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**WE:**—You mean, nearly all the films you have seen have struck you as being designed for the primary purpose of propaganda? Or, if you understand the phrase, as dope for the masses?

**PLATO:**—That appeals to me as being a particularly apt and useful expression. Let us therefore use it, though I can well understand that it would not be popular among those who produce the films nor among those of the masses who consume them. For at all times the art of propaganda has depended on the extent to which it conceals its purpose.

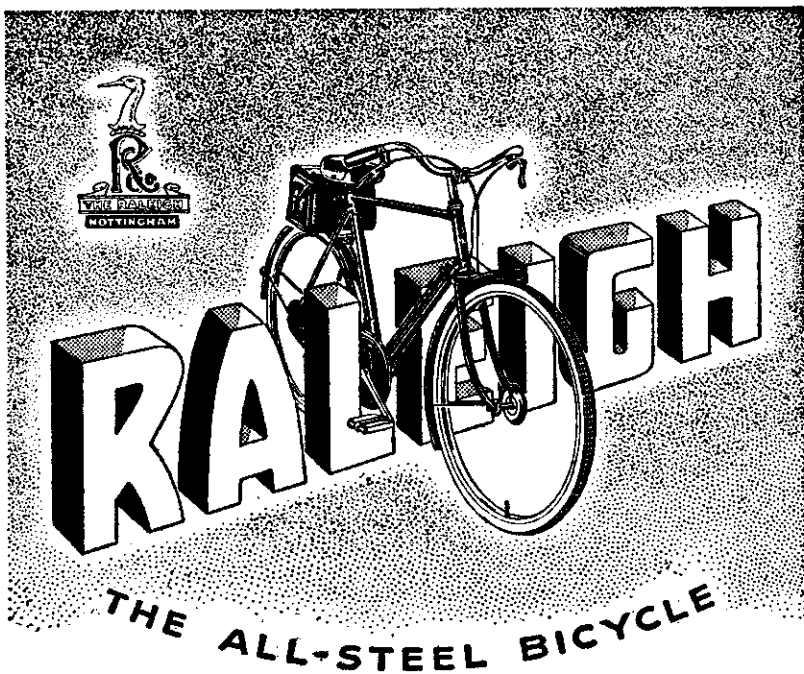
**WE:**—But many of our most intelligent and highly-educated citizens support the movies. Not every film that is made, of course, or any of them uncritically; but such persons do place the films on a much higher plane than you seem prepared to.

**PLATO:**—Yes, but I am reminded that during my present visit I have encountered several strange sophistries and abnormal cults which thrive in this country: and I believe that you will not be able to deny that it is the "educated" among your citizens who chiefly support them with their money and devotion. Such foolishness is in itself unimportant, but it should be a warning to you that human nature is tougher and less manageable than people like you believe. Man demands not truth but wonders and miracles, and will, if he is given the opportunity, enslave himself to any superstition rather than accept the commands of knowledge. For truth is seldom comforting and reality has rarely the winning aspect with which deception can deck itself out. That is almost certainly the explanation for the popularity of so many inferior motion pictures, and for the almost certain unpopularity of those which exhibit some intelligence or some break with convention in their making.

It is for this reason also that you should now take warning if you are really concerned for the happiness and virtue of your countrymen. For they have been infected with false standards and made to believe that knowledge is easy to come by and open to everyone who has read a book or heard a lecture or seen a few films. And so your democracy, which you praise as the home of freedom and the protector of the conscience of the individual, is in reality not far removed from the dictatorships you abhor. For even your film magnates and your newspaper kings, your makers of cosmetics and salves, your political bosses and your orators and publicists, are not free to do what they please: they, too, are enslaved since, to keep their circulations up and their tills full, they must dance attendance on a stupid public, ministering to its every whim and considering only what new sensation they can provide to titillate its jaded palate. The free spirit brought up in such trickery and deceit will have only one refuge. He will not believe one word that is told him by the politician or the publicist or the advertiser or anyone else, but keep himself to himself until truth can gain control and rule throughout the world.

[Note: We realised later that in the preceding paragraph Plato had been quoting almost verbatim from the dialogue on British Education, which occurs in R. H. S. Crossman's book. Presumably he thought it so relevant as to be worth repeating.]

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