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THE LITTLE FOXES

THIS article should begin with a fair warning to readers: What is said will be a lot clearer to those who have read Isaiah Berlin's essay on Tolstoy, *The Hedgehog and the Fox,* concerned with the finely drawn tension in the great Russian writer's thinking and writing. The tension, as Berlin makes plain, grew out of the war between the universal and the particular in human thought and experience. Tolstoy felt that there *must* be great, universal truths, yet he feared to come by them too easily. In him also was the determination to accept the truths of immediate experience, with all their sharp corners and rough edges. The balancing of these opposing forces in Tolstoy's intellectual and emotional life, Mr. Berlin suggests, was the secret of his genius.

"The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing." That is the way the Greek poet, Archilochus, set the problem. If it is as simple as that, why read Mr. Berlin? Mr. Berlin needs to be read because his commanding discussion of the stress in Tolstoy's life makes it clear that the issue is real and of tremendous importance. During the Middle Ages, this issue shaped the differences between the Nominalists and the Realists; today, it is the ground of the disagreement between the Idealists and the Positivists. The man who takes sides in this argument is probably getting ready to give an answer to the question asked by Pontius Pilate.

The most recent chapter in the controversy is provided by an article in the Winter 1960 number of *ETC.,* a quarterly journal of general semantics. The writer, E. I. Hayakawa, is the editor of *ETC.* This article is one of a series on "Communication and the Human Community," and is subtitled, "The Great Books Idolatry and Kindred Delusions." Mr. Hayakawa is a skillful polemicist and well worth reading, even if the charges he brings against those whom he calls "Neo-Scholastics" are neither new nor always accurate, and in some instances are not accurate at all. If, here, we fall short of accuracy in condensing and reproducing some of his arguments, it will not be for lack of trying.

Essentially, Mr. Hayakawa's article is an attack on the Platonic doctrine of ideas. His position is very like that of the Medieval Nominalists, who insisted that general ideas do not make reference to archetypal essences, but are simply *words.* He accuses the Neo-Scholastics of being Platonic Realists and intellectual authoritarians, if not, potentially at least, political totalitarians. Among the contemporaries he identifies as Neo-Scholastics are Robert M. Hutchins, Mortimer Adler, Pitirim Sorokin, Eliseo Vivas, Sebastian de Grazia, Allen Tate, Richard Weaver, Russell Kirk, and Eric Voegelin. Henry Luce achieves the distinction of a camp-follower of this variegated company, in view of certain enthusiasms exploited by his magazines.

The chief complaint against these men seems to be that they assert (1) that the truth exists, and (2) that they know what it is. Mr. Hayakawa is careful, however, to allow his opponents full right to hold to their own conceptions of "truth." His objection is clearly stated:

> What I do dispute is their basic contention that *communication is impossible unless we FIRST agree to accept THEIR religious and metaphysical principles as the basis of discourse.* They are saying in effect, "How can we communicate at all—how can we even agree as to what we are disagreeing about—unless we have a prior agreement and understanding about first principles?"

To establish the foregoing claim as the "basic contention" of the Neo-Scholastics, Mr. Hayakawa presents the following evidence:

> In questioning this basic premise of the Great Books Movement, I am not, of course, arguing

> against the heritage of ancient Greece or of Christianity—which, I am sure, are at least as valuable as the heritage of ancient China or of Buddhism. What I am concerned with is the belief of Dr. Hutchins and Dr. Adler that agreements at the levels of "first principles"—in other words, agreements at the highest possible levels of philosophical abstraction—are the *necessary* condition of intellectual, political, moral, and social order. As Dr. Hutchins wrote, "If we can revitalize metaphysics and restore it to its place in higher learning, we may yet be able to establish rational order in the modern world as well as in the universities" (*The Higher Learning in America* [New Haven, 1936], p. 105). Get the metaphysics straight, so the argument goes, and everything else will turn out all right.

Now it is true enough that communication improves when both parties to the communication speak the same conceptual language. Mr. Hayakawa would hardly dissent to this. So there can be no objection to this idea. And since there are various conceptual languages, arising from various assumptions about the nature of things, there is an obvious value in knowing about the various assumptions it is possible for men to hold. No objection here, either. What, then, does Mr. Hayakawa object to? He objects to the presumption of those who insist that everybody talk in *their* language, on the ground that no other language has meaning.

