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"WHAT WILL PEOPLE DO?"

THE overriding determinant, today, in decisions of national policy is the answer to the question, "What will people do?" The most common assumption, when "people" means those whom we regard as actual or potential enemies, is that *they will do their worst.* When W. H. Ferry proposed in a letter to a Santa Barbara newspaper that the United States adopt a policy of unilateral disarmament, an opposing correspondent exclaimed that Khrushchev had already exterminated a number of his own people equal to those who would be destroyed by a "good-sized atom-bomb," and asked: "Would he have more mercy on us?"

This is an anguished and desperately rhetorical question. There can be no doubt about what the person who asked it thinks, nor about the policy of national defense which she would support. Further, we can say that qualifications and reservations have little meaning at this level of opinion. Those who take this view of the intentions of the Soviet people (of their leaders, rather) reduce the issue to the simplest terms: Will they or won't they destroy or enslave us, if we disarm? The issue becomes one of naked power. And if the issue is one of naked power, then policy must be shaped by the experts in power.

This is not a hypothesis. It is what has happened. As Charles E. Osgood wrote in *Conflict Resolution* for last December:

> The war with communism is a pervasive conflict between alien political philosophies, and, being such, victory must be sought in the minds of men. Yet most of the discussion of policy in a nuclear age has been framed in technological terms and carried on more by physicists and engineers than by social scientists. If I am right, nuclear technology merely sets the problem; it neither explains our difficulties nor offers any real solutions.

We do not propose to set out in great detail, here, the consequences of this answer to what the Russians will do. These consequences are examined at great length by a number of writers who have carefully analyzed the almost inevitable result of an uncontrolled arms race. The calculus of mutual destruction soon leaves all familiar frames of experience, mounting to predictions that leave us both aghast and benumbed.

But the people (ourselves) who are submitting to a program of unlimited (limited only by our wealth and capacity) military preparations are by no means pleased or made complacent by what is being done to protect their lives and secure their "way of life." These people—ourselves—are not morally insensible. They sense the dreadful contradiction between an armament capable of destroying the world ten times over and the ideals to which they declare allegiance. The hideous prospect of a third world war compels at least nominal attention, if not something more, to other means of settling the differences between the Eastern and Western powers. This interest in alternatives to war leads to proposals of various courses to be pursued at the same time that we are maintaining or seeking full military readiness. The authors of these proposals do not intend them to be regarded as "empty gestures." Very few men are thorough-going hypocrites, and still fewer are morally irresponsible Machiavellians. As a matter of fact, there is nothing in the present international situation to indicate large prospective rewards for hypocrites and Machiavellians. Conditions are too explosive for this sort of calculated deceit to pay off. It may be practiced by stupid and unimaginative men, of course, within a framework of both practical and moral blindness, but the major problems of the time lie elsewhere.

The idea of seeking alternatives to war at the same time that we are strenuously preparing for it

with all our energy, involves us in another side of the question of "what people will do." On the one hand, the yearning for as much security as possible dictates a defense program based upon the assumption that an opposing power will do its worst. On the other hand, our efforts to pursue negotiations for peace, or for reduction of the likelihood of war, are based upon the assumption that this enemy will be able to see our good intentions in these efforts and do his *best* in responding to them.

It is obvious enough that these two assumptions are in childlike contradiction. If our survival and our morals were not the values at issue, we should burst into laughter at this ridiculous portrait of the "enemy." But our survival and our morals *are* at stake, so we do not laugh. Instead, we make tense and self-righteous speeches to ourselves and to anyone else who will listen. We carefully ignore the knowledge painfully accumulated during the past fifty years concerning the springs of human behavior, since attention to the findings of psychologists in this area would subvert both our theories of survival and our feelings of self-righteousness.

We are probably right, however, in not wanting to let the psychologists tell us what to do. After all, decisions of this sort should not be delegated to *anybody*. They are too important, practically as well as morally. The point, here, is that we are not even listening to the psychologists. You can listen to an expert without letting him make your decision for you. But we suspect—and we are right in so suspecting—that what the psychologists will have to say to us will point so clearly to the need for a change in policy that we shall be obligated either to adopt their views or admit that we are blindly stubborn barbarians. This is a hard choice, and it seems less painful to ignore or abuse the psychologists.

Never before in the history of man—or more precisely, the history of nations—has so high a price been placed upon consistency. Never before have national leaders been under so great a pressure to neglect the implications of primary political principles—or, if the principles are under discussion, to refuse to notice actions and policies which are an almost complete negation of the principles.

Take for example the present extreme embarrassment of the national leaders of the United States by the recent exposure of American "intelligence" activities by a flyer over land well inside the boundaries of Soviet territory. What, actually, is there to fuss about?

