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# THE ILLUMINATION OF VALUES

IT is becoming increasingly clear that if we had a world populated by thoughtful scientists, our collective problems would rapidly diminish. We say "collective problems" for the reason that individual problems are of another nature than collective problems, needing private, individual solution. But the collective problems have to do with our corporate behavior—the things we cannot do alone and that we cannot correct alone. These include war, economic confusion and injustice, wasteful relationships with nature, and all the institutional reflections of such abuses.

Why should there be this confidence in the attitudes of men of science? Because the expressions by scientists of basic moral intelligence are now so frequent as to sound like a chorus in a Greek tragedy, voicing the wisdom of *Ananke.*

For illustration there is a recent discussion of "Physical Law and Moral Choice," by Paul B. Sears, noted conservationist and author of *Deserts on the March,* which appeared in the Phi Beta Kappa *Key Reporter* for January, 1959. Following is a selection of paragraphs from this article:

> . . . morality today involves a responsible relationship toward the laws of the natural world of which we are inescapably a part. Violence toward nature, as the Tao has it, is no less an evil than violence toward our fellow-man. There can be no ultimate harmony among our own species in defiance of this principle. . . .
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> A disturbing paradox of this scientific age is the fact that its most profound implications have not sunk into our minds and become manifest in our behavior. Commonly—too commonly—we hear such phrases as "man's control of nature," "the necessity of an expanding economy, and "the conquest of space." As Ortega y Gasset has said the effect of the industrial revolution has been to create an illusion of limitless abundance and ease, obscuring the ancient doctrine that efforts are the price of human survival.

The "population explosion" is what seems to worry Mr. Sears the most, but his comments are broadly based on deeply felt moral judgments. He makes this warning:

> *The applications of science must be guided, managed, controlled, according to ethical and æsthetic principles and in the light of our most profound understanding.* . . . Modern society seems incalculably rich in means, impoverished in ends. The dazzling success of science in placing facilities at our disposal has left us all, including the scientist, a bit confused. . . . Complicating the situation is the prevailing conviction that science holds the key to man s future. Julian Huxley has described this mood as "the airy assumption that 'science' will surely find a way out," a mood intensified by recent developments in the exploration of outer space. Yet it is clear enough that the fundamental problems of mankind are no longer technological, if they ever were, but rather cultural. . . . People shape their values in accordance with their notions of the kind of a universe they believe themselves to be living in. The basic function of science is to illuminate our understanding of that universe—what it may contribute to human ease and convenience is strictly secondary. . . .

Mr. Sears puts the matter very simply: "People shape their values in accordance with their notions of the kind of a universe they believe themselves to be living in." He might have added that human reactions to a theory or belief about the universe are of two sorts. One arises from the will to participate in some constructive way in the universal process—to know, to understand, to work with and contribute to the *meaning* that is unfolding all around us. The other reaction regards the universe as a system of restraint—something which has to be taken into account in order to avoid pain.

It is an over-simplification, of course, to divide human motivations so abruptly, yet these ends are clearly different, clearly play a part in the lives of most if not all men, and clearly one may

prevail strikingly over the other in the life of a given individual. In the scientist, the longing to know takes precedence over other motives; often the scientist, when he looks around, is appalled by the absence of this motive in so many others. Discovering this situation, he may, like Mr. Sears, put together an analysis of the universe which stresses the pain that will result to human beings if they continue to ignore the rules of life as disclosed by scientific understanding. Yet Mr. Sears is obliged to admit that such warnings "carry little weight." The trouble is that the impact of the warnings which scientists are able to make can be felt only by people who have at least a little scientific understanding and are willing to think in terms of the massive effects of collective behavior. But the judgments of the people to whom the scientific warnings are directed are not impersonal judgments about the nature of things. Instead, they concern the private interests of individuals. The threat of punishment by some kind of "natural law" seems to them so remote as to require no serious attention.

That is the real problem, and Mr. Sears, no doubt, will be the first to admit it.

Well, what is to be done? Shall we grit our teeth, study science, and do our best to dramatize the effects of mass misbehavior? No doubt this ought to be done, but is there anything else to do?

Is there, for example, anything critical to be said about the scientific approach? One thing seems quite apparent: The unit of moral behavior, so far as science is concerned, is man-in-the-mass. It follows that the cycles of action and reaction, in scientific terms, are long-term cycles. Quoting Lao-tse, Mr. Sears speaks of "violence toward nature." He is speaking of the bad habits of entire populations, but what about the bad habits of individuals? The science of psychology is making a beginning in this field, but psychologists are still a long way from the formulation of a science of individual morality. Yet the rule ought to hold: "People shape their values in accordance with their notions of the kind of universe they believe themselves to be living in."

