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"THE HUMAN WAY OUT"

[This article is adapted from an address by Lewis Mumford, delivered Sept. 28 on the Berkeley Campus of the University of California. Mr. Mumford is Visiting Research Professor of Government Affairs at the University.]

THIS subject, The Human Way Out, is not of my choosing. It has rather been thrust upon me by current political events and reactions. At this critical moment in human history, I have no other course but to speak openly and freely about the situation in which we find ourselves, and to explore what means we still have at our disposal to curb the forces that our own leaders, from 1945 on, all too confidently and carelessly set in motion. I regret that President Kennedy's address to the United Nations Assembly has not lightened my task nor absolved me from its performance.

If I flinched from taking on this duty I should be unfaithful to my vocation as a teacher. There is no "disaster shelter" for the mind, in which the American scholar can take refuge, to cower in darkness and shameful silence, protected from the poisonous fallout of public error. The worst dishonor possible would be to remove our minds from the full light of day, and to withhold from our countrymen our most valuable human resources: not merely our specialized critical intelligence, but our imaginative insights, our moral evaluations, our historic perspectives, our prognostic anxieties.

The public task that has fallen to me is one I would gladly have evaded, if peace of mind could be purchased so cheaply. More than once during the last sixteen years I have found myself wryly sympathizing; with the Biblical prophet Jonah, who fled from his unpleasant duty of announcing to the people of Nineveh that, unless they altered their conduct, they were headed for destruction. And I am still envious of Jonah's good fortune, not just in escaping the tempest and the belly of the whale, but in living to see the words he so reluctantly addressed to the inhabitants of Nineveh heeded by everyone, from the king and nobles down: so that "great city," though it contained six score thousand people who couldn't tell the difference between "their right hand and their left," was saved, along with much fine cattle.

The only thing that lightens my burden today, my sole support and consolation, is the conviction that I shall be uttering, to a far larger degree than anyone would suspect from reading the newspapers or listening to the radio, the thoughts that millions of other people, our own countrymen and our neighbors all over the world, are now thinking in anguished silence, still unheeded by their leaders. In recent months, I confess, I have been going about my work from day to day, haunted by a few lines that come near the end of the most heart-breaking of Shakespeare's tragedies, *King Lear:*

> The weight of this sad time we must obey:
> Say what we feel, not what we ought to say.

And in that mood I face you now.

Let us go back to the beginning. Half a generation ago, our country found itself in sudden possession of almost illimitable physical powers and potentialities, derived from scientific insight into the ultimate constitution of matter. By a chain of brilliant experimental investigations, the technical means of transforming mass into energy were invented. Potentially, this marked a human advance comparable only to that which the neolithic domestication of food plants and animals had brought in. But instead of being applied, like that older technical triumph, to the enhancement of human life, the new powers of nuclear fission were directed at once to a negative function: large-scale human extermination. The permission to use atomic energy turned into the compulsion

to use atomic weapons, against present or future enemies. This fixed idea still dominates us.

Unhappily for mankind, the "release of nuclear energy had been preceded by an even more devastating kind of liberation: a release from moral inhibitions and salutary taboos it had taken civilized man four or five thousand years to build up. Three years before the atom bomb was invented, our own country, along with our democratic partner, Britain, had adopted the totalitarian strategy of attacking, not only identifiable military targets, but numerous inhabitants of whole cities, doing what the Germans had done, to our own well-justified horror, in their assaults on Warsaw, Rotterdam, and London. This wilful breakdown of mankind's well-established safeguard against insensate violence, this transformation of war into genocide, turned every country into a potential extermination camp. Though we covered our actions with the specious excuse that such wholesale extermination would shorten the war and thus save precious human lives, our government actually placed every human life on this planet in jeopardy, as soon as atom bombs went into mass production. We must now face the consequences of these tragic errors.

I do not propose to examine the many sins of commission and omission that have, from this starting point, brought us into the present desperate situation. Suffice to say that massive errors were committed—and are still being committed—by both our own country and Soviet Russia, the principal offenders. Both governments quickly became the prisoners of the absolute weapons they were creating; and these weapons in turn brought into existence a host of scientific, technical, industrial and political agencies, whose members acquired a heavy vested interest in the strategy of extermination, and had no economic or personal incentive to seek an alternative strategy and policy. The food that most of mankind now eats has been poisoned by the mere testing of these nuclear weapons; but the moral atmosphere has been even more heavily contaminated.