We knew that the United States has spies, just as every great nation has spies to maintain its intelligence concerning enemy preparations and resources. Military operations require intelligence operations. So we shall not fuss about the fact that we have spies. Shall we fuss because we have not been able to catch any Soviet spies over *our* territory, to give the world public confirmation that they are doing it too? In what framework of values would that kind of fussing take place? Shall we complain that our intelligence executives made a mistake in taking a risk of this sort just before the Summit conference? This is an issue of pure expediency, and we can fuss about that if we will, but is it worth the effort? Shall we say that the young man who was caught was poorly trained and inadequately instructed? Someone might retort that it is a credit to our country that a fine young American boy turned out to be a poor spy; that a democracy is not the sort of culture that produces "good" spies. Years ago, Raoul de Roussy de Sales attributed the easy fall of Western Europe to the Nazis to the fact that the peoples of these countries were too civilized to make good warriors against the Nazis. They hated the brutality of war too much, he said, to harden themselves to the impending conflict. Where lies virtue, then, in this context?

The capture by the Russians of the American airman may have value in making us think about these things. What other point is there in discussing it?

On one thing, however, there can be general agreement. We do have good principles, and now and then an American leader provides so clear an expression of them, it becomes evident that he is not only repeating them, but has also been thinking about them. The implications of American political philosophy have seldom been so well articulated as by Nelson A. Rockefeller, Governor of New York, in an article, "Purpose and Policy," in *Foreign Affairs* for April, 1960. Mr. Rockefeller begins:

> It is in the nature—and the challenge—of a revolutionary period that, as it unfolds, witnesses view it as a series of seemingly unrelated crises. The essence of the challenge, for a responsible people or a great nation, is to discern the meaning of the period and its implication for the future, and to shape the emerging forces in the light of its purposes. In our particular period one revolution is piled on another—the political revolution giving birth to new nations, the population explosion, the chain of scientific discoveries. And now, before man has learned to live in harmony and freedom on earth, he already must face the problems of conquering space.

For a broad outline of the present, this would be difficult to improve upon. We don't know what Mr. Rockefeller means by "conquering space," and it doesn't seem important anyway; the essential challenge, as he suggests, is to discern the meaning of the period. He continues:

> Two world wars have shattered a system of political order that had governed most of the earth for more than a century. And as the great empires have retreated or fallen, hundreds of millions of people clamor and fight for fulfillment of new needs and wants, from food to freedom. All this—and not the tyranny of Soviet imperialism—is what stamps ours as an age of revolution, marking the end of a great historic era.
>
> A revolutionary period is always composed of two parts—destruction of the old and creation of the new. Our grave danger in such a time is to fall into a purely defensive posture: a fending off of perils, a kind of fretful and hesitant sparring with history. The risk is that a people can become so obsessed with what they are against that they may fail to articulate—perhaps even to know—what they are for. Nothing is more important than that free nations escape this snare and display conviction about the historic direction they propose to take. The question before America is not whether new patterns should evolve, but who will be their author with what principles and values, and toward what ends.
>
> The great conflict of our time is not capitalism against Communism; it is freedom against tyranny. The future direction of the world depends on whether the values of human dignity and the brotherhood of men, whose expression in America has inspired so many new nations, can be given a meaning relevant to our time. Here lies our task and our opportunity.

One hesitates, after so lucid a statement, to ask for more; to require, for example, that Mr. Rockefeller spell out what he means by "fretful and hesitant sparring with history." After all, he is the governor of one of the most important states in the Union. He has the responsibility which goes with the authority and power of his position. Could he, should he, speak unequivocally to this question? It seems obvious that he could not answer this question as *we* would answer it, and still remain governor of New York. Which is more important—that a man of his calibre remain in the governor's chair, or that he destroy his political status by declarations so "radical" that he would be swept out of office? Before the protests start coming in, we hasten to add that nobody can answer this question except Mr. Rockefeller, and he does answer it, in a way, by his own version of "spelling out" his statement of general principles.

Another view of this issue would parallel what David McReynolds said in his recent *Peace News* article about the British. The British, he proposed, now have opportunity to become world leaders in adopting a policy of non-violent defense of their country, precisely because the British have almost no hope of being able to defend their island home by military means. They do not have the power. This being the case, the choice of non-military means becomes much easier for them. What else are they to do? Only habit and a blind allegiance to the instruments of a moribund empire stand in the way.

By a parity of reasoning, Governor Rockefeller, who occupies a post of power in a nation which *does* have the power to use military means, is not a man from whom we can reasonably expect to obtain any "radical" proposals for disarmament or defense by non-military means. We may say, perhaps, that he has done enough in making so clear a statement of principles. Others have more freedom than he in explaining what the principles mean.