Reduced to simplest terms, this means that a man has certain ideas about himself and his relations with other people, and with his general environment and nature at large. These are the ideas which determine his values and guide his behavior. What else is there to guide his behavior? It is these ideas which need looking at. It is unlikely that the behavior of man-in-the-mass will alter very much for the better unless men as individuals find reasons for altering their values.

The actions of individuals, just as much as the applications of science, "must be guided, managed, controlled, according to ethical and æsthetic principles and in the light of our most profound understanding." If this is so, then man must be a being for whom ethical and aesthetic principles constitute the highest reality; and from this it follows that he is made, in his true nature, of the very stuff of these principles. How can we convince ourselves of this?

If we pursue this subject, we shall enter the realm of philosophy and religion. What are the values involved in ethics and æsthetics? They are values, it seems reasonable to suggest, which reach beyond the confines of space and time. They are *enduring* values; they embody the breath of eternity, of immortality, of wholeness and universal harmony. We might argue that the substratum of man's nature has this constitution, however mixed and combined with other ingredients. He is, then, an intelligence who seeks to impose an enduring order, a scheme of transcendental meaning upon the transient forms of physical existence. He is forever making matter echo and ring with celestial sounds, rearranging it in new patterns suggestive of dreams of the infinite. Men come forth who cannot find peace while other men are still in pain. These drives are irrepressible realities. They are forms of the search for unity, as unequivocal as the scientist's pursuit of general principles which will bring all

physical phenomena under the order of a common whole.

Who or what is the individual responsible to? We have been told, again and again, that we are responsible to some great Being who was our Creator. This hypothesis has not been convincing. Always—or almost always—the spokesmen for the Great Being compromise themselves and Him with special pleading. They are not ready to let man be responsible to himself, as an instance of the universal being, in whom universal principles are straining for expression.

The one hypothesis about man that stands in irreducible reality is that he is responsible to himself, to his own understanding of himself. How else shall he define his responsibility?

The problem is to gain a sense of competence for such large undertakings. We are not thinking of the men whose stature is such that they act with a dignity which seems a natural endowment, as, no doubt, for them it is. We are thinking of the rest of us, for whom moral greatness is something that needs to be reached after. We cannot avoid the conclusion that strength and confidence, for such as ourselves, can come only from the conception of man as soul, as a being who is working out his destiny through a long course of embodiments on earth. Call it Platonic, Buddhistic, Gnostic, Neoplatonic—call it anything you like. Labels do not matter. The substance of conviction about man's nature is the thing. It is the thing because this sort of thinking about oneself presents the promise and the obligation, of a high calling. We are here to learn. We are here to grow into understanding, to extend the radius of our perceptions, and therefore of our being, until it includes the entirety of life. When we violate that purpose, we violate ourselves. We confine the organs of our inner being to the restraints of ignobility. When we harm others, we harm ourselves. We break the reciprocal moral relationships of the school of life. We condemn ourselves to the repercussions of life itself. We brand ourselves as hostile to life and, in self-defense, life turns away its face.

This is the implicit message of the modern novels of self-defeat, implying the ethic of personal discovery and self-established dignity. And yet it goes beyond the pragmatic contentions of immediate experience. It finds the law of retribution in the alchemy of motive and the openings and closures which motive accomplishes in the perceptive capacity of human beings. All other rules break down. Every other conception of "punishment" borrows from theological externalities and denies the true potentialities of the human being.

There is something in every man which responds to this kind of thinking, although the provocatives which bring the response may not be expressed in a metaphysical vocabulary. The value of the metaphysical vocabulary is that, once established, it bridges the gaps between momentary inspirations and enables a man to keep before him a conception of transcendental structure for his life.

The metaphysic of a transcendental ideal also gives support to enterprises involving intellectual and moral daring. It maintains upon the horizon of man's mental life the archetypal image of the hero. Even if a man chooses another kind of life, he keeps a sense of proportion toward the safe and the mediocre. He is helped by the dream he does not follow to avoid the complacency and even the arrogance of the mass man. Contrasts of this sort need to be a part of the cultural heritage of any society in which the idea of human excellence is maintained, if only, for the many, as somewhat remote ideal.

A passage in a current thriller paints the picture of what happens to many men who shape their careers without taking into account any sort of ennobling dream. At this point in the story, a young technician is explaining why he will not take a chance in order to keep on doing work which requires some ingenuity:

"Look, my friend—except for a little hitch in the stateside army, all I've got on my record since college is this job. If I had to look elsewhere, who'd give me the shining endorsement? You? No offense, Tony. In this day and age you've got to play it safe."

"So you're playing it safe—while the project is being kicked up on the shelf. Damn it all, Freddy, can't you even get mad?"

He flushed deeply.

