thing is so.[68]

Argument, that is, means an appeal to tradition and legality. There is no doubt that this has been true of the systems of logic and philosophy of the past. The way to escape such logic is to follow one's own deepest inclinations and intuitions, under the supposition, of course, that one's nature is thoroughly social—like Traubel's, or like most natures

in a society which allows a free and natural development.

No one is lost who stays with himself. And no one is found who wanders from himself. There is no practical and unpractical. There is no reasonable and unreasonable. There is only a man and his vision. There is only what a man is and what a man sees. And if he fails to follow what he sees he deserts himself.[64]

Traubel's logic may be called reversed logic, working always from the conclusion, and in this, too, it is the logic of pragmatism:

The good conclusion is to me a working hypothesis. . . . I do not ask myself: Which idea is true and which is false? I only ask: Which idea serves me best? By serving best I mean humanizes me. Makes me more useful as a man and more fruitful as a comrade. By serving best I mean builds me up and spreads me out in efficiency. Gives me vision and reach. Gives me direction and consecration. My life is my only asset. And yours is the same. . . .

If I feel the universe on top of me crushing me I am a failure. If I feel it under my feet eternally succoring me I am a success. . . . I keep myself ahead of the facts. The facts are too slow for me.[65]

But enough of Traubel's *method* of thinking. The *substance* of his thought is equally revolution-

ary. Having rejected the claim of logic as a sufficient guide to life, he also refuses to postpone his direct experience of life while seeking to comprehend the "universe," and he objects vigorously to the typical philosophical attitude which insists that, first of all, the universe must be explained—"I do not wait for the universe to explain itself," he says, "Maybe the universe cannot be explained":

> Why should I put question marks into the sky in place of stars? It is my main business to live. To live nearest the best life I can discover. To live nearest the natural laws. To live nearest people. . . . I can cite no justifications. But I can cite my comrades. . . . The Cause explains enough, though it don't explain it all.[66]

The function of men is to understand, not the universe, but one another: "People intoxicate me. My eyes see people (I don't acknowledge things)."

> I don't need to see all: I see enough:
> I see your eyes as you look at me:
> I see my own face in the glass:
> I see to the roots of trees: I see to the tops of mountains:
> If I look in the right way I see to the bottom of seas: I can watch the seed in the ground grow:
> I don't need to see everything: that which I see leads me to that which I don't see:

There are roads I can't travel: I can see round corners my feet never turn:
My hand touches you: my fingers play in your hair: I see that everything leads to you:
My ears hear your voice: I can listen to the invisible in the tones of your common speech:
It's all so mysterious: so much is veiled: yet so much is also disclosed:
I might see all and know nothing: I might see nothing and know all: there's no one path:
The reasonable people ask me every day: How do you explain this and this?
I don't explain it: I see it: I follow it: it takes me very far down somewhere and very far up somewhere:
That seems to me to be all I want: I don't want analysis: no: I want to see:
If I could tell you about a thing—that would be taking it apart: the dissector can do that:
If I see a thing—that is putting it together: only love can do that: . . .[67]

Even the theory of evolution, which has served in the hands of most of its expounders to enlarge the universe and belittle man, is used by Traubel to magnify man:

I don't propose to hand myself back to the residual gases. I propose to pass myself forward to the impeccable gods. . . .[68]

Yet Traubel's optimism, like Whitman's, has an undoubted philosophic basis (if an unconscious one):

I say that a man is not an atom in an infinity. I bring you a great secret. I say that infinity is but an atom in you.[69]

"There is no telling how big a man is because there is nothing by which to measure a man," he continues. And here again Traubel is followed by the newer anthropocentric philosophy (pragmatism). His optimism seldom relapses to the absolute, transcendental optimism that is so common with Whitman. Its usual form may be seen in these lines:

There is no loss but all lose: there is no gain but all gain: we move together.[70]

Traubel here concedes, as against Whitman, that there may be a loss in the universe. He insists only that where one loses all lose and where one gains all gain.

But even more fundamental in Traubel's mental make-up than his sub-conscious logic and philosophy is his courage in asserting himself and proclaiming the joy of life. Like Whitman he seizes, not so much with his mind *as with his whole being,* the central truth of life:

Duty won't put a man anywhere. Or what his fathers and mothers said he should and should not. Or books called sacred. Or the rigid arbitrary traditions of the schools. Only joy will put a man anywhere. . . .

Is it reasonable? What difference does that make? It's life. It's action. It's joy. . . . Suppose I am the most illogical of men. I am also the most joyous of men. I can't prove life. But I can live. I can't give you reasons. But I can give you life. . . .

Fortunes are made for somebody's fun of it. Revolutions break out just for everybody's fun of it. And when the disturbances are over the fun of it can be enjoyed by all.[71]

Traubel's attitude towards the future society, and indeed his whole work, as well as his philosophy, are all based on this humanistic optimism, and it is this that makes him an absolute rebel against present-day society. His whole position rests on what people have sometimes called faith, but it is not necessary to use that term. It should rather be called the courage of one's impulses (as we speak of the courage of one's convictions), or rather the courage of humanity's impulses, in which we all—in our varying ways—share.

From this point of view nothing is sacred except human nature. Human nature can take its natural forms only in a free society. And the only way we can bring about this new society is to unite in re-

fusing—as far as we can—to allow our natures to be coerced into existing molds. For example:

> Nothing is so obvious to the world we live in as that business must come before pleasure. Nothing after a while will be so obvious as the idiocy of this proposition. . . . My dearest comrade says: I'm so busy I can't write you. No one has any business to be so busy he can't write me. . . . The supposition is that love can be adjourned but that business can't be adjourned. But look out if you adjourn love. It's fatal. . . . I'd like to go into every busy office in the land and scatter its votaries to the four winds. There they are, too fat and too thin, too red and too pale, worshiping away like contrite ascetics in a temple. And they'll tell you, and everybody'll tell you, that it would be blasphemy to interrupt this divine procedure. My God. It makes me sick to see this arrogant infamy.[72]

From this profoundly revolutionary foundation, which amounts to a denial, in the name of human nature, of each and every principle upon which our society is supposed to rest, all of Traubel's revolutionary ideas may be logically traced, whether relating to individual morality or to society.

But what shall we say of Traubel's religious tendencies? Traubel's *Conservator* was originally an organ working for a broader religious unity, and Traubel himself was at first very much under the

influence of Emerson as well as Whitman. But his religion is ultra-rational rather than transcendental or mystical. Like Tolstoy he still has a tendency to retain the older terms, but in his "super-rationality" he even passes beyond Tolstoy. He quotes Spinoza's saying, "To define God would be to deny him," but he uses the term in such a way as very clearly to define and to deny the "God of our fathers." He deals with "God" as he does with "love," making them both no more important than their diametrical opposites:

I am no more afraid of Satan's bad than of God's good:
And but for me neither could have been and but for my good health the two would never merge:
And the good health of my body and of my soul is the good health of the spheres:
And Satan could not damn me alone: God would have something to say about that:
And God could not save me alone: Satan would have something to say about that:
And it is whispered me that I am to be neither saved nor damned anyway,
But that I am to save or damn myself to all eternity:
I, in whom God and Satan, for purposes not all seen, eternally melt beyond severance.[78]

Then he practically makes God a man among men, a brother rather than a father:

Therefore I say that I have taken God to be my brother not my king—
Therefore I say that this comrade universe is for all, God and all men and women and children equals of God, share and share alike. . . .
And it would be no disgrace to God to be as loyal to me as I am expected to be to God:
The debt must be paid both ways until no balance is left on either side:
The debt of God to me so vast accruing and my debt to God piled up in mountainous eras of time. . . .
I meeting God perfectly equipped and worthy of God forever:
God meeting me perfectly equipped and worthy of me forever. . . .
They say I am too familiar with God,
They say that I talk of God as if he lived next door,
They say that I use God's name as freely as if it was my name or my child's name or the name of my bosom friend:
I am accused of being on speaking terms with God. . . .
And what God does for me is too wonderful to be set down with figures in an argument,
And I do not question but that what I do for God is no insignificant item. . . .
I have made God common to the commonest earth —he is the genius of every day and the crowd:
I have made God my brother where once I was told he was my ruler.[74]

Not only does Traubel refuse to put his God above man, but he refuses to give his God a superior position to himself—as we have already seen:

Let me be self-approved:
Once I prayed to God for myself and went hungry and thirsty with a full meal:
Now I pray to myself for God and though my lips receive neither food nor drink I am fed on richest returns. . . .
I pray to my soul,
I lock out the priest, I prohibit God, I forget how to read the books,
I refuse all presences but that presence which issues in myself.
Myself alone in prayer to myself alone. . . .
I pray for prayer alone and self alone ever and ever. . . .
The nearer you bring men to each other the nearer you have brought God to man:
What God can do for you is of least importance: what you can do for God is everything. . . .
You have hurried to accuse God: I accuse no one:
You have hastened to pardon God: I pardon no one.[75]