His *Foreign Affairs* article continues:

> We live at the end of an historical period. During that period we have often risen to heights of striving and sacrifice. But a nation that lives merely on the memory of past achievement is going to stifle constructive responses. We cannot mechanically apply old patterns, however well they may have served us in the past. The freedom we have inherited must be reclaimed, redefined, rewon and extended by each generation.
>
> The task is not merely philosophic: it is practical. Without strong values, we shall not be able to distinguish our fears from our hopes, our opportunities from our dangers. Without a sense of purpose, all our values could become increasingly irrelevant to this time of revolution.

How fundamental can Mr. Rockefeller get? Reversing his English, we might add that the task is not merely practical; it is basically philosophic. For at present we need, more than anything else, a clearer understanding of our purpose. What is the "purpose" of the United States? The answer to this question must be that the United States is a political creation intended to provide the greatest possible freedom to individual decision. This nation is *not* an end in itself. Its end is the service of the individual. This end is sometimes spoken of as a "way of life." As Charles E. Osgood put it in *Conflict Resolution* (December, 1959):

> Stripped to essentials, this way of life is one in which the state is subservient to the individuals who compose it. All the things which dominantly characterize our way of life—a democratic form of government, a capitalistic economic system, a legal system which guarantees the rights of individuals to education and freedom of expression—flow from this pervasive underlying notion. The development of such a political philosophy, based upon the essential dignity of the individual human being, was a most remarkable step along the path to becoming civilized; it was both hard come by and all too easily lost.

This quotation from Mr. Osgood sharpens the issue. Plainly, it reduces the question of national purpose to a question of individual purpose. There can be no national purpose alien to individual purpose, that affects national policy. Are we ready, then, as individuals, to do those things which the technologists require us to do, in the name of national security, as an expression of our individual purpose? Are we ready to assent to all the moral contradictions in the "negotiate from strength" stance of national policy, when "negotiate from strength" means, almost of necessity, giving our full support to a program which begins with the theme of "peace through fear of retaliation," but soon graduates to reliance on "peace through fear of annihilation"? Is this the sort of solution sought by "individuals" in the United States? What has become of the meaning of "purpose," under such circumstances?

Mr. Osgood speaks to this question:

> Some will argue that it has always been necessary to give up our freedoms in time of war so that in the long run they may be preserved. But, not only does the basic conflict with totalitarian systems have no definite conclusion, *the policy of mutual deterrence includes no provisions for its own resolution.* Few people seem to have asked the obvious next question: When and how does it end? It promises no removal or even reduction of threat, unless through other policies we succeed in mutual disarmament or aim for the preventive war we seem ideologically incapable of making. Our "way of life" is a set of learned habits of thinking and behaving which can as readily be unlearned and forgotten. Prolonged subjection to a totalitarian set of beliefs, *particularly if self-imposed*, would probably result in a thorough distortion of our own social philosophy.

Thus we see the ugly situation into which we have been led by our uncompromising assumption that, no matter what we do, our "enemies" will do their worst. It is an assumption which condemns us, eventually, to doing our worst, not only to others, but to ourselves.

There is a final paragraph to quote from Mr. Rockefeller—the last of his statement of general principles. He says:

> In order to achieve our national purpose, we must be sure to state correctly the nature of the political alternatives before us. If these are false, so will be our decisions. And I fear that we have too often posed to ourselves just such false choices—as if our alternatives, for example, lay between negotiation and military strength, between the economic development of new nations and the fiscal stability of our own nation; between arms control and an armament program, between making commitments to other nations and preserving our own independence of action. This, then, is probably our first task; to get the choices straight, and not to confuse things complementary with things competitive.

But before we can "get the choices straight," we shall have to obtain more clarity on our answer to the question, "What will people do?" And on answers to the still more important question, "Are there things that we should do, and things we should not do, regardless of the actions of others?" For these, after all, are really the controlling decisions.

Letter from
PRAGUE

PRAGUE.—A learned book I have been reading says that you can judge a civilization by the status and standards of the judiciary, and by the status of women. After a week in Prague I have no progress report on these matters, but I think the Czechs are pretty civilized. Why make it so hard? I have other measures.

Take dogs. Or cats, if you are so minded. I'm not. In Prague the dogs, leashed or free, go along with interest and well-being in every step and look. The mutual appreciation of dog and master is almost palpable. To me that's a measure of civilization.

Take birds. In one of the big parks where I wandered one morning, someone had hung birdhouses all over the place. About every tenth tree had some uncouth-looking, homemade structure, usually of raw wood, old or new. I don't know how the birds felt, but I felt good. I don't think the Government did this. Some civilized human being was responsible.