"Sure I could get mad, but what would it get me? I'm no lousy hero. If the bigger and better brains want to blow up the world, I can't stop them. Me, I just want to fiddle along and try to get in on my share of this rose-covered cottage stuff while it's still available. All I want is a doll like, say, Osma waiting there in a chintz apron, and I'll take my chance raising babies before the world gets blown to hell. . . ."

I couldn't even get mad at him. Freddy was no different from most of the others swarming around us in the cafeteria. They came from all kinds of backgrounds, they were a mixture of the clever, the strong, the stupid, and the weak, but every one of them was caught in the big scramble to get ahead, or at least get along, and that meant playing it by ear, playing it safe. They all wanted the same as Freddy wanted—a few simple values to cling to in a frightened world, things like love, enough money, a little happiness. I understand because I want the same things.

What is wrong with wanting these things? Nothing is wrong with wanting them. What is wrong is the lack of any suggestion that there is anything else worth wanting. Every scheme of human wanting ought to include the possibility of longing for transcendent ends, but this practically never happens in works of modern literature, and seldom in the life of modern man.

It is as though the psychic or soul life of human beings had been deliberately truncated—the top of the pyramid of thought and aspiration cut off—so that the intuitive feelings of men concerning a higher life can find no outlet.

In men of unusual moral strength, these feelings force their way to the surface, defying the mediocrity of the times and finding expression in spite of the bland negations which surround them on every hand. We may be grateful for the occasional presence among us of such men, but what about the rest of us? What about our children? Why should this suffocation of spiritual vision be allowed to overtake all but exceptional individuals?

"The basic function of science," says Mr. Sears, "is to illuminate our understanding of the universe"—but this is only the physical universe. There is another "basic function" which needs to be put into operation—searching intellectual and moral inquiry into the higher nature of man, so that some sense of the deeps of human experience, and the heights of human achievement, may gain its rightful position in the foreground of thought, slowly enriching our culture and our education, calling out the quality of moral striving in the men of our time. How else are we to enter into relationships with nature and with other men that the crisis of the age requires?

# *REVIEW*
## THE PROGRESS OF MR. EATON

CYRUS EATON, the millionaire industrialist who matches his faith in free enterprise with a willingness to trust in the inherent human worth of the Communist leaders and peoples, is a remarkable prophet of world peace. Though Eaton's famous protests against, the FBI, his dislike of the probings of the House un-American Activities Committee, and the unsuccessful attempt to intimidate Eaton have been regarded as little more than good copy by most journalists, it must now be recognized that a determined Eaton is a determined voice for world peace.

Aside from his almost fantastic capacity for the "treaty-making" techniques necessary to a multi-million dollar industrial complex, Eaton brings to his campaign against nationalism the simple and sound belief that a genuine democrat will accept and make room for the Communist. On the larger scale, this means that he sees nothing but arrant nonsense in the widespread opinion that either America or Russia must ultimately control the political destiny of the world. He thinks, moreover, that the greatest immediate challenge is to the intellects of American industrialists, labor leaders and statesmen, for he feels that these men display greater insularity than their Russian counterparts. When he writes that "I emphatically believe the globe is big enough for both capitalism and communism," he supplements this statement by arguing that the opportunities inherent in our own relationships with the problems of production are not realized nearly as well as the Russian opportunities, and that this is because circumstances of history have led the Russians toward a global view more *scientific* than our own.

One spectacular accomplishment in Eaton's assault on nationalism has been the Pugwash Conferences. At the third of these, held recently,—a conference of nuclear scientists eighty experts gathered from twenty-two Eastern and Western nations to consider "The Dangers of the Atomic Age and What Scientists Can Do About Them." Eaton here drew together men of diverse background and loyalties, but with a common interest in science, considered universally—men who had individually given much thought to the implications of modern science in relation to the future of mankind. Eaton's leisurely and friendly interview with Premier Khrushchev in Moscow was considerably augmented by the results of the Pugwash Conferences. Khrushchev is reported to have said, on first meeting Eaton: "I have personally read the proceedings of the Pugwash Conferences, and I want to thank you on behalf of the Soviet people for bringing the scientists of the world together. It is a highly constructive move."

In the *Progressive* for February, Eaton gives a detailed account of the Khrushchev discussions, and we can think of no better basis for discussions of current "international" affairs. Take for example the implications of these statements made by the Soviet Premier, as summarized by Mr. Eaton:

> Then he (Khrushchev] made the observation that I consider the most significant of our entire discussion. If by some means, he said, genuine cooperation and understanding could be created between the Soviet Union and the United States, if these two most powerful nations the world has ever seen could come to work together in harmony, all of the political disturbances in every other part of the world would be adjusted by compromise and peaceful means, instead of becoming the occasion for fomenting renewed bitterness and hatred between the United States and the Soviet Union. Both of these giant nations are so extensive geographically and so richly endowed in natural resources that neither has much incentive to impose on other countries. If the two giants agree, the rest of the world will pose no major problem. This suggestion, I believe, is realistic and offers promise of a workable peace.
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> Khrushchev expounded in detail the reasons the Russians want peace. First he cited the colossal cost of armaments and pointed out that, in these days of astounding scientific progress, today's effective weapons may well be obsolete six months from now.

