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WHAT IS VIRTUE?

AS man-made satellites move around the Earth and head off toward the Moon, and as our nation proceeds with its efforts to produce more and better scientists, we may do well to remind ourselves once again that the need for good men as well as good scientists continues, and that this, too, is a basic objective of our educational system and our national life. If we are to produce good men we should be as clear as possible about what constitutes this goodness. What is good character? Socrates, living in a situation not entirely unlike our own, used to wander around Athens asking this question. He phrased it, "What is virtue?" It was not a very popular question then—Socrates was executed for his persistence, and it is not a very popular question now—we would prefer to leave it to someone else. Nevertheless, Socrates may have been right in thinking that it was a question of central importance, and perhaps we are justified at present in making a stab at it. We can hardly be intelligent and effective in our efforts to produce good people if we do not understand the nature of our objective. This essay makes six assertions about virtue and proposes that awareness of these aspects of virtue is of considerable importance to us as we attempt to diagnose the nature and extent of our contemporary sickness.

(1) *Virtue involves asking the right question.* The right question is "What ought I to do?" This question is not asked to lead to a discussion of moral theory; it is asked with a view to determining action. It is to be answered by the selection of an act, not by the formulation of a standard. This question represents the adoption of the moral point of view, without which a person may be rich or popular or influential or respectable—but not virtuous. Virtue, thus, requires from the beginning a moral orientation that will exhibit itself in the response a person makes to each situation that confronts him. If this orientation is built into human nature, so much the better; if it is not, then we must commit ourselves to it. And this may not be entirely easy. People are persecuted as much for the questions they ask as for the answers they offer. We have learned that one does not get the right sort of answer unless he asks the right sort of question; but it is probably wrong questions rather than wrong answers which lead us astray.

We need not quibble over words. The question might be phrased, "What is the best thing for me to do?" or "Where is the good in this situation?" rather than in the Kantian language of obligation which is used here. The important point is that the question institutes a search for the valuable, the worthwhile, the better, in a specific situation. It represents a normative orientation on the part of the person who asks it. Without this orientation, virtue is already forfeit because the individual has failed, either willfully or otherwise, to take the stance of a moral agent. He is not aimed in the direction of virtue.

There are other questions that come to dominate our lives. For example; "What will be the easiest way out of this mess?" or "What is the way to have the most fun?" or "What is the way to secure power?" or "What is the way to make the most money out of this state of affairs?" Each of these questions defines a point of view, and there are occasions when they are appropriate leads to follow; but pursuing any one of them makes no contribution to virtue unless the person who asks it has already asked whether or not he ought to discover the easiest, the gayest, the Machiavellian, or the financially shrewd way through and out of a situation. The virtuous man is morally oriented. This means that his interest in these other questions is subordinate to his concern to discover what he *ought* to do. His moral orientation does

not arbitrarily exclude them; rather it places them in perspective. We might say that his moral orientation provides him with the perspective for pursuing these other questions when they *ought* to be pursued. They may be relevant, but they are not ultimate.

This seems to make it clear that the moral question is not the only question. There are other questions a person must ask. It would be silly to go through life with a single question. But it is not silly to select a single question in order to define the point of view from which the others shall be approached. One is reminded of Aristotle's doctrine that the man of moral virtue must act and feel in the right way, at the right time, with the right motive, toward the right people, and to the right extent. (*Nichomachean Ethics.*) Thus, says Aristotle, "It is no easy task to be good... wherefore goodness is both rare and laudable and noble."

Clearly, it is not enough merely to ask the right question.

(2) *Virtue involves reaching a responsible answer.* The great Socratic affirmation was that virtue is knowledge, and we agree with this to the extent of insisting upon the presence of a cognitive factor in virtue. The virtuous man must know what he is doing. But we are not saying, as Socrates was, that knowledge is sufficient for virtue; we are saying that it is essential but not by itself sufficient. And we are proceeding with modern epistemological caution in using the term "responsible answer" rather than the trouble-strewn term "knowledge." Nevertheless, the responsible answer we seek is far from arbitrary. It will not be infallible or absolute, but it will represent moral insight into the moral requirements of a given situation. It is not any-old knowledge that constitutes virtue in the Socratic sense; neither is it any old opinion that constitutes moral insight in our sense. As Kant has pointed out (*Critique of Practical Reason*), the virtuous man does not have to be able to justify his insight in terms of a well developed ethical theory—that is the task of philosophers—but he must possess the insight nonetheless and he must be able to make a responsible choice of act in a given situation. We will perhaps be gentle in imposing blame upon a person who is incapable of moral insight, but a person does not have to be blameworthy in order to fail in virtue. A blunderer is a blunderer, and, though he may be dealt with kindly until you are convinced that he should have achieved some knowledge of his own limitations, he lacks an essential ingredient of virtue—you do not trust him. Our present concern does not require us to analyze this failure of moral insight. It may be due to failure to observe facts, failure to draw correct inferences, or some uniquely moral failure. This does not matter. Our point is that some people persistently fail to come up with a responsible answer to the question, "What ought I to do?" They are unable to discern what is relevant.