Take kindness. People in Prague seem not to be too busy to be kind to one another. One wouldn't expect kindness on a New York main street, or in one of its taxicabs, though it is found sometimes and is the more welcome for being rare. The Arab in his natural habitat is never kind to anybody; certainly not to a dog—well, maybe sometimes to a child. And the Russian in Moscow is a sullen pusher. He (or she) ceaselessly jabs your kidneys even in a moving elevator, where there is no question of moving forward or of getting out. It's a habit, maybe born of standing in queues. In Prague there is not the exaggerated, bowing, hat-waving politeness of Vienna, which struck me as something of a game. But here a blind man who drops his white stick is a concern of everybody in sight; no one pushes into or out of the elevator; men and young people give up their seats in the tram to women and old people. On my first two visits to restaurants I encountered kind people who felt it their special duty to help me get something to eat, when neither waiter nor menu had a language I could use. My helpers didn't help me, either, really, but the effort was so earnest, and the goodwill so patent, that it was a warming experience. (Both times I ended up with a piece of beefsteak with a fried egg on top!)

But there are contradictions. One Antonin Novotny, by far the most unprepossessing looking of Eastern Europe's "Big Brothers," glowers down from every official and public wall. There is a thin-lipped, fanatic look about him, which makes it quite impossible to imagine him bustling about the earth kidding heads of Government and bussing babies. Exactly how to imagine him is not clear. He isn't much in evidence. He doesn't appear at parties or receptions, or make news, or attend conferences. A very senior official of a neutral government, over two years in Prague, told me he still had not made up his mind who really runs the country. One presumes it is Novotny, but solid evidence is lacking. There are no foreign troops in Czechoslovakia.

To all appearances, Czech Communism is the most rigid and doctrinaire in Europe. Since January 11, 1960, there has been no private enterprise at all. The State runs everything, even the philatelic store I visited on behalf of my friends and relations. Asking person after person got me no suggestion of the existence of any private enterprise except the obviously half-crippled old lady who wandered through the restaurant with three newspapers under her arm. Being a pensioner, and not being in the State labor pool, she is allowed to do what she can—this sort of thing.

Yet consider the great stone statuary group, a memorial to Stalin, on one of the prominent hills edging the city. It is about sixty feet high, and the Man of Iron in the familiar overcoat stares moodily out over the city, fronting a group of workers and peasants. It is interesting that, while this group is dutifully listed as No. 125, the final item in the guidebook, and is both visible and

easily accessible by foot or tram from city center, it is not on any of the suggested "walks," organized in great detail for the visitor's guidance in seeing the city. I wonder why. I haven't been to Budapest yet, but someone here told me that all that remained of Stalin's statue there for a long time after the Revolution in 1958 was the pedestal—surmounted by a pair of shoes.

Faced with these apparent inconsistencies, one inevitably wonders why the Czechoslovak Republic accepted Communism. It is the only industrialized, economically developed, urbanized, bourgeois group to have done so to date. Why? Actually, I was told, the standard of living for most people now is not much different from that of pre-1949 Republic times.

The streets are full of people, placidly looking in shop windows. One Sunday I saw more cameras on the Charles bridge than I ever saw before, anywhere. At a rough guess, the ratio of cameras to people must have been about that of cars to population in California: what is it? 1 to 1.7? The city is full of movies, and the movies are full of people. At 10:15 one week-day morning I counted over 100 people, mostly women, standing patiently in line to get into a showing of *War and Peace.* The restaurants and coffee shops are jammed. The so-called "Automat," where you buy coffee and various delicacies at the several counters, and then eat them standing about a marble slab in the middle of the room, is an unbelievable crowd-scene, where a person with plate and cup in hands stands quietly behind one who eats, waiting to get to the table. I took one look and left. Maybe others were hungrier.

Interestingly enough, the only statement I could find in a foreign language of the official view of the "February Events" when Czechoslovakia went Communist in 1949, was published in France and is not now generally available. The Institute of International Relations promised me a copy, by mail. But whether it will help me better to understand the massive contradictions hinted at by a brief view of life in Prague, remains a question.

ROVING CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW
TOWARD A SCIENTIFIC METAPHYSICS

THE INTEGRATION OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE by Oliver Reiser (Porter Sargent, 1958) is a work which attempts to indicate the direction of human evolution by suggesting the implications of the various sciences. Mr. Reiser admittedly goes beyond the region of the demonstrable in science. Hard-headed critics might call some of his speculations fanciful, while others will praise his intellectual daring in seeking a philosophic synthesis for the world of tomorrow. If labelling is at all appropriate for such a work, Mr. Reiser's philosophy might be termed Pantheistic Humanism. The author's affinities for a kind of Platonic or theosophic wisdomism are fairly apparent, even though his vocabulary seems preponderantly drawn from the conceptual resources of modern physics.