> The more you spend on armaments, in fact, the more you have to spend. Then he quickly enumerated half a dozen programs to which the Soviet Union has committed itself, and for the rapid accomplishment of which the maximum of money and labor are required. At the top of his agenda was a broad expansion of schools, colleges, and other educational facilities, requiring hundreds of thousands of new buildings and additional teachers.
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> Second came an ambitious housing and home building program. "You will observe the great number of apartment houses that have been put up in Moscow," he said. "We have only started. We want every citizen of the Soviet Union to have a comfortable modern home."

For evidence that Mr. Eaton is willing to be a "democrat" or a large enough scale to allow a fair hearing to even the Communists, there is the following:

> I did not have to rely on my interpreter to sense that one of the most marked characteristics of the Russians is their friendliness. With this pronounced trait, I feel there goes hand in hand an overwhelming desire for peace. Here, in my mind, lies great hope for the future harmony of the world, for I believe the people of America match the Soviet populace both in capacity for friendliness and in love of peace.
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> The men who head Russia's government, industry, and banking are distinctly able. I met with seven cabinet members, numerous other government officials, a number of industry leaders, and the head of the State Bank of Moscow. A word concerning Russian banking: deposits draw three per cent interest, while only two per cent is charged on loans. Credit is extended solely for the building of houses. A Russian may own his own house if he chooses, but the land on which it is built belongs to the state. There is no rent for the land, but there is a property tax based on the value of the land. The Russian owns all the furnishings of his house and, if he has an automobile and a radio, those are his property, too. At present, he has to pay cash for everything. If installment buying is ever introduced in the Soviet Union—and my hunch is that it will come eventually—the consequent increase in demand for consumer products will create a mass market well worth American attention.
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> I would not know where to look for the American who would want to trade our system for the Russian way. On the other hand, I think we Americans must take full cognizance of the fact that the Russians are enthusiastically sold on their system. In the 40 years since their Revolution, they have made immense material and intellectual progress on a mass scale, and they are determined to continue to get ahead. Furthermore, they are as imbued with devotion to Mother Russia as we are with respect for our beloved Stars and Stripes. The nation that succeeded in launching the first Sputnik must be taken as seriously as the country in whose laboratories the first nuclear chain reaction was produced.

In the *Nation* for Jan. 31 John Barden reports the result of an interview with Eaton, in which a number of concrete proposals on American foreign and domestic policies were discussed. Eaton spoke of the desirability of an Eisenhower visit to the Soviet Union and with Khrushchev, the recognition of Communist China—the country of the six hundred million Chinese whom we have somehow contrived to place beyond the political pale—the confining of activities of American police organizations to legitimate police work, and the eradication of anti-Communism as a security measure. As Mr. Barden remarks, concluding his analysis of Eaton's many faceted schemes for promoting peace: "Any estimate of Eaton's prospects for peace in the world and composure in the United States must begin with some definition of what would constitute his failure. World War III would constitute the failure, but who's going to judge it? Short of this, his prospects seem excellent for some measure of success. Muddling through more decades of brinkmanship with the successors of Dulles is not a reasonable alternative. No two great powers about equally balanced in military capability and mutual official hatred can maintain so hostile a balance for long. No great powers ever have. Eaton is taking his case to the productive people of the world. They will judge him and it."

# *COMMENTARY*
## A TOLSTOYAN PRINCIPLE

THE contents of this week's issue set the stage for a look at the impact of what people call "mass culture" upon our lives. Before the days of technology and mass communication, the qualities of the good life were somewhat snobbishly thought to be private excellences. They could be enjoyed, that is, without much intrusion of vulgarity. The classes were stratified, learning belonged to the few (it still does, of course, but not so noticeably), and standards were set by persons of recognized authority.

This cloistered serenity is gone. We have had an industrial revolution, a democratic revolution, and along with these developments what Ortega y Gasset called the "revolt of the masses." Vulgarity has been armed. Acquisitive aggression, which used to spread over a county, now spreads around the world. Gresham's law applied to the negotiable element in culture has driven delicacy and sensibility into the interstices of society. Various narcotic preparations (not only the alcoholic kind, as Niccolo Tucci points out) are now vended with full respectability.

