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NO ISSUE

IF we had to choose one thing as what is wrong with our time, we would say that men can find no *issue* to fight for, no final value to seek through a program of action. Of course, they are not looking very hard; but then, this is not remarkable. In the past, the issues over which men met in struggle were pressed upon them by concrete events. There were obvious grievances, plainly beckoning goals.

A man might write himself into a state of exhaustion describing what is wrong with the world, yet, very likely, would create in his readers little sense of there being a great issue. But could things get much worse? We have the nuclear arms race, we have an economy founded upon militarism, we have lives distorted by the artificialities of modern marketing techniques. We have malnutrition of the overfed, as the result of adulterated foods. We have polluted atmosphere and debilitated soil, and produce mildly poisoned by pest control. We have a brooding fear of our military rivals, a vast insecurity in our personal lives, and an incredible drive to status, according to the analysts of such things.

We have a twenty-first century technology and a medieval religion, a thoroughly matured psychosis concerning our "freedom" and our "survival," with a small-boy belligerence for our foreign policy and noisy adolescents for diplomats. We have brilliant sociologists like C. Wright Mills and David Riesman, whom we almost completely ignore, and we have a galaxy of scientific specialists who are worried sick over the condition of the world and their inability to do anything about it—to the point that they have felt it necessary to build their own private weeping wall, *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, in the pages of which they seek to console one another with an understanding unshared by the great unwashed.

There are a thousand issues, but no *big* issue—nothing important enough to make people arise and demand a different kind of a world.

Pacifists picket, climb over fences, march by the thousand, go to jail, make statements, get their pictures in the paper, sit down in the road and invite trucks to roll over them. They are trying to make people see that there is an issue. But the people don't see—at least, not yet.

The arts are divided between the vulgarians and the esotericists, with hardly any middle ground. The first repeat the clichés everyone is tired of, the others devise a vocabulary nobody understands. There is little art of, by, and for the people because the people have no sense of being artists—if William Blake were here among us, he would probably wither away from lack of an atmosphere to breathe.

It is a strange time to live in—when we can have everything, and *nothing*. When all the flavors exist, but it is impossible to savor anything. An intelligent man can, perhaps, find his own happiness, but to do it he has to forget the world. We are not writing for people who are prepared to forget the world, or for people who will settle for a private compact assuring their own salvation. What kind of a man would go to heaven and leave the sinners behind? No wonder the forward movements of the world are led by heretics, atheists, and rebels! No wonder the imagination of the oppressed peoples of the world has been captured by angry and outspoken materialists! Even though the materialistic system is a trap and does not work as it is supposed to work, how are these mistreated and exploited people to know this?

The war cries and slogans of our time are all echoes of ancient contests belonging to a day when objective issues could be found. There are

no such issues today—that is, the issues are all *once removed* from immediate impact upon our lives. To recognize the issues, to learn to deal, not with simple relations of cause and effect, but with long chains of causes and a complicated series of effects, takes training and some sensibility.

One thing has happened to us all—public issues have become private issues, which means that personal morality is turning into social morality. But morality is very largely subjective. That is, the right and the wrong of what a man does depend upon how much he sees and understands. He cannot be held to be guilty of crimes he is unaware of committing. So the issue—if there is an issue—isn't there unless you see it. This makes for public confusion and private bewilderment. It makes for obscure guilt feelings and anguished frustrations. It makes for a worse than Promethean pain. Prometheus knew why he suffered and accepted the pain. We neither understand nor accept our pain.

MANAS has a subscriber who writes about once a month asking the MANAS writers to be "simple." Perhaps it is possible to deal with these things more simply. If we could call up the shade of Dostoevsky or summon Tom Paine, we might be able to accommodate this reader. The question is, Is this an age which has deserved a Dostoevsky or a Tom Paine? Are we prepared to nourish such men? Would anyone give them bed and board, to say nothing of an audience, or recognition? Genius must be welcomed. We cannot sit back and invoke the presence of the gods. Even the gods, if there are gods, must husband their energies.

The relationship between great men and the people they serve is not a one-sided affair. The people have to grow in understanding before a man like Paine can formulate the ringing generalizations which spell out the meaning and the issues of the times. Even then, great men seldom are taken whole. We took from Paine his large-hearted social conceptions, but we turned against the core of his thinking and the well of his inspiration—his humanitarian religion, which was involved in forthright rejection of Christian orthodoxy. Paine was the man whom a distinguished American of a much later date called a "dirty little atheist." The people tolerated that—so why should Paine come back? But if there is any coming back, he'll probably come anyway.