At this point it is important to distinguish clearly between the virtuous man and the ethical theorist, lest we appear to be transforming the former into the latter. In a sense, their point of departure is the same: both respond to the normative orientation. The virtuous man, however, proceeds to answer the question in practical terms: *"This* is what I ought to do!" The ethical theorist proceeds to render explicit the meaning of the terms of the question and to articulate and criticize various standards which might be used as practical guides in the discovery of what one ought to do. Moral insight does not have to wait for ethical theory. Ethical theory develops by reflection upon moral insight; and if it can subsequently deepen and stabilize the insight, so much the better. Our present topic, which is a scrap of ethical theory, leads us to stress the movement of thought which leads the questioning moral agent to the selection of an act to be performed, not that which leads to the search for a moral standard.

(3) *Virtue involves the will or determination to act in accordance with what one believes to be*

right. We are familiar with the person who asks the right question and consistently comes up with a wrong answer. We are also familiar with the person who seems to have a sound answer to a moral problem but fails to translate it into action. He lacks what is ordinarily called will or determination. Sooner or later, as the case may be, virtue requires action. Virtue is incompatible with pure spectatorship no matter how subtle and discerning this spectatorship may be. Even the blunderer commands a kind of admiration at this point. His lack of insight is deplorable, and what he does may be disastrous, but his will to act is awe-inspiring. We are likely to interfere with his action, but our basic task is to sharpen his insight, not weaken his will. A common word for this aspect of virtue is *guts.* Virtue involves guts, the courage to see through in action the dictates of moral insight. Positively, this is the will to act; negatively, this is the ability to resist temptation.

The struggle to resist temptation is very likely in part a struggle for deeper insight, yet Paul's description of the situation (Romans 7: 15-20) seems to have wide application in human experience. He holds that we frequently know perfectly well what we should do and yet we do something else. The problem here is not one of *knowing* what ought to be done. It is a problem of *doing* it. Our wills are weak or evil or divided. Against this background the struggle to resist temptation emerges clearly. This struggle presupposes a conviction concerning what ought to be done. Without this there would be nothing to struggle with, and the only struggle would be a struggle for knowledge—call it a struggle with ignorance if you wish.

Of course, to the extent that a person is virtuous, he will possess the kind of character that enables him to resist temptation without a major skirmish with each Charybdis, and he may even have ceased to feel certain temptations. But this moral security represents the triumph of virtue over temptation; it does not entitle us to eliminate will as an essential ingredient of virtue. The will is there, although its presence is no longer conspicuous.

We see, so far, that virtue requires a person to ask the right question, to reach a responsible answer, and to manifest determination to do what he has found to be right. These assertions cover most of what we ordinarily look for in a virtuous person, but there is something extremely important to be added.

(4) *Virtue involves commitment.* Commitment is not a matter of knowing what to do, nor entirely a matter of doing it. Commitment, or the lack of it, is revealed in the kind of relationship that exists between a person and what he does. We might ask, "Was his heart in it?" It is at this point that Jean-Paul Sartre makes a significant contribution. He finds the whole of virtue in this one aspect of it. His writings deny that there is any basis for a responsible answer to the question, "What ought I to do?"—with this we need not agree—but we can nevertheless learn something about commitment from him. The virtuous man is dedicated to his action. He may *find* it objectively, but he does not *do* it in the same mode. He does it subjectively: it is *his* action. He is not playing a part assigned to him by someone or something else, as Stoic literature suggests. His conduct is his contribution, his very own; it flows from him and he is its autonomous source. In a sense, his conduct is an extension of himself; he transcends himself in and through his conduct, so that no clear line of demarcation between himself and what he does remains.

Commitment also involves acknowledgment. The virtuous man acknowledges his conduct, not merely by admitting that he is its immediate causal source, but in a much stronger way. It is as if he were to say: "There is my act. I have chosen it, willed it, done it. You may look at it and associate it with me. I am responsible for it."

This does not mean that a man is expected always to like what he is doing, nor is he expected to value each act as an end in itself. Our heart

may be in unpleasant activity because we believe in it, not because we like it; and life has a way of dividing into means and ends, so that our commitment to an act may be commitment to that act, not as an end, but as a means to an end to which we are committed.