Those who deplore this trend—it is much more than a "trend"; it is a far-reaching transformation of our lives—don't quite know what to do about it, how to deal with it. Some of them, like Albert Jay Nock, freely admit that the change has made them into "superfluous men." Others, with a deeper complaint, join the ranks of the Existentialists, charging that Nature has played a ghastly joke on our will to know, our hunger to understand. Then there are those who try to make peace with what they recognize as revolutionary changes in the affairs and relationships of human beings—a good illustration of this attitude being found in Lyman Bryson's *The Next America.* A later book that ought to be read along with the Bryson volume is *The Waist-high Culture* by Thomas Griffith (Harcourt, Brace). Mr. Griffith is one of the editors of *Time* and will be especially appreciated by readers who feel some sympathy for the letter printed in Frontiers.

The problem is not just that mass production and mass communications have diluted the values of a politer epoch. New issues are emerging—issues which cannot be defined according to past canons of manners, æsthetics, and morality. Without meaning to suggest that it brought a great light, we might say that some attempt at redefinition of values took place in James Jones' *From Here to Eternity*, which may help, to account for the extraordinary popularity of this book. The issue, for Jones' characters, is personal integrity in a mass situation. Army life is itself the prototype of the mass situation, so that the author sets the story up for a drama of personal defeat, yet out of it comes an intensely human, twentieth-century version of William of Orange's great utterance—"It is not necessary to hope in order to undertake; it is not necessary to succeed in order to persevere."

A similar feeling arises from Tom Chamales' *Never So Few* (soon to be reviewed). The point is that we are beginning to get books and writing which struggle to break through the dead weight of the mass culture and to illumine the decisions of individual man. When you can find work like Tucci's *Paris Review* article, and keep on finding material which cuts through conventional assumptions and categories to look at the actual human situation in a mass society, you know that good men are working on this question and that they are going to find something out—probably enough to save both our hides and our souls.

The problem of individual human decision is the bedrock foundation of philosophy. Once the question of what to do about the mass society is reduced to this issue, we can get somewhere with our thinking.

Meanwhile, the thing that seems important is to keep alive the idea of really clean alternatives. Sure, you can do some good working for the mass media. Sure, there is a good movie now and then, and there are some "fine dramas" on television. A

man with taste and time on his hands can worm his way around in our society and see and hear some things worth his attention.

But we must never forget, when we see an Arthur Miller play like *A View from the Bridge*, that Miller has a movie that he can't get anyone to produce, and what is to be done about *that?*

In any culture in transition, there have to be people unwilling to settle for half. If a mass society is bound to have diluted values anyway, somebody has to supply it with something really good, that can stand a little dilution, and maybe a lot.

Somebody has to feed the culture unadulterated materials. Somebody has to work for something beside money and somebody has to revolt without getting drunk to get away from it all. A principle is involved—a Tolstoyan principle, although others have practiced it, too. The principle is to do what you think is right and good, regardless of what other people are willing to do, and if conditions won't let you do what you think is right and good, then start out by creating the conditions that will let you. Every man can do this in his own way. It is not possible to stop him. Nobody can stop him but himself. Human beings are able to do what they are determined to do. They always have been and they always will be. This is why human beings have a history. They are not animals, which always do things the same way. A human life is the track of a unique individuality, but a man has to find his track before he becomes an individual—find it by making it.

# CHILDREN
## . . . and Ourselves

IF anyone should feel inspired to lecture modern youth on "the evils of alcohol," Niccolo Tucci would be our first candidate for instructor to the lecturer. In some "Notes on Drunkenness" in a recent *Paris Review*, Tucci shows the futility of one-dimensional, oversimplified counsels of abstinence. Temporarily disregarding all the standard arguments against alcohol, he wastes no time in indicating that no one can adequately combat alcoholic excess, either in himself or in others, without understanding that alcoholic addiction is but one reaction to the central psychological dilemmas of our time.

It is generally assumed that the problem of alcohol is the problem of the alcoholic, yet the point of view from which attempted cures of extreme addiction usually proceed is the same point of view which drives the drinker to excess in the first place. Tucci writes:

> The error of most cures: they re-adjust the drunk to a world that the doctor himself would not dare to discuss, let alone criticize. He forgets that the patient's refusal to live soberly is the last sign of health.

What Tucci means here, we take it, is that the drinker may not be apt to delude himself into accepting pat answers concerning the way life should be lived. His ultimate defeat, if it comes, results from final acceptance of the bottle as the only answer he cares to bother about. He achieves a chemically arranged withdrawal from society, and this is failure, however poor the societal frame of reference may be; yet unless a man manages some kind of "withdrawal" he is not likely to find himself as an individual. This is the part of the unspoken argument in *favor* of drinking—however specious—which perceptive youths may sense, and, unless the point of view is recognized, counsels of abstinence—or even of moderation—may strike the drinker as singularly unimpressive.