The Foreword by Giorgio de Santillana (M.I.T.) would make a splendid review of this book. It is written in the spirit of an urbane skepticism, yet Mr. de Santillana, unlike less cosmopolitan agnostics, is thoroughly aware of the need of the modern world for a faith more profound than the existing brand of "naturalism." Something of the psycho-moral discoveries of Viktor Frankl (*From Death-Camp to Existentialism*) is unmistakeable in Mr. de Santillana when he speaks of Prof. Reiser's "prophecy" concerning "the emergencies of a new world religion based on scientific humanism, which should gradually replace—or integrate the existing ones." Mr. de Santillana continues:

> The critic is reminded here, inevitably, of Comte's Religion of Humanity with the "great Fetish," at its summit. This one, however, is far more ample and cosmic-minded, as befits our age of astrophysics. The kinship with Stoicism, which the author brings up, is undeniable. It shows also historical perception. In the solitary ordeal of the concentration camps, the most frightful of our times, those who had to find a faith in order not to be broken emerged with some kind of stoic religiosity they had worked out by themselves. Such a faith might well rediscover the cosmic overtones of the ancient one without coming into conflict with the scientific consciousness of our time. It would certainly take considerable distance from the present institutional religions, such as they are, and as they have taken curiously to justifying their existence from the behavior of men in foxholes, or from the need for some kind of social cohesive.

Concerning the philosophic ancestors of Mr. Reiser, Mr. de Santillana writes:

> Mr. Reiser's metaphysics . . . follow the royal road of panmathematism. The analogic deduction from geometry to metaphysics is as direct in his writing as it was five centuries ago in that of Nicholas of Cusa, and there is still in it, expressed in the varied and modern terminology that the Cardinal was searching for, the same sense of the infinite. The wealth of enticing symbolism contained in modern hyperspaces is used here with the true instinct, but is it not still the ancient "explication"? Are the images even so different? Beneath the logarithmic spirals and spins and rotations and divergences which befit the world of "electro-magnetic man," we rediscover the archetypes of Kepler, the very same. We have a "response of the manifest world to the world of archetypal influences: Platonic solids, circles, spirals, and the higher patterns of spherical harmonics." We still have the same poetic intimations of "cubes and gyres" that Harun al-Rashid sought "in the great volume of Parmenides" as fancied by W. B. Yeats. We are still cradled in the foundational myth of Western thought.

Some idea of Mr. Reiser's intentions and method may be gained from his second chapter, "The Unification of Knowledge." He sets the stage for this discussion with a quotation from an early work of Robert M. Hutchins, *The Higher Learning in America,* who wrote:

> The modern university may be compared with an encyclopedia. The encyclopedia contains many truths. It may consist of nothing else. But its unity can be found only in its alphabetical arrangement. The university is in much the same case. It has departments running from art to zoology; but neither the students nor the professors know what the relation of one departmental truth to those in the domain of another department may be.

It is Mr. Reiser's hope to remedy this situation. In nearly five hundred pages he ranges

over the entire terrain of modern scientific investigation, showing a familiarity with many specialties. His most interesting enterprise, perhaps, is the attempt to relate parapsychological phenomena to the scientific world-view. Not many contemporary thinkers have hazarded so far-reaching a project. While J. B. Rhine, of Duke University, has repeatedly pointed out the revolutionary implications of extra-sensory perception for morals, philosophy, and the social sciences, Mr. Reiser goes considerably further, offering what amounts to a metaphysical topography of the universe. It is a valiant attempt to close the abyss between mind and matter opened by Descartes so many years ago.

This abyss marks the real frontier of scientific knowledge. This is the real brink from which the pioneers of modern thought peer into the unknown. What are the causal relationships between mind and matter? We do not know. Is there any sort of connection, however obscure, between ethics and physics? We do not know. How are the meaning of the world and the meaning of man's life united? We do not know.

It is obvious that the moral compulsion in the human sense of responsibility depends in large measure upon the answers to these questions. The problem is to get answers without getting, also, so overwhelming a *system* of interpretation of universal processes that our sense of freedom and self-reliance is destroyed.

The hierarchical systems of antiquity all had answers to these questions. The empirical systems of the present have none. The answers of the hierarchical systems are rejected, today, because, for the most part, they seem to deny to the individual the right to discover his own answers. The trouble with Divine Revelation is that it does our work for us, and this is a supreme insult to human kind. Can we get back a sense of meaning and order—both universal and individual meaning and order—without sacrificing our private sense of Promethean mission? This is the sort of question Mr. Reiser's book compels us to ask.