But did those whom he calls "Neo-Scholastics" do this? We don't know about the rest of the presumed offenders, but we are certain that Mr. Hutchins never insisted any such thing. On the contrary, in the passage which Mr. Hayakawa quotes against him (from *The Higher Learning in America*), Mr. Hutchins says something quite different from what Mr. Hayakawa makes him seem to say:

> I am not here arguing [Mr. Hutchins wrote] for any specific theological or metaphysical system. I am insisting that consciously or unconsciously we are always trying to get one. I suggest that we shall get a better one if we recognize explicitly the need for one and try to get the most rational one we can. We are, as a matter of fact, living today by the haphazard, accidental, shifting shreds of a theology and metaphysics to which we cling because we must cling to something. If we can revitalize metaphysics and restore it to its place in the higher learning, we may be able to establish a rational order in the modern world as well as in the universities. We may get order in the higher learning by removing from it the elements which disorder it today, and these are vocationalism and unqualified empiricism. If when these elements are removed we pursue the truth for its own sake in the light of some principle of metaphysics, we shall have a rational plan for a university. We shall be able to make a university a true center of learning; we shall be able to make it the home of creative thought.

What are we to conclude about Mr. Hayakawa? That he falsified Mr. Hutchins' opinion in order to win a point? It would be foolish, we think, to charge a respected thinker with so shallow a practice. Instead, it seems evident that what Mr. Hayakawa really thinks is that any sort of metaphysics is a nonsensical objective; therefore it did not strike him as important to distinguish between the metaphysical clarity for which Mr. Hutchins is arguing, and the dogmatic metaphysics which Mr. Hayakawa attributes to him.

We must conclude, in short, that instead of objecting to Mr. Hutchins, Mr. Hayakawa is doing some insisting of his own. He insists upon doing without metaphysics; and what is more, he wants Mr. Hutchins to do without it, too. This argument, then, is not about whether Mr. Hutchins is a dogmatist and a Neo-Scholastic, but about whether or not it is possible to do without metaphysics. Mr. Hayakawa has taken a position in this argument and is trying to use Mr. Hutchins as a whipping boy.

At this point it should be useful to introduce some definitions. Metaphysics is handily defined in last week's Frontiers article, by Prof. S. Radhakrishnan:

> . . . metaphysics . . . is concerned with the ultimate nature of things. The search for metaphysical certainty has been the source of much that is profound and significant in the history of thought. Metaphysics comprises two main fields, [one of which is] ontology. Ontology is derived from

> the Greek word for being. What is the reality which exists in its own right and is not dependent on anything else? The other is epistemology, which is derived from the Greek word for knowledge. What can the human mind know with certainty? How does opinion differ from knowledge? What is real? What can be known? These are the problems with which metaphysics deals.

What happens when a man decides to ignore these problems by asserting that metaphysics is a meaningless or futile study?

For an answer to this question, we turn to F. H. Bradley, who says in the Introduction to his work, *Appearance and Reality:*

> The man who is ready to prove that metaphysical knowledge is wholly impossible . . . is a brother metaphysician with a rival set of first principles. And this is so plain that I must excuse myself from dwelling on the point. To say the reality is such that our knowledge cannot reach it, is a claim to know reality; to urge that our knowledge is of a kind which must fail to transcend appearances itself implies that transcendency. For, if we had no idea of a beyond, we should assuredly not know how to talk about failure or success. And the test, by which we must distinguish them, must obviously be some acquaintance with the goal.

Bradley makes it pretty plain that any serious thought has metaphysical implications:

> Is it possible to abstain from thought about the universe? . . . by various causes, even the average man is compelled to wonder and reflect. To him the world, and his share in it, is a natural object of thought, and it seems likely to remain one. . . . the question is not whether we are to reflect and ponder on ultimate truth—for perhaps most of us do that and are not likely to cease. The question is merely as to the way in which this should be done. And the claim of metaphysics is surely not unreasonable. Metaphysics takes its stand on this side of human nature, this desire to think about and comprehend reality. And it merely asserts that, if the attempt is to be made, it should be done as thoroughly as our nature permits.
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> . . . it protests that, if we are to think, we should sometimes try to think properly. And the opponent of metaphysics, it appears to me, is driven to a dilemma. He must either condemn all reflection on the essence of things,—and if so, he breaks, or tries to break, with part of the highest side of human nature,—or else he allows us to think, but not to think strictly. . . .

This last alternative named by Bradley characterizes a tendency common among the anti-metaphysicians. They want the uncertainty which they are sure represents the appropriate attitude of fallible human beings toward all ultimate questions, and the best way to guarantee the uncertainty is to deny the possibility of certainty. They are the foxes who know many things, and who are suspicious of the Big Thing known to the hedgehog.