The subjective morality we need has its drawbacks. It is difficult to make judgments of others on the basis of subjective morality. The guilt or innocence of a man is an inner question. Then, for people who are habituated to measuring morality by outward action, there may be a sense of being ineffectual so long as they do not march out to conquer evil in some tangible form. We want to *see* the results of our goodness, and the fruit of inward morality is sometimes imperceptible, or slow in maturing.

On the other hand, subjective morality has great advantages. The man who practices it can never reassure his conscience by saying to himself, "I must be all right, since I am doing what everyone else is doing." Hypocrisy and ethically indifferent conformity are the defects of a culture which relies upon objective morality. A healthy subjective morality is free of these weaknesses. And *these,* let us note, are the weaknesses which our psychologists and sociologists find rampant in present-day society.

This is a question of giving proper diagnosis to our ills. Because we commonly feel our troubles in terms of some external situation, it is natural to define what is wrong in the same terms. In this case, morality seems to demand the correction of the external situation. We must, we say, change what happens to us. Injustice must be eliminated, equality restored. This is the way we have been thinking about morality for centuries.

But during our own time, the focus of crisis in the moral situation has been changing. We still have objective ills, still suffer concrete wrongs, but the concern of intelligent men is no longer to shape a crusade to change the circumstances

which give form to these ills and wrongs. The most searching criticism, today, is criticism of the quality of our lives—of what we do, more or less under our own volition, or by the provocations of suggestion.

While there is still plenty of room for change and reform in the terms of objective morality, especially in other parts of the world, the place of moral tension is increasingly within ourselves. The conclusion here proposed is that there is no objective solution for subjective tension, except incidentally and superficially.

Our condition at present seems to be that we are slowly becoming aware of our own widespread and deep-seated moral confusion. That is why, perhaps, we can find no great issue of objective import to unite upon and do something about. Possibly, the best we can do, now, is to unite upon the fact of this moral confusion. This would be an issue without precedent in Western history, since it would involve no enemy, no concrete program of objective change, but only the energetic pursuit of understanding of ourselves.

One evidence of the confusion lies in the tendency of some men to want to apply the techniques of objective determination to subjective problems. We have scientists, the argument runs, who are trained in finding things out, so why don't we use their talents to bring order to our moral confusion? Not long ago a MANAS reader proposed that experts in the social sciences ought to conduct surveys to discover what "the people really want." Then, with this knowledge, it is suggested, we could set about giving it to them. The assumption, here, is that subjective confusion can be reduced to a problem needing only technical solution. But in a culture where the supreme problem is one of *identity*—Who are we? What are we about? Where did we come from? Where are we going?—there are no discrete values to be counted. The elements of this question are in a state of intellectual and moral fog. As John Lukacs wrote recently in *Anchor Review* (2):

> Those who, first optimistically and by now more and more cynically, have asserted that "what the people want is the supreme standard" are very much in error, since their statement combines two fundamental fallacies:
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> I. People know what they want. (That is, popular opinion exists.)
>
> II. We can find out what they want. (It is measurable and it is ascertainable.)
>
> But we can't; because, more than often, they do not know it themselves.
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> "In a modern society," Auden wrote, "whatever its political form, the great majority prefer opinion to knowledge, and passively allow the former to be imposed upon them by a centralized few—I need only mention as an example the influence of the Sunday book supplements of the newspapers upon our public libraries." Thus the problem was very well stated not by a statistician but by a poet; and rightly so, since the essence of the problem is not mathematical but ethical.

So, making a survey will not help us.

Another well-intentioned proposal we have come across recently is for educational films to show to the backward peoples of the world how much hard work and technical know-how are involved in creating and maintaining the high standard of material living enjoyed by the people of Western lands. The educational value of such demonstrations is obvious, yet they would have to be carried out very carefully, if moral presumption is to be avoided. If we are to become tutors to "backward" peoples and "undeveloped" countries, we have a profound obligation not to betray them into the same mistakes that we have made, arising from the pursuit of material benefits with scarcely any attention given to moral relationships.

It is time, in other words, for the West to exhibit an almost absolute humility in relation to its failure to attain moral equilibrium, either in its internal relations or in its relations with other, less complicated peoples. Actually, we of the West have been congratulating ourselves for so long on

our high achievements in culture that we neglect the duty of periodic assessment of what we have become.

