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SOME THINKING ABOUT RELIGION

THE aside of a contributor, in last week's "Children" article, concerning the MANAS editors' "ambivalent attitudes toward religion," is so accurate a comment that it deserves extended reply. We shall hope, in discussing this question, to show that at least *some* ambivalence toward religion is not only justified, but practically inevitable, if only for the reason that the word "religion" has so many differing meanings.

In almost sufficient illustration of the point we shall try to make, the difficulties begin with any attempt to offer a definition of Religion. For many men, religion is the canopy of half-asked and half-answered questions raised over all the fundamental mysteries of human life. If you happen to believe that there is an incommensurable element in human beings, and that formulations expressed in words only describe the outer ramparts of the Ineffable, then a definition of religion which pretends to do more than state this general situation is a question-begging concealment of the problem. On the other hand, if you argue that what men do in the name of religion has a history, and that the study of that history supplies valid meanings of the word, you may then, as a sociologist of religion, make the best report on the subject you can; but as a human being you will also have to make some personal decisions involving either acceptance or rejection. These personal decisions are not made in the sharp light of scientific objectivity, but under inclinations as obscure as those which attend people who fall in love. One who chooses with some awareness of what is happening is usually—in the perspective of time—acknowledged to be a wise man. That is, he gets a functional impartiality from admitting the problematic nature of all feelings of final certainty. Yet that very impartiality—often termed Socratic ignorance—may easily become a threat to people who have made their own acceptances and rejections with less self-consciousness, or with none at all. In the heavy atmosphere of partisanship, the unprejudiced man appears as either an enigmatic enemy or an articulate disturber of the peace. There is simply no way to avoid the unrest caused by his presence.

You can of course buy time by passing a bill of rights. Or you can impose a species of illegality on the public debate of religious differences by establishing a secular state. In the long run, however, all that this accomplishes is a change in the vocabulary with which men try to trap some answers to the ultimate questions. Fundamentally, religion comprehends all the meanings sought or declared concerning the nature of man, of the universe, and all the attitudes and acts consequent to those meanings, whether or not they are held to be within our grasp.

The foregoing may be only a long-winded way of saying that religion represents the confrontation of individual man with his decision-making destiny—a destiny that he may be able to put off, but which he can never escape.

But this, you may object, could turn out to be a cruel and ruthless account of religion. Who among us is *ready* to make such decisions? People need help, and they need time, and above all they need *education.*

This comment really opens the question up. Is there one big decision, or are there a lot of little ones? How much "rationality" enters into the matter? How important is it that we have working theories on the answers to these questions? How do you combine the exercise of rationality with an "open-door" policy toward irrational inspiration?

How, moreover, shall we distinguish between the Zen-Master's antagonism to conceptual

thinking and criteria, and gut-level sanctions of the blood-and-soil path to salvation?

If, before the law of a democratic society, all religions are to be regarded as equal, what is desirable in the area where freedom of opinion is supposed to rule? Is it wrong to give public explanation of why one thinks one religion is better than another? Should the enthusiast and proselytizer of a particular religion have no questions put to him?

What about the Scopes trial in Dayton, Tennessee, in 1925? Was Bryan right? Was Darrow right? Were both of them right and both of them wrong and in what sense and when were they either right or wrong?

What about the man who claims that public neutrality on questions crucial to individual spiritual welfare is a betrayal no conscientious human should endure? What about the idea that it is bad taste to ask such questions?

Or, if you let them be asked, in what context of thinking about the common good should we construct our answers? Do we approve, for example, of the way in which books which are bitterly critical of powerful religious institutions are largely ignored by book review editors? As, for example, Emmet McLoughlin's *Letters to an Ex-Priest*, published recently by Lyle Stuart, Inc. (239 Park Avenue South, New York, N.Y. 10003, $4.95.)

What about the endless evidence of deep connection between religious ideas and psychological aberration? Should this evidence stay in the case books or should it be put up for discussion in the serious magazines of lay opinion?

Are there parallels between the way religion is taught in some denominations and the way secular education often attacks the vulnerable *psyches* of children in the early grades? (See *Why Children Fail* by John Holt.)

What about religions which indoctrinate in self-righteousness? Is this to be tolerated without complaint until it reaches the anti-human proportions found in South Africa?