These points are powerfully illustrated in Sartre's play, *The Flies.* First we see a vivid picture of the breakdown of this aspect of virtue. Orestes' tutor, an intellectual and an uncommitted man, speaks:

> And what of your culture, Lord Orestes? What of that? All that wise lore I culled for you with loving care, like a bouquet, matching the fruits of my knowledge with the finest flowers of my experience? Did I not, from the very first, set you a-reading all the books there are, so as to make clear to you the infinite diversity of men's opinions? And did I not remind you, time and again, how variable are human creeds and customs? So, along with youth, good looks, and wealth, you have the wisdom of far riper years; your mind is free from prejudice and superstition; you have no family ties, no religion, no calling; you are free to turn your hand to anything. But you know better than to commit yourself—and there lies your strength.

Orestes does not follow this advice. Not only does he act, but, speaking to his sister, Electra, he clearly defines his relation to his act:

> I have done *my* deed, Electra, and that deed was good. I shall bear it on my shoulders as a carrier at a ferry carries the traveler to the farther bank. And when I have brought it to the farther bank I shall take stock of it. The heavier it is to carry, the better pleased I shall be; for that burden is my freedom. Only yesterday I walked the earth haphazard; thousands of roads I tramped that brought me nowhere, for they were other men's roads. Yes, I tried them all; the haulers' tracks along the riverside, the mule-paths in the mountains, and the broad, flagged highways of the charioteers. But none of these was mine. Today I have one path only, and heaven knows where it leads. But it is *my* path.

It would be rash to say that this is the whole of virtue, but surely this is part of what we mean when we ascribe virtue to a person. Integrity requires this sort of relationship between a person and his acts.

There is a difference between the person who meets the four requirements of virtue which have been discussed, but manages to do so only by keeping his teeth clenched, his lips tight, and his visage grim—and the person who manifests virtue with a joyfulness that is both contagious and inspiring. The former is not to be disparaged. He may have ulcers but he has accomplished a great deal. You can count on him. He will be virtuous if it kills him (and his attitude frequently suggests that he expects this to happen at any moment). The famous lines of William Ernest Henley's "Invictus" exhibit this grim virtue. And a little imagination may enable us to suppose that the elder brother in the parable of the prodigal son was such a person. But the latter is the better man. He is not blind to the hazards, but he has learned to find joy as he goes about his duty. He may even have ceased to think in terms of duty as opposed to desire, so that he is one man in a sense in which most of us are not. Thus—

(5) *Virtue is enhanced by joy*. A person may come to love his duty and find satisfaction and delight in doing it. This joyfulness shines through the lives of some people even when the going is rough. We see it in Socrates in the midst of the serious business of his trial and subsequent days in prison. We see it in St. Francis, quite compatible with his life of voluntary poverty. We see it in the later years of Gandhi, even during the painful moments of his fasting, to say nothing of the easier moments of his life. These illustrations should be sufficient to show that there is a difference between joy and fun. To say that joy enhances virtue is not to identify virtue with happiness in the popular sense nor to revert to the view which makes fun central.

These people, and others like them, are the *saints* of our world. This designation stretches the term considerably beyond its canonical usage, but joyfulness in virtue seems important enough and rare enough to warrant this extended meaning. At the same time, we might rescue another term from limited usage and label as

puritans those steadfast souls who respect duty but find no joy in it.

Finally, to remind us that virtue is not cultivated and does not exist in a psycho-physical vacuum, we assert that—

(6) *Virtue involves getting enough sleep.* Obviously, sleep is not virtue, nor do we mean to insist literally that sleep is an essential ingredient. The assertion is made as a reminder that without sleep the several ingredients of virtue are hard to develop and difficult to maintain. Many potentially good men have failed for lack of sleep, that is, for lack of concern for their physical and psychological well-being, without which one may lack the alertness to ask the right question, the sharpness to see the answer, the determination to act, or the staying power that may be required.

It would be unwise to claim too much for the preceding discussion. It is a point of departure for a theory of virtue rather than a completed analysis, and much, indeed, nearly everything, remains to be said about the relations between the six aspects that have been mentioned. But this approach does have the advantage of enabling us to focus attention upon different aspects of good character and thereby locate specific areas of breakdown and specific techniques for recovery and development. Such an effort is beyond the scope of this essay; but even casual observation and reflection concerning the character types of our time reveals the acuteness of our problem.

Many people are not morally oriented. Their lives are organized in some other way. It is easy to confirm, for example, the widespread occurrence of Erich Fromm's "marketing orientation" (*Man for Himself*), whose defining question we may phrase as "What must I do in order to be in demand?" or "How can I be as you desire me?" These people are interested in being marketable packages rather than moral agents. There are also many people who are morally oriented, that is, they ask the right question; but they are honestly confused and painfully unable to arrive at answers satisfactory even to themselves. The toughest of these keep on searching; others, unable to endure the anxieties of accelerated social change, live aimlessly and meaninglessly. The will to act is not in short supply—everywhere people are going places and doing things—but when we come to commitment, we find that a powerful diagnosis of our contemporary sickness focuses at this point.