In their reliance upon weapons of genocide—nuclear, chemical, bacterial—both the United States and Soviet Russia have been equally at fault. Today, in consequence, both countries symbolize the dilemma of the irresistible force confronted with the immovable object. Neither government will yet give ground, even on trivial issues like those raised in Berlin. Each still threatens the other with unrestricted extermination and destruction, despite the fact that the same catastrophe would be visited on both sides, and would eventually do grave damage to every other people on the planet, no matter how innocent or remote. The notion that there is some neat technological way out of this impasse forms part of the strange pathology of our time. Plainly every new mechanism of death invented by either side only heightens the present tension, widens the prospective terror, and commits them more heavily to the universal catastrophe they profess to abhor but do not shrink from projecting.

Our own country has declared its readiness to sacrifice fifty million of its own citizens to our Nuclear Gods on the first day that genocide breaks out. We have covered over that first appeasement of these demented gods by building wholly illusory underground shelters, designed on the quite indefensible assumptions that only military targets would be hit, only nuclear weapons would be used, and—most fantastic assumption of all—that the conflict itself would last only a single day. At best, our peripheral fallout shelters would provide an extra fortnight for contemplating the traumatic horror of facing the continuance of a purposeless war, and lingering on, wracked by disease and starvation, in a meaningless world, disintegrated and permanently defiled beyond power of redemption.

To accept such an abomination of terror and desolation as even a remote possibility, much less an honorable and tolerable sacrifice, is sheer madness; and the fixed policy that will eventually

lead to such an end is, by any rational criterion, a mad policy, empty of human values and unworthy of human respect: the policy of under-dimensioned men with "ten year old minds," operating within a one-generation frame of reference, with no respect for the values of human history and no concern for the future of the human race. Let us face these consequences before our leaders commit us further to this unpardonable sin, to use Hawthorne's words, this ultimate crime against mankind itself. And let us speak plainly to our leaders to this effect: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that there is no national purpose, however ideal, no practical urgency, how ever pressing, that would justify the risk of bringing about the irretrievable mutilation of the human race and the nullification of human history.

From this it follows that we must swiftly change our minds and alter our rigid policies. There are no alternatives to our present course that our own government should not be prepared to examine, no lengths it should not be prepared to go, no humane proposals it should be afraid to make lest they be treated as a confession of military weakness—in order to forfend even the bare chance of such a fatal terminus. If we are to overcome the irrational factors that are increasingly driving us into a corner out of which they threaten to break only by a final irrational act, we ourselves must take the lead in rebuilding the moral foundations we ourselves thoughtlessly demolished, and challenge the premises that have brought us to the verge of accepting this gigantic aberration as a normal intelligent choice.

More than that: we must not merely repair our own morals but improve our manners. At such a hair-triggered point as this, the persistent baiting and taunting of the Russian government and the communist system by our leaders only betrays their incapacity to come to grips with reality: the reality of Soviet Russia's existence, the reality of the world's need for their willing consent and cooperation in the enterprise of ensuring mankind's survival and continued development. The fact is that we need the help of the communist peoples, as they in turn need ours, if we are to escape the death trap each nation has cunningly set for the other.

Only one course is now open to us: to retrace our steps and seek a human way out. What, then, does it mean to be human? To be human is to recognize, as even the most primitive tribes recognize, that we are all part of a cosmic process that encompasses and outlasts our little lives. As living organisms, we are members of a complex, cooperative society that includes species at every level of development, from the viruses and bacteria to the most fully developed human personalities, a Confucius or an Emerson, an Aristotle or an Einstein. As families or nations, we live not alone or on our own exclusive terms, but with the constant help of countless species. Wantonly to break apart this complex web of organic life and human culture at any point is to assault the foundations of our own existence. Our security and our welfare rest upon mutual aid and mutual tolerance. And when we are fully human, the entire human past and future are constantly present in our consciousness, to deliver us from insolent fantasies based on the prejudices of our tribe and the discoveries of a single generation.

To be human, by the same token, is to recognize with humility our own inherent imperfections and limitations. At every moment, as Christian doctrine has always stressed, men are prone to sin and error, to hallucinations, self-deception and headstrong pride. All men individually, and all nations collectively, are finite and fallible beings; and they are never more open to flagrant error than when they feel smugly self-righteous and immune to any possible criticism. Traditional wisdom warns us against these flattering illusions. Though we may make our daily decisions alone, knowing that our mistakes will hurt only ourselves, now that our leaders persist in committing us to policies that might eventually bring disaster to all mankind, we must recall them to their human conditions: they need

the historic wisdom of the race, and the criticism and correction of all other peoples, and above all they need to restore their own balance by bringing back into the picture the human factors they have blindly ignored.

Only if we operate once more from a humble base will the problems that now seem insuperable become open, step by step, to a human solution. There are many alternatives to the course that the Western nations have been following these last sixteen years: there is still an abundance of open choices, accommodations and compromises, midway between the hateful extremes of one-sided surrender and mutual extermination. But the time is late, and the dangers multiply day by day.