Well, if we decide to profit by such lessons of history and to protect ourselves from narrow doctrines of belief by developing a sharp, critical sense, what shall we do when we find, as so many parents have, that our children have exchanged a nihilist-tending condition of no-allegiances for the constricting faiths we shielded them from?

There are other instructions in history. People with strong, positive religious beliefs didn't used to shilly-shally when the time came for courageous and self-sacrificing behavior. If you made a moral judgment, you acted upon it, or hung your head. There's not much of that, today. As religion grows broad, it seems also to grow shallow. Without the magic and the mystery, men no longer attempt superhuman labors. Everything gets pretty safe, from one point of view, but massively dangerous from another. We have shifted life's burdens from the shoulders of our personal religious morality to the wider but more slippery yoke of the Welfare State. And from that source of ambiguous security the burdens come back to us in large, depersonalized claims upon our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor. This isn't what we bargained for, we say, on the day when the youngsters take ship for far-off Viet Nam.

It soon becomes clear that an inquiry of this sort cannot be pursued for long without taking a position. And when you *take* a position, as distinguished from inheriting one or otherwise acquiring it uncritically, you do so by entering that region where religion and metaphysics overlap. The metaphysics a man chooses supplies what reasons it is possible for him to have for holding to his religious basis of action. Insofar as the questions of religion are deliberated, they are deliberated in the terms of metaphysics. And for the meaning of religion which we have adopted here, the pronouncement of Immanuel Kant concerning the necessity for metaphysics is equally applicable. Kant said:

> That the human mind will ever give up metaphysical researches is as little to be expected as that we, to avoid inhaling pure air, should prefer to give up breathing altogether. There will, therefore, always be metaphysics in the world; nay, everyone, especially every reflective man, will have it and, for want of a recognized standard, will shape it for himself after his own pattern.

The importance of Kant's statement is that it makes it possible for us to disregard the fine over-simplifications and brave solutions of people who start out by saying—"Look, I'm not breathing, it's *safe* over here! I've found neutral ground."

The pretense that a metaphysical position can be avoided removes all sense and meaning from a great range of issues over which men have fought and died, and it subtracts dignity from the fate of martyrs as much as it renders trivial the transcendental aspirations of mystics and idealistic philosophers.

If you had lived in the eighteenth century and read De La Mettrie and Baron d'Holbach among Europeans, or became a follower of Ethan Allen in the United States, you could easily have become persuaded that the devaluing of all these questions was not too big a price to pay for emancipation from the bloodstained evils of organized religion. Think of what these men promised:

> If Atheism were universally disseminated, all the branches of religion would be torn up by the roots. Then there would be no more theological wars: there would no longer be soldiers of religion, that terrible kind of soldier. Nature which had been infected by the consecrated poison, would win back her rights and her purity. . . .

The great Atheists of the revolutionary epoch were as much the enemies of metaphysics as of religion because they knew that the religions which generate strong emotional conviction have foundations in metaphysics. They knew that they couldn't shut out the priests from the forums of acceptable truth without outlawing the philosophers as well. They wanted to fix it so that when priests and philosophers spoke, nobody would hear because nobody would care. And so far as the vital initiative in Western thought is concerned, they succeeded. A lot of what we call "tolerance," today, is little more than indifference.

Let us consider this matter of "tolerance." The important question is: How well do you tolerate what threatens you? Occasionally, these days, you see a bumper strip which reads: "Register Communists, not Firearms." This has some fearsome implications. In the area of public philosophy, such problems are resolved by the doctrine of "clear and present danger," but one of the central arguments for tolerance as an attitude of mind is that it helps to keep misguided human opinions from reaching the strength of being a "clear and present danger" by encouraging dialogue and open discussion of *all* opinions. It is an axiom of the politics of free men, therefore, that their freedom is preserved most effectively by using it to reconcile important differences *before* they gain dimensions so threatening that tolerance is no longer possible. The way, then, to deal most constructively with differences is to examine them as closely as possible, to see what they really mean, and under what circumstances they become "dangerous."

Tolerance, then, is not really a political problem at all, but an educational problem. The political solution for serious differences is a no-solution, so far as the meaning or *value* of the differences themselves is concerned. The political means cannot resolve differences, it can only liquidate them.