Least of all are we in any position to preach to backward peoples. It would probably be useful if we said to them something like this:

"If you want to make the things that we are making, we'll teach you. It is your right to know how. But it would be well for you to realize, before you get too deeply involved in material progress, the terrible failures suffered by Western civilization through an excess of devotion to the techniques of material progress. We confess ourselves to be at an absolute standstill in the solution of these problems, which are getting worse, not better. Look at our recent history—our wars, our irresponsible diplomacy, our technologized vulgarity, our crime rate, our suicide rate, our juvenile delinquency, our mental illness and emotional instability. Look, also, closely and long, at our delusions of grandeur in the face of this record. True, we have a great literature, magnificent music, a noble tradition in the arts—but this is a period of discontinuities in our cultural life. We do not know where we are going. In a year or two, we may fall into a death-struggle among ourselves that will engulf the entire world in destruction. Our best men warn of this danger continually. Imitate us if you will, but do it at your peril and on your own responsibility. We have enough on our consciences, already."

This, we think, would constitute the sort of moral honesty that is essential to recognizing our own confusion—and we may hope that it is not a death-bed honesty.

But there is another issue behind the issue of our moral confusion—the issue of our very being. It is fair to say that moral confusion is a result of a failure in self-knowledge. The idea of the self is crucial to clarity in ethical thinking, and our moral condition rests upon our ethical thinking.

So, as we have proposed many times before, the essential human issue is an issue in philosophy, in ethics and metaphysics. This is the issue to which we are being reluctantly led by the complex and multiple pressures of our times.

REVIEW
SCIENCE INVADES THE "OCCULT"

ALL our mass picture magazines have featured "scientific" descriptions of hypnotic techniques, usually in connection with the medical and dental professions. The American public has been informed that it is just no trouble at all to avoid the pain of either tooth-drilling or childbirth—just let a qualified hypnotist work his magic. And it really isn't magic after all. The modern practitioner, we are told, has made a science out of an ancient art.

Now, as the June *McCall's* tells us, hypnosis can solve the reducing problem of the American female. After listing the numerous advantages of the hypnotic approach to the fat-removal problem, Jeanette Sanford gives one warning, which strikes us as rather important. "There is just one danger," she writes, "but it's a very serious one. Hypnosis, like any other scientific or medical 'tool,' must be used by people who understand its limitations as well as its value. Only a doctor or a psychologist, with the full understanding of the possible physical and psychological causes of obesity, should be permitted to treat such a problem with hypnosis, since an attempt to 'cure' any deep-seated habit this way can easily result in the substitution of an even more harmful symptom."

A dramatic illustration of what may be involved in this gentle generalization is provided in a psychiatrist's attack of wide-scale use of hypnotic aid to such problems as that of weight reduction. Dr. Harold Rosen, of Johns Hopkins, warned the A.M.A. that hypnosis could be dangerous in *several* ways (*Chicago Daily News*, June 11). For example, there is the possibility of an "over-dose" of hypnosis:

> Before anyone tries to remove anxiety or apprehension from a patient by hypnosis, he should know what causes the anxiety; otherwise he's "playing with dynamite," Dr. Rosen said.
>
> He told of a person who underwent hypnosis to stop smoking. She did cut down on her cigaret intake, only to become a compulsive over-eater. After putting on 40 pounds, she again was hypnotized and her appetite controlled. But then she became an alcoholic.
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> She then wished to become hypnotized to stop her alcoholism, but this was not done, since without any psychiatric treatment it was felt she might next develop addiction to narcotics, Dr. Rosen said.

Until Richard Matheson's *A Stir of Echoes*, we had never encountered a novel dealing with the adverse effects of hypnotism. Writing as if he were not only familiar with Dr. Rosen's concerns, but also with the whole field of Spiritualist phenomena, Matheson builds his story around the after-effects of party hypnosis. The leading character, who works, prosaically, for North American Aviation, is hypnotized by his brother-in-law, a psychology student, to liven up a social gathering. But while the trance seems to follow the usual pattern, the young husband and father who has been hypnotized begins to have a series of frightening psychic experiences. Somehow or other, the passivity which accompanies hypnosis developed mediumistic proclivities in him, and opened him to other modes of *"psi"* phenomena—such as perceiving the thoughts and feelings of others.

Finally "Tom Wallace" decides that he should visit a psychiatrist, since his unwanted psychic premonitions and "hallucinations" are extremely troubling to his wife. The psychiatrist, rather obviously speaking for the author, attempts to explain why it is that "fooling around" with hypnosis may lead to personality disturbance. This psychiatrist obviously believes that ESP has been established beyond any reasonable scientific doubt, and he also feels that the *psi* capacity is universally distributed among human kind. But, in his view, all supernormal abilities of this sort should ideally find development in a later epoch of history. The conversation between the psychiatrist and his confused patient includes these musings:

> "Are you—leading up to saying that . . . what happened to me was a sort of mechanical speed-up of evolutional trend?"