Since only the human way out remains, the most imperative task for us as Americans is to summon forth and patiently cultivate friendly human feeling in ourselves to evoke a similar response in our opponents. The belated proposals that both the Russian and the American governments have made toward total disarmament will not move an inch toward realization whilst our governments meet each other filled with hostility, suspicion, and bravado, poisonous qualities that derive directly from their confidence in the very weapons that must now be destroyed. The human break-through must preface every serious governmental effort, and the first change in the atmosphere, the first melting of inflexible power into supple wisdom and humanity, must be made by each of us, opening our hearts as well as our minds, and speaking freely.

Let us speak truth to the power that can only will its own destruction. Let us tell our leaders that this is not a time to threaten desperate, irretrievable acts, but to utter disarming words: words that will sympathize, conciliate, heal, embrace: words that will pave the way to honorable compromises, and eventually, passing beyond the ensurance of coexistence, will bring about positive cooperations. At this point, only the quick therapy of words, meaningful words, openly and honestly exchanged, as in a direct face to face relation, can free us from the grim tensions and compulsions that now have us in their grip. "The weight of this sad time we must obey." Yes, the time has come to speak, and to say what we feel; for what we feel in the depths of our being is precisely what we ought to say. We have no commitment to catastrophe.

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REVIEW
LOCKE'S AMBIGUOUS BEQUEST

IN Yeat's *Collected Poems* there is a "Fragment" which, if only for its power to suggest two climates of opinion, ought to be better known:

> Locke sank into a swoon;
> The Garden died;
> God took the spinning-jenny
> Out of his side.

These lines describe and judge an age. Locke was the intellectual Adam of the eighteenth century. For its artists and writers especially, he was "the Philosopher"—much as Aristotle had been for the Schoolmen. Just as Newton's *Principia* (1687), with its new model of the universe, brought about a revolution, so Locke's *Essay Concerning the Human Understanding* (1690) contributed a new model of the mind and completed the revolution. But revolutions, as Wendell Phillips once said, never go backwards; and the Lockian-Newtonian revolution proved no exception. Something was lost, perhaps irrecoverably: man's primal wonder, his sense of the fullness and fitness of existence, his conviction of being the center of concern. The Garden died. But in this shift of the center of concern, this distraughtness, man felt himself newly empowered and now truly the Maker—though, as Yeats would have it, the only Eve drawn from his side was a "jenny." It is interesting to note, as an underscoring of Yeats's judgment and implied frame of reference, that the spinning-jenny (invented about 1767) was at once hailed for its greatly increased output and deplored for its poor adaptation to "fine spinning."

On Yeats's "Fragment" Ernest L. Tuveson's *The Imagination as a Means of Grace* (University of California Press, $5.00) might be read as a gloss. Subtitled *Locke and the Aesthetics of Romanticism*, it is concerned with some of the revolutionary changes in the idea of the imagination, especially that of literature, which Locke's new model of the mind brought about. More particularly, it deals with the ways in which Locke's "transference of the 'focus of reality' to the perceiving mind made necessary eventually a radically new conception of art as effect; and how it was necessary to reconstruct 'conscience' and the 'means of grace' in terms of a theory of the mind that denied the possibility of occult and supernatural influences on the personality." Stated in this way, Tuveson's subject ranges beyond the currents of eighteenth-century thought to which he mainly confines himself. It reaches *us*—our art, our literature, our science, our psychology. For in many ways we are the true heirs of the Lockian-Newtonian revolution and Locke left us an ambiguous bequest.

In the intellectual world of the late seventeenth century a wide gulf stood between the "new philosophy" which Newton was bringing to classical formulation and the prevailing epistemologies—the concepts of how the mind operates and how experience actually occurs. Newton's universe is pre-eminently quantitative. His atoms move according to simple, universally applicable laws. These atoms and their laws are the constituents of reality. The universe they compose is unlimited in extent: it has no "up or down" and no recognizable center. Qualities and values, moreover, are not intrinsic facts inhering in external objects. With Newton's universe, as Tuveson puts it, "the whole idea of a beautiful parallel between physical and mental realities, between spiritual and physical, between great world and small world, became untenable." Yet epistemology during Newton's time still reflected the old qualitative view of the universe. Form and matter combined as the constituents of reality. Everywhere, according to this view, the universe shows purpose behind motion. Everywhere it "is striving to realize a great and perfect idea, which is analogous to the living being." In the old epistemology the question, according to a much-used formula, was "Why?" In the new philosophy it was "How?"