Nor is his treatment of Christ any more reverential (as reverence is ordinarily understood). In reviewing a recent work on Christ, Bouck White's "The Call of the Carpenter," Traubel says:

He realizes the crimes of institutional Christianity. But he wants to save Jesus. I have no doubt Jesus will be saved. But he won't be a lonesome figure. There will be Jesus. And there will be others. There will be a man bearing your name. And there will be a man bearing my name. And there will be men bearing everybody's names. They will be saved too. And no one will enjoy a special heaven or an isolated apotheosis. Jesus will take his chances. His human chances. Not his god chances. His man chances. Just as you will and I will. He will not be set apart. He is set apart to-day. . . . Jesus will never again be honored as a savior of saviors. He will only remain a savior. He will not be a god. He will be a brother. . . .[76]

In his treatment of the problem of body and soul, as well as the problem of sex, there also appears, at first sight, to be just a touch of the old religious asceticism or metaphysics, which is really the opposite to all that Traubel stands for:

My body, too, demands worship. But there was something before it. . . . I do not preach the unseen at the expense of the seen. . . . I follow the lead of my body till it becomes soul. I follow the lead of my soul till it becomes immortality.[77]

Here the body seems to be made inferior to and more or less separate from the soul, but other pas-

sages remove the impression. This uncertainty is probably due to the history of every language, which makes it extremely difficult, and almost impossible to avoid the use of these two terms, body and soul. The matter is clarified, however, in a poem published since the issue of "Optimos":

So I asked myself: How can there be any body and soul after all? maybe there's only me. . . .
And so I said to my body: I will no longer call you body: there must be another name for you:
And so I said to my soul: I will no longer call you soul: there must be another name for you.[78]

Nor is there any asceticism in Traubel's treatment of sex, and in this he is a perfect disciple of Whitman:

Now I say we must all gather ourselves on the side of reverence,
Answering with a triumphant yes the questions of the ardent blood. . . .
Think what it means to treat your passions as if the soul could not get along without them.[79]

Like all poets who have written effectively of love, Traubel realizes fully that the flesh and spirit, especially in this relation, are absolutely one:

If you will tell me why other things will submit to be denied and sent away but why love will never submit to be denied and sent away. . . .

If you will tell me what the dreams of lovers made flesh are for,
If you will tell me what the flesh of lovers made dream is for. . . .
If you will tell me what love is for I will tell you what life is for.[80]

Love between the sexes is to give way before nothing in life:

And so I do not doubt that the corruption in a man with love is purer than the saintliness in a man without love. . . .
And that you, no matter who you are, should go with love to the ends of love and not be afraid.[81]

"And I know that only those who are rich enough to pay tolls should attempt the journey," he continues, showing that he is no mere leveler. Nor is his treatment of sex life ever abstract, as his treatment of "love" in general sometimes appears to be. He will tolerate no theory of love—and to-day it is theories that are the levelers:

We speak of the sex problem as if it was all one story. But there are as many sex problems as there are people. And each case stands alone. Every time a man meets a woman a new sex problem is propounded. . . . Every time a boy makes love to a girl it is a first time. There's always something which never entered into the solution before.[82]

V

THE PHILOSOPHER OF DEMOCRACY

"The Collective People"

WE are now prepared to grasp the most important part of Traubel's thought and work, his social philosophy.

Fully as basic in his character and philosophy as his Socialism, is his extraordinarily eloquent insistence on the absolute inviolability of the individual, the ultimate import of human personality:

> You can never know what you amount to till you count yourself up. Till you have made immense claims. Till you have been guilty of colossal impudence. . . . Voltaire said: If God did not exist we would have to invent him. You say: If I did not exist God would have to invent me.[83]

Nor does Traubel fail to reconcile his apparently contradictory affirmations of the inviolability of the individual and the all-importance of the masses:

> Let me be my own kind of a man. I would rather be my own kind of a man than any other kind of a

man. Than any genius. Than any saint. . . . I don't want to be happy. I do want to be myself. I want all that comes to me as myself. But I want nothing that comes to me as some one else. . . . Every man belongs to himself. Demands first of all the sovereignty of his own soul.

Makes no compromise. Yet acquiesces in the crowd. Owns himself, yet is owned by the crowd. Willingly defers in crowd things to the decision of the crowd. Never confuses the one claim with the other. . . . Regarding the boundaries between the two with delicate honor. Even with a cruel austerity. My life and other lives. Yet acknowledging again that the line drawn can't be drawn. Leaving the matter unsolved. Intimating rather than insisting upon the distinction. Feeling rather than seeing the way. . . .

Any kind of a man can be lost in a crowd. But to be found in a crowd: that demands a man of men.[84]

At the same time Traubel's attachment to the masses is as unqualified as is his devotion to the individual man. He does not lose himself in the masses. But neither does he lose his relation to them, nor allow this relation to become merely idealistic. The individual has his significance solely as his life directly proceeds from and goes out to other individuals and to the great masses of men:

I've met the sayers of democracy. But I want to meet the democrat. They say the people may be all

right sometime but not yet. I take the people as they are. I don't idealize them. They're the sure material in my foundations. I don't give them faith. They give me faith. They're not built upon me. I'm built upon them. . . . I've changed my definitions. I've never modified my purposes. I've always wanted the one result. I've not always agreed with myself as to how the result was to be brought about. I've wanted people without anything else. I've wanted to make less of countries and more of people. Less of books. Less of arts and sciences. Less of beauty. Important as all may be. Less of all of them and more of all the people. . . . People first. Before all the wealth and splendor of state. Before all the saviors and savings of society. Before all incomes and ambitions. . . . That's what I was born into the world for a quarter of a century ago. That's what I've stayed in the world for. That's what I'm going to pass into the future for. To say this one thing.[85]

The reconciliation of individual self assertion and devotion to the masses—which seems an insoluble contradiction to many—is in reality no problem at all for Traubel. His sole self-expression lies in that direction and in every communion with the crowd he is always able to find something for himself, to further his own development. He goes farther, for he recognizes no separation, but feels himself the very child of "the collective people":

I am not born of the seed of my father planted in the body of my mother. I am born of the collective people. I can't conceive of the man and the crowd. As if they were set off from each other. No. I can only see the man in the crowd. As I can also mystically see the crowd in the man when I look again. If I hadn't the people to talk about I'd have nothing to say. If I was left to talk of some one person or of myself I'd feel as if I was without a subject. . . . Some of you have money in bank and live on that. Some of you are famous. You live on fame. But I? What have I got? Only the people. I live on the people. And so I say everything that's worth while lives on the people. Every product of the brain or the heart that's worth while lives on the people. Philosophy, religion, the inspired canvases, the visions of seers: they all live on the people.[86]

Nor does Traubel care where this deepest feeling of his soul leads him, he gives himself over to it with utmost abandon—not by an act of faith, for it is done entirely of his own spontaneous initiative, without internal struggle, but by an act of will—an act that is in no degree forced, but an expression of his whole nature. After describing the eloquent sermon of a Negro minister, which contained the refrain "I don't know where I'll be, but I'll be in the procession of the Lord," Traubel says of himself:

I don't know where I'll be but I'll be in the procession of man:
I may be first or last: what difference does it make? I may be much or nothing:
Look for me: can you find me? in there: in the throng—in the endless winding moving panorama:
Look in the farthest back place: there you'll see me: where the crush is greatest: there I'll be:
Not with the artists: not with the famous: no: with the crowding jamming nondescripts: there:
I'm not proud or humble: I like the touch of the unknown: I'm at home with unlettered things: the university scares me:
I reach for a spot where life is commonest: I find my part in the mix of the street: I drop out of sight:
But I'm never out of the procession: I never step aside, letting it go on without me: I'm with it for good and all:
I may be tired: I may be jostled: I may be hurt: I may even be angry: but I never step aside.[87]

It is true that his advocacy of the cause of the "people" is occasionally expressed in such a way as to sound like leveling populism or the regimentation of State Socialism rather than the individualistic Socialism of a free society. We have an example of this when he says:

Now I gave genius back all its prestige,
Now I was contented to be alone with love
In the average practice of men.

But such passages are rather passing moods than permanent elements in Traubel's philosophy, for his insistence on the absolute inviolability of every individual portends an increase of the rôle of genius, the unshackling of all the latent genius that now goes to waste among the masses of the people, rather than an acceptance of "the average practice of men." He idealizes "the crowd," not in order to reduce the individual, but because he believes that the individual can only have his maximum development in the most complete democracy, and because the masses of to-day, precisely on account of their present lack of culture, are the only force through which the traditional culture of the past can be effectively opposed.