"Not exactly," he said, "although I think the hypnosis—or, more accurately, the faulty extraction of your mind from hypnosis—did tap your latent powers of dissociation. Or, putting it in another way, unlocked your psychical double-jointedness. Your psi."

I must have looked confused for he said:

"I've used that word twice now. Probably it throws you. What it's accepted as meaning is simply this: the mental function by which paranormal cognition takes place."

"I say 'oh'," I said.

He grinned briefly.

"Which brings us to a particular," he said. "A tangential point accepted by only a few; among them, me."

He shifted in his chair and looked fixedly at me.

"You recall," he said, "that, a moment ago, when you asked why you? I said, you or anyone. This is a prime point. I believe that every single human being is, from birth, endowed with varying degrees of psychic perceptivity—and needs only a touch to its mechanism to use this perceptivity in responding to experience.

"Naturally," he went on, "this power is little suspected. The entire concept, for that matter, is pretty disreputable at the moment. And, because it is, not very much in evidence.

"As to your particular case," he said, "I think that the perceptivity released in you is more akin to that of the primitives than it is to that of the, shall we say, man of tomorrow. But don't feel too badly about that. Ninety-five per cent of the so-called mediums are in the same boat—though they'd be double-damned before they'd admit it. Their actions prove it however; the disorderly, directionless, pointless ramblings of their séances; the absurd contradictory results they so often get.

"Which is why," he continued, "these things which have been happening to you have come unexpectedly, without warning except for that occasional physical heightening—which heightening is *also* proof of its imperfection."

Tom's real trouble, as he came to realize, was that he had no control over the visitations of psychic imagery. He had become a passive agency, a "medium" in many respects, without desiring the vocation. And he was driven by the breakup of a former easy relationship with a loving wife to realize why psi perception, in the case of an otherwise ordinary individual, can be a dark nemesis. Mr. Matheson reports one of the conversations between Tom and his wife:

"I hate to have all these things happen at a time like this. But I can't help it. Can't you see that? Do you think I'm doing this deliberately? Do you think I'm trying to hurt you? What's happened to me wasn't my doing. I'm just as victimized by it as you are. I don't know what it means or why it should happen to me. And it isn't going to stop. I feel certain of that. I can't imagine what could end it now. It's a part of me. What else can I say? If only you'd accept that, not fight it so hard. It isn't frightening if only you accept it. Believe that, Anne. It isn't terrible then. It can only hurt you if you struggle against it, if you believe it's something unnatural and wrong. Can't you see that?"

I must have sounded pretty impassioned because she looked at me now with sympathy, almost with understanding.

Then it faded.

"What about us?" she asked. "Is it going to be—the same? *Can* it be the same when you're like this? Isn't every day going to be a—a new torture? What if . . . Tom, what if you start seeing things about me, about *us?* I'd know it, Tom, I would. You couldn't hide it, you couldn't pretend you hadn't seen them." She shook her head in short, choppy movements. "How could it work? Life would be unbearable. I'd just be—waiting for something terrible to happen."

As other discussions in MANAS may have disclosed, the editorial stance, here, may seem paradoxical. We have defended the validity of the ESP researches of Dr. J. B. Rhine and others, yet at the same time express distrust for the techniques by which an uncontrolled psychic capacity can be stimulated. Perhaps, in the case of hypnosis, this has something to do with traditional—and, we think, valid—conceptions of human dignity. Any one who has witnessed the supposedly amusing incidents of hypnotic trance in a college classroom may sense something of what we are talking about. For the hypnotized subject is no longer a human being, able to

choose, by way of taste or ethical conviction, how he will react to the suggestions of the hypnotizer.

Mr. Matheson, in short, has raised tremendously important psychological and philosophical considerations. There is little doubt, if we read him correctly, that he is also a defender of the reality of psychic phenomena. In this book, so far as we can see, he issues a warning against the careless practice of hypnosis, thus indicating an even more important view—that psychical activization without personal and social maturity far beyond the average will simply increase the problems of the twentieth-century "psyche." For one thing, we are plainly not ready to read each other's minds. Mr. Matheson puts this conclusion in a reflection by "Tom Wallace":

> I thought what a terrible world it would be if men realized their potential overnight, and everyone knew what everyone else was thinking. What a terrible breakdown of society. There could *be* no society when every man was an open book to his neighbors. Unless, of course, by the time such a condition prevailed, men could gain maturity and be able to cope with their new-found abilities.