We are charged with *alienation.* Erich Fromm writes:

> Man does not experience himself as the active bearer of his own powers and richness, but as an impoverished "thing" dependent on powers outside of himself, unto whom he has projected his living substance. (*The Sane Society.*)

An alienated person is incapable of commitment. Fromm charges that alienation pervades every aspect of our lives, our work, our play, our social and economic relations, and our relations to ourselves. Thus he explains how we can scramble for fun but live without joy, how we can be depressed and bored in the midst of pleasure.

The diagnosis need not continue. If Socrates was correct in thinking that the cultivation of virtue is the proper business of man, our task is clear—and we have much to do.

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REVIEW
SCIENTISTS AND MORAL DECISION

LINUS PAULING is obviously a man who likes to teach science. Not even the horrible subject of atomic and H-bombs can dampen his enthusiasm. Which means that almost anyone can enjoy his book, *No More War!,* issued last year by Dodd, Mead ($3.50), despite the fact that it is largely devoted to the immeasurable damage to the human race that another war would bring, as well as to the measurable damage which has resulted and is now resulting from the continued tests of thermo-nuclear weapons.

Occasionally MANAS gets a letter from someone engaged in some branch of the sciences who feels that Dr. Pauling outreaches the extent of actual scientific knowledge in his anticipations of what is happening in terms of biological harm from radioactive fall-out and genetic disaster from radiation, as the result of atomic testing. We hope that all such people will read his book. It is not that he is sure to "prove" to them that he is right and they are wrong, or that their scientific conservatism should be abandoned. For anyone not a scientist to tell a working scientist that reading a book is bound to change his mind would be presumptuous in the extreme. No, the reason for inviting attention to Dr. Pauling's book is that any reader, scientific or otherwise, wil1 have a hard time failing to recognize that here is a man who writes with candor, gentleness, eminent good will, and wholly in the tradition of the scientific spirit.

During World War II, Archibald MacLeish wrote a stirring article for the *Nation* called "The Irresponsibles." In it he brought indictment against the psychological isolationism of the scholar and the scientist from the great issues and torments which then afflicted the entire world. The article touched the conscience of many men who had conceived their responsibilities solely according to the morally neutral criteria of the scientific method. MacLeish's appeal for scientists and other men of learning to return to the Renaissance tradition of human as well as professional obligation was only a more urgent expression of a mood which had been growing in scientific circles since 1937, when the American Association for the Advancement of Science began a series of investigation of the impact of science on society.

It is fair to say that Dr. Pauling's book, as well as his earlier activities in behalf of peace and in opposition to nuclear weapons testing, is a thorough-going response to this mood.

What at least some of the critics of Dr. Pauling seem to neglect is the fact that the composite responsibility of a scientist—his responsibility as a scientist and his responsibility as a human being—must inevitably involve incommensurables of feeling, growing out of individual moral judgments. It is perhaps natural that, after many years of specializing in areas which by definition exclude anything resembling moral judgment, scientists should feel uneasy in having to think at this level, often confusing to the best of men; but that is the kind of activity which the rest of us must daily engage in, according to our lights, and the time has come for scientists to assume their share of the burden, especially since the burden is in some sense—at least technically—of their making.

How a scientist should balance his science with his humanity in this new role is of course a central question. There are all sorts of considerations. It could be argued, for example, that a scientist in the service of the Government is pretty much like a general. He is there for his technical know-how, not for his moral perception. If he happens to be in whole-hearted accord with the policies of the Government, then that is a bonus the Government gets, but this sympathy is not an essential part of the scientist's services. The moral decisions of the Government are supposed to reflect the moral decisions of the people, as expressed in their choice of representatives at election time. The scientist is

just a fancy kind of gunsmith or armaments-maker. The moral responsibility for what he does is not his own.

On this theory, the political institutions of a nation should be allowed to subdivide a human being. It is only when the acts of a nation go to extremes, as in the case of the German nation under the Nazis, that the burden of responsibility is shifted back to the individual, as was decided by the ruling principle of the Nuremberg Trials. This principle requires a man to be answerable for what he does before the bar of Mankind, regardless of what orders he has been given by some political authority.

Of course, you could say that a scientist out of sympathy with the policies of his government ought not to work for the government at all. During the recent war, some German scientists and some American scientists took this view. You could say that precisely because of their sense of moral responsibility, they refused to help design atom bombs or other new weapons. Here the assumption is that human beings have higher obligations than the obligation to serve the national State. Everybody admits this in the abstract; it is only when you get down to cases that disagreement begins. What needs to be recognized is that there is no way to avoid disagreements of this sort if scientists are to be invited and expected to contribute to the moral understanding of issues of national decision.