How does tolerance function in education? Well, a teacher knows that if a person—man or child—has some bad opinions, you can't help him to get better opinions without listening to his bad ones. And the successful teacher is always one who looks for the good part behind anyone else's bad opinion. He also makes the personal reservation that he, the teacher, will very likely learn something, himself, from even the bad opinion of another. For example, he may see more clearly how the good in a man's heart works

to support the imperfect thought in his mind. By this means the teacher becomes more skillful, and a more patient human being.

Is there a working metaphysic for this kind of teaching? There most certainly is. The teacher moves on the assumption that the man or child with bad ideas can get good or better ones, that ignorance can be replaced by knowledge, fear by understanding, suspicion with reasoned trust. The teacher has a working knowledge of the dynamics and a respect for the integrity of the human mind. Perhaps we should use the word "soul," instead of simply mind, since the process of growth involves the feelings and all those modes of perception and apperception of which a human being is capable—"wholeness" is the adjective we use, these days, to suggest the total growth potential of a person. It is fair to suggest, then, that the interplay of thought and feeling between people, with all that this entails, is the field and method of the educational process, and you could say that education is most likely to take place when people somehow share one another's autonomy of being in exchanging thought and feeling.

Have we, here, the substance of an account of the *knowable* Highest Good? Is there *any* good, mutually realizable, or communicable by human beings, which is not in some sense dependent upon these interpersonal processes and therefore in that sense a derivation of them?

Whatever you postulate about the springs of religious inspiration, whatever you declare about first principles and prime movers, whatever you claim concerning mystical insight or scientific objectivity, when you begin communicating you either acknowledge the autonomy of the individual in the terms of the teacher's experience, or you don't. You make, in short, a metaphysical judgment of the nature of man. And the best and only useful meaning of "tolerance" has to do with your inner feeling toward the way another man's autonomous beinghood relates to your autonomous beinghood.

There is now the matter of personal and social distances to be considered. Teaching and learning are invitational affairs. The learning intelligence is at once eager and timid, insatiable and shy. Each one has rings of protective fortification about him, as well as some wide-open doors. Bad teaching makes the pupil build more barriers than doors. Good teaching helps him to fill his rings with porous openings, so that he learns from practically everything. We make conventions in recognition of these various rings around individuals, shaping them according to the value system that dominates in our time. If we care more for the political process than we do for the learning process, the conventions tend to ignore the needs of autonomous individuals. If we care more for acquisition than for human growth, we try to bend the twigs into "consumers" rather than learners. And so forth.

There is a sense in which the individual society or cultural community is itself a loosely autonomous entity with similar defensive mechanisms and areas of educational intake and growth. It has its rigid institutional formations and its tender growing tips, its rubrics for self-assurance and its inconspicuous areas where daring and innovation are sometimes possible. Behind the tough bark of its vulgar surface is the tender cambium layer where the life-processes go on, and where shared visions of good cause leafy shoots to appear in unexpected places. For men *have* taken positions in regard to ideals and objectives and the flow of their thought and action produces tangible effects of this sort of intuitive "religious" consensus. The very literature of modern education and psychology which has made possible our present discussion is a group manifestation of human reaching after meaning, and while the intense reflection and increasing practice arising from this common effort are an immediate effect, the wider influence is incalculable, since it rises and multiplies in a kind of "spiritual" progression to fertilize the new thinking about religion throughout the world.

Now if this should be broadly the case, then there is indeed a contribution from educational psychology (using this expression in a very wide sense, encompassing all the insights of minds concerned with how human growth takes place) to the ranges of normative thinking which come into play when an individual *takes* a position regarding religious truth. It is a contribution which tends to make us think, not of *a* religion, in terms of some known establishment, but of *the religious* in human life and to see religious reality in those subtle and delicate encounters which cause men to give priority to the independent *becoming*-potentialities in others, and to think habitually in terms of what they may be, rather than what they ostensibly "are."

This is in fact a doctrine of limitless spiritual possibility. It is affirmative in regard to the only quality in human beings that we have any business being affirmative about—the promise and possibility of growth. As with any affirmative doctrine, it has critical implications. It stands against, and is to be compared with, any religious or political claim which negates the possibility of human growth and rejects the autonomy of the individual growth process as the crucial value in human relations.