> This easy formulation, although it needs qualification, is essentially true, and helps explain

> why the discrepancy between epistemology and cosmology had become intolerable by the end of the seventeenth century. The peculiar distinction and importance of John Locke is that he constructed a system that bridged this gulf. That his formulations were overdue is demonstrated by the fact that the new epistemology, revolutionary and disturbing though it was, within a few decades became almost the only one accepted, and, it is not too much to say, modern psychology of whatever school shows Its influence.

What was the problem Locke tried to solve in his *Essay?* To understand it, suggests Tuveson, we should go back to Hobbes. In his *Human Nature* (1640) and *Leviathan* (1651) Hobbes tried, in an over-hasty effort, to explain all sensation and all thought in terms of purely material, physiological changes. He attempted, in fact, to reverse the medieval attitude. The Schoolmen assumed that, since man is the center and the object of nature, the universe must present an analogy to the structure of the human mind. Hobbes assumed just the opposite: the mind must be patterned after the physical universe. Particles of matter impinging on the organism give rise to modifications in the body. These constitute "the very substance of thought." Occurring in accidental sequences, they give rise in some way to all our ideas—even the greatest and subtlest. Nothing is involved but "dead" matter. According to Hobbes's theory, there is "no soul, no living self at the heart of it all, no center of consciousness to receive the material impressions and to be aware of itself." To his age, Hobbes's theory was on the whole unconvincing: it not only violated the integrity and dignity of man, but was false to impressions made by the very fact of living.

Yet Hobbes's claims, as Locke and others soon saw, could not be entirely denied. If his theory failed to account for the phenomena of the mind in all its diversity and uniqueness, it nevertheless had a fitness with new ideas about the universe. It recognized that the idea of planets arranged in an order of nobility, and guided by intelligences, was no longer believable. It recognized that the sense of qualitative differences was becoming passé. It recognized, in short, that the new cosmology explained the universe in terms of uniform operations of matter, reducible to comprehensive and simplified natural laws. Some major implications of the new cosmology Tuveson summarizes as follows:

> The moon moves as it does, not because it obeys a command to take part in the celestial dance, but because of properties of mass, position, and gravitational attraction. The wonderful art of the Creator is shown, not by His stage-managing the great ballet of the heavens, but by the economy whereby, with a comparatively simple master plan, He set matter in motion to operate as a machine. One atom is like another, and as good as another; it seems ridiculous even to raise the question whether the planets are "nobler" than the earth. God sees with equal eye the bubble and the world. The universe, although obviously designed and sustained by a divine energy, is nevertheless not of itself moral. Value must be found, not in things themselves, but in the way they affect sentient beings.

Though it is easy to assume that such a conclusion must have come as a severe blow to humanity, it did nothing of the sort. In fact, says Tuveson, the triumph of the new philosophy "seemed to release a tidal wave of enthusiasm and energy that carried mankind forward in the greatest creative activity of its history." A sense of literal enlightenment, of clearing away old mists, old confusions, was in the air. Soon, however, men began to feel an acute need. They wanted a new model of the mind that "would bring the intellectual processes into nature without making them wholly material phenomena, as in Hobbes's theory, in which the mind appears to be at the mercy of its unpredictable adventures with matter." This was the problem Locke's *Essay* tried to solve. His solution, as we know, was to endow the mind, not with completed ideas, but with the power to make all its ideas out of impressions. The material of all thought, held Hobbes, is derived from sensations. On the contrary, held Locke, it *is* sensations (or, to use his favorite phrase, "simple ideas"). These arise from the impact of external physical objects upon the organs of the body. They are conveyed by the "conduits of the nerves" directly to "their audience

in the brain—the mind's presence-room." These simple ideas cannot be resisted; we have no control over which ones enter our consciousness. In this way Locke maintained the humility before nature. It was a way of embodying in epistemology the belief that, as Locke's pupil Shaftesbury later put it, man is made for nature and not nature for man.

Locke's experimental epistemology seemed, at least to a majority of men, to leave religion and morality secure. With it, says Tuveson, the Enlightenment became a full reality. Locke had made the process of thinking a matter of seeing and "considering." Complex ideas were built up from simple by the association of sense impressions. Yet *experience* for Locke is not "a mere automatic connection of impressions, as if an adding machine were being set up":

> He always has the sense of a living being, with inclinations of its own, responding in a myriad of ways to a world which affects it in as many ways. In the center is an autonomous organizing power; but its area is not sharply defined, and its boundaries expand and contract with the exigencies of the creature's total response to its ever-changing environment. The personality is potentially the whole of its experience, existing in a state of constantly shifting tensions.