COMMENTARY
THE GOOD IN ECLIPSE

IT is necessary to remind ourselves, when considering the trend of this week's lead article, that men have not ceased being good. They are as good as they ever were; perhaps better; but by their genius—the peculiar genius of our time, the technological genius—they have learned how to multiply and make into a massive image what is indifferent in man, because it is his individuality, his distinction as a unique center of consciousness and decision, which is good. This goodness is lost in a mass image. But since we have become so expert at making images, at taking averages, and planning for the image of the average man, the indifferent man, the good in us all is eclipsed.

So, by such means, what was indifferent becomes evil since it hides the good.

For this, we have no difficulty in blaming technology, or the use we make of technology. As W. H. Auden has written recently:

> The degeneration of people into the public has been tremendously facilitated by the invention of mechanical means of communication, such as the high-speed printing press, the movies, the radio and television apparatus. Neither the inventor nor those who developed these media intended harm; most were and are thoroughly well-intentioned people who at worst want to make a little money. It took some time indeed before the wicked realized what a weapon science had put at their disposal. Yet, whatever the intention, the destructive effect of the mass media is stronger than anyone's intentions, since it is inherent in the nature of the media themselves.

Now it is of interest, and of more than casual irony, that these words were put into print by Doubleday (in a Doubleday Anchor book), perhaps the largest publishing organization in the world, and certainly one which has all the resources of technology at its disposal. Which suggests that the very men who are at odds with technology and the mass media which have grown out of technology are obliged to publish in those media or remain unheard.

This compels the admission of at least the abstract possibility that the mass media can be turned to good ends. But how could such a reform be conceived? Mr. Auden has another paragraph which may help. He says:

> The essential evil of totalitarian propaganda is not that the doctrines it promulgates happen to be false, but that a small minority take it upon themselves to regard the rest of the population as children under the age of consent and to keep it there, so that even if the doctrines were true, which they are not, people would never be permitted to choose the truth; the admission of any facts and feelings which would make doubt possible is forbidden.

No apology is needed to go with the assertion that the population which has been so treated—so worked up by the cultivation of the propaganda-makers into a giant "child"—is indeed a massively dangerous entity. It is the "indifferent" part of mankind, given a specious but effective unity by the strings which control the behavior of this enormous puppet. What if he should break the strings and run amok?

Not all the mass media are devoted to "totalitarian" propaganda—at least, not directly. But the mass media are not directly supported by the people. They are supported by the manipulators of the people's wants and appetites. The mass media, therefore, in order to survive, must preserve the principle of manipulation. This is their meal-ticket.

So the question of whether a mass medium can be turned to "good" purposes is really the question of whether or not the publication—newspaper or magazine—can survive at all without lending itself to the purposes of the manipulators.

Then there is the problem of the linkage between commerce and politics. Since economic survival at the level of mass distribution is so plainly dependent upon manipulation of the people's wants, successful manipulation becomes a form of commercial Righteousness, which is only a short distance from political Righteousness. High-level manipulation makes little distinction

between politics and economics—after all, Freedom and Free Enterprise, what's the difference? Again, Mr. Auden is helpful:

> Propaganda, commercial or political, might be defined as the employment of magic by those who are not susceptible to its spells against those who are. Its aim, the aim of all magic, is to gain such power over the wills of others that the question of their personal assent or dissent does not arise. Naturally its task is easiest when its victims do not care what they choose.

How are the mass media to be cleansed of this kind of magic? We do not see how it is possible.

It is not a question of whether the "bonuses" the magic promises us represent honest values. We share with Mr. Auden an admiration of kitchen refrigerators and other niceties of modern living. People keep on writing us coy notes about their favorite TV programs—"Just watch it and *see* if it isn't *good!"* Sure it's good; we admitted that beforehand. There is still room for a few good things in the mass media in the West. But look at the way things are going. Mr. Auden writes:

> . . . the moment the machine, which is never tired, and so expensive that it can only pay its way by never being allowed to stop, the machine which is incapable of making mistakes is introduced, entertainment becomes an industry and, no matter how well-intentioned its leaders, the impersonality of the means produces an impersonal result—the realm of the aesthetic is no different in this respect from the realm of morals or politics—and the result is nothing that you can call art, popular or highbrow, but a kind of entertainment offered for consumption like any other form of consumer's goods and to be judged in the same way. . . .
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> The sad consequence is that, apart from a few comedians, the only good art today is highbrow art. This is bad for everyone: the lowbrow loses all genuine taste of his own, and the highbrow becomes a snob. The only places where genuine popular art still exists in the world today are poor and backward and unindustrialized countries. In the others the effect of the machine on taste cuts across all political and religious differences. For example, the same kind of painting is approved by all the publics, be they Catholic, Protestant, Communist, Capitalist, Conservative, Labor, Democrat, Republican, and though their terms of disapproval may vary—where one cries "materialistic," another cries "decadent cosmopolitan," and a third "communistic"—the kind of picture which they disapprove is the same for them all.