Is this, conceivably, a spiritually "arrogant" or selfishly "individualistic" proposal?

Such questions cannot be answered without becoming candidly metaphysical. If the human individual is regarded as an absolutely discrete and eternally separate unit, then every brief for autonomy becomes an argument for isolation; but if, on the other hand, we recognize the splendid paradox of our being, and extrapolate from universal experience, we may say that the more fully human one becomes, the deeper into the wide confraternity of life go the tendrils of his being. A more familiar way of putting this would be to say that the truly autonomous man is more capable of love than any one else. Only the free man can make a *gift* of his energies and his devotion. And, speaking metaphysically, his union—or reunion—with the One is an act of the will, not a submission to the engulfing flux of externality.

But, it may be argued, while all this is very fine, we live in a "real" world which includes a lot of organizations calling themselves "religious," and the comment, quoted at the outset, had to do with the alleged ambivalence of MANAS toward the beliefs that these organizations represent. What about that?

We can only say, in reply, that we hope this ambivalence, if it exists, is a faithful reflection of the ambivalence of religious institutions regarding the autonomy of the individual in matters of ultimate religious decision. What is the significant act on the part of the aspirant? Is it an act of daring or an act of conforming? Is daring proper to one part of our being, and conforming to another? Do these parts get transposed in some religions? What is the real heresy? Denial of a particular set of metaphysical or religious assumptions, or denial of man's autonomous capacity to make final decision himself? If someone else has to make it for him, *is he a man*?

Now these questions, having to do with the declarations, and sometimes the ambiguities and equivocations, of theologies and creeds, can all be related to the uncertainties and wonderings of individuals. There are days when there is no evil, and days when we see no good. There are life-intervals when all doors to perception slam shut and others when meanings open like petals to the sun. We have moments of heroic independence, and moments, also, when the posture of independence is a quivering sham. As we go through all these experiences, we grind out a character. If *we* don't grind it out, who will? Is there a pain deeper than finding we have let some one else's plausible authority shape our lives awry? Is there an anger more furious than the resentment of feeling impotent after being betrayed?

The heart of religion, then, lies in the injunction that men must choose. And the history

of religion is the history of the human attempt to define the grounds of choice.

The best religions, however they may comfort a man in hours of indecision, will not neglect to point to this primary responsibility. The worst attempt to win his allegiance by offering to relieve him of this awful obligation.

Here, in practical terms, we come very close to declaring that the ideal religious institution would always be doing everything it can to make people need its services no longer. Which is a somewhat ridiculous situation. But if, as well may be the case, the religious institution can be likened to a chrysalis, a shell of nutriment first devoured and then abandoned by the glorious *psyche*, which now flies high and free, then a continually self-liquidating church would in some sense answer to the deepest human needs.

There is the matter of timing. Nobody knows when a man is ready to stand alone—or, to put it in another way, to stand *with all* other men. Most historical religions have taken vague account of this question and have in them traditions of mystical questing in which it appears that heavy doctrines dissolve in the presence of first-hand inward experience. But the more "temporal" a church, the more trouble it has with its mystics. The more firm and fixed the imagery and forms of the religion, the more tethered and confined the reports of mystical inspiration, or of any kind of free or original thinking. (Teilhard de Chardin had his problems.)

The quarrel, then, if there is or should be a quarrel, is never with the seeking of individuals in their own time by their own ways, but with the authoritative utterances and charted approaches that grow brittle with time and empty from mechanical repetition. If religion stands for the highest good, it must also stand for, and serve, the highest capacities in man to seek and find that good. When it does not do this, then it stands for something else—something which is not good at all. The question of the "nature of God" is a red herring; the basic religious issue is the nature of man. If there is no way of considering religious doctrines and practices on their merits, then there is no way of avoiding those terrible interludes of history when men rise up and strike down the oppressors of their minds and the exploiters of their hopes, in a desperate, nihilistic rebellion.

The problem, in any such consideration, is the criterion of true religion. But you do not "set up" the criterion of true religion. Every sentence of every creed, every definition of every truth, can be read in a way that inverts its intent. The criterion of religion has to be grown, and made so sturdy that no plausible appeals to reason or mindless invocations of feeling can shake its authority. Phrases like "Know Thyself" and "There can be no religion higher than Truth" are artifacts left by the practitioners of true religion.