Their suspicion, it is necessary to acknowledge, is well founded. There is only one thing worse than denying the possibility of metaphysical knowledge, and that is to arm oneself with stern and threatening authority on the ground that you have *found* it. The main body of Mr. Hayakawa's article is devoted to criticism of claims to metaphysical certainty, and here we can do nothing but applaud. Take for example the following:

> Another array of neon lights of Neo-Scholasticism is provided by the *Time, Life,* and *Fortune* group of magazines, which seems to have a central cadre of editorialists whose task it is to expound the metaphysics of the Luce empire. That metaphysics is sternly other-worldly; it asserts repeatedly that the basic questions confronting man are religious. It sternly opposes pragmatism, positivism, and excessive reliance on science. In an Easter editorial, for example, *Life* (March 30, 1959) excoriated "secularism," which "refuses on principle to ask questions which science cannot answer", this non-religious view, the editors asserted, is responsible for "the triviality and self-indulgence of American life."
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> In view of how strongly the editors of *Life* feel about the triviality and self-indulgence of American life, one wonders how they could bring themselves to include in the same issue page after page of expensive and attractively laid-out advertising for Pontiac ("personal attention to quality is the secret of giving the customer a car he'll enjoy"); Soft-Weve ("the 2-ply tissue by Scott, the most noticed little luxury he'll enjoy"); and a spread of three full pages to say that Marlboros are obtainable either in soft pack or flip-top box. The reader is left quite at a loss as to what

> *Life* wants him to do: (1) to accept God and give up secularism and self-indulgence, or (2) to order a new Pontiac.

On its own definitions, *Life* qualifies as a pretty fancy Whore of Babylon.

Time, also, Mr. Hayakawa shows, identifies itself as one of the caretakers of the Moral Law:

> The central problem of our age, said the editors of *Time,* is the crisis among intellectuals. Public opinion is able to arrive at right decisions only if there is "a certain agreement on moral standards, a framework of philosophy about man, the world, and the truth in which facts relevant to the news can be assembled, tests applied, and rational debate carried on." But as *Time* put the question, "In the U.S. today, is there enough unity about fundamentals to make for a sensible and fruitful debate on public policies? Are the limits of debate and the final standards of policy clearly and generally understood? To clarify such fundamentals is the duty of the intellectuals, especially the philosophers." But the philosophers are not, it appears, doing their job: "How true is the cliché that this is a time of 'growing intellectual confusion'? . . . like most clichés, it is all too true. . . . Today the idea of an objective unchanging moral law is hotly denied by many social scientists, defended by other intellectuals and by a lot of non-intellectuals . . . . So intellectual confusion has been growing."

Same words, different music. Somebody will ask, "But isn't it *true?*" Or argue, "Doesn't *Manas* say things like that *all the time?*" What harm can a few ads do? Anyhow, they're pretty to look at, and you might want to buy something sometime.

When people start talking like that, we need the foxes. For the foxes, through the centuries, have been the ones to spell out the fact that the people who claim the most authority from the Moral Law—authority to tell other people what to do, how to believe, whom to revere—usually turn out to be Grand Inquisitors. They are metaphysicians all right, but of the Roman sort, who will tell you privately that there is only one kind of theology (the civil theology) which is of any social utility, and it is not true.

The first negative rule in the study of metaphysics ought to be to look out for the people who are seeking truths which have "social utility." For they are the people who, before long, will discover the One True Revelation that entitles them to run the entire world. The tragic fact is that the idea of eternal truths has an extraordinary power to attract hypocrites, pretenders, demagogues, and pious frauds of every description. Any book which advocates the study of metaphysics should make a big point of this. *Only the highest values are worth counterfeiting.*

What shall we say, then, about Mr. Hayakawa? The justest thing we can think of to say is that he is still fighting in the French Revolution, for the values it represented. But there is another and perhaps a greater revolution under way. It began, we might add, in the private, inner war of Leon Tolstoy with himself, and it has still a long way to go before it comes out into the open.

Letter from ROMANIA

BUCHAREST.—"That," said my young friend earnestly, "is why we hate capitalism!" The dancer who had just skipped his way across the stage wore a long-tailed coat, a generous moustache, a wide-brimmed hat, and carried a whip. He looked remarkably like Simon Legree, but the performance we were seeing was not "Uncle Tom's Cabin." It was a new Romanian ballet, *Ballad of the Motherland,* and I was the guest of a Ministry at the avant-première. The crowd showed its approval of scene after scene, each preceded by a brief declamation by a spotlighted young man. The scenes were for a time all revolt and revolution: overthrowing the Turks in 1877; the 1907 peasants' revolt, crushed by the landowners and the Government; the great General Strike of 1933, crushed again with 11,000 deaths. Then came crescendoing scenes of success, in each of which the red flag of Communism brought new victories. The production ended on a note of building, of success, of the glories of the future, and was followed by a rout in which quantities of lovely red flowers were tossed onto the stage by a shouting audience, and tossed back by the cast in shared enthusiasm.

Bucharest is especially interesting after visits to other Communist capitals. In Moscow I met with groups of undoubted Marxists, who used our visit to make debating points. Sometimes it seemed that almost any old point would do, while they watched each other to see the effect of each remark. Don't mistake me—they're quite serious in Moscow, but a bit of relaxation is appearing in the tension. In Warsaw, attitudes, if not actual words, said very plainly: Well, this situation has been hung on us; what do you expect us to do but live with it? In a Government office in Prague the apparent loss of a high-level Marxist book of reference, supposed to be available to answer all questions of theory, called forth raucous hilarity on the part of the men with whom I was talking. In Belgrade there is on the part of some people an eager, hopeful feeling that they are discovering something new in the world of Marx, and they want to talk about it. Meanwhile, one has the impression, from unmown grass in the parks and a general slackness in management, that perhaps some of the more basic problems have been locked in the closet or swept under the rug.