COMMENTARY
'WHAT WILL GOD DO?"

ANTICIPATING speculation on the part of earnest Christians concerning what may be God's view of nuclear warfare, a symposium uniting two authorities on this question was arranged last March to set at rest the minds of the seventy-five military chaplains who constituted the audience. The speakers were Francis J. Connell, formerly professor of moral theology at Catholic University of America, and Dr. William G. Pollard, director of the Institute of Nuclear Studies, Oak Ridge, Tennessee. According to a press report, both men defended the use of atomic weapons as "morally justifiable under certain circumstances." Luster was added to the occasion by the fact that Dr. Pollard is a Protestant Episcopal minister as well as a nuclear scientist. The latter's brooding intelligence was responsible for the observation that the sun and every star in the Milky Way is "a natural hydrogen bomb in the process of fission." The chaplains, no doubt, went away with considerable awe for the goings-on at Oak Ridge. Dr. Pollard had pointed out to them: "It's a sobering thought that God made more hydrogen bombs than anything else."

We turn from these sublime utterances to some notes by John Collier on the beliefs of the heathen, drawn from a collection of books. Mr. Collier writes (in *El Crepusculo,* of Taos, N.M., for Feb. 18):

> The world is moved by a living will, the Bantus believe. Man's will is one of the myriad products and vehicles of the world-will. The world-will, experienced as purpose, passion and personality in every living being and equally in the non-living, insures the immortality of every creature, and of man as one of its countless millions of creatures. The world-will implants in every creature freedom.
>
> Freedom as a matter of profound necessity, includes suffering, and even includes evil, and it is a meaningful freedom, not wanton, but self-directed within the ecological web of existence. Father R P. Placide Tempels finds that the Bantus assert this view of the eternal reciprocities within the web of being, in their language, their myths, their songs and dances, their actions; it is the deepest, most realistic part of the Bantu society and Bantu individual and is inexpungible from the Bantu soul.

After citing similar material from W. H. Hudson and from Marguerite Yourcenar, Mr. Collier continues:

> I ask a question without hoping (here) fully to answer it. This fraternal passion of man toward all the other beings within the life web: the passion embodied in hundreds of languages, hundreds of institutions and societies, and hundreds of modes of the loving utilization and conservation of nature: is it a lost passion, or useless, within our national crisis and world crisis of today?
>
> Technology has made us modern men seem to ourselves omnipotent, until, with little of ecological caring, we spread the chemical "rain of death" upon insects, birds, and all the "wild" fauna; omnipotent to destroy each other and the world in thermo-nuclear war, and through technology we are annihilating at extreme speed the natural resources on which all of future human life must depend.
>
> Is Dr. Schweitzer wrong in believing that a re-asserted nature-and-man morality and purpose is our only hope, if technology is not to devour and utterly kill ourselves and our fellow-creatures on earth? Here, without arguing, one can only insist that Dr. Schweitzer is profoundly right, not wrong. And that which man in thousands of societies through twenty thousand years has demanded of himself, and has received, we can demand of ourselves, and receive, once more. What man until yesterday has demanded, and has received, has been mutually between man and nature.

As Dr. Pollard said, "It's a sobering thought."

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
RELIGION AND THE INDIVIDUAL CHILD

[Pursuant to recent discussion here of "philosophical" thinking by the very young, we present a roughly-recollected interview between a teacher-counselor and a worried parent—reported to MANAS in illustration of the fact that philosophy need not be "abstract even though it may deal with metaphysical issues." The following conversation concerns a child's fear of death.]

Parent: My ten-year-old girl fears death. Her concern has reached the point of hysteria. She cannot accept the explanation of the church as to what will become of her after death. What shall I say to her?

Counselor: Perhaps it would help to approach the problem of immortality from the standpoint of logic and reasoning, since she is evidently a very intelligent child. Ask her to consider the fact that she knows her body has changed considerably since birth; her ideas and feelings, also, change often, yet she as an individual can observe these changes and is aware of them. Perhaps she can sense from this that she as an entity does not change. If this is so, isn't it possible that she, *as that entity,* will continue after the death of her body?

Parent: But still she will question the particulars of what will become of her after death.

Counselor: There are so many different concepts in all the various religions as to the actual condition of the individual after death that such questioning is certainly natural. The important thing, for a ten-year-old, is to become secure in the idea of immortality *per se.* If logic tells her that she is immortal, then separating *that* conviction from the problem of the "how" of immortality will enable the child to examine various teachings on the subject, as she grows older. Many people have rejected the teachings of a particular church concerning immortality, but in doing so have also rejected immortality itself. I believe that this rejection—of immortality itself—may lead to psychological insecurities, loneliness, and even related neuroses. On the other hand, the rejection of a particular kind or condition of immortality, while still retaining the conviction of immortality itself, allows the individual intellectual freedom without depriving him of that radical security which objective investigation requires.