So, as we said at the beginning, the good in man is getting covered up by the vastly multiplied and endlessly projected image of the indifferent man, who is everybody and nobody at all. How long will we sit still for this portrait of ourselves?

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

GOOD-BYE TO BLUE YONDER?

As an article quoted here a few weeks ago made abundantly clear, Henry Miller feels that the world is closing in on all its young people. The promptings towards conformity of opinion and behavior are so numerous that individuality has little chance of emerging. Mr. Miller's complaint, of course, is heard around the world, since every observant social critic, psychologist, or percipient author reads the same handwriting on the wall. However, the fact that their complaint is receiving so much attention, these days, perhaps means that there *is* some hope after all.

When Mr. Miller wrote of the "treachery" practiced by adults upon children, he quoted: "Ah, hapless birdie, thou wilt fly no more!" The same idea is otherwise expressed by Arthur Miller in a recent interview. This Mr. Miller, too, keeps hammering at what he feels to be an ominously symptomatic delusion in American thinking—that all that is wrong with the world can be summarized by the word "Communism." This is not the real issue, he says, and never has been:

> It is whether or not people can remain human beings, be it under communism or capitalism, when every human quality is being suppressed excepting the thing we need to have in order to fit in efficiently. With goods being produced at a larger rate than any time in history, there are already millions of people who are so closely organized into the economic machine that they no longer know why they are alive or should live.
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> Is it possible that we have got to revise our concept of success, and face the fact that material advance and efficiency in themselves are not automatically going to fling us into happiness? That we are going to have to think again, and discover what it really means to be human, and what a human being really is and needs? The problem will not be solved by a new refrigerator, which cannot keep a soul from spoiling.

How do the inverted values of our time condition youth, so that Henry Miller fears it will "fly no more"? Well, for one thing, we encounter "history" made up to meet the prejudices of an adult population more concerned with counter-communist propaganda than with truth. A *Nation* article (May 9) by George Rudisill, Jr., "Homogenized History," reveals that textbook publishing in the U.S. is not noticeably superior to the indoctrination practiced in Russia—except that our ideology is less clearly defined. "We," Rudisill says, "spend millions every year—educational publishing in 1957 totaled sales of $484,660,000—to familiarize our students with their national heritage, to teach them American history, to mold their civic character. More students are taking more courses in American history and related fields than ever before. The American Celebration is booming, but ignorance seems to increase and character to deteriorate in direct ratio to expenditure. The current generation is the victim of textbooks that do not teach and of teachers who have been taught nothing but how to teach. Texts and teachers are as characterless as the white-collar society which produced them."

The simplification of history—beginning, even, with treatments of the era of the Founding Fathers—has resulted in a watering-down of most university texts so that harmony with the pat generalizations of high school history books may be achieved. The "demand," according to a representative of a college textbook firm, is for "a good high school text that doesn't say so on the title page." Mr. Rudisill interviewed officials of the American Publishers Institute, and noted the admission that standards in history-writing "vary with the climate of opinion and march of events." He continues:

> "The textbook," we are told, "is the contribution of competitive free enterprise to the public school system of America." The terms of the competition remain a mystery, but the result is much the same as in the automobile industry—standardization of price and product, the choice of both lying beyond the control of the consumer. Textbooks are the tailfins of our academic system, exaggerated in size and devoid of honest purpose.

> Few professional historians will touch the subject on the school level. Those who do usually associate themselves with a co-author from the secondary schools, a good selling point for the administrative personnel who make the final selections. The remaining authors come from colleges of education which, instead of teaching history, teach teachers how to teach history. These people all write the same way, namely, by collating other people's texts. . . .

Mr. Rudisill comments:

> American history has simply become another commodity to be peddled in a protected market, its value determined by the size of the sales rather than by any intrinsic merit of the product itself. Worse yet, the effect is cumulative, each generation corrupting the next; each generation more defenseless than its predecessor, like the school boys in George Orwell's "Boys' Weeklies." The literary pabulum of teenagers on both sides of the Atlantic produces remarkably similar results. British adolescents, wrote Orwell, acquired the "conviction that the major problems of our time do not exist, that there is nothing wrong with *laissez-faire* capitalism, that foreigners are unimportant comics and that the British Empire is a sort of charity-concern which will last forever." We do not speak of empire but of world leadership. And the most famous textbook of them all (Muzzey, p. 636) ends its panegyric with a discussion of Washington as a "World Capital." "The position of world leadership has been thrust upon us"—presumably just as empires were forced on Great Britain and Rome. The only other difference to note is that Orwell's boys' weeklies were pulp magazines distributed by the conservative press magnates of British commercial journalism. The bogus Americana acquired by our school children comes through the school system itself.

