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About Butpeople

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Butpeople are a very peculiar species of people who have some kind of reservation, a sort of "but," towards everything they encounter. Their speech isn't "yes yes" or "no no," it is "yes, but" or "no, but." If you say to them that two times two is four, they answer you readily and with a certain superiority: "Yes, but two times three, sir, is six." Whereupon they leave you, satisfied that without giving an inch themselves, they have given you more than you expected. If you sigh that thank goodness the days are growing a little longer now, they object in this manner: "Yes, but that's not going to improve the economic situation." If for some reason it offends you that Tweedledum is a thief and a scoundrel, they reply: "Yes, but this Tweedledee isn't much better." And so on.

As is well-known, grammatically, "but" is a conjunction of opposition. Butpeople neither question nor dispute anything, they only oppose, they put up a certain amount of resistance to everything; they are, by nature, bad conductors, because of whom conveyed energy is lost. They don't deny that two times two is four; they only show that it doesn't matter very much, that you can keep this "four" business to yourself, and that there are more important facts in the world, for instance that two times three is six. If you pull a drowning child out of the water before their eyes, they don't tell you that you shouldn't have done that; they are more likely to voice the opinion that your action was correct, it's true, but three hundred or so persons went down with the ship Prinzepessa Mafalda, and nobody pulled them out of the water. You can give to the poor, my friend, but you are hardly solving the problem of poverty by doing so. In short you can't do anything, you can't even say anything, without their having some "but." From this we have the butpeople; they always have greater intelligence, and they always think of things that are neither pertinent nor applicable in a given situation yet which make it possible to reproachfully criticize your statement or action as defective,

incomplete, and a bad solution.

Being a butperson has its advantages:

1. An awareness of intellectual superiority, with which we can correct and "keep within the proper limits" the actions and also the knowledge of our neighbors.
2. The delightful possibility of concerning ourselves with nothing but our own opinions, applying our own personal reservations to things, and, by this, asserting our own egos.
3. Finally, a deep satisfaction from being able to successfully bore other people to death.

In principle, "but" is mostly a disease of the intelligentsia. Ordinary people have more to do with things than take positions on them; they don't try to separate their own egos from the others because of certain exceptions or through emphasizing their own special point of view.

That's why, when ordinary problems come along, intellectuals can't solve them; they are incapable of a simple, decisive "yes" or "no." Any truths which might be needed are draped with "buts," which limits them. That's why, in public life, truths are so often lost and then replaced by something infinitely more primitive: namely, slogans.

The minute butpeople touch upon something, they lose it; all that remains is their "but." God save us from butpeople!