If this child is able to rid herself now of the fear of death, perhaps you can explain to her that as she grows older she will be able to investigate and decide for herself what kind of immortality seems most logical to her.

Parent: I think that would help a great deal. Of course, she is a little young to do that now.

Counselor: That is probably true. Yet she ought to realize that she will have the opportunity as she grows older.

Parent: I certainly would encourage her to do that. I have accepted the teachings of my particular church, after looking around a little, and I feel secure with them. Yet I don't expect my children to accept these same ideas without thinking for themselves.

Counselor: It seems wise to encourage this freedom of thought in children. There are so many ideas to consider. Some people feel that the most rational explanation of immortality is that the individual returns to a physical body over and over again.

Parent: Reincarnation, you mean. I have often thought, myself, that this really is the most logical and would feel free to encourage my children to consider it.

* * *

An eloquent support for teacher-counselor's approach occurs in W. Macneile Dixon's *The Human Situation:*

> Immortality is a word which stands for the stability or permanence of that unique and precious quality we discern in the soul, which, if lost, leaves nothing worth preservation in the world. If you can

find in it no such quality its preservation cannot of course interest you, and you can accept the thought of its destruction with equanimity. And in this tranquil acquiescence is thus summed up your opinion of all existence as a worthless misery. . . . When upon this issue, then, judgment is given, with it is given also a judgment upon the universe itself. I read some time ago of a Spanish girl in England for the first time. Approaching London in the train she looked out on the sea of houses, factories and chimneys. "These people have no view," she cried, and burst into tears. To have no view, how sad a lot.

There are more suicides among civilized peoples than among savages. And once the world has reached the reflective stage of full self-consciousness, if then it holds that this earthly life is all, there can be no exit, however long it lasts, from its disquiet, no comfort anywhere. .

Come now to the vital point. Are there any indications in nature or human nature upon which to found this hope?—the hope that even Schopenhauer could with difficulty forego, when he wrote, "In the furthest depth of our being we are secretly conscious of our share in the inexhaustible spring of eternity, so that we can always hope to find life in it again." Many things are hard to believe, and a future life, some say, is quite incredible, and the mere thought of it a sort of madness. . . .

Well, I should myself put the matter rather differently. The present life is incredible, a future credible. "Not to be twice-born, but once-born is wonderful." To be alive, actually existing, to have emerged from darkness and silence, to be here to-day is certainly incredible. . . .

We are deceived, indeed, if we fancy that our five senses exhaust the universe, or our present standpoint its many landscapes. In the soul's unvisited and sleeping parts it holds both faculties and powers not mentioned in the books of the historians, the manuals of the mathematicians or the physiologists. "The sensitive soul," as Hegel wrote, "oversteps the conditions of time and space; it beholds things remote, things long past and things to come." That we stand in other relations to nature than in our open and familiar intercourse with her through eye and ear, relations of which we are wholly unconscious, is not debatable, it is certain. . . .

How many modes of existence are there? I cannot tell you, but I should imagine them to be very numerous. And what kind of immortality is at all conceivable? Of all doctrines of a future life palingenesis or rebirth, which carries with it the idea of pre-existence, is by far the most ancient and most widely held, "the only system to which," as said Hume, "philosophy can hearken." "The soul is eternal and migratory, say the Egyptians," reports Laertius. In its existence birth and death are events. And though this doctrine has for European thought a strangeness, it is in fact the most natural and easily imagined, since what has been can be again.

FRONTIERS

"Fighting Words"

THE New York *Times* Magazine for Dec. 20, 1959, featured typical quotations from Jean Anouilh's *The Fighting Cock*, providing basic commentary on "over-leisured" culture. In the Broadway production of this play, Rex Harrison speaks these eloquent lines as a retired French general, moved by the discrepancy between his boyhood ideals of heroism and the lukewarm personal existence of most privileged people in our time:

> The entire world is in labor. . . . The planet, bursting with riches, is gasping and writhing in agony and all we do is sit by the bedside concocting ways to cheat the tax authorities. . .
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> Cheating is our great obsession! We're all trying to find something to make our lives a little easier, a little more agreeable. Give us a bit more comfort! That's our battle cry now. All the ingenuity of men, which was harnessed for so long to nobility and beauty, is now bent on finding something a bit softer to put under their bottoms. Contraptions to make our drinks cooler, our houses warmer, our beds softer.
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> It's disgusting! Don't you see where all this has got us? To music without the effort of making it, to sport you sit and watch, to books that nobody bothers to read (they digest them for you—it's easier and it saves time), to ideas without thinking, to money without sweat, to taste without the bother of acquiring it (there are glossy magazines that take care of all that for you). Short-cuts to the good life. Cheating—that's our great aim now.
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> It is by their ability to die for something incomprehensible to the vast majority that a handful of men have succeeded, over the centuries, in winning the respect of the world.
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> Everybody has principles. And for some extraordinary reason, which no one has been able to explain, they're always more or less identical. Everybody wants peace and universal happiness—yet everybody goes to war. So I ask you, where are you?
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> If the world is to be saved at all, it will be saved by fools.
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> Everything's far too free and easy! I want life to become difficult again; I want us to pay for everything, out of our pockets, to pay for love, to pay for liberty and pay dearly; not to have them for the asking by simply filling in a form!

Mr. Anouilh's scorching criticisms unfortunately apply in good measure to the mores which have developed around institutions of "higher education" in America. Apropos the statement that "cheating is our great obsession," we recollect an article in *Time* (March 7) which described a recent crack-down in New York City on a ring of hired ghost-writers for college examinations. It appears that the ghost-writing agency has been flourishing for some time, "serving" the students of Columbia University and NYU. During a three-year period, this agency, which finally ran afoul of the D.A.'s office, had also been accepting commissions to write theses for graduate scholars, for fees ranging from $350 to $3,000. So popular was this "service" that discreet advertising unearthed customers throughout the nation, including "indolent scholars from as far off as Texas, Indiana and Alaska." The psychology often seemed to be that, since students don't have to work very hard anyway, they see no reason why they should work at all. Commenting upon the success of a newspaper reporter turned ghostwriter to gather evidence for this expose, *Time* comments:

> Although New York educators had long suspected the existence of the ghost-scholar racket, they were still understandably upset by Benson's evidence. Said Dr. Hollis L. Caswell, president of Teachers College: "The general moral tone in our country is tending to encourage this sort of thing. It is a little like our attitude toward income tax—if you can get by with it, it is all right." Columbia might have been equally concerned at the facility with which Newsman Benson, himself an admittedly indifferent undergraduate student (Class of '49) with a C-plus average, at New York's Queens College, sailed through an exam beamed at graduate students.

Said Ghost-Scholar Benson, who wrote an A-minus test paper: "It was a cinch."

With things like this going on in education, one can easily see the point of advocating real discipline in school work. In an interview published by *U.S. News and World Report,* Dr. Mortimer J. Adler speaks to this point:

Q. Don't youngsters learn to work in college?

A. I doubt if 10 per cent of the college population in the United States works 40 hours a week. Add up the number of hours a student spends in class—assuming that he's attentive and not asleep—and the number of hours he spends in the library and at a desk, and I would guess that less than 10 per cent work much more than 30 hours a week. That's not enough for an energetic boy or girl to put in.

Q. Do youngsters carry those standards of work with them into later life—as plumbers or clerks or salesmen?

A. That's right. In our generation, there are many educators who say that school should "prepare for life." I agree with them. Now what is life? Is it mainly significant work, or is it play? Anyone's understanding of human life is that the main job a man has to do is to grow, improve himself, make a contribution to society, as well as earn a living. All of this is work—leisure work or subsistence work. If this is so, then the only way the schools can prepare a child for life is to start him working at the age of 6. From 6 on, the child should be given a full burden of work and kept at it. That is the way to prepare a child for life. Of course, if life is to be a round of frolic and fun, then what the schools are doing now is "preparing for life." I think it is a dreadful picture.

Q. A youngster gets out of school without working very hard, so his idea is to get through life the same way—

A. That is precisely it.

Q. What about the parents? This idea of education has been going on for many years. Is their outlook affected?

A. It's a vicious circle. You have no idea how much protest comes from parents when teachers try to increase homework. Why is this so? The answer is that, if the children have considerable homework, the evening hours of parents in the home are interfered with. The child should be able to go to his parents for some help with respect to difficult problems. But this interferes with the relaxed state of affairs in the home, and the parents would rather not be troubled by it.

All of which seems the last word in the "easy-living" psychology remarked so long ago by Alexis de Tocqueville. "Freedom" to be significant in any context must *have* a context—must be "won anew each day." Neither well-to-do parents nor the students of our universities are apt to appreciate their leisure unless they earn it by attention to the integrity demanded by disciplined effort. Emphasizing ideas given considerable recent attention in "Children . . . and Ourselves," Dr. Adler feels that the child should start "work" at the age of six. Even younger ones among our over-privileged progeny may need to be impressed by the *atmosphere* of work in their homes.