The individual finds his present meaning only in the crowd, just as he finds his lasting meaning only in the race:

It makes me feel so big to feel all my fathers and mothers back of me pushing me ahead:
It makes me feel so little to feel all the girls and boys, my farthest children, dragging me into the illimitable future. . . .

For having all the earth to myself would be nothing to me if I did not have the people inhabiting the earth.[88]

When you corner anything. Even virtue. When you corner pictures or books or curios. When you corner ideas. When you jealously corner your dreams. When you eat too much while others eat too little. When you dedicate any of the sources of life to anything but the common privilege. Then you have sold your soul for dirt. If your love stops with your family. If you can love your own children and not love the children of others.[89]

Dependence on the people or on the race is in no way a limitation of the individual but only his natural fulfilment:

I was sent here I don't know what for: I know I was not sent here to be free:
I can't cut loose, I can't be dismissed: I can no more sign myself away than be signed away.
Is it so terrible to be tied to things? to not be able to lose yourselves in nowhere as nobodies?
It would be more terrible to be a cosmic orphan. . . .[90]

An excellent concrete illustration of Traubel's conception of the relations of society and the individual is found in his treatment of marriage. Mar-

riage is neither the exclusive concern of the individual nor is it purely a social institution:

Nothing can take the place of love. Nothing in marriage and nothing outside of marriage. If love is dead within marriage that moment the marriage ceases. And if love come to life outside marriage that moment the marriage begins. This is not a question as if between free love and some other kind of love. It's a question as if between loving and not loving. . . . It's no mistake for people who do love to live together the life of love wherever and however. And it's no mistake for people who don't love to live apart the life of friendship wherever and however. You can quote the law either way and it has no weight. Love alone fixes the standards of behavior. Every real marriage abolishes every law. . . . No individual has any right to say that such a thing is exclusively his business. Nothing is exclusively a man's own business. If he lived detached. If what he did had no general results. Then it might be his business. But nothing he does or thinks or says is so personal as that. It all reacts in some way on others. Everything has such reactions. Even your diet. Even your habits. Whether you get rest when you sleep. Whether you breathe right or wrong. It all has the remotest influences. That may not mean that the community should pass laws to control us so intimately. It only means that it's up to us, the individuals, to recognize the communal obligations. . . . "Marriage is at bottom a social institution." . . .

"Hence the mistake of the libertarians." I'd rather say: "Marriage is at bottom a love institution." "We must recognize this question to be at bottom a question of sex." I'd say love here instead of sex, as I said love there instead of social. . . . Marriage so far has been chiefly experimental. . . .[91]

Traubel provides a place for the genius and the exceptional individual; that place is in the crowd. He says finely of Lincoln: "He emerged from the crowd by staying in the crowd." But it cannot be denied that he gives far greater attention to the people in the mass than he does to any individuals who have become differentiated. Nor does he make exception even for those men of the people who, like Lincoln, are most representative of the people.

Like all revolutionary Socialists, Traubel is opposed to "leaders." This is well shown in what he says of H. G. Wells and others, as the authors of "The Great State":

These anticipators and specifiers want to go ahead and say: Come on. What they should do is to stay in the press of the fight and say: Let's go on. You persuade more people by comradery than by tutorship. You are more potential as a friend than as a prophet. Nothing is more offensive to a man who is not himself inherently a follower than to be followed by others. The instant a genuine leader finds himself followed he sneaks to the rear. I don't

want to be the light of the world. I want to add my light to the light of the world.[92]

Traubel believes that the feeling of to-day that there must always be somebody to lead is due solely to the servile condition in which the masses of men find themselves:

You have got so in the habit of serving under masters. You have been the subjects of kings so long. And of parliaments and presidents. And you have such false awe of professional men. Of men who talk and write. Of the merely ornamental arbiters of social values. That you imagine that when you pass over the border into the new life the leaders and professors will migrate with you. That you will still be compelled to look to them for the articles of social federation. You deify leadership. You are afraid to think of heaven as a democracy.[93]

I am pulling down the monuments. The great men. The masters. The leaders and superiors. The geniuses and the marvels. I shake them down in a common ruin. In order to rebuild greatness. In order to bring out of all what so far has been all brought out of some. I turn all values upside down. I turn ideals and instrumentalities upside down. In order that man may come up. Now man is below all the rest. Then all the rest will be below man.[94]

Traubel's attack on leaders is really one of the clearest definitions of his democracy, for if self-

government is to mean anything it must mean that the people do not follow. And what else does a leader mean except a person whom people follow? He objects as much, then, to spiritual leaders as to political leaders, for he feels that their influence is mainly to demoralize individual initiative on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to make perverted egoists out of the few who offer themselves as leaders:

When the great artist appeared with his miracles I
thought of the plain facts of my own life and was
ashamed:
I showed my back to this wonderful performer and
returned as one dissatisfied among my fellows. . . .
And even the children were less than children, and
the men and women less than men and women.
This was worship: this was my reach from the mud
to heaven: this was to go into the dust and ask
of life that it pardon me for having lived:
This strange awe before power and skill—this shudder
of despair, this knave confession and fool regard.
This was what came in the travail of my passions,
when power was let loose without love,
This was the largess of authority, this was the legend
and entail of the despot.[95]

Perhaps the world has never had a spiritual leader or great man so much exalted and so universally recognized as Shakespeare. Without sharing in

any of the petty criticisms of Harris or Shaw, without taking anything whatever away from Shakespeare or his work, Traubel makes this effective protest against Shakespeare worship:

All the priesthoods agree about Shakespeare as they do about the Bible. The theological, literary, university, journalistic, scientific, medical, priesthood. They all say the same thing. And they say it with a club. They say it with armed and vitriolic adjectives. If you defy their creed you are subject to inquisitorial denunciation. Your reputation's gone. You're no scholar. You have no historic perspective. You're unesthetic. You take yourself too seriously. You're in revolt against culture. . . . I don't blame Shakespeare for being puffed up by gaseous adulation into a historic monstrosity. He had nothing to do with it. But I don't find myself drawn towards such an irritating and arrogant tradition. Every new Shakespeare book excites in me this old Shakespeare resentment. I was going to say I want a place in the sun for greatness but not for the great man. But maybe I should say I want a place in greatness, which is the general sun, for the people and not for the incidental genius of a master. Then again making one too big makes all the rest too little. The great man of the schools is less likely to light the way than to be in the way. You who are reading me right now: What do you honestly think of Shakespeare? I don't ask you to tell me, though I'd like you to. I only ask you to tell yourself, for you must.

If, as the orthodox inform us, the Bible and Shakespeare are enough, then pastoralism and feudalism are enough. Then we might as well all be dead. Then we are all dead. But if pastoralism and feudalism are not enough, then Shakespeare and the Bible are not enough. Then open your doors and let the fresh air in. Then we might as well all be alive. Then we are all alive.[96]

Traubel attacks our present civilization in the name of the people. This civilization consists, largely, in the false voices of leaders—spiritual and temporal:

They are the false voices. They have told your story. Or, rather, told an invented story as yours. You will find it in most of their arts and literatures. They have lied about you. They have lied against you in lying for you. They have got everybody crooked. And they have been believed in. Why, even you have believed in them. You have acquiesced in their terrible picture of yourselves. You have assented to yourselves at their estimate. . . . You have never trusted yourselves to your own voice. Any other voice was better than your own. Any fool voice. Any corrupt voice. Any king's voice or bishop's voice or baron's voice. Any voice was more welcome to you than your own voice. . . .

You allowed others to say it for you. They did not say it. Now you must let me say it for you. I will say it. If I fool you then send me where you sent

them. I will say it for you for a little bit. Merely until you are ready to say it for yourself. Just overnight, maybe. Just while you are getting good and ready, maybe. Just to fill the gap. Holding you up not to your own scorn but to your own pride. Not to tell you I can take charge of your affairs for you. Telling you only that you must take charge of them yourselves. Not flattering you. Not praising you for what you are not and have not done. No. Rather accusing you. Rather pointing out what you may become and what you may do. Let me say it for you. And even if I do not say it for you you have got to live it for yourself. And living is better than saying.[97]

Civilization is represented by the lies of the leaders of the past and present. Against this dead or dying civilization stand the living men of to-day:

Everything goes back to the people. I'm not interested in suns. I'm interested in people. Mountains and moons and trees have no meaning to me till they are peopled. Your philosophies and dreams are insignificant till they are peopled. I know nothing but people. I comprehend nothing but people. If you sing a song I hear people in it. If you paint a picture I see people in it. If I didn't hear the people or see the people I might as well be deaf and blind. If you tell me there are so many rivers in a country or so many acres of ground and ask me: What do you think of that? I say: I don't think of that: I only think of people. If you name the great men to me and

ask: What do you make of them? I answer: I make nothing of them: I make everything of the people. . . .