But Bucharest seemed different. Perhaps it was because I spent several days in the nearly uninterrupted company of a man so young that he had been educated almost from the beginning in the Communist system. In fact, I was served, guided, guarded, and no doubt watched, as never before in my experience.

My impression is that control here is in the hands of really hard-core Communists. They think they know what they are doing, and they have no intention of wasting any time. One day I visited Public School No. 34, with twenty-four classrooms, beautifully built, with laboratories in physics, chemistry, mechanical drawing and natural science, all better equipped than any school I ever attended. It has a 6,000-volume library, a performance hall seating 900, and the entire plant was constructed in 90 days. Ninety days!—they worked round the clock, three shifts, and it opened on National Day, August 23, 1959. Every hallway was lined with photo-montages showing Lenin participating in historic events. No classroom was without a picture or a bust of Lenin.

"Our Party policy," I was told by three separate persons, "is to improve the living standards of the people first, and only then to invest in industrial development." In a semi-industrialized country like Romania, this is not as crazy as it sounds, though obviously there comes a time when the process requires reversal. To the declared end a startling building program is under way, described by officials as no less than an attempt to rebuild a full three fourths of this city of 1,300,000 by tearing down everything, clean, and building new housing, business, social and

sports facilities in a super-modern complex in which only a few, quite special landmarks will be retained. One feels regret for some of the gracious mansions of the last century, but these have long been put to office or many-family use for which they were not intended, and are therefore already lost.

When this plan has been carried out, will every capital of Europe look like a slum, in comparison with Bucharest? The rebuilt areas I have seen, extensive already, are as clean and neat, flower-trimmed and colorful as the best housing anywhere, and far better than most. The architecture is pleasing, with satisfying variety of form and the intelligent use of color. (The single obvious example of Soviet architectural influence in Bucharest is the ugly, tower-topped monstrosity of the State printing plant.) There are great, broad playgrounds and shaded parks. There are new schools and vast sports-complexes.

The problem, in all too short a visit, is to have some dependable idea of what is really happening. Physical building is impressive, but one realizes that it may also be deceptive. If Socialism is to succeed, it must build a living society as well. I asked my young friend about this, and he countered with bitter criticism of Western society. From the Olympian heights of four months' service in Washington—his only absence from the Socialist world—and taking his cue from *"Que Sera, Sera,"* which I must have been whistling, he said: "The Western world only thinks about getting rich. *I* don't want to get rich!" The more positive aspects of his philosophy did not become clear, but he did give me clues on the present status and interests of the residents of Bucharest in general.

While examining one group of new apartment buildings, I asked how large each dwelling-unit was. The answer, "Two or three rooms, depending upon the size of the family," was further clarified by a well-informed resident foreigner, who told me that the average area of each was 27 square meters. Allowing minimum space for bath and kitchen, this is about the equivalent of two rooms, each 10 by 11 feet. This may or may not account for the phenomenon of literally thousands of people wandering the streets in the evening, filling the downtown districts, jamming the trams, walking in Christmas-shopping-like crowds, looking in the brightly-lighted shop windows. Watching such a crowd, trying to see what interested them most, I realized that one particular shop, of all the tasteful displays, was the clear winner. It held a quantity of bright-colored plastic household items: washbaskets, buckets, funnels, and clothespins.

It was also a new experience for me to meet undiluted sight-and-sound propaganda of the type which inevitably recalls "1984" for its prototype. Every park, every square, every village, is wired for sound. Roads are well-lined with billboards, not so large nor so blatant as those in America, but sufficient to be noticed. Their message is directed to Collectivists, Socialists, or merely Citizens; the phrase loosely translated as "Long Live Our Country" is omnipresent. One morning when I was about to take a picture of a charming harbor scene my friend rushed to me in agitation and said: "Wait! We must ask someone's permission!" There was no one in sight, and the crisis was averted by the negative decision of my light-meter, but there was a strong feeling that Authority, though invisible for the moment, would also have something to say.

Well, I'm seeing how the other half lives. It is fact, not fancy, that almost half the world lives in some such environment as this.

ROVING CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW
NEVIL SHUTE—CONCLUDING CHAPTERS

FOR some thirty years, until his death on Jan. 12, 1960, Nevil Shute Norway found himself consistently, if surprisingly to himself, England's best-selling novelist. Reviewers in the United States and England have attempted to explain the affection shown Mr. Norway by an ever-growing audience. This writer, they have said, was warm and compassionate without being emotional, and the stoic gentility of those whose last days were depicted in *On the Beach* is perhaps a good example of this quality. Further, in a world so dependent on the intricacies of engineering, a world in which the future is so much involved with aeronautics, a writer who was also an outstanding aeronautical engineer could easily unite "story-telling" and the disciplines which the engineer and designing profession represent.