There will be those who think that no man who is willing to lend his unique knowledge to the construction of atom bombs could have anything to say that is worth listening to at the moral level. Others will look upon scientists who refuse to make bombs as virtually traitors to their country. No doubt all the intermediate views between these extremes will be taken by people who wonder about the duty of the scientist in the role of moralist and maker of public opinion, and no doubt the scientists themselves will vary in their judgments about what they should do, from one extreme to the other.

From one point of view, the prospect is bewildering and unattractive. Persons who are responsible for what is called "national morale" are likely to regard all such contradictory claims as to what is "right" as practically subversive. The men whose work it is to marshal the forces of a nation for the total technological and emotional effort of modern war could hardly cope with countless independent opinions, all of them held by people who are beginning to believe that they have an actual right to their opinions. The trouble is that the uniformities of technology require a corresponding uniformity of outlook in the human beings who must make the technology work efficiently. A machine cannot be serviced by a man in an ambivalent mood. In wartime, therefore, intense differences of opinion as to the conduct of war, the weapons of the war, or simply war itself, become doubly dangerous.

An educator, on the other hand, would be found taking an entirely different view. He would say that human beings are less than human when they fail to form independent moral judgments concerning right and wrong. He would say that it is the role of the leaders of a society to set the example of independent thinking. He might even argue that the suppression of such thinking, or even the withholding of its fruit from public forums, would mean so great a loss to the moral and cultural forces of our society that not even "survival" should be made an excuse for demanding that dissenters from the adopted national policy be kept silent.

Well, what does Dr. Pauling think about matters of this sort?

His position, at least, is clear. He believes that scientists should express themselves conscientiously in counsels to the governments they serve, and that they should appeal to the forum of world opinion in matters which concern the whole world. Such actions by scientists are amply described in *No More War!* in the chapter "The Scientists Appeal for Peace." The opinions of scientists assembled in this chapter, some from

originally private reports, some from public declarations by various scientific groups, make impressive reading. For example, in the Franck Report, sent to the Secretary of War on June 11, 1945, the six scientists involved warned against the use of the atomic bomb against Japan. The Franck report included this statement:

> "If the United States were to be the first to release this new means of indiscriminate destruction on mankind, she would sacrifice public support throughout the world, precipitate the race for armaments, and prejudice the possibility of reaching an international agreement on the future control of such weapons."

Other statements by scientists include the July 1955 declaration by fifty-two Nobel Laureates, calling on all nations to renounce war as a final resort of policy, and in the same month appeared the Russell-Einstein appeal, signed by Dr. Einstein a few days before his death. There was the statement of the first Pugwash Conference, convened with the help of Cyrus Eaton in July, 1957, and declarations by German and Soviet scientists. Then, in April, 1957, eighteen leading German scientists announced that they would take no part in the manufacture, testing, or use of nuclear weapons. Most recent of such expressions is the petition, formulated by Dr. Pauling, signed by 9,235 scientists, including thirty-seven Nobel Laureates, which was presented to Dag Hammarskjold, Secretary-General of the United Nations. The petition urged that immediate steps be taken toward an international agreement to stop the testing of nuclear weapons, asserting that each bomb test "spreads an added burden of radioactive elements over every part of the world," damaging the health of human beings everywhere and affecting the human germ plasm "such as to lead to an increase in the number of seriously defective children that will be born in future generations." The petition also warned that with continued testing, "the danger of outbreak of cataclysmic nuclear war through the reckless action of some irresponsible leader will be greatly increased.

In his chapter, "The Need for International Agreements," Dr. Pauling makes unequivocal expression of his own moral position:

> Man has developed admirable principles of morality, which in large part governs the actions of individual human beings. And yet, we are murderers, mass murderers. Almost all of us, even many of our religious leaders, accept with equanimity a world policy of devoting a large part of our world income, our world resources—one hundred billion dollars a year—to the cold-blooded readying of nuclear weapons to kill hundreds of millions of people, to damage the pool of human germ plasm in such a way that after a great nuclear war our descendants might be hardly recognizable as human beings.
>
> Does the Commandment "Thou Shalt Not Kill" mean nothing to us? Are we to interpret it as meaning "Thou shalt not kill except on the grand scale," or "Thou shalt not kill except when the national leaders say to do so?"
>
> I am an American, deeply interested in the welfare of my fellow Americans, of our great Nation. But I am first of all a human being. I believe in *morality*. Even if it were possible (which it is not) to purchase security for the United States of America by killing all of the hundreds of millions of people behind the iron curtain without doing any harm to anyone else, I would not want that killing to be done.
>
> I believe that there is a greater power in the world than the evil power of military force, of nuclear bombs—there is the power of *good*, of *morality*, of *humanitarianism*.
>
> I believe in the power of the human spirit. . . .