If your theories don't give me the people. Or your governments. Or your sciences. Or your vast cities. Or anything you build or pride yourselves upon. . . . You say the sculpture of Greece, the paintings of Italy, the music of Germany. I say people.[98]

Our present civilization in its so-called "higher" aspects is held as a burden that the people carry and not as a treasure they inherit:

What pack have you got on your back? What load are you carrying that's not your own? What's that burden under which you are bent? Symonds wrote to Walt Whitman: "Do what I may I can't get that Oxford pack off my back." . . . Think what we've carried round on our backs. All the creeds exciting people against people. All the laws making least of most and most of least. All the jails for saints and all the executive mansions for sinners. All the arts treacherous to all. The churches alone are full of death. It's a wonder we ever survived the churches alone. Not to speak of the colleges founded by and for the aristocracy. They have all been on our backs. And the books that made light of the people. Millions of dead books mountain high.[99]

Traubel's revolutionism spares nothing. He attacks not only our civilization but nearly all its

products, its much vaunted "education," its heroes, and even its saviors, who after all are only a sort of sanctified leaders:

Every time you try to live for yourself some savior interferes to live for you. . . . The church will live for your soul. The state will live for your body. You find all the saviors waiting to live for you. Refusing to let you live for yourself. Taxing you to death to crown themselves for life. You have thought of the saviors dying that you might live. Think again. And you will see yourself dying that the saviors may live. My life is the people's life. I no more die for the people than the people die for me. Look the saviors straight in the face. Defy them. Refute them by an appeal to your own treasure. Every time you save yourself you destroy a savior. Do you want to be saved by another? What is the price of salvation? Your body and soul are the price. You are to give up everything. That is the price. Not give up everything to all. No. That would be a fair price. Give up everything to the saviors. That is the price. That is the pirate fee. . . . What is left after you have settled with the saviors? The saviors are left. But nothing is left of you. . . . The saviors used to succeed. Now you may notice that the saviors fail. The saviors only succeed when the people fail. When the people succeed the saviors fail. Saviors belong with kings and owners and bosses. When the people at last object to being ruled or owned or bossed the saviors will disappear with the saved.[100]

The mere fact that civilization is so largely inherited is in itself an evidence that it is in so far dead. The people must question—and question suspiciously—every iota of "culture" that is handed down to them, whether from those above them today, or by their own ancestors, the miseducated masses of past generations:

So people mustn't be telling people all the time in hushed tones that tradition is to be respected. Ten chances out of nine it's rather to be distrusted than confided in. At the very least we must test it every day to see if it has grown any with time overnight. Nobody has more love for the Declaration than I have. But I keep on asking it questions. And I always expect it to answer my questions. So with any body of procedure, legal, ecclesiastical or literary. With any pre-assumption of the sciences or the arts. I ask questions. And I want answers. I always say to everybody: Ask questions. I want the crowd to ask questions. The mob. They didn't ask so many at the start when the United States got under way. They've been asking more and more. And they've got more still coming. We can't afford to give masters, bosses, superiors, rulers, compacts, kings, presidents, a moment's peace. We'd be guilty if we let them sleep any nights. And we'd be sinners if we let them loaf any days. They must give an account of themselves. Not to a few. Not to committees, commissions, judges, assemblies: not to any special set self-selected, chosen, or appointed.[101]

I have already illustrated the mixture of deep sympathy and irreverence with which Traubel handles the sacred things of our civilization. This spirit is very strongly brought out in his recent poem, "Hello, Central!":

Hello, central!
Hello, central! And the answer came back:
Along the mysterious wire traveled the voice of the invisible to the ear of the unseen. . . .
What do you want? the words hurried me out of my dream: what do you want?
What did I want? I wanted religion: I said so: give me religion:
And I waited, hearing the click and buzz of strange sounds: feeling the sting of the current flowing across:
Give me religion, I said: and then it came: I am religion, it said:
And I asked my questions: they were the questions of my heart: but they went unanswered:
It was not religion answering: it was theology: it was a creed: I heard the mumbled prayers of a priest:
Hello, central! I cried: you've given me the wrong number: I wanted religion: you've given me the church.
I called up information: What's religion's number? I asked:
Information said: I don't know anything about religion: I only know the church.

Was I to despair? was I to sit down and cry myself sick? where was religion?
Hello, central! central again: try justice: try equity: give me honor and equality!
I heard my name called: how did they know my name? well, what did I want?
I was again answered without getting an answer: I don't seem to know what you want, the answerer said:
And the answerer said: I am the state: I don't seem to know anything about right and wrong![102]

Apply this renunciation of saviors and sanctities to the poet-prophet idea of Whitman. America was to be *saved* by a new class of heroes. They were to be leaders who brought new ideas and a new inspiration to the people. These were to be democratic ideas, but the inspiration was to come from the few to the many, from a natural born élite. Traubel, on the contrary, renounces heroes, leaders, prophets—and bibles, new or old. He will go to the people to get inspiration just as much as to bring it to them. He will not tell them how to be worthy democrats. They will tell him how to be a worthy democrat, and he will pass on the message to the world.

In reviewing Bernard Shaw's "Socialism and Superior Brains" Traubel shows even less respect than Shaw does for all that now goes under the name of education and culture:

Do I see your superior brains? You go to school. You learn how to use good English. You can't do anything. But you can talk nice. I can make a shoe for your foot. Can you make anything for my mind? No. You can only talk good English. You can only fol de rol about philosophy and art. You can't help people to live. You can't even help them to die. Do I see your superior brains? I know the hyena can bite. I know the craft of the fox. I know the poison of the snake. Do I see your superior brains? You weigh more pounds than I do. You go away in summer and loaf somewhere at your ease. You know how to spend money. You don't know how to make money. Honestly. By some form of human service. But you know how to spend.[103]

Our present education and culture Traubel regards as a mere by-product of class rule. He does not deny that a great many of the really stronger characters find their way from the masses into the ruling classes, nor that a more than proportionate number of the weaker ones remains among the mass, but mere strength is not necessarily worth anything whatever to society or to the race:

We do everything to produce the weak men. The strong men are either seduced or destroyed. The strong man is given only one alternative. He can decide to be weak. Then he may be left to be honest.

He may decide to be strong. Then he must be converted to the class of those who exploit. Our civilization leaves only honesty to the weak. It leaves only robbery to the strong.[104]

VI

THE POET OF SOCIALISM

AS a radical Socialist Traubel is not satisfied to attack existing institutions from a vaguely popular standpoint, but sees that if a people's movement is to revolutionize all civilization, it must be organized and must develop a program in accord with the tendencies of social evolution. He believes that the Socialist movement has such a program and he fully accepts that movement, though without allowing himself for a moment to be submerged by its temporary forms. He even concedes the need of a rigidly logical doctrine, and only protests against materialism or any interpretation of Socialism that is exclusive or narrow:

My material economists give me only another word for the mystery. They have not begun to see. But they think they are through seeing. . . . Socialism is not only anti profit. Not only anti exploitation. Not only anti to all physical lordships. Socialism goes below all foundations and above all superstructures. It can be proved to a cent. And it baffles all demonstration. I understand what the too too Socialist Socialists

say to all this. . . . They say: Why don't you stick to figures? But you've got to stick to something else before and after you stick to figures.[105]

You may sneer all you choose at the Socialism that's up in the air. It still remains true that you breathe the air. You may say anything you please of our dreams. It still remains true that nothing ever became a fact but through a dream. . . . Well—what are you doing with the technique of Socialism? You want to learn it. Then you want to forget you ever knew anything about it. You want to use it as an instrument. But you mustn't adopt it as an end. The technique of Socialism is like the technique of anything else. It's often best observed in the breach. Technique makes cowards of us all. If Socialism is an invention then it can be diagrammed for good. But if it's an evolution then it must have variations and elasticity and submit itself to the constant expansions of the human spirit. Natural selection will dispose of the dogmatist. Jessie Hughan says: "The tactics are still in the making." So they are. So they always will be. Once they are made they become a tyrant institution. They are only safe in the making. They become a menace when made. . . . You and I, too: we are only useful in the making. If we ever get made we'll be a check on the truth. You can't exempt your historic movements from this law. Socialism will always only be safe in the making. When it gets made something'll have to happen to get it making again. Some people already have Socialism made.[106]

Traubel will accept no substitute for the Socialist reality. Recognition of certain facts is not Socialism, neither is the acceptance of any formula, nor adhesion to any fixed social tactics or individual course of conduct. And above all he rejects that interpretation of Socialism which makes it an exclusive instead of an inclusive movement:

Note the radicals. We take it for granted that they're not drifters. Yet some of the deadest dead wood of thought is called radical. Radicals get into ruts. They group into classes, cliques, machines, orthodoxies. They commit themselves to incidental follies. They test the whole of life by a piece of life instead of a piece of life by the whole of life. They advise the people but they refuse to be advised by the people. . . . You may assume that all institutional feeling is drift and all revolutionary feeling is mastery. But that don't follow. There's radical drift as well as conservative drift. There's drift towards as well as away from the past. Your libertarians themselves may be slaves of a process—pawns in a routine.[107]

It is unnecessary to point out that such a liberal Socialist as Traubel will pay a far higher and more willing tribute to the great individualists—provided only they are democrats—than he will to the dogmatic or partizan Socialists, however eminent. It may be doubted, for example, if the character of

that uncompromising anti-Socialist, John Bright, has ever received a fuller appreciation than this:

He was for getting rid of all the rulers everywhere and all the ruled everywhere. The final touch was never given to Bright's nerve. He was never poor. He was never in prison. But he was better than ever having been poor. He was capable of being poor. And he was better than ever having been in prison. He was capable of enduring imprisonment. Being poor may be a necessity. Being in jail may be a misfortune. But being ready to face and accept adversity is the supreme gift of personality. Bright had no earth hunger. He was for England giving up what she has rather than for seizing more. He had no money hunger. He was for everybody having enough money. He didn't seem to know how they could get enough. But he was in favor of it. . . . He was not afraid to be called a sentimentalist. To remind grandees and ecclesiastics that their powers and their gratuities were all drawn from the blood of the people. He didn't go the route. But he talked the route. He acknowledged that we may be able at a given time to go only part way. But he insisted that we could always see all the way. Bright didn't seem to realize what privilege was built on. But he recognized its victims. He protested without knowing just what he was protesting against. But he made his charge in a spirit so righteously aflame that its fire scorched the flesh of the guilty. He had so much faith in peace that he fought like a soldier.[108]

While Traubel must be regarded as a liberal Socialist he is also one of the most radical; indeed, he turns out to be quite as much a fighter as a lover:

We are going to make mistakes. We are going to be hot. We are going to do you some injustice. We are going to be stern. We are going to use words that overshoot and words that undershoot the mark. . . . Fight. That is our word. . . . We do not fight because we hate but because we love. We do not fight to take away anything from anybody. We fight to give away everything to everybody.[109]

In a review of Emma Goldman's book on Anarchism, while disagreeing with her on some fundamental points, he yet puts a high value on her work and life just because she is a fighter against existing institutions:

Emma Goldman is one of the voices of the new evangelization. One of the stirrers of strife, if you choose. Stirrers of strife are stirrers of life. Stirrers of love.[110]

In one of his most eloquent "Collects," Traubel regards himself also as a "stirrer of strife." One passage contains as bold and defiant a challenge to the ruling classes as can be found anywhere, though it is by no means a unique passage in Traubel's writings. He says:

I hit you without apologizing instead of apologizing without hitting you. I might be so gentle you could not understand my rebuke. That would please you. But I am so honest you can't misunderstand me. That pleases me. My business is not to platitudinize myself into the favor of the court. My business is to be always in contempt of court. I could not shine as a ruly member of society. I am only at home as an outcast. I am only at ease when the police are after me. I am only right when I have done wrong. I know that when I am endorsed there is something the matter with me. And I know that when I am denounced I am all right. For I am a disturber of the peace. . . .

I break in upon you with my brutal taunts. I turn myself into a question mark and follow you wherever you go. I am in the food you eat. In the clothes you wear. In every cent you spend. You can't buy a box of cigars but I lean over your shoulder and say something to distress you. I make you report to me. I ask you for figures. My presence fills you with hatred. I come and go before your eyes planting revolt. Little by little, here and there, by words that warn and challenge, I succeed in stirring up the waters under your ship. . . . In order that all of us may be what all of us must become the few of you must be reduced to the ranks. . . . We don't go round through all the hours of the night like loyal watchmen crying: It's one o'clock—or any other o'clock—and all is well! We don't cry: Sleep on!

We cry: It's one o'clock—or any o'clock—and all is ill! We cry: Wake up![111]

The only kind of radical Traubel cares about is the militant radical, the agitator, the type that was embodied, for example, in Wendell Phillips. Of the great abolitionist he writes:

Phillips was no beg your pardon revolutionist. He was no by your leave man. There was no now you see me now you don't in his propaganda. He was always all there. He was never round the corner. He was never missing. He had no important friends to pay court to or ornamental dinners to stuff with.[112]

There can be no question that with all of Traubel's attacks on the ruling classes there is mixed a deep element of sympathy. His hope is always to make converts of them—for their own sakes—even though he confesses he has been often disillusioned in this direction and is aware that the democratic movement can have no hope of winning over the privileged class as a whole. And, whether his hope is justified or not, his attack is so just and pierces so deep that it tends to force these classes to a realignment along the line of the deeper issues, which is a vast gain—no matter which side they finally take.

Yet Traubel does not spare the ruling class. In accord with the most profound truth of the whole

Socialist philosophy, he makes all of his attacks personal. He gives no attention to the social system in the abstract. He attacks it as embodied in men—though he never goes so far as to say that class-consciousness is all that is embodied in any man:

Labor is finding that it has been too generous. It is wondering why it should fatten you with plenty and starve itself. It has been comparing the rosy cheeks of your children with the pale faces of its own darlings. . . . You have charged the costs of culture to labor. Every college represents an enforced tribute. . . . Labor is not going to borrow the weapons of earthquakes and waterspouts. It is simply going to swarm on its own roads, occupy its own homesteads, enjoy its own pleasures, work out the measure and shape of its own will, and leave you to fall in line in the one way that will secure you against annihilation. Labor is not going to destroy anything. It is not going to destroy even you. It is going to use everything. It is going to use you. Labor does not say you are useless. Labor says you are useful. And to prove you against yourself labor is going to make use of you.[113]

It's all nonsense for the man up town to call the man down town his brother. For the man at the top to call the man at the bottom his brother. For the man who is a victim to call the man who is the victor his brother. The man who is my brother goes round with my money in his pocket. More than that, with

my dreams in his soul. He makes my possible opportunity for life his actual opportunity for life. He's my brother, he says. He's not my brother, I say. And I couldn't be his brother under the same conditions.[114]

Whether the proffered "brothering" on the part of the ruling classes takes the shape of telling the wage-earner how to finance his family or how to use his leisure it is equally insufficient:

Don't ask the workingman what he can live with. Ask him what he can live without. Don't ask him how much food he needs to be really alive on. Ask him how much food will keep him from really dying. Don't let him figure it out for himself. You figure it out for him. His income must not be the wages of your sin. He's not to choose. He's to be chosen for. Good people, bad people, indifferent people, are studying the question. . . . All this tabulated sympathy is a species of negation. It sounds like: What can I do for you my good man? No matter how innocent we may be we suggest guilt. We don't say: Present your bill. We say: Let us edit your bill. . . . What is the working class creatively to help itself to? Can you tell? No. You only want to know what they can live on. You say nothing as to what belongs to them. You only speak of what they can be allowed. The working class, you see, are not to have what they produce. They are to be given an allowance. A living allowance is hay to feed the horse on to-night

so the horse can work for us to-morrow again. You can cut off all his sources of supply. If you do you cut off his source of life. If he can't work you must. So he must be kept in condition. Not in condition for manhood. Far from that. In condition for an industrial serfdom. You don't want him to be good off. Then he'd get cocky. You don't want him to be too bad off. Then he'd die. You want him to live so you can live. If he dies you die. Or you work. Which is worse than dying. So we must discover some way of preservation. We want to take care of a man so he can do the most work possible with his chains on.[115]

Our fight is a fight for leisure. That's true. But it's not leisure's fight for us. It's our fight for leisure. Remember that. We want to do things. We need time and space to do them in. We're fighting for that time and space. That time and space is what we call leisure. We need room to move round in. That's what we're fighting for. Not for meals and clothes and houses. That's only the incident. We're after life and more life. We're after expansion. We want fresh air and sunlight to grow in. That's our fight. We don't fight to possess goods. We fight to stop goods from possessing us. We don't want to possess. Only, we don't want the other fellow to possess either. We want possession vested in all not in one. I only need to own when others own. If others stop owning I can be safe without a cent. . . . That illusion of the intellectual well-to-do that he is chosen to save the soul of the intellectual pauper is offensively

gratuitous. There's no man so rich he has any salvation to spare. There's no man so poor he has no salvation to pay for his keep. . . .[116]