REVIEW
PSYCHOANALYSIS AND "RESPONSIBILITY"

IN retrospect, it is apparent that very nearly all our quotations from contemporary psychoanalysts are beginning to embody philosophical affirmations of the individual's capacity to govern his own life. The public image of Freudianism, as Herbert Fingarette pointed out in *The Self in Transformation*, has been seriously deficient precisely because the "getting rid of" inhibitions or guilt has so often been misrepresented as the key to successful therapy. The confusion of Freud's half-taught disciples apparently arose from a failure to distinguish between the analyst's obligation to withhold moral judgment and his equally important need to encourage the patient to take on responsibility uniquely his own. We have at hand Erik Erikson's *Insight and Responsibility* (Norton, 1964), a book which lucidly connects Freud's essential ethical intent and the emphasis of such men as Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers on the importance of individual responsibility for one's own state of being

Eriksen's portrayal of "the first psychoanalyst" shows the tremendous shift in attitude which Freud felt compelled to make—from traditional "doctor" to *participant* in the necessary struggle a patient seeking help must undertake. What Freud offered was "a conscious and direct partnership: he made the patient's healthy, if submerged, part his partner in understanding the unhealthy part." Dr. Erikson continues:

> Thus was established one basic principle of psychoanalysis, namely, that one can study the human mind only by engaging the fully motivated partnership of the observed individual, and by entering into a sincere contract with him.
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> But a contract has two partners, at least. The changed image of the patient changed the self-image of the doctor. He realized that habit and convention had made him and his fellow physicians indulge in an autocratic pattern, with not much more circumscription or justification than the very paternal authorities who he now felt had made the patients sick in the first place. He began to divine the second principle of psychoanalysis, namely, that you will not see in another what you have not learned to recognize in yourself. The mental healer must divide himself as well as the patient into an observer and an observed.
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> The intellectual task faced here, namely, psychoanalytic insight and communication, was a massive one. Today, it is difficult to appreciate the psychosocial task involved. Freud had to relinquish a most important ingredient of the doctor role of the times: the all-knowing father role, which was safely anchored in the whole contemporary cult of the paternal male as the master of every human endeavor except the nursery and the kitchen.

It is not Erikson's intent to apotheosize Freud, but he shows why it is necessary to distinguish between Freud's breakthroughs of insight and whatever rather autocratic personality traits appeared in Freud's non-analytic dealings with family, friends, and students. The point is that Freud was *non-autocratic* or did not assume an "all-knowing" role in the relationships with his patients, nor in discussing the content of psychoanalysis with medical aspirants to the new vocation; psychoanalysis was meant to strengthen the ego, not weaken the individual center of value judgments; and the clearing away of irrational fixations of fear and guilt was to allow a higher ethical sense to develop.

Erikson attempts a synthesis of views about "ego strength," accumulated by analysts in over fifty years of study of "life histories." This involves philosophical as well as psychological reflections on the meanings of such words as "hope," "will," "purpose," "fidelity," "love," and "wisdom." Of particular interest is a discussion of Fidelity in the emergence of individuality out of the confusions of adolescence. Unless interfered with by traumatic experiences in childhood, the growth toward maturity always involves a "seeking after an inner coherence and a durable set of values." Dr. Erikson says: "I would call the particular ego-quality which emerges, with and from adolescence, Fidelity"—a sense of commitment. It is this recognition of the human need for commitment which joins what is truly authentic in traditional morality with the emerging *philosophy* of psychoanalysis. Erikson continues:

> Fidelity is the ability to sustain loyalties freely pledged in spite of the inevitable contradictions of

value systems. It is the cornerstone of identity and receives inspiration from confirming ideologies and affirming companions.

In youth, such truth verifies itself in a number of ways: a high sense of duty, accuracy, and veracity in the rendering of reality; the sentiment of truthfulness, as in sincerity and conviction; the quality of genuineness, as in authenticity, the trait of loyalty, of "being true"; fairness to the rules of the game; and finally all that is implied in devotion—a freely given but binding vow, with the fateful implication of a curse befalling traitors. When Hamlet, the victim of his royal parents' faithlessness, poses the question, "to be or not to be," he demonstrates in word and deed that to him "to be" is contingent on being loyal (to the self, to love, to the crown) and that the rest is death. Cultures, societies, religions offer the adolescent the nourishment of some truth in rites and rituals; in modern times we also find powerful ideologies which claim and receive the loyalty from youth. For youth needs, above all, confirming adults and affirming peers.