Tucci asserts that the worst sort of drinking is not the drinking of the lonely brooder, but the "adjusted" drinking of the man who uses alcohol as an effective means of keeping him from thinking too much:

> Those who claim that they are not real alcoholics because they only drink in company, are perhaps worse than a confessed lone drinker. Who drinks in company today? Cocktail parties are no company. They differ from the subway car only in that the motion is internal: there are no straps to hang on, and one pretends to know the people who are there with you; and your preoccupation is with the glass in your hand that the elbows of "company" might upset any minute, or with leaving the company of those who think they can talk with you. Company indeed! Like saying: "I don't live alone because I live with 8 million people in New York."
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> People and company don't mix in our time. Like idleness, and like drinking itself, company is a great art that was lost long ago. Drunkenness with success, (a substitute for company) drunkenness with publicity (another substitute for company, showing the mental impotence of our society) have transformed social gatherings, especially in the field of letters, into harrowing experiences where drunkenness alone can throw a mask on the face of despair. Alcohol has infected conversation even where people do not drink. There is an alcoholic style that makes people begin to discuss arguments, then forget them half-way, or go off on a tangent, more so than they ever did before. (Montaigne has exactly this to say about the fate of conversation in his day! That at least is consoling. But today's "conversation" is *scientifically* bad, it is specialized boredom and newsy imbecility.) Oh no. The lone drinker is better. He at least speaks alone.

Now it is possible that if parents were able to address their sons and daughters in just such terms, they would feel challenged rather than lectured. For there is that in every person, young or old, which is capable of taking pride in the thought of conducting himself in other ways than those chosen by the majority. Further, and above all, there is a need for getting beyond the classification of either acts or habits as defining a man's worth. Few but the wooden-minded fail to make the discovery that many periodic inebriates are worth more, man for man, than their

abstaining brethren. Moreover, we can be "drunk," as Tucci points out, on a great number of things which are more lethal than alcohol—even though alcohol is a major death-dealer. (This is plain from the "case histories" of two of Tucci's friends who had once been cured of alcoholism but who were won over to drinking again by an article in a popular magazine—one dies as a result of his return to the bottle and the other is in an institution.) But what Tucci is really saying is that we should become mature enough to *understand* drunkenness, and that understanding has almost nothing to do with "factual" analysis.

"Notes on Drunkenness" was inspired by Tucci's disgust at a supposedly "scientific" discussion of the effect of alcohol in a well-known national magazine. The implication of the article is that it will not be long before science overcomes that almost universal American affliction, the hangover. Then we'll be able to drink, by golly, without any unpleasant consequences, no matter how much alcohol we imbibe. All that will matter is the "proper" time and place for its consumption, The final counsel, therefore, in Tucci's words, is—"Addicts, drink as much as you please, but *remember* always to use your minds! The cure can only come 'in the form of intelligence'." And so Tucci, who is certainly not on any sort of Temperance platform, felt profound "moral indignation" that the physicians who contributed sugar-coated opinions to the "factual study of the hangover" could allow themselves to be so quoted.

It is "the drinker" who gets Tucci's sympathy. In the following passages he says things which even many college students can understand:

> The problem is no longer how much alcohol, but how much soberness we are able to stand. Let business or politics run dry for a few days, then see who is the loser! VIPS floored by heart attacks after hearing the truth about themselves, children strangled by the roadside, mothers charred in their beds, business meetings and top-level political meetings, summit or stratospheric talks broken up by profanity, if attended at all, copies of Dale Carnegie's manuals pinned on bathroom walls with kitchen knives, skyscraper elevators crowded beyond capacity on their way up, then honest citizens coming down from all sides of the building like dead cats from a volcano. Easy with moderation! Easy!
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> It is silly to say: "Don't drink, the world is beautiful, life is worth living." The world is horrible and life is not worth living. The world might still be beautiful were it not overbuilt with real-estate developments and overrun with cars and with people who inhabit and drive either, both or neither. And life would be worth living, were it not for the "living" to the making of which all life is sacrificed. When you get yourself drunk with such ambitions as to make ends meet or pay your taxes (very negative ambitions), you might as well get yourself drunk with alcohol, kerosene or nail-polish. We land on the deserted shores of an empty afternoon at 5 or 6, with no idleness left to enjoy life.
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> So we must stand for Freedom of Illusion. Pass the bottle!