Manifestations of the "cult of conformity" are widely apparent. The Aug. 1 *Saturday Review* prints a section from Richard La Piere's *The Freudian Ethic*, which confirms Henry Miller's condemnation of phases of American education as "treachery." Mr. La Piere writes:

> The cult of adjustment is more than an intellectual exercise by which the unsociable products of the permissive home and the progressive school are theoretically reconciled to the necessity of living in society. It is the ideological base for a number of socially sanctioned practices in which people are actually encouraged to follow, in some one or many respects the course of least effort. The most numerous and active advocates of adjustment via the course of least effort are the student counselors, who are now part of the administrative apparatus of most large high schools and of many colleges.
>
> The counselors ascertain through tests what particular subject the student will find easiest as a major and what vocational career will be the least demanding in view of his interests, emotional make-up and existing skills. Thus the student who has been carefully wet-nursed through primary school and gently escorted through high school and on into college may be absolved from making any important decision for himself.

How shall we summarize such criticisms? Mr. La Piere does a good job when he writes: "Every one of these changes has as its recognized and avowed objective, the provision of more security for some kind or class of individual." But the other point in need of emphasis is that all of these quotations represent vigorous "value-judgments," and that as long as such judgments are made—so well and so frequently—there will be abundant encouragement to parents to work out something better than "homogenized" Americanism for their children. Our situation is certainly better than that of Russian parents and youths, but if we don't do something with our chance for individuality, they will probably get farther with inverted philosophical values than we do with none.

FRONTIERS

The World They Never Made

You hear it again and again: *"What is the matter* with these people? Can't they find anything *good* about the world?"

You hear it from people who don't like modern art; from people who think that serious contemporary novelists have some deep moral flaw; and you hear it from people who successfully struggled with the circumstances of American life to carve for themselves a comfortable existence, and who distrust all others who do not go and do likewise.

This breakdown of communication between generations and between types of human beings is an old story. It takes many forms, by no means limited to the discontinuity which separates "radical" youth from their often well-to-do and puzzled parents. At root, the breakdown results from changing conceptions of the Good.

Take for example the boy who, fifty years ago, left his native Oklahoma to come to Southern California, where he worked as a laborer during the day and went to school at night until he mastered the intricacies of accounting. He became a successful professional, gave his children "opportunities" far beyond his own youthful dreams, and watched them turn out well, according to standards which, through the years, had become a credo supported by his deepest feelings. This man, despite an essential good nature, is angered by any criticism of the *status quo*—of the general set of circumstances which enabled him to regard his life as a fulfilled career. In his terms, the world is increasingly filled with fools, dreamers and profligates, and he easily sides with anyone who seems to promise resistance to change. He is, in short, a perfect portrait of the "reactionary," and his life history is an apt illustration of the process by which reactionaries are made.

This, plainly, is determinism—a theory we abhor, yet one that must be adopted, here, at least for the time being.

A *Nation* (Aug. 1) review by Dan Wakefield provides another illustration of the break in communications. The book under discussion, which Mr. Wakefield admires, is Warren Miller's *The Cool World,* a study from the "inside" of teen-age Harlem gangsters—Negro children whose world is identified by boundaries totally unknown to most other people. Wakefield writes:

> Mr. Miller . . . catches the painful lack of communication between the kids in the gang and their elders—like "Gramma" Custis, who escaped the South to "come up here for the opportunities" and does not understand this new variety of nightmare that brings her grandson home bleeding from the streets.
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> Perhaps most important of all, Mr. Miller has a true sense of the relationship of these "cool" kids to the outside world of order, rules, lessons and prefabricated answers. He illuminates it powerfully in describing a trip in which Duke's teacher takes the class on a tour of the Wall Street district. The teacher is a dedicated, hard-working man, but he is going by the rules of a world that is as foreign to these kids as the No plays of Japan; he is telling them where George Washington once stood and they are talking among themselves of the relative values of a Biretta and a Colt for use in gang fighting. Duke [a fourteen-year-old], in describing the tour, says:
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> ". . . we went up to the stock exchange an looked at the exhibits about the City of the Future. These rocket ships kept flyin back an forth over it. They were on wires you could see the wires. An the City of the Future it was jus a big housing projeck."