How modern this sounds! How "advanced" and, alas, how open to misinterpretation and partial application! To see the personality of one individual besides ourselves, or even ourselves, as "potentially the whole of its experience"—how often do we do it? The question answers itself. It shows in what sense we, like Locke's contemporaries, can regard his model of the mind as revolutionary . . . and as a blueprint for later revolutions.

Most of *The Imagination as a Means of Grace* is a systematic elaboration of ways in which Locke "made necessary a new kind of thinking and creating for the artist, the critic, and the theorist." For example, Locke tended to see men as by nature neither good nor bad. Since the mind, as he conceives it, serves no transcendental end, it is morally neutral; it is conditioned by its experience of simple ideas, over which it has no control. Yet Locke admits that "there are natural tendencies imprinted on the minds of men; and that from the very first instances of sense and perception, there are some things that are grateful, and others unwelcome to them." In such a statement, judges Tuveson, we have the "seed" of the still influential "Moral Sense" theory. Another of Locke's contributions was a rationale of the "Natural Sublime." This preoccupation with immensity and infinity as signifying God-in-Nature and, later, God-as-Nature is "behind modern man's obsession with the vast, the unlimited, and the suggestive rather than the sharply defined. . ." Tuveson discusses several of the important stages in the evolution of the "Natural Sublime." In this evolution, he points out, *space* (usually capitalized and synonymous with *immensity*) became regarded as "a visible divine attribute."

Central to this study is the concept of the imagination in the new epistemology. Although Locke made no provision for aesthetic values *per se*, he conceived imagination as *the* instrument of perception and the discursive intellect or "understanding" itself as a kind of perception. Implicit in Locke's concept of the imagination was its tendency to become an autonomous authority, independent of the judgment of reason. Within a few decades after his *Essay*, the "total mind-act" of creativity was being replaced by the separation of imagination from logical thought, with the conclusion that seldom the twain should meet. This "dissociation of sensibility" becomes most evident, of course, in the Romantic Movement—and to it we can attribute many if not most of the distinctive features of art for generations. As Tuveson demonstrates, however, the "dissociation" is evident for the first time in Addison's *Spectator* papers on the "Pleasures of the Imagination" (1712). Here, Addison extends Locke's concept of the imagination and gives us "the first work ever written on aesthetics as a wholly autonomous subject."

From Addison's time to ours, contends Tuveson, the place of imagination in a context of new attitudes toward man, human nature, and the relations to external nature has become more and more important. Gradually more and more men came to feel they had a stake in the life of imagination and its products. Its ascendancy as a dominant interest, however, involved—and involves—many problems:

> If the mind is fragmented, if understanding, imagination, and moral sense represent specialized responses to varying kinds of impressions, there may follow certain kinds of solutions to the problem of why we have imagination at all, and what functions it should perform. The common belief is that by means of imagination, a supernal influence, capable of elevating and transforming the soul, flows into the mind. This conviction, defined by Addison, became the theme on which many variations were composed. The theorists were interested in filling in the gaps which remained after Addison's papers appeared. What forms does the divine power assume? What are the mechanisms whereby immediate sense impressions from physical nature may work their beneficent effects?

In varying degrees the aestheticians after Addison (especially Francis Hutcheson, John Baille, Alexander Gerard, Lord Kames, and Archibald Alison) contributed to the concept of the imagination as "a means of grace." Their contributions, and others which Tuveson discusses, led to the basic faith of romanticism—that "only the poet sees things in their true, organic harmony, as opposed to the man of reason—whether he is philosopher, scientist, or merchant." Today, this faith has become identified with art itself. It might be maintained that today there are no *anti*-romantic theories of art: the only living rivals among theorists, critics, and practitioners are various romanticisms and counter-romanticisms. (One influential counter-romanticism, which presupposes certain romantic tenets in order to oppose others, is the so-called "classicism" of Eliot and his followers.)

Tuveson concludes, as this review began, with a discussion of Yeats. In several ways the choice is apt. Yeat's earlier poems and plays were, by his own account, "symbolist." The quality of the symbolism which is the essence of his poetry he himself defined in terms strongly suggesting Locke's concept of the imagination:

> All sound, all colours, all forms, either because of their preordained energies or because of long association, evoke indefinable and yet precise emotions, or, as I prefer to think call down among us certain disembodied powers, whose footsteps over our hearts we call emotions, and when sound, and colour, and form are in a musical relation, a beautiful relation to one another, they become as it were one sound, one colour one form, and evoke an emotion that is made out of their distinct evocations and yet is one emotion. [*Ideas of Good and Evil* (1900).]