Dr. Pauling thus takes his place with other scientists who have spoken out on the subject of thermo-nuclear war—Albert Einstein and Albert Schweitzer.

COMMENTARY
THE ISSUE BEHIND WAR

MANAS occasionally receives a letter from a reader who objects to discussion of the threat of nuclear weapons and of the hazards and anxieties of cold war. "These subjects," the letter will argue, "are already done to death by other papers, so why don't you leave them alone?"

Well, we get to thinking we're doing pretty well in leaving wars and rumors of wars to the political journals of opinion, and then along comes a book like Linus Pauling's *No More War!*—which can hardly remain unnoticed.

The fact of the matter is that all the central issues of our time are obviously related to the problem of war. War, that is, is the massive goad to thinking about ultimate questions. Goaded thinking is not, of course, the best thinking, but it is at least better than no thinking. And all "social" thinking which ignores the issue of war seems to us to be completely utopian.

But so far as MANAS is concerned, the pacifist implications of the discussion of war are a secondary issue. The primary issues raised by the problem of war are the nature, role, and responsibilities of the individual. These are philosophical and religious questions. We discuss war in these pages chiefly because the kind of war which now threatens mankind inexorably presses these philosophical and religious questions into the foreground of man's thought.

What a man thinks about these questions directly affects, in turn, what he is prepared to do about war. If, for example, he supposes that his wondering about man's nature and responsibility can be answered in institutional terms—if, that is, he is able to accept the traditional answers of the churches, or to feel that the silence of the sciences on such questions is all that he can hope for—he will probably continue to drift along, squirming in his private chrysalis of anxiety and indecision, waiting for the powers that be to tell him what to do.

Granted, that it is a big jump into the unknown to begin to think of yourself as unable to shift responsibility to others for what happens in war, or as the result of any national or large-scale corporate decision. But if the time has come for human beings to take this jump, then a close look at the moral compulsions involved is very much in order, even if this means an almost monotonous discussion of the issues pressed upon us by modern war.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

WE have speculated more than once on the number of present pacifists who may have become such as a result of sensing the terrifying impact of war upon the lives of small children. In the days of the "warrior," whether on the *Bhagavad-Gita's* field of Kurukshetra, in medieval jousting between armored horsemen, or among the American Indians, the children stayed home. But now, as has been amply demonstrated since 1941, home may be where the bombs hit. Throughout the strife-torn Middle East as throughout Japan and the Europe of World War II, children were killed and maimed or exposed to traumatic shock almost indiscriminately. And there is something about the pathos of these situations which touches our latent instincts of humanity more deeply than anything else—even making it possible to wonder whether some form of "freedom" attained or maintained only as the result of a bombing war could possibly be worth its price in children's suffering.

We recall that the hero of Walt Sheldon's *Troubling of a Star*, a good pilot and a brave man, simply decided to quit fighting after he had observed at close range what Napalm did to civilians, in particular the manner in which it condemned children to excruciating death. The most poignant and arresting shot in Hollywood's *The Young Lions* showed a little German boy attempting to make his way through the rubble of demolished buildings with an inadequate crutch—stumbling and falling.

The horror of modern war for children is also represented by a passage from Alistair MacLean's *South by Java Head*, describing the destruction of Singapore in World War II. Mr. MacLean has written other tales of heroism (*The Guns of Navarone, H.M.S. Ulysses*) but in this novel the quality of manhood among the survivors of a wreck is measured by their reactions to a small child whom they pick up and take with them in the lifeboat. Mr. MacLean deals very little with this waif in the course of the story, except as a symbol. And before the child is rescued, MacLean shows the reader why his presence evokes such strong protective instincts.

> In a winding, smoke-filled alley, a little boy cried in the darkness. He was only a very little boy, perhaps two and a half years old. He had blue eyes, blond hair and a fair skin all streaked with dirt and tears. He was clad only in a thin shirt and khaki-coloured haltered shorts: his feet were bare and he was shivering all the time.
>
> He cried and cried, a lost, anguished wailing in the night, but there was no one there to hear or heed. And no one could have heard him who was more than a few yards away, for he cried very softly, short muffled sobs punctuated by long, quivering indrawn breaths. From time to time he rubbed his eyes with the knuckles of small and grubby fists, as little children will when they are tired or weeping: and with the backs of his hands he tried to rub the pain away, for the acrid black smoke constantly laced a smarting path across the tear-filled eyes.
>
> The little boy cried because he was very, very tired, and it was hours past his normal bedtime. He cried because he was hungry and thirsty and shaking with the cold—even a tropical night can be cold. He cried because he was confused and afraid, because he did not know where his home was or where his mother was—he had been with his old amah, his Malayan nurse, at a nearby bazaar a fortnight previously and had been too young and unknowing to appreciate the significance of the bombed and burnt-out rubble that awaited their return—and he and his mother had been due to sail out on the *Wakefield*, the last big ship from Singapore, on the same night of that January 28th . . . But he cried, most of all, because he was alone.