There are further passages which deserve to be retained in one's Private Library for Special Occasions:

> Beware of the dry drinker! The reformed alcoholic remains an alcoholic, as the melted obese man remains a thin fat man. The addiction to alcohol, like the constant mistaking of one sex for another, is a symptom of a deeper disorder. Only a few of the drunks take to the bottle. Others are founders of political parties that don't know what they want but want it right away, so that they may rejoice in the success of their endeavours. And still others are militant workers in political parties that *do* know what they want, but do *not* want it right away. These work for post-posterity. Three generations hence is their bare minimum. Thus the sins of the great-grandfathers shall be unjustly visited upon their great-grandsons.
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> But both these types are drunk with the same form of altruistic self-centeredness, or the mania to cure others of one's own mental illness, whether or not they need it or they asked for it.
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> We are still drunk with the Wonders of Science, and yet Science today works almost exclusively to repair its own damages.
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> The Forbidden Fruit of Knowledge has become a reality, compared to which the great Defiance of Prometheus was the theft of a matchbox. We *have* stolen the sun from the sky, we *have* lit it on earth,

and now we don't know where to hide it. There is no room for it under the table. We can neither *not* touch it *nor* touch it. So now give me that bottle and let me tell you a fairy tale of how Man subdued Nature, made the world safe from lions and cannibals, then left without leaving a forwarding address. You can find him on the moon.

Anything in excess is drunkenness, you say. But in excess of what? Poundage or miles or megatons? Ah, my dear friend, to know that you would have to ask the Greeks. We who can measure anything, from galaxies to anti-matter, have lost Measure itself, which alone can give meaning to these games. "Nothing in Excess" and "Know Thyself"! These were the only two inscriptions to be found on the temple of Apollo in Delphi, which was the temple of Truth. The very things that are denied our age: Temperance and Self-knowledge.

# *FRONTIERS*

## Luther Versus Erasmus

THE following is a letter which states a point of view so clearly that we publish it entire:

> Although I found much in the article "Where Is the Enemy?" to delight me, I also found much to upset me. I agree with the main contentions of the writer of the article, but I disagree with his main line of response to the facts and problems of the situation.
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> Before continuing, I had better state my prejudices. I am a student in a College of Arts and Sciences and a journalism-literature major. My philosophy of individualism tends along the same lines as John Stuart Mill's, as stated in *On Liberty*. In our civilization, I believe that for an individual to act competently he must know the facts, both of thought and opinion. He must seek to be critical in the sense that Matthew Arnold defined criticism: "a disinterested endeavor to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world."
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> In the field of mass media today, I see much that is encouraging and much that is discouraging. But I think that for a discriminating reader and listener the mass media have something valuable to impart. I point to Walter Lippman and William S. White as writers and Edward R. Murrow as a radio-tv commentator.
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> The writer of the article seems to agree on this attitude at one point: "The truth of the matter is that there is nothing wrong with the system that people who are determined to be independent of systems couldn't cure." But then he goes on and seems to contradict himself as he asks us to become ostriches: "You can avoid the mass media—the avenues through which come to you all the stereotypes which determine mass attitudes." There is a difference between reading an article critically as a jumping-off place for further thought and discussion and dogmatically deciding not to read it at all. You can't wash your hands of "society" and all its forms and expect to do "society" any good.
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> The style of the article does not seem on a par with MANAS writers. The author seems to assume that the reader is (already) caught up in the sloganization of the society. He assumes we are thoughtless tools of a mass mind. He alienates a readership which (at least) tries to be thoughtful.
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> The author says (and we laugh for it is well put): "If a few distinguished people would start using their heads in public instead of endorsing the products of the highest bidder, using one's head might even get popular." But in this statement we readers see the ridiculousness of making the great abstraction "thinking" popular. There are many distinguished thinking people in this country today, but they don't dress up in "packaged thinking" and say it is the latest fashion. We would resent it if they did.
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> The author makes another generalization: "The people who write the papers, these days, don't think much of what they are doing. How can you get any good out of them?" I cannot deny that there are some publishers and reporters who "don't think much of what they are doing." But I know of several exceptions. I know of several people (and I am sure there must be many over the country) who are fascinated with the job of printing the facts and who are in wildest ecstasy when they find that their readers are concerned about these facts, and are in ecstasy when readers report a mistake and are irate about it. A critical public, a readership that is interested in more than the appearances of things, is a good newspaperman's reward and goal.
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> News judgment depends, to a large extent, on the number of people involved in a certain event. Objective news judgment cannot depend on the morality or sympathetic tendency of one editor. Thus I must admit that the subject-matter of newspapers may be an index of what many people in the local area are interested in. A discriminating reader must take this into consideration and realize that this "quantity" is the criterion in some cases and that the newspaper is not endorsing the subject, by any means. A newspaper's job is to tell people what is going on, and it is up to the people to do something about it. The fact that people today do not often read critically or analyze facts is, I believe, the "enemy." We cannot blame this failure on any publishing group.