In a very different mood and against the background of a much larger canvas is a scene in Doris Lessing's *Retreat to Innocence.* The occasion is the meeting of two brothers, Jan and Franz Brod, in London—both natives of a central European country which has had a communist revolution. Jan is a writer who had to leave his homeland to escape the terror which came with communist rule. Franz stayed and prospered. Now a "thaw" has taken place, the writer's books are being republished at home, and Franz has

come to London to persuade Jan to return. At this point in the story, Jan has just finished telling about the end of his new novel, which portrays the death of a ruthless revolutionary leader—a man who had outlived the struggle which brought the Party to power. The leader lay on his deathbed, knowing that the younger men who stood about him could no longer understand the past, nor grasp the pain of having inflicted what now seems unnecessary suffering. It was a moment of indiscribable loneliness.

> Franz leaned forward and took his brother's hands. "Jan, why can't you leave it alone now? Why? What good does it do?"
>
> "Good? It all happened. People have a right to it. It's a part of us all now."
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> "People have suffered so much," said Franz suddenly. "Over here, they have no idea—this morning, when I came, I was walking about the streets. I looked at the faces. There was something different. I didn't understand what it is. Suddenly I saw—it was that they hadn't suffered. And our young people are like that. It's good to see them. They are happy: they have no idea what it cost, what it all cost. And why should they have?"
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> "Who are you to say what they should know and what they shouldn't? Why shouldn't they know it all? We weren't Communists to fill the world full of children who can't face the truth?"
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> "They face enough truths. They've enough to face."
>
> "I was not a Communist for that, I was not."

There is not the same certainty of judgment, here, but there is clear suggestion that when an essential element of the past dies in the present, something of the future dies, too.

Franz now reminds Jan of how he became a Communist:

> "No. But I'll tell you why, you've forgotten. I was going to see Dounya one afternoon—you remember Dounya?—and you were sitting on a pile of wet snow by the roadside, crying. You were on your way back from school. Your feet were blue and bleeding. I thought you were crying because your feet hurt. I took you up in my arms to carry you home. You said: 'Juri has no shoes, Juri has no shoes. I've given him my shoes because he has to go to school five miles there and back without shoes.' That's when you became a Communist. You were eleven years old. I remember it. He was the son of Maria the washer-woman."
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> "Did you know that one of her sons is a clerk at the Embassy? He'll be a diplomat. Perhaps it was him I gave the shoes to."
>
> "Perhaps it was."
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> "All the same, the shoes are not enough," said Jan suddenly.
>
> "No. No. We do not say so."
>
> Jan leaned back and frowned. "Well, and perhaps you're right after all? We were Communists so that people should be happy, and when the generation is born that has forgotten all *that* misery, we resent it. . . ."

This, then, is the question: Are the shoes enough? Or must the pain, the commitment of the struggle, be remembered, also? Is a world of innocents what the revolution was to bring?

Another form of this question is set by a correspondent to the *National Guardian* (Aug. 3), who, encouraged by the quality of Liberty paperbacks (such as the Doris Lessing book, quoted above), tells what he wants:

> I should like, for example, to see a re-examination of virtually every Marxist concept from art as a weapon to the absolute and relative impoverishment of capitalism. I should like to read an estimate of the new role in a new world of nonviolent resistance, not only in Montgomery but in such colonial cities as Durban.
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> I want to see debate and argument as to the validity of various paths to socialism, and as to Marxist ethics and philosophy. I want to know if the rights of man as won in the American and French Revolutions, to the degree that they were won, are really obsolete under socialism, engulfed by so much greater liberty that they have become irrelevant. It may be well to attack our foes, but perhaps it is better still to know first what we ourselves think and why. Only such knowledge, not to be inherited, will result in political activity.

It is this desperate want of shoes that is now questioned as the basis of a social philosophy.

Can we say that, given enough shoes, we shall have no need for the "rights of man"—that is, those rights of the individual which contemplate activities usually pursued just as well barefoot as with shoes—and that the "greater liberty" of a flood of material benefits does indeed make those rights "irrelevant"?

The comment on all this is obvious: People who identify the Good with a particular sort of material environment are making a culture without any moral continuity, and they will become, therefore, a people who will periodically lose the power to communicate—whenever there are changes in the circumstances and the provocations of the environment. Such people have no basic conception of the nature of man, nor any transcendent ideal that can be passed from one generation to another. They are blind to the essential human situation.

Knowledge of the essential human situation can never be inherited. It is not the result of objective analysis and description, but of a form of experience which each generation must undergo for itself. The revolution which ignores this fact is as doomed to failure as the *status quo* which defines the good in terms of its own conditions.