While Traubel occasionally writes to the ruling class as if he thought it might be persuaded to consent to the social revolution, he never promises the people that they can gain anything without the stubborn resistance of that class. Thus he advises the people:

Keep to the road: do not turn back: no matter what happens, do not turn back:
There's poverty ahead and starvation ahead and battle ahead and death ahead: I refuse to see nothing. . . .
You have challenged the masters of the people and they are everywhere out to meet you:
The lords god of money, the lords god of trade, the lords god of the land, are out to meet you.[117]

And again:

"Strikes are desperate expedients. They are war. What's the use pretending? Let's tell our real names. There is war between capitalism and labor. Desperate, unequivocal war. The war is on. . . . Now labor challenges. Now capitalism challenges. They may compromise. But they don't forgive. There'll be no stop till the object is won. Labor will say when the war's over. Capitalism will have nothing to do with

fixing the date. Capitalism has had most of its say. Labor is yet to get most of its say. . . . This is a world war. It's not a quarrel between two races. It's a quarrel within the whole race. Take it to a still higher plane. It's a war between ideas. That which has been but is not to be. That which is to be but never has been. . . . Every morning you see fifty things in your paper about the war. It's not called war news. But it's war fact. If we printed all this news on a page or on pages together under a single display head indicating what it intrinsically is every man reading it would catch its dramatic suggestions. He would see that we are living through the immensest epic of the ages. He would read by the light of this conflagration the decrees of fate. Thermopylæ, Waterloo, Gettysburg, Sedan, alone or together, would seem cheap beside this overarching crisis. . . . Most people are blind. They say nothing's going on. They hear the noise of the conflict but they don't know what it means. Even when they are wounded they don't know what hit them. Even when they prematurely die they don't divine to what they are sacrificed. They look upon boycotts and strikes and lockouts as evidences of peace. No. They are evidences of war. And this war instead of being the mildest is the severest of wars. Old wars were horrible in form and trivial in substance. The new war is terrible in substance and innocent in form.[118]

As the social war involves suffering on the part of the oppressed so Traubel has a right to demand from

the oppressor that he too make a sacrifice, though it may be against existing human nature to expect that this appeal will be heeded in social circles where material allurements are so great and where training has been so radically wrong. Whichever class he may come from, every genuine Socialist must be driven mainly, not by the material advantages he can hope to obtain in the near future for himself or his fellows, but by the feeling that his work for Socialism gives him his present mission in the world and promises the greatest present opportunity *both for self-development and for social service:*

Of course I have a mission: and you?
If I had no mission what would I have? and you?
If I had no mission I would have no life: if I had no mission I would have no love:
My mission is the course I sail: my mission is my indestructible dream:
There are the stars I steer by: there are the comrades I steer by. . . .
With masters against slaves, with money against men: do we know what our mission is? . . .
With drawing lines everywhere instead of wiping lines out everywhere: do we know what our mission is? [119]

Traubel thinks, however, that class lines exist, and must be recognized if they are to be wiped out, that everybody is involved in some way in the

class struggle—if not actively, then, passively. If one does not take an active part in bringing about the new society or in defending the old, one is at least either among the exploiters or among the exploited. There is no innocent public:

Then they tell us about the innocent public. The innocent public suffers. Suffers for something it has nothing to do with. Don't believe it. There is no innocent public. There is only the guilty public. If that innocent public wasn't guilty there'd never be a strike. If that innocent public wasn't the guilty stubborner of profit there'd be no economic injustice. Don't talk to me about the innocent public. I have its face hung in my rogues gallery.[120]

Traubel is not a Socialist who drifts whichever way the movement happens to be going for the moment. He is a Socialist only so long as the movement is true to itself. For example, he condemns the mere reformer inside the movement as well as without—the man, that is, who in advocating certain relatively small social changes believes, or pretends to believe, that he is working as fast as is practicable towards a new society:

I want Socialism to be sternly narrow so it may become prophetically broad. I want it to be cruel so it may be kind. I want it out of feeling to not care whose feelings it hurts. I want it to refuse to have

anything that it has to get wearing a mask. It is entrusted with an earth mission. I want it to have an earth voice. I want it to have an earth scope. I want it to get what belongs to it as soon as it can. But I want it to wait as long as it must. I don't want it to abbreviate itself to the dimensions of a political platform. Nor do I want it to withdraw into some hermit isolation. I'm not afraid of banners. I who believe in symbols. I don't discredit the stars and stripes. I who credit the red flag. I'm not sorry to have my feet on earth. I whose brow is in the heavens. But after all I am a quarreler. I plant myself on the spot where I belong. There I challenge the conventions.[121]

It must not be supposed that Traubel despises any reform or is unwilling to *accept* any concessions. He is only unwilling to *make* concessions himself, or to accept, even in part, any existing social injustice—which he would consider as making him an accomplice in social crime, a "compounder of the felony."

You will never hear me say that you are defeated, dear comrades. You may make concessions. But I will make no concessions. Do you think that when I look at your children I can make concessions? . . . Your masters have sent you to bed whipped. Will you get up to-morrow morning defiant? Your temporary report is made to defeat. Your final report

is made to victory. You asked for ten per cent. You asked for nine hours. You asked for something. You got nothing. That is, nothing except a little stiffening of the fiber. And so you think you were licked. But I tell you that strengthening of the fiber is worth more to you than ten per cent. or than nine hours. Defeat? This world is your world. But you have thrown away the title. And no admitted defeat will pick up that title for you again. But the defeats that you will not admit will in the hour of your riper courage return you your rejected heritage. . . .

I would rather have a whole-hearted enemy than a half-hearted friend. I would rather entertain a bad idea with all my heart than a good idea with half my heart. I would rather that capital was all right and labor all wrong than that labor should compromise with half a claim for the sake of peace. I would rather have a world full of honest tyrants than a world full of dishonest courtiers. I would rather have strength in my enemy than weakness in myself.[122]

To Traubel Socialism means a vast social movement and not a mere political party. He is not willing to appeal to the public for the party on the opportunistic ground that the victory of Socialism will make no sweeping changes and have no effect on cherished institutions and ideals, such as patriotism and the home, nor does he believe that the changes which it is to bring about can be guaranteed to keep within any fixed limitations whatever:

We shouldn't take our gospel to the world and try to show how little it's going to shake up things. We should show how much it's going to shake up things. We shouldn't say: Don't be foolish and be afraid. We should say: Be wise and be afraid.[123]

With these views, Traubel naturally does not care for the compromising, dilatory, non-Socialist reformer. One of the best of these in America, Brand Whitlock, he trenchantly characterizes in less than four lines:

Whitlock is one of the thousand year men. He says these millennial results will surely come but give them time. I say: They may take time but I won't give them time.

Here we have not only the typical reformer's view but also that of the genuine Socialist as opposed to him. Could more be said in so few words?

In these days of destructive and criminal "patriotism" directed as much against other countries as for the benefit of one's own, there is no better test of the true revolutionary spirit than one's attitude on this question. Here as elsewhere Traubel does not flinch. He reviews Gustave Hervé's "Leur Patrie" with full approval and asks:

When will the whole Socialist movement consent to stand unequivocally against patriotism? We are

either one race or we are not one race. We are either a brotherhood or we are not a brotherhood. If we are one race, if we are a brotherhood, then the patriot is out of place. He belongs to another world. Unfortunately, not to a world that the world has outlived. Hardly that. But to a world that we are outliving. To a world that the Socialist certainly has outlived. . . . But the Socialist patriot? What can we say to the Socialist patriot? He is an anomaly. He is without a reason for being.[124]

When Traubel wrote these lines the present war had not begun and Socialist "patriots" were not yet in a majority as they are now in all the countries at war, if not everywhere. This situation, together with Traubel's profound and instinctive antipathy to war, makes his views in the present great conflict between the nations one of the best possible tests of his whole position. He has handled it at great length and from many angles.

It needs hardly be said that Traubel has seized this occasion once more to point out that no real democrat can be a mere nationalist or patriot, a mere American, for example:

If I say I'd choose my country wrong to any other country right you slap me on the back as a patriot. But if I say I'd choose any other country right to my country wrong you shoot me as a traitor. You say: Now's the time to shut up. I say: Now's the

time to talk out. They ask me: Would you like to be a German? Or they ask me: Would you like to be an Englishman? What can I say? I had nothing to do with what I am. I want to have nothing to do with what I'm to be. When it comes to races, I don't want to choose. Or men, I don't want to choose. If I choose then I'm lost. Then I've set one above another. That's war. I'm for peace.[125]

In another passage Traubel shows how profoundly opposed democracy is to that militant nationalism which rests upon assertions of superiority. He says:

I don't want to be superior. I hate superiority. When the German's superior I become anti. When the Englishman's superior I become anti again. A man may be right in all his ideas. But his superiority's wrong. I might agree with all his theories. But I dissent from his superiority. And the more right his superiority is the more I despise it.[126]

But Traubel is more radical than most Socialists. He is a communist, believing in the equal division of goods, and this belief is based—as in the case of Whitman and Tolstoy—on a belief in the *essential* sameness of persons. People being *essentially* equal and alike, there is no reason why one person (or nation) should be given more power or "means" than another, no reason why one person (or nation) should "use" another at all:

We'll have no peace as long as a shred of the old theories of combat and victory is left. As long as anybody anywhere has to fight for anything. Struggle will never be outlived. But the sacrifice of one by another must stop.