But, so far as we know, no reviewer has given much attention to the evidence that Nevil Shute was also very much of a mystic. From his early *An Old Captivity,* which revealed an interest in reincarnation, and *No Highway in the Sky,* involving telepathy, to *The Rainbow and the Rose,* which carried various intimations of immortality, Mr. Shute recorded a remarkable assemblage of technical and deeply philosophical interests. In a different vein and in a different context his best-selling novel, *The Chequer Board,* showed appreciative absorption of an Eastern world view, while *Round the Bend* was Gandhian in tone.

As we see it, many readers hunger for a framework of thought broad enough to bring the details of the practical life and metaphysical explorations into some kind of harmony—a synthesis found in every one of Shute's books. Although his latest, *Trustee from the Toolroom,* Book of the Month selection for March, is perhaps the most difficult to discuss in terms of this analysis, a Shute fan should be able to recognize the characteristic signs. Keith Stewart, an unassuming, middle-aged Englishman who designs miniature machinery, finds himself in an extraordinary predicament. His married sister and her husband leave their daughter with Stewart while they go off on a sailing voyage around the world, with plans to settle permanently in Vancouver. Because of the restriction on taking money out of England, they have turned their not inconsiderable life savings into diamonds and mortared them into the keel structure of the boat. When the *Shearwater* is wrecked on a coral reef in the South Seas during a hurricane, and the parents drown, Stewart realizes that his little niece will have no inheritance unless he is able to retrieve the sunken treasure without attracting attention. He is himself unable to give her much financial help.

He must make a try, though the odds seem insuperable. In the first place, since the concealment and removal of the jewels was illegal, he can enlist no official aid. But how can he, without money or apparent influence, travel twelve thousand miles to recover the treasure? As Edmund Fuller says in the April 2 *Saturday Review,* "How he [Stewart] does so without financial means or knowledge of the world is Mr. Shute's story. The fellowship of craft and meticulous workmanship provides the key to the problems. Modest Keith Stewart finds that the *Miniature Mechanic* has created across half the globe a network of devoted admirers, many of whom are able and willing to work magic for him." Mr. Fuller elsewhere remarks that this unusual sort of hero "is perilously close to the cliché of the good little man," but his devotion to his craft, his kindly assistance to all those who sharpen their inventive talents through miniature design and construction have established profound admiration and respect among hundreds of men Stewart has never met. Their desire to help him, with no questions asked, is spontaneous, and here is the "mystical" core of *Trustee from the Toolroom.*

A philosophically inclined Buddhist or Hindu would simply say that this is "karma," the natural results of a good man's intensive endeavors. The bread cast upon the waters comes back, or, if we prefer, as this man has sown, so does he now reap. The moral might simply be that Devotion is one of the most powerful faculties of the human soul.

Half a page from *Trustee from the Toolroom* shows Mr. Shute's capacity for portraying a moment of decision without fanfare. Having arrived in Honolulu by courtesy of unexpected help, Stewart finds that there is no way to Tahiti unless he is willing to chance the company of a Polynesian-American of childlike intelligence who has built a sailing boat with his own hands, who cannot use a sextant or read a chart, and who possesses no auxiliary motor for the craft. Although warned by a friend that a voyage to Tahiti under these circumstances would be suicidal, Stewart refuses to give up. Finally he encounters another sailing man who admits to faith in the Polynesian-American's purely instinctive ability to reach a destination:

> Keith hesitated. "Do you think he'll get there?"
>
> Mr. Fairlie stubbed his cigarette out in the ashtray. "It's an opinion, Mr. Stewart. He thinks like a child ten years old. But he's certainly a good seaman, and he knows a lot about the sea."
>
> "You think he'll get there?"
>
> "In the end—yes, I think he probably will." He glanced at Keith. "It won't be comfortable."
>
> "Would you go with him yourself?"
>
> Mr. Fairlie smiled. "If I was absolutely desperate and had to get there somehow, at whatever risk—yes, I think I would."
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> There was a half minute's silence in the wardroom. To go back tamely with the aeroplane to Blackbushe, to renounce all chance of getting Janice her inheritance because he was afraid of Jack Donelly, would be cowardice. If he did not at least investigate this line he felt that he would never be able to tell Katie the truth about this journey; at one point he would have to lie, and go on in the same lie for the rest of his life.
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> At the same time, he felt that he was sliding deeper into the mire of the unknown and the fantastically dangerous.