The report here (Sept. 10, 1958) on John Caldwell's *Children of Calamity* demonstrates statistically how long after the termination of actual fighting the effects of war upon children can continue. Mr. Caldwell tells the story of the four hundred thousand illegitimate babies produced in the wake of recent wars, "lost children" because so many of them are still homeless outcasts—"the children of our world who have next to nothing in the present and little

more to hope for in the future and who make up a staggering total of innocence betrayed."

* * *

A MANAS reader has called our attention to a simple story-book of fifty pages addressed to the problem of sectarian intrusion in the lives of young children. Though the consequences are less severe than in times past, the very young can suffer needlessly from parental insistence upon partisan religious tradition and distinctions.

The Little Mixer, by Lillian Nicholson Shearon, was published by Bobbs-Merrill in 1922, yet must have been singularly impressive, for copies are still available in our main public libraries. This book should be helpful to parents and children in whom traditional Jewish upbringing has set part of the tone for their lives, since "the Little Mixer" is such a child. When she moves to a new neighborhood, she finds that a little girl whose parents are Christian Scientists lives on one side of her and a Catholic on the other.

Hannah likes both little girls, and appreciates the conviction with which they express their opposing viewpoints. Since religious discussions cannot be avoided, Hannah decides to join rather than to squabble—partly because, unless she had something to do with Christianity, how was she going to participate in Christmas? On Christmas Eve she made the necessary preparations, as revealed by the notes to Santa Claus attached to her stocking:

> Deer Santy—Nellie babtized me. Holy Wotter—Hannah.
>
> Deer Santy—I want things in my stockin.—Hannah.
>
> Deer Santy Claws—Ime a jentile catholic C.S.—Hannah.
>
> Deer Santy—Bring me any nice things you got left. With love Hannah
>
> Deer Santy—Don't let my Mama and my Papa get mad bout you. Hannah.

Looking over Hannah's correspondence, the child's amiable and understanding father comments:

> "The little mexier!" he chuckled. "A Gentile Catholic Christian Scientist is she? And if she has ever happened to hear anything about Mahomet, believe me, she's sleeping with her feet toward Mecca right now!"
>
> Rose was weeping silently over the little message: "Don't let my Mama and my Papa get mad bout you." She touched her husband on the shoulder, "Eli, what shall we do about it?"
>
> "Do?" He stood up and set his jaw determinedly. "You spoke just now of the fight between the old and the new generations: do you see what we are coming to if we don't concede our child her legitimate rights. She will seek them out, and take them by force, and never forgive us for withholding them, that's 'what'."

FRONTIERS

Notes on Transitions

A JOURNAL such as MANAS is likely to be considered too "optimistic" as it searches for hopeful signs in the various minority trends which express idealism in religion, education and politics. Not every hopeful "trend," of course, gathers enough momentum to make an impression upon its cultural setting, yet if there are changes for the better, they must lie in breaks with orthodox opinion.

The conclusion of the International Geophysical Year has at least made it evident that American and Russian scientists can work together without conflict—and have done so in important areas of scientific discovery. The investigations comprising the IGY involved more than thirty thousand specialists from a score of nations—Russians, Britons, Americans, Danes, Australians, Belgians and French working together in amity. The Los Angeles *Mirror-News* (Jan. 12) interprets in this encouraging manner:

> What they discovered presages much closer international cooperation in future. The rich mineral deposits on the Pacific Ocean floor, for instance, belong to no one nation—could be mined eventually for the benefit of all nations.
>
> The scientists, after the IGY program was completed, determined to set up a permanent International Geophysical Cooperation group, to continue the work that produced such a rich fund of new knowledge.
>
> What scientists can do, politicians must learn to do.
>
> The IGY program proved that it is possible for Russia and the West to work together productively for the good of people everywhere.
>
> The scientists have pointed the way that political leaders must follow if humankind is to survive.

Alton Blakeslee, AP science writer, comments similarly in a dispatch from New York (Jan. 8), remarking that "the thirst for knowledge launched by IGY is not satisfied. Organizations of scientists have formed special new committees to push on, especially in co-operative studies of the oceans, Antarctica, and space science." Perhaps it is clear that this "thirst for knowledge" is the best and bravest international hope for the future.