This is the very opposite idea to that of Kipling's "White Man's Burden." It is seen again in Traubel's sympathy for many of the ideas of Tolstoy:

The main thing in Tolstoy is his emphasis placed on people. On everybody. Not on somebody. Not on the virtuous. Not on selected democracies. But on the mob. The ragtag and bobtail. The discredited. Tolstoy contends for all.

This is the psychological or spiritual basis of communism as we see it in the founders of religions. The Socialist who is not a communist, on the contrary, believes that the value of individuals and of societies to humanity varies exceedingly. In this respect the Socialist is at the opposite pole from the communist. Traubel sometimes goes so far that he draws as little distinction between the various social systems as he does between individuals. He says:

I can't follow the hairsplitters and the quibblers. The document worshipers and the constitution mongers. For the people always come back to me. The

plaintive cry of the people. I can't draw lines. They're all people. Just about equally wise. Just about equally foolish. Just about equally deceived. Just about equally brutalized.

But here Traubel does not state his own position altogether correctly. For in another passage, written about the same time, he suggests that, while he is not uncritical of America, he distinctly prefers the American social system, because of its greater advance towards democracy:

For America to put on airs about its democracy is as bad as for Europe to put on airs about its culture. We are still in a wretched tangle. All of us. We have every reason for all being dubious of our perfections. Yet all also have good reasons for being thankful to each other. The worst of us has contributed something to the fund. The best of us haven't contributed enough to brag about. And as the effort of the bad to be good is often nobler than the effort of the good to be better we can say of nations that the treasure of the worst may stand for more than the treasure of the best. Our United States have made a state. It's full of faults. It looks back as well as ahead. It's anti-democratic as well as democratic. It discredits the people as well as trusts the people. It contradicts itself. It lies about itself. It shows itself one thing when it's another. Still it has eyes. It's peering into the future. It's calculating upon extensions of its democratic practice. To say

that we have a state administered by the people, controlled by the people, made as they please and unmade as they please by the people, is to go ahead of the figures. That's what we want. But that's not what we've got. In economics the people want the earth. But they've got very little of it. In politics they want the state. But they've got hardly any of it. There's too much between. Just as in religion. The people want the church. But they can't have it. And literature. And art and science. The people want all and sometimes I think they have nothing.

Traubel's self-imposed task in this passage was to state the case against America; he does it in a way to disclose his belief that it is in this country—at the present moment—that the greatest *efforts towards democracy* are being made. He *does* discriminate between nations then—if only in favor of America.

Traubel's strongest attack on the present war is when he assaults those non-Socialists who claim it is being fought for democracy and against militarism. He points out that when these persons are not Socialists they are not really democrats themselves, since they stand for another and a far more costly war:

But terrible as this war is your economic peace is worse. Low as the war goes this peace goes lower.

Savage as battles are profits are savager. Treacherous as strategy is the system is more deceitful. You are horrified because the Germans laid tribute on Brussels. It was horrible. But horror don't become you. For you have exacted such tribute that this is in comparison a mere mote in a sunbeam. You can be shocked by a formal war. But here we have a war worse than war. And here you are unperturbed. You shudder over a battlefield. But you regard poverty with equanimity. . . . Coupons, dividends, interests, profits: they're all deadlier than rifle balls. They're the blow in the dark. They're the assault in the night. You who denounce the Zeppelins approve of profits. The Zeppelin murders while the people sleep. So does your income. And you are so concerned for the noncombatant. For the people who can't fight back. For women and children. For the too old and the too young. But who does your income spare? When you get that which you have given no equivalent for, who is spared?[127]

Yet in spite of his intense reaction against the present war, Traubel's optimism stands the test, he will not take a pessimistic view even of war. The motives that led to the conflict are among the worst, the results may be of the best. And it is the social function of the people to see to it that it is so. The war must be fought, not to a finish, but "to a revolution":

What are the people going to get out of the war? Is the clock to be set back? I never see anything going that way. I see everything going on. I don't grieve with my sorrows. I make use of them. I can't see the war wholly wasted however I look at it. I can see it wholly wicked. Wholly horrible and wholly inexcusable. Wholly stupid and wholly impossible. Yet I gather up its ashes and scatter them across the earth and know that they must bring us returns. I'm not making the worst of the best bargain. I'm making the best of the worst bargain. I can't conceive of a worse way to get anywhere. I can't imagine a more idiotic method of humanizing society. I can't concoct a more devilish scheme of growth. But I'm still resolute. I still say granting you your barbarism I'm going to get something civilized out of it. Something for the people. That's the only civilized thing anywhere, anytime, anyhow. Anything you get for the masters of the people. Anything you get for those who isolate land and the product of labor from the people. Anything you leave in the possession of rulers. Anything. That's all blasphemy. That's all robbery. That's all barbarism. But anything you get for the people. No matter what you get. No matter how little the people want it or even deserve it. That's all civilized.[128]

A social rebel like Traubel would be expected to carry his spirit of revolt to the foundations of institutions and in all directions. Nor does he hesitate for a moment to say that his attitude is destructive,

and must be destructive in order that a larger construction may finally result:

It may be necessary to sweep half our world away in the interest of the other half. It may be necessary to stampede all values. To abrogate all treaties. To repeal all laws. To annul all respectabilities. . . .[129]

Without following Nietzsche in his ethics, Traubel takes an equally radical and an almost identical position on the question of good and evil, a position destructive of the very foundations of the whole moral system of to-day:

We used to be worms that never die. We used to be kindling wood for hell. We used to be told that our hearts were rotten. . . . Most everybody used to be taught that. It was put into literature. The painters represented it in pictures. The pulpits thundered it. No wonder we succumbed. . . . The idea that there was no bad and no good never entered our skulls. We just acquiesced in the common moral surrender. . . . If a man believed he was good, why what wouldn't he do? What outrage wouldn't he perpetrate? . . .

I was not only in revolt against being bad. I was also in revolt against being good. I wanted to be free of both obligations. . . . If people ain't bad what are we going to build a church on? Or a stage? Or social regulation? If people ain't bad what would

we do with our policemen and armies and navies? If people made more of love than of hate what would become of all the people who live on hate? We have built up society on the supposition that people are bad. This theory of their goodness undermines the social order. You are taking the foundations out from under. We've nothing to stand on. . . .

I see through your bad to your good. I see through your good to you. . . . I know that if you give people half a chance to be themselves they'll not try to be anybody else. . . . I can understand that my coat may be incorrigibly bad. But I can't understand how I can be incorrigibly bad. The human stuff is made to last.[130]

Recognizing neither "good" nor "evil," but only social or anti-social conduct, Traubel refuses to accept that kind of democracy which consists only in efforts *towards* democracy, however sincere or even "heroic" that effort may be:

A woman said to me that she found it hard to be a democrat. She wished to be a democrat but found it difficult to mix with the crowd. She asked me: Do you? I said it was not hard to be a democrat. I said it was hard to force yourself to be a democrat. I said it was not hard for the crowd to mix with the crowd. I said it was hard for an alien to mix with the crowd.[131]

The most interesting person in history is myself. And the most interesting to you should be yourself.

And to every man should be himself. Then we have a democracy. When every man sees that he is indispensable to all and is responsible accordingly, That brings us all face to face.[132]

Evidently the type of social individual Traubel here presupposes will become general only under the improved conditions of the future society. So, like Whitman, Traubel is a futurist, if I may use this much-abused term. But he is far less influenced than Whitman was by the past and is undoubtedly even more closely in touch with the masses of men—which gives him a more solid foundation for his construction. His interest in the future, moreover, does not consist in a willingness to postpone that future, because of the certainty of its coming. Traubel is not an evolutionist of the old school, he is a pragmatist:

Why should we skulk in the present? Why should we apologize? Why should we be willing to admit that the future is good enough for justice but that the present is not good enough for justice? . . . You are learned in nonsense. You quote evolution against haste. . . . But what will evolution do for you if you do nothing for evolution? Evolution includes delay. But it also includes hurry. . . . Am I to be a dead tool of evolution? Or am I to be a vital factor in evolution?[133]

"History reaches back into the jungle. It reaches forward into the commune."