The Rainbow and the Rose (1958) had a similar theme: devotion to duty leads the principal characters to enlargement of their capacities, a deepening of wisdom, and happy personal consummation. But the duty Mr. Shute always seems concerned about is never describable in conventional terms—as witness the illegality of the "smuggling" operation in *Trustee from the Toolroom.* It is as if Mr. Shute, while interested in the same values that religion talks about over-much, feels that they become real only when they are hewn out by the individual, each in his own way. And in Mr. Shute's scheme of things, the flowering of abnormal perception comes as an end-result of the achievements of integrity.

Mr. Shute's books include some twenty-one titles, taking us from Viking times to England, to Australia, and to the South Seas. But whatever Shute has written, it is told with the calm assurance of a man whose own philosophy is both dynamic and settled. Mr. Shute has had no successful imitators during his long career, nor is it likely that one will appear. Like some of the characters of his novels, Shute exhibited what Mr. Fuller calls "a self-reliance that asks few favors and ends by having large favors thrust upon it."

COMMENTARY
FOR AN EXAMINED PHILOSOPHY

ON reading over this week's lead article, it appears that some critic may feel that he has grounds for an argument that would run something like this:

You say that people like Dr. Hutchins are not arguing for a particular metaphysic. But surely, they are *after* a particular metaphysic—one of which they will be able to approve. And then, after they have decided upon the best possible metaphysic, will not all Mr. Hayakawa's strictures justly apply?

In reply we would say that this argument confuses metaphysics with theology—a common mistake and injustice to metaphysics. Mr. Bradley has a comment that is pertinent to this question:

> I may have given the impression that I take the metaphysician to be initiated into something far higher than the common herd possesses. Such a doctrine would rest on a most deplorable error, the superstition that the mere intellect is the highest side of our nature, and the false idea that in the intellectual world work done on higher subjects is for that reason higher work. Certainly the life of one man, in comparison with another, may be fuller of the Divine, or, again, may realize it with an intenser consciousness; but there is no calling or pursuit which is a private road to the Deity. And assuredly the way through speculation upon ultimate truths, though distinct and legitimate, is not superior to others. There is no sin, however prone to it philosophers may be, which philosophy can justify so little as spiritual pride.

After all, metaphysics is the exploration of all possible points of view, in the hope of finding the least avoidable position that one can adopt. It is the testing of assumptions by the mind, through an examination of their logical consequences. By means of metaphysics a man may arrive at an understanding of the principles he holds, or thinks he holds, thereby gaining the ability to change them for better ones. Metaphysics cannot supply first principles, but it enables us to examine them.

If we mistake not, it is Mr. Hutchins' view that people who, through this sort of reflection, have gained clarity concerning the meaning and implications of their most cherished convictions are best equipped to articulate the major issues of human existence, and he believes that educators and, increasingly, students of the higher learning, ought to acquire this equipment.

The only authority enjoyed by such men is the self-sustained authority of reasoned argument and discourse. Mr. Hutchins has never even hinted that he would wish to move from this position to the authority exercised by a Theocratic State. What he does seem to suggest is that persons imbued with the disciplines of careful thinking may be able to convey, by a kind of cultural osmosis, a mood of orderliness and responsibility to the social community at large. This is what every intelligent, thoughtful citizen is trying to do, in his relations with the public. We can only conclude that those who routinely object to any expression of a serious interest in the disciplines of metaphysics have never troubled to find out what they really are.

So far as we can see, the only difference between the well-intentioned positivist and the well-intentioned Platonic idealist is that the positivist wants to secrete his ethics by some mysterious process unknown alike to science and to rational investigation, while the idealist is trying to get *his* ethics out into the open for public inspection.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
HEREDITY, ENVIRONMENT, AND THE "SOUL": I

SOMEHOW or other, the pages of MANAS do not easily lend themselves to sharp controversy. Perhaps this is because the editors have been principally concerned with assisting attempts towards synthesis in human thought—after the techniques of controversy have been exhausted through other media. But nevertheless there are certain fundamental philosophical questions about which every thinking human being will form emphatic opinions, and, in any attempt to invite the construction of a larger circle to encompass contradictory views, the issues require at least some definition.

In the present instance we are in receipt of a critical comment on Dr. Burton Henry's contribution to "Children . . . and Ourselves" for April 27. Our quotations from the critique are chosen because they so well indicate the extent to which argument may hamper the chances for constructive modifications of terminology. Our correspondent takes stringent exception to Dr. Henry's generalized description of the teacher's ideal contribution to the study of "human relations." For instance, when Dr. Henry wrote that "several thousand years of living with *homo sapiens* has led us to believe that man is not born human, he must learn his humanity," his critic remarks:

> I must disagree, and violently, that this focus should be self-consciously added to any class-room for the purpose of "modifying the behavior" of the students, or of "transforming the human genotype into a human being." And indeed, I must confess that it was exactly this attitude on the part of teacher-educators and a majority of teachers and administrators that drove me from the class-room. I found it intolerable, and beyond that, think it the most dangerous and destructive attitude in the teaching profession and in our world today. . . .
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> It seems to me that we should have realized long ago that human beings do not teach one another to think, but can only teach one another what the fruits of thought have been. The idea of entering a class-room in order to modify the behavior of its occupants, or to make them into human beings, strikes me as indicative of arrogance on the part of the teacher, and the failure of teachers and others to accomplish changes in behavior in their students surprises me not at all, for it would be a poor human being, I think, who would allow himself to be changed in any basic way simply because a teacher or adviser thought the change necessary.
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> Presenting material in the class-room as a strategem or focus of any kind implies a lack of faith in the children themselves and in the soaring intelligence which is their prime characteristic, and because it seeks to confine that intelligence to a particular mold, and to direct it to pre-arranged conclusions which are not always suitable. I find this attitude dangerous, meanwhile, because it tends to rob the child or student of his birthright of free choice and free thought and consequently arouses his deep resentment, while, at the same time, it tends to rob society of the forward thrust of thought of the new generation.

Well, now, these are good points, but we repeat them, not because we feel that Dr. Henry's contribution is any more in need of criticism than that of his present opponent, but because they suggest an obvious fact—that education as well as psychology and philosophy are still struggling to find the proper terms for definition of the human being. So far, no period of human history has escaped fulsome debate on the extent to which education should "modify" behavior. Perhaps the closest agreement existed between centuries eight and twelve, when opinion was standardized by the church, and when the process of "modifying" was assumed by all save the heretics to be simply a matter of pruning off certain sinful proclivities. When Dr. Henry talks about modification, however, he means something entirely different. We quote from his "The Fourth R—Human Relations":

> Human Relations education is of course concerned with the cultural heritage; however, it does not regard the democratic cultural heritage as a collection of facts, but of ideas—a frame of mind, an

> attitude that appreciates the worth of human life of each human being regardless of color, or sex, or class, or creed; an attitude that proclaims that nothing that is human is foreign to it. It is only when the school is concerned with the transmission of this kind of cultural heritage that the culture can accomplish its prime purpose, that of transforming the human genotype into the human being.
>
> How can the human relations attitude become the focus of the school curriculum, become *the* "subject matter" which integrates, correlates, and gives meaning to all other subject matter? Paramount I would think is the need for teachers who perceive themselves more as facilitators of growth than as dispensers of information, teachers who are more interested in the learning process than in the teaching process (who do not equate teaching with telling), teachers who understand themselves in some depth and who therefore can help children understand *themselves* in some depth. We need teachers who accept themselves and are therefore not fearful of differences in others in order to develop in children the self-respect which must precede respect for others.

In other words, there is no basic argument here as to whether the influences of environment can play an important role in awakening a young person's capacity for thought. Dr. Henry emphasizes the extent to which the teacher can constructively function as a portion of that environment, while our correspondent is chiefly worried that educators may accept Harvard Professor Skinner's theories in respect to the calculated engineering of human responses by "social engineers." Dr. Henry is simply calling attention to the fact that teachers cannot perform a significant function if they avoid participation in the thinking life of the child—they must admit into discussion the obvious problems and dislocations of our time, including the dislocations of racial prejudice, divorce, capital punishment, and the threat of fear-triggered war. Our correspondent seems to be arguing that every human being, young or old, is a soul in the Platonic sense, that is, "a self-moving unit." But Dr. Henry is building upon the same premise, and then proposing that if this be so, there is something more than relative truth, and that the teacher needs to assist the open-minded student to a discovery of those truths which allow him to define himself in terms of principle.

This discussion recalls a cartoon which appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post*—a little boy stands before his father, head unbowed, although the report card he has just handed over is obviously filled with unsatisfactory marks. "Which do you think is responsible, Pop," he says, "heredity or environment?" Most parents, save those ridden with guilt-complexes, tend to believe that the heredity part is just fine, and that if anything goes wrong the fault must be laid at the doors of the school. The school, on the other hand, points out that the basic attitudes of the home are the fundamental factors of environmental conditioning. In respect to this issue, we tend to be on the side of the schools, because what the child is subjected to during school hours is not so much the teaching theories of administrators and faculties as it is the ethos of a community group, and the community group forms its opinions on the basis of the example set by adults in their own homes.

FRONTIERS

"She's Making History`'

JUST about the best story we've seen on the sit-in strikes by Negro students at Southern lunch counters is "Sit down, Chillun, Sit Down!", by Wilma Dykeman and James Stokely in the *Progressive* for June. After reading it, you are fully aware that an irrepressible force has been turned loose in the South, but that, fortunately for both whites and Negroes, it is a moral force which threatens, not life and limb, but only inherited prejudice and willful injustice.