Robert Hutchins, in an interview in New York on Jan. 16, reaffirmed his faith in education, both scientific and cultural, as the only means to a sane society. The crux of the matter, to Dr. Hutchins, is our present inability to comprehend that the question of "just what is really worthwhile" is the biggest question of all. Since Hutchins has often been assailed as an iconoclast and a pessimist, the interviewer asked about his hopes for "human progress." Hutchins replied:

> Yes, I am hopeful. But if pressed for specific grounds for my optimism I might be at a loss to explain why:
>
> I don't believe, however, that things just get better and better by themselves every day. A tremendous exercise of human will and intelligence is necessary to achieve progress.
>
> And I think that everything that is called progress isn't necessarily real progress.
>
> I do feel, what many of my contemporaries don't feel, a sense of crisis—and it has very little to do with the Russians.
>
> If all the Russians were to disappear tomorrow—or become Republicans—everything wouldn't be fine. . .
>
> This crisis I feel is a crisis about the whole American tradition. The question is whether our own democratic institutions can stand the strains and pressures of a large, heterogeneous, bureaucratic society—whether the individual can stay free.

Another encouraging sign is that clinicians of all sorts are beginning to recognize that merely clinical evaluation of human beings leaves them staring at Hamlet with Hamlet left out. In an article in *ETC.* (a journal of semantics), "Psychotherapy and the Paradox of the Esthetic," Dr. Clyde E. Curran of Claremont Graduate School contrasts the literary technician with the psychotherapist:

> The critic has learned, by turning over in his mind the preceding argument, to live with the distressing fact that his logical commentaries upon literary art will always be, in relation to esthetic profundities (the soul of art), secondary, if not trivial. If he faces up to the dilemma science has forced upon

him, I believe he would have to admit that his work has only a limited purpose.

This also is the seeming plight of the psychological clinician. As poet (one who understands his client) he finds himself at odds with his scientific commitments. He, as in the case of the literary critic, has discovered the limitations of science. What is the nature of this discovery? Since science, in order to meet the demands of experimentation and exact statement, must be separated from metaphysics, purpose, in an inclusive sense, must also be eliminated. Scientists must confine themselves to the analysis of phenomena which will lend themselves to the instrumentalities science has devised. This discovery places the clinician within the same enigma that bothers the critic. Regardless of how accurate he is in reporting his findings, he must omit what is essential to his job: his awareness of his client. While he readily sees that his patient's struggle is ontological, concerned as it is with the patient's struggle for becoming a human being, this revelation, being poetic, must remain hidden. The intuitive nature of this revelation defies meaningful (literal) statement. Anything he may say will do violence to either his insight or science.

Dr. Curran's point is that awareness of this dilemma, like awareness of the patient, is the key to bringing together technology and esthetics and genuine value.

Another sort of transition is revealed by socialist writers. Socialist dogmas, it appears, must now be abandoned, or at least recreated at a more comprehensive level. For instance, Rita Hinden, editor of *Socialist Commentary*, remarks in her article, "The Golden Age of Misery," printed in the *Nation* for last Dec. 13:

. . . there is, to put it in a nutshell, a curious schizophrenia in the societies we are creating. Looked at from one point of view, the individual is its darling; from another, he is its victim. Never before has so much attention and care been given to each separate person as in some of the comprehensive welfare states of the West; never before has he had the opportunities for comfort, leisure and pleasure as in our increasingly prosperous and increasingly egalitarian economies. Yet never before has he felt he "counted" so little, or had such difficulty in making any distinctive contribution.

The care and attention he receives come when he is ill, or has in some way fallen by the wayside; benevolent social services then rush to his rescue. But let him be well and secure with his money jingling in his pockets, and society disregards him; the large town in which he lives, the scale of any organization to which he belongs, his status at work, all reduce him to nothingness. He does not know how to fill his leisure hours in any satisfying way. His entertainment is left to commercial interests to provide, and these cultivate his worst tastes and pander to his lowest instincts.

This frank disavowal of oversimplified socialist thinking, which held that everyone would be happy when everyone had enough—is in a sense a parallel to a hard hitting article by John C. Esty, Jr. in the *Nation* (Jan. 10), "Draft-Dodger or Patriot?" Mr. Esty teaches at Amherst but he is also a captain in the Air Force Reserve and has had considerable contact with military bureaucracy. He is against either "selective" or "universal" military service, on the ground that either one results in an obscuration of democracy. He concludes his explanation of why most college students feel justified in trying to "dodge" the service:

I am aware that our military manpower has been criticized on the basis of unconstitutionality, inadequacy, waste and expense. It should be. But about these grounds I am not especially informed, and can only grumble. I do know, however, of the draft law's effect on college students, and if they are considered to be an important segment of the society, then someone had better pay attention to their perspective. From that perspective, the *status quo* is absolutely unviable, the corruption of "universal" service is corrupting their sense of duty, uncertainty is making cynics of them, and their talents and training are deliberately turned from the service of their country.

It is not yet stylish to be unpatriotic, but the college student can't hold out forever.

Well, what all this means, we suspect, is that when enough people comprehend the meaning of the minority views expressed in these quotations enough people will have been awakened to values which afford some promise of dignified survival.