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COMMENTARY
THOREAU BOOKLET READY

THE four-part essay on Henry David Thoreau by Richard Groff, which appeared in MANAS during August and September, is now available as a booklet from the Manas Publishing Company. Encouraged by readers and by a few groups which have indicated a desire to obtain copies in bulk, the publishers decided that there was sufficient reason for putting the essay into more permanent form. The price of the booklet is seventy-five cents. It is printed in two colors, sewed (not pamphlet-bound), and has a stiff paper cover. There is a foreword by Richard B. Gregg, author of *The Power of Non-Violence.*

MANAS readers will hardly need to be reminded of the quality of this essay, which is by a man who, in his own way, seeks to emulate Thoreau. Much more than a scholar's appreciation of Thoreau appears in this work. Its luminous account of Thoreau's intentions and its unfolding of his commitment would hardly have been possible for a writer who did not himself share to some extent in Thoreau's motives. These, at any rate, are some of the reasons why the editors and publishers of MANAS found Mr. Groff's essay worthy of publication, first as articles, then as an important if slender book.

The title of the booklet is *Thoreau and the Prophetic Tradition.* Format and typographic treatment are by Porter Groff, a graphic arts designer and brother of the author. The booklet is extremely attractive in appearance and we should urge it as a most appropriate, if modest, Christmas gift, save for the fact that there is barely time for orders to be filled by Dec. 25. However, those who wish to try this idea should place their orders at once, adding another twenty-five cents for wrapping and first-class postage. Parcel post (book rate) is nine cents. (Sales to dealers and organizational distributors of literature are subject to the usual trade discounts on purchases of six or more copies.)

Needless to say, publication of this booklet is something of a "venture" for MANAS. The prevailing motive which led to the undertaking was the conviction that Thoreau speaks to our time as no other American of the past can speak, and that there is an overwhelming need for a revival of the ethical vision and the moral strength that are found in his writings. If material of this sort can be placed in print without undue loss to its publisher, this work by Mr. Groff may turn out to be the first of a series of publications—reprints from MANAS or from other sources—by the Manas Publishing Company.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

FRACTIONAL MAN—AN EDUCATIONAL PRODUCT

A SOMEWHAT breezy article in the New York *Times* Magazine of Sept. 24, "Needed: Whole Men, Not Fractions," by Prof. Claude Coleman, speaks of the desperate need for "liberal" rather than specialized learning. Prof. Coleman writes:

> Today our society suffers from a plethora of splendid splinters—fractional adults who never become men and women in any real sense of the word. I had better define my term, perhaps. Ask who someone is and the reply invariably comes back, "Why, he is a plumber," or a "surgeon," or an "economist," or a "geographer," or a "dean," or a "policeman"—not a man at all but only a splinter.
>
> Do I mean that our society has educated its best minds in the wrong directions and with a false sense of values? Yes that is exactly what I mean. Along with a false estimate of itself. We must not permit our college students to be led into narrow specialization without a broad substructure of understanding. We need more psychology, more literature, more history and anthropology, more philosophy, more of ail the fine arts and humanities. If we abdicate to the technologists and the engineers, they may indeed take us to the moon or even to Mars, but why transport this crazy society beyond the earth?

In the opinion of Joseph Wood Krutch (see his contribution to the *Saturday Evening Post* Adventures of the Mind series, *Post*, July 15), we have become a nation of "role players" rather than "whole men" chiefly by an over-definition of "democracy." Dr. Krutch thinks that the completely relativist philosopher tends to eliminate the sort of language which enables men to discuss what they *are* as men. The question, What would you like to become? is most frequently answered in terms of a function rather than in terms of an evolution of the mind or, if one prefers, character. Theologians and philosophers in the past, of course, had a great deal to say about "what men are in themselves," but the history of Western religion and philosophy is largely the history of partisan propaganda rather than that of Socratic inquiry. It is no secret that Dr. Krutch feels the need for the renewal of a somewhat mystical, metaphysical view of nature and of man, but he seeks no predetermined conclusions. It is the *language* of philosophy, of mysticism, which appears to him to be the primary need. And in the *Post* article, "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Welfare," he outlines the desirable consequences which the development of this language might produce:

> We could say that education is not whatever a pupil thinks he wants in school, but that it is that which experience has shown will lead to a true understanding of his own nature, his own needs and his own wants. We could say the ideal of education is not conformity, not acculturation, but the full development of human nature's potentialities.
>
> We could say that the normal is not the same as the average, but rather that the normal is normative—that is to say, that by which a thing is to be judged. And we could add that the normal human being is not the average human being, but the thing to which human nature aspires.
>
> To attempt to determine what is part of permanent human nature is to undertake no easy task. To distinguish between what is truly natural and what is merely conditioned is extremely difficult. But to conclude that the question is actually a meaningful one is already to have concluded something vastly important.