Traubel repudiates "the old apologists of old systems and the old interpreters of old saviors," and all those who look to the past rather than the future, on the ground that their culture separates them from the living currents among the masses of men of our time. Not one of these "autocrats of culture," he says, hears "either the laugh of the unlettered or the cry of the living." [134]

Traubel is confident as to the future for two reasons: because of his views about society and because of his views about individuals. Believing as he does that existing civilization is a burden almost as much as it is a benefit to the masses of men, he reasons, with undeniable logic, if his premise is accepted, that progress will be hastened enormously when this colossal burden is removed. And even if he did not see concretely the form of society that will take the place of the old, he believes that mankind has now, as it has always had, the *power* to rebuild:

Listen, you high and mighty lordlings of things and affairs:
I take all your books and properties and precedents and cultures and put them on a pile together,
And I light them with a simple match into a vast flame,

And you stand close by with me and see them all go up in smoke. . . .
And then you look at me wondering what now is to come to the earth.

I will tell you what is to come to the earth, you lordlings of affairs and things. . . .
All that has just burned up before you so casually will come to the earth again and would always come:
For they have always come out of the people, who are the masters of life,
For they do not come making man but they come made by man,
And will always come, and be destroyed, and come again and again. . . .[135]

Again Traubel's confidence in the future lies in his belief in individual human nature, which he bases, not on speculation, but on his observation of individuals. Every human being that is born into the world is obviously restricted by the limitations of civilization, and feels this restriction. Society even makes a conscious effort to mold the child into a serviceable and obedient being, but fortunately it fails:

If it was not for the boys, or for the boy left over in the man, everything would always remain about where it is. We draw a line up against which we

halt the boy. The boy walks straightway over. He does not defy us. He does not hear us. The boy has eye and ear for sights and sounds ahead. But no cries from the past arrest his impatient feet. Every boy brings the youth of the race back again. The hope you have lost your boy recovers. When you say rebellion you say boy. . . . If injustice could live in a world of grown men it would feel safe. Injustice fears the cradle. Injustice is not afraid of your brain, your culture, your curiosity or your logic. Injustice is afraid of the boy. The boy dreams. And the boy believes in dreams. Grown men dream, too. But they are less apt to believe in their dreams. The boy tries fact by dream. The man tries dream by fact. That is what makes the man conservative and the boy radical. That is what makes the man the apologist and the boy a menace. The boy is the typical striker. He is up at once for his rights. He thinks neither of family nor society. He thinks only of his rights.[136]

Traubel does not assert that human nature can be made over by any artificial arrangements however "socialistic" or "idealistic" they may be, but he believes that it will make itself over if artificial arrangements give it the opportunity.

Like Whitman, Traubel distrusts all institutions and systems, past, present, and future. But he goes beyond Whitman in his distrust of ideals and ideas —which may tyrannize over the individual as much

as institutions and systems. Whitman wanted to renovate and utilize the old religion and the old metaphysics. Traubel is as much opposed to the rule of the abstractions and faiths of the future as he is to their continued authority in their present forms. Whitman was a democrat on all sides but this. He did not see that the religion and metaphysics of a period are the last stronghold of its social system. So he left these authorities fundamentally undisturbed. Traubel, a democrat on all sides, recognizes no authority—either existing or to come.

NOTES

1. "Song of Myself."
2. "By Blue Ontario's Shore."
3. *Ibid.*
4. "Song of the Broad-Axe."
5. "By Blue Ontario's Shore."
6. "Song of Myself."
7. Walt Whitman in Camden, Vol. I, p. 113.
8. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 34.
9. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 35.
10. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 283.
11. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 255.
12. *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 69.
13. *Ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 491, 492.
14. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 193.
15. "Song of Myself."
16. "Song of the Open Road."
17. Note to "Democratic Vistas."
18. "Democratic Vistas."
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.*
21. Walt Whitman in Camden, Vol. II, pp. 87, 88.
22. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 53.
23. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 321.
24. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 429.
25. "The Conservator," Vol. XXIII, p. 104.
26. *Ibid.* Vol. XXV.
27. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXV, No. 1, pp. 1-4.
28. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXII, pp. 66-67.
29. "Optimos," p. 131.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 153.
31. "The Conservator," Vol. XXIII, p. 105.
32. *Ibid.*, Vol. XVIII, pp. 65-67.
33. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIV, No. 5, p. 77.
34. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXII, p. 165.
35. "T. P.'s Weekly," October 17, 1914.
36. "The Conservator," Vol. XXII, p. 188.
37. "Optimos," pp. 132-149.
38. "The Conservator," Vol. XXI, p. 35.
39. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXV.
40. "Optimos," p. 60.
41. "The Conservator," Vol. XXIII, p. 13.
42. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXII, pp. 113-116.
43. "Chants Communal," p. 97.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 171.
45. "The Conservator," Vol. XXII, pp. 18, 19, 35, 36.

46. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIV, No. 10, pp. 162-164.
47. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXV.
48. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXV.
49. "Optimos," p. 67.
50. "Optimos," pp. 126, 127.
51. "The Conservator," Vol. XXII, p. 169.
52. "Optimos," p. 288.
53. "The Conservator," Vol. XXII, p. 35.
54. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXII, p. 119.
55. "Optimos," pp. 199-201.
56. "The Conservator," Vol. XXII, pp. 1-4.
57. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXV.
58. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIV, No. 7, pp. 115, 116.
59. *Ibid.*, Vol. XIX, pp. 114, 115.
60. *Ibid.*, Vol. XIX, p. 114.
61. "Chants Communal," p. 150.
62. "The Conservator," Vol. XXI, p. 168.
63. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXII, pp. 99, 100.
64. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXII, p. 180.
65. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXII, pp. 146, 147.
66. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIV, No. 10, pp. 164, 165.
67. *Ibid.*, Vol. XIX, p. 18.
68. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIII, p. 109.
69. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXI, p. 148.
70. "Optimos," p. 370.
71. "The Conservator," Vol. XXII, pp. 82-84.
72. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIII, p. 67.
73. "Optimos," pp. 34, 35.
74. *Ibid.*, pp. 78, 115-121.
75. *Ibid.*, pp. 101, 104.
76. "The Conservator," Vol. XXII, pp. 184, 185.
77. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXI, pp. 33, 34.
78. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXII, p. 182.
79. "Optimos," pp. 177, 180.
80. *Ibid.*, pp. 206, 209.
81. *Ibid.*, pp. 208, 209.
82. *The Conservator*, Vol. XXI, p. 171.
83. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIII, pp. 100, 101.
84. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXII, pp. 98-100.
85. "The Conservator," Vol. XXV.
86. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXV.
87. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXV.
88. "Optimos," p. 368.
89. "The Conservator," Vol. XXIV, No. 7, p. 100.
90. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXII, p. 117.
91. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIV, No. 10, pp. 170, 171.
92. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIII, p. 106.
93. "Chants Communal," p. 177.
94. "The Conservator," Vol. XXIV, No. 7, p. 101.
95. "Optimos," pp. 46, 47.
96. "The Conservator," Vol. XXV.
97. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXII, pp. 131, 132.

98. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIII, p. 98.
99. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXV.
100. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIII, p. 99.
101. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXV.
102. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIII, p. 53.
103. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXI, p. 137.
104. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIII, pp. 50, 51.
105. "Chants Communal," pp. 142, 143.
106. "The Conservator," Vol. XXIII, p. 59.
107. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIV, No. 10, pp. 168, 169.
108. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXV.
109. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXV.
110. "Chants Communal," pp. 33, 34.
111. "The Conservator," Vol. XXI, p. 172.
112. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXII, pp. 162-164.
113. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXV.
114. "Chants Communal," pp. 66-68.
115. "The Conservator," Vol. XXIV, No. 6.
116. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIV, No. 10, pp. 169, 170.
117. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIV, No. 10, p. 172.
118. "Optimos," p. 313.
119. "The Conservator," Vol. XXV, No. 1, p. 13.
120. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXII, pp. 20, 21.
121. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIII, pp. 26, 58, 59.
122. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIII, p. 26.
123. "Chants Communal," pp. 73, 75, 83, 84.
124. "The Conservator," Vol. XXIII, p. 75.
125. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXI, p. 109.
126. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXV.
127. "The Conservator," Vol. XXV.
128. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXV.
129. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIII, pp. 105, 106.
130. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXII, pp. 3, 4.
131. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIII, pp. 1-4, 6.
132. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIII, p. 6.
133. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXII, p. 85.
134. "Chants Communal," pp. 132-134.
135. "Optimos," pp. 282, 283.
136. "Chants Communal," pp. 12-13.