In a cultural situation which is admittedly bad, two courses are open to the man who wants to help bring about a change for the better. He can, as Martin Luther did, break with the prevailing system and attempt to start a new way of doing things; or, like Erasmus, he can attempt to leaven the old system with reforming insight, encouraging what is good in the old way, while speaking uncompromisingly against what is bad.

Every period of change sees good men working either as Luther or as Erasmus worked.

Some men, whether by temperament and natural inclination, or by a caution which makes them reject a "radical" course, do well in the role of Erasmus—far better, perhaps, than they could do if forced into the path of total rebellion. Others, less tolerant of that mixture of good and evil which every "conventional" society represents, insist upon new beginnings. "I cannot," a man of this sort might say, "tolerate a society which is complacent about so many evils." He might argue that radio or television which gently dispenses with the services of Edward R. Murrow, because he shows that the "selling" techniques of modern industry sometimes rely on organized vice, is communication unworthy of *any* of his attention. It is not, he might say, that there is nothing "good" on the air—even Arthur Godfrey has his moments—but that he will not support in any way a system of communication which "systematically" suppresses things he ought to know about, for example, the recent addresses of Albert Schweitzer.

In San Francisco during the depression, one of the major newspapers assigned a member of its staff the task of watching the wire services for "unsettling" dispatches. If a story came through which told about the unemployed men of a town breaking into a store to get food for their children, the story was killed. There were a lot of stories like that. You could say, of course, that if any such stories appeared in the paper, a wave of violence might result. You could say that, and it might be true. But a paper which suppresses news of this sort assumes a tremendous obligation. It is practicing censorship in the name of the public good. An editor who does this sort of thing ought to pledge himself to spend the rest of his life campaigning for the kind of a society in which depressions don't occur. Papers which practice censorship simply to preserve the *status quo* do not deserve support.

Publishing a newspaper is a moral responsibility. Our correspondent makes plain how great that responsibility is. She says that "for an individual to act competently, he must know the facts, both of thought and opinion." Now the newspaper business, today, is big business. (See *The Disappearing Daily,* by Oswald Garrison Villard.) The role of the newspaper is to move goods through its advertising columns. If it does not move goods, it does not survive. Big business is governed by its stockholders, who are interested in profits, not in accurate and impartial dissemination of the news. News that is unpopular will not help to sell advertising. On the contrary, it discourages the sale of advertising. Unpopular news may be the most important news to publish, but unpopular news will not be published. The publisher of the modern newspaper is responsible, first, to his stockholders, and after that to his readers.

Some papers, of course, do better than others, as for example, the New York *Times.* We know that some fault is found with the *Times* by critics of modern journalism, but we confess to a wholesome respect for this newspaper. A similar respect is felt by many Americans, some of them in California, who prefer to take their news four days late in the *Times* to subscribing to a local newspaper.

For a Californian to subscribe to the New York *Times* amounts to a boycott of the mass media. We propose that this boycott is a constructive attitude toward newspaper publishing in the United States—an attitude which, were it to become widespread, would soon lead to the publication of better newspapers all over the country.

We are against paying money to people who pretend to be something they are not for doing something that has no other purpose than to make somebody else rich. This is a contemptible way of life. We are *for* supporting people who are doing what they believe is important to do for its own sake. We want to support such people so that

they will be able to go on doing what they believe in, because people who do what they believe in doing enrich the lives of every one of us.

Does anybody feel alienated, yet? Is there anybody present who doesn't on occasion wonder if he has not been made into a "thoughtless tool of a mass mind"? We take the view that no thoughtful person of our time can fail to suffer from this unpleasant suspicion.

That our critic really proposes is that every thoughtful person ought to become a kind of private institute for propaganda analysis. That would be fine, if you have the time. You have to do something like that anyhow. If you read *U.S. News & World Report* you will get the impression, over a period of months, that the releases of the Atomic Energy Commission are on a par with Holy Writ, while Linus Pauling is a busybody out on the West Coast whom *some* people suspect of being friendly to Soviet Russia. That's the impression you will get from *U.S. News & World Report* (which makes lots of money), and to correct this impression you need to read the *Reporter* (which loses lots of money), in which you will find some very careful analysis of the AEC releases. But suppose you are just an ordinary businessman who takes *U.S. News & World Report* because it prints a lot of things in which businessmen are interested. And nobody tells you about the *Reporter*. There you are, loaded with prejudices. Of course, you probably wouldn't want to read the *Reporter*, anyway, since people who keep on losing money for the sake of an Ideal can't have much sense and how could *they* publish anything really *reliable?* And if someone told you that some members of the staff of *U.S. News & World Report* a couple of years ago secretly voted David Lawrence, their editor, the John Kasper Award for 1957, you probably wouldn't even think it was funny. It is thoughts like these which incline us to the "radical" proposal of boycott of the mass media.