This movement can do nothing but grow and spread. It is not a movement led by outsiders or even by older Negroes. The students, the "new Negroes," have taken the issue of discrimination in public places into their own hands. These young people are not afraid. There aren't enough jails in the entire South to hold the Negro students who are prepared to go to jail. On the subject of the "inspiration" of the sit-ins, the students have a ready answer:

> "Sure we've been influenced by outsiders," a Florida student said not long ago, "outsiders like Thoreau and Gandhi. But our biggest influence has been inside—all those years of second-class citizenship stored up inside us."

The students train themselves in non-violent self-control. They hold clinics in which they shove and jostle one another, to be sure they will not get angry when white crowds or hoodlums mistreat them. A youngster who said, "I couldn't stand for a white man to strike me," was told to stay home from the sit-in demonstrations—to help in other ways.

Last March, in Orangeburg, South Carolina, more than a thousand students from two Negro colleges began a peaceful march to the downtown area. They carried Bibles and hymnbooks and planned to offer a public prayer for equal rights. The local police and the fire department awaited the demonstrators with fire hoses ready to blast water at them. The *Progressive* article continues:

> "The police chief asked who the leader was," one of the Negro boys related, "and twelve hundred students shouted, 'I am the leader.'
>
> "'Well,' the police chief said, 'I am going to arrest the leader. Step forward,' and twelve hundred students stepped forward.
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> One or two of those in front were arrested then and the police chief said, 'Get those niggers.' The fire hoses were turned on. Many of the boys and girls were knocked down, the force of the water was so strong. Some of their dresses and shirts were torn. Hats and coats were ruined. One fellow's ear began to bleed, but he stood there and took it."
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> Then the students began to sing The Battle Hymn of the Republic and still moved forward. Tear gas was thrown in their midst. Still they came. Then the arrests began, so many that only a parking lot converted into a temporary stockade could hold all the prisoners. It was ten o'clock that night before the Negro community could raise sufficient bail to get the students back to their campuses, where at least forty were treated for injuries and exposure in the near-freezing drizzle of rain.

Old ideas about the Southern Negro are rapidly going the way of all cultural delusions. When Southerners say regretfully that "communication between the races has broken down," the new Negroes say it's not that, but that instead, the whites are getting "a new message." Now, the Negroes say, the whites "are learning what we think, and it doesn't fit in with their pet myths."

It is the habit of Southern white leaders, when trouble looms, to call in certain Negro leaders to talk things over and find out what is going on. This method no longer helps. The Negro leaders don't seem to know. Following is an account of a meeting between store executives and student protesters in one large city:

> There was a poignant moment at that meeting. The man speaking for the store managers accused the Negroes of breaking their truce. "We made no truce," they said. "Those men you called in didn't speak for us." The chairman and all the other white men were astonished. They looked at each other. "If we're not dealing with leaders we can somewhat control," they seemed to say, "with whom are we dealing?"

The demonstrators are a new generation of Negroes. They are educated, they know their rights and are determined to have them, but they are equally determined to win them without violence and without hate. An extraordinary morale pervades everything they do. The best evidence of this is found in an editorial in the Richmond (Virginia) *News Leader*—a paper which, the *Progressive* writers remark, is "certainly no proponent of integration." The editorial says:

> Many a Virginian must have felt a tinge of wry regret at the state of things as they are, in reading of Saturday's "sit-downs" by Negro students in Richmond stores. Here were the colored students, in coats, white shirts, ties, and one of them was reading Goethe and one was taking notes from a biology text. And here, on the sidewalk outside, was a gang of white boys come to heckle, a ragtail rabble, slack-jawed, black-jacketed, grinning fit to kill, and some of them, God save the mark, were waving the proud and honored flag of the Southern states in the last war fought by gentlemen. It gives one pause.

Thus the New Negro belongs to a generation which is coming to maturity through attitudes of discipline and self-respect. The parents of the students are beginning to see the meaning of what is happening. When the white schoolmate of a Negro girl who had been put in jail for sit-in protesting asked the latter's mother how she felt about it, the mother replied, "She's making history."

The "history" being made today in the American South is also establishing a new principle of social action. In the War Resisters League newsletter for May-June, Bayard Rustin, WRL field secretary, tells how WRL members and other pacifists pioneered the use of non-violent methods to oppose racial segregation and other injustices, as early as 1940. "These early experiments with Gandhi's methods in the U.S.," he writes, "have become an historic part of a world-wide movement." He continues:

> Today nonviolence has become the most generally accepted technique in the struggle for freedom the world over. When men in Korea and Japan, students in our South or in Spain, black people in South Africa and Kenya strike out against the old order, they must of necessity adopt a Gandhi-like program. This is dictated by many elements in contemporary society: the nature of modern arms, the inability of revolutionary elements to obtain them, the reluctance of governments to unleash them against groups which have the respect of press and public opinion.

This is a simple statement, but the more you reflect on it, the truer it appears. In nonviolence, it is now becoming evident, lies the initiative for all forms of constructive social change which require the uncompromising strength of a revolutionary undertaking.