So, is Dr. Krutch an "absolutist"? Hardly. It is rather that, along with various writers often quoted in MANAS, he feels that a human being can never be fulfilled unless he sets for himself standards of achievement which reach beyond material success or the playing of a specialized role. Krutch continues:

> Man is inveterately a maker of value judgments. His idea of what constitutes right and wrong conduct, of what is just or unjust, has been—perhaps will continue to be—extremely diverse. But he has nearly always believed that good and evil, justice and injustice, are realities which it is of the first importance to define and to cherish, while moral and cultural relativism—the idea that morals are nothing but mores and that one society is not absolutely better than another—is so profoundly unnatural a

> conviction that it has seldom been entertained for long and is destructive of human welfare when it is.
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> Men have varied enormously, irreconcilably, over the question of what constitutes justice. But they have nearly always believed that there is some such thing and that they should adhere to it. Part of that feeling is, I believe, the conviction that acts should have consequences, and that the way you are treated should be in some degree affected by the way in which you behave. A spoiled child, one who never pays any penalty for his follies or misdeeds, one who is given what some of the modern educators call "uncritical love," is usually an unhappy child because something fundamental in his human nature tells him that acts should have consequences and makes him profoundly uneasy in a world where they do not.

Well, one must admit that this sounds a bit extreme. We have ourselves encountered children exposed to "uncritical love" who are by no means unhappy. Nor, in terms of one outstanding example in mind, do we have much background for believing that "retribution" for dubious acts must be handled predictably by the parents. But what we think Mr. Krutch is really getting at is the conception of ethical, not moral, responsibility, and there is no doubt that a child must have some conviction of a growing personal integrity within himself in order to feel at home with the experiences of life.

There are many obstacles in the way of achieving this sense of personal integrity. In the first place, a conventionally-conceived religion may provide the child with a fairly workable morality, but offers little assistance in the development of unique individuality, and it is upon the sense of individuality that integrity ultimately depends. Theological morals are not ethics, nor is the chauvinistic morality of nationalist propaganda. Along with the confusing styles of religious and national morality comes the negative influence of most parents, for most parents today have little conception of what it means to make "value judgments" on a truly individual basis.

We might try out the following hypothesis: that every child hungers at times for an acceptable moral authority; that most children, becoming increasingly percipient as we move toward the *dénouement* of the crisis of the twentieth century, look harder and longer and mostly unsuccessfully for a "moral authority" which they can instinctively trust; further, that the child's response to uncritical love is very much dependent upon whether the parent or parents who are its source are fundamentally happy human beings.

Mr. Krutch is arguing that no truly *human* being can be happy unless he is also involved with a goal which transcends material success or security. And this is true. The parent who is fearful either of atom bombs, of demotion in income bracket, of physical illness or of death—may love "uncritically," but out of weakness rather than strength. Mr. Krutch is saying that the sort of strength which provides a valid authority must come from philosophical understanding and ethical determination.

FRONTIERS

"Winter of our Discontent"

IF you muse on this title of John Steinbeck's latest novel, the author comes into pretty clear focus. Steinbeck has been called an "uninhibited" writer, but he is really an uninhibited moralist. We suspect that this is the only good kind, because only the uninhibited or spontaneous among the moralists *are* kind. No matter how irascible he may become personally, or how embattled against men who work unkindness in the world, Steinbeck remains an artist-type compassionator. It was easy enough, in the late '30's, to react against Steinbeck's sudden popularity by way of *Tortilla Flat*, for this was a spotty, mood-changing piece of writing. But those inclined to be measured at the outset perceived the other side of the coin—that Steinbeck, in his best moments, is one of the fine writers of this or any time.

While *The Winter of our Discontent* is a complete shift of scenery from Steinbeck's California, the core of the work returns us to the content of stories which originated in Monterey, the Salinas Valley and Corral de Tierra. For Steinbeck could not have a latent Prometheus as protagonist without evoking mysticism as well as the subtleties of philosophical ethics. In this story the last of a once-prominent old New England family totters on the edge of going the way of the world, but manages to find his way out of the labyrinth of twentieth-century half-values. Ethan Allen Hawley thinks too much and feels too much to be beguiled by the opportunities presented for a fresh ascent on the social ladder. Manager of a store once owned and subsequently lost by his family, Hawley is presented with devious means by which he can raise his name to contemporary respect, but he never quite loses himself. And this, we think, is the Steinbeck theme—the story of the almost, but not quite, snowed-under or defeated individual. Hawley has a side that even his loving wife fails to see, the side which is nurtured by moments of aloneness in a hidden nook. Of this "place," to which the storekeeper repairs, Steinbeck—or Hawley—says:

> It's a spot in which to wonder about things. No man really knows about other human beings. The best he can do is to suppose that they are like himself. Now, sitting in the Place, out of the wind, seeing under the guardian lights the tide creep in, black from the dark sky, I wondered whether all men have a Place, or need a Place, or want one and have none. Sometimes I've seen a look in eyes, a frenzied animal look as of need for a quiet, secret place where soul-shivers can abate, where a man is one and can take stock of it. Of course I know of the theories of back to the womb and the death-wish, and these may be true of some men, but I don't think they are true of me, except as easy ways of saying something that isn't easy. I call whatever happens in the Place "taking stock." Some others might call it prayer, and maybe it would be the same thing. I don't believe it's thought.

For summary of the plot of *The Winter of our Discontent*, one can refer to Carlos Baker's review in the New York *Times* for June 25, or to a flattering account of the novel in *Newsweek* (June 26), which declares that *The Winter of our Discontent* "is Steinbeck in his old rare form." Baker, too, says that "not since *East of Eden* in 1952 has Steinbeck engaged a theme of such broad social significance—the threat to personal integrity and right conduct which is imposed upon men of good will by the modern slackness of ethical standards."

All this is good generalization, but it is best to let Steinbeck speak for himself. For example, here is a bit of the mystical tone to which we earlier referred:

> I guess we're all, or most of us, the wards of that nineteenth-century science which denied existence to anything it could not measure or explain. The things we couldn't explain went right on but surely not with our blessing. We did not see what we couldn't explain, and meanwhile a great part of the world was abandoned to children, insane people, fools, and mystics, who were more interested in what is than in why it is. So many old and lovely things are stored in the world's attic, because we don't want them around us and we don't dare throw them out.

Steinbeck has never ordained himself as a pacifist, but he has earned considerable amateur standing with passages like the following:

> As a child I hunted and killed small creatures with energy and joy. Rabbits and squirrels, small birds, and later ducks and wild geese came crashing down, rumpled distortions of bone and blood and fur and feathers. There was a savage creativeness about it without hatred or rancor or guilt. The war retired my appetite for destruction. . . .
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> The Templeton Airfield is only about forty miles from New Baytown, and that's about five minutes' flying time for the jets. They come over with increasing regularity, swarms of deadly gnats. I wish I could admire them, even love them the way my son Allen does. If they had more than one purpose, maybe I could, but their only function is killing and I've had a bellyful of that. I haven't learned, as Allen has, to locate them by looking ahead of the sound they make. They go through the sound barrier with a boom that makes me think the furnace has exploded. When they go over at night they get into my dreams and I awaken with a sad sick feeling as though my soul had an ulcer.
>
> Early in the morning a flight of them boomed through and I jumped awake, a little trembly. They must have made me dream of those German 88-millimeter all-purpose rifles we used to admire and fear so much.
>
> My body was prickly with fear sweat as I lay in the gathering morning light and listened to the slender spindles of malice whining away in the distance. I thought how that shudder was under the skin of everybody in the world, not in the mind, deep under the skin. It's not the jets so much as what their purpose is.
>
> When a condition or a problem becomes too great, humans have the protection of not thinking about it. But it goes inward and minces up with a lot of other things already there and what comes out is discontent and uneasiness, guilt and a compulsion to get something—anything—before it is all gone. Maybe the assembly-line psychoanalysts aren't dealing with complexes at all but with those warheads that may one day be mushroom clouds. It does seem to me that nearly everyone I see is nervous and restless and a little loud and gaily crazy like people getting drunk on New Year's Eve. Should auld acquaintance be forgot and kiss your neighbor's wife.

The war preparation fever is seen by Steinbeck as but another phase of the perils of success. Successful enough himself, Steinbeck has not lost his feeling for the dispossessed. In The Winter of our Discontent he shows his contempt for a typical small-town scheme for enrichment and "security":

> Now a slow, deliberate encirclement was moving on New Baytown, and it was set in motion by honorable men. If it succeeded, they would be thought not crooked but clever. And if a factor they had overlooked moved in, would that be immoral or dishonorable? I think that would depend on whether or not it was successful. To most of the world success is never bad. I remember how, when Hitler moved unchecked and triumphant, many honorable men sought and found virtues in him. And Mussolini made the trains run on time, and Vichy collaborated for the good of France, and whatever else Stalin was, he was strong. Strength and success—they are above morality, above criticism. It seems, then, that it is not what you do, but how you do it and what you call it. Is there a check in men, deep in them, that stops or punishes? There doesn't seem to be. The only punishment is for failure. In effect no crime is committed unless a criminal is caught.

So, one never wastes his time entirely by reading even the worst of this writer, and *The Winter of our Discontent* is by no means that. This book is rather part of a continuous expression which has established Steinbeck as considerably more than a literary figure.