Carl Rogers' article in the June *ETC.*, "Freedom and Commitment," makes broad description of the dis-ease experienced by chronologically mature persons—and by the whole society—when the need for commitment fails to be recognized:

Certainly the disease of our age is lack of purpose, lack of meaning, lack of commitment on the part of individuals.

It is clear to me that in therapy, as indicated in the examples that I have given, commitment to purpose and to meaning in life is one of the significant elements of change. It is only when the person decides, "I am someone; I am someone worth being; I am committed to being myself," that change becomes possible.

I am emboldened to say that over against the view of man as unfree, as an object, is the evidence from therapy, from subjective living, and from objective research as well, that personal freedom and responsibility have a crucial significance, that one cannot live a complete life without such personal freedom and responsibility, and that self-understanding and responsible choice make a sharp and measurable difference in the behavior of the individual. In this context, commitment does have meaning. Commitment is the emerging and changing total direction of the individual, based on a close and acceptant relationship between the individual and all of the trends in his life, conscious and unconscious. Unless, as individuals and as a society, we can make constructive use of this capacity for freedom and commitment, mankind, it seems to me, is set on a collision course with fate.

Dr. Erikson's optimism about the future is in no sense an anticipation of the sort of psychological utopia which is depicted in B. F. Skinner's *Walden Two.* Dr. Erikson sees enlightenment arising out of circumstantial necessity and the attitudinal reorientation of individuals. He concludes:

The nature of history is about to change. It cannot continue to be the record of high accomplishments in dominant civilizations, and of their disappearance and replacement. Joint survival demands that man visualize new ethical alternatives fit for newly developing as well as over-developed systems and identities. A more universal standard of perfection will mediate more realistically between man's inner and outer worlds than did the compromises resulting from the reign of moral absolutes; it will acknowledge the responsibility of each individual for the potentialities of all generations and of all generations for each individual, and this in a more informed manner than has been possible in past systems of ethics.

I would advocate a general orientation which has its center in whatever activity or activities gives man the feeling, as William James put it, of being "most deeply and intensely active and alive." In this, so James promises, each one will find his "real me"; but, I would now add, he will also acquire the experience that truly worthwhile acts enhance a mutuality between the doer and the other—a mutuality which strengthens the doer even as it strengthens the other. Thus, the "doer" and "the other" are partners in one deed. Seen in the light of human development, this means that the doer is activated in whatever strength is appropriate to his age, stage, and condition, even as he activates in the other the strength appropriate to *his* age, stage and condition. Understood this way the Golden Rule would say that it is best to do to another what will strengthen you even as it will strengthen him—that is, what will develop his best potentials even as it develops your own.

COMMENTARY
POET AS PHILOSOPHER

IT is the business of the scientist to establish boundaries, to develop special disciplines, and to draw limited conclusions useful for projects with finite dimensions.

It is the business of the philosopher to tear down the boundaries made by the scientists, and to show, in the process, when they are relevant to human need and when they are confinements of the will to know.

What of the artist? The artist is a layman of all these professional activities, a wonderful amateur who poaches freely in every domain. He makes ends of every means, and is especially good at invasion of neglected areas of human concern. Should religion go into a decline, the artist becomes a priest. If philosophy turns academic, he gives it new life.

The artist proves the endless versatility, the omnicompetence of the human spirit. There is no limit to his boldness. He picks up the dropped stitches of an age and weaves them into a tapestry of protest. He is also a kind of exhibitionist. He wears on his sleeve the marks of his Promethean pain.

We cannot say enough in praise of the book whose riches are a little mined in this week's Frontiers. *The Modern Tradition* is a manual of the self-consciousness of the practitioners of the arts. It is a statement of the accounts of those who have found themselves unable to resist the soul's enormous claim, and are paying up, as and when they can. Again we quote, this time from Paul Valéry:

> Our *personality* itself, which, stupidly, we take to be our most intimate and deepest *possession*, our sovereign good, is only a thing and mutable and accidental in comparison with this other most naked ego; since we can think about it, calculate its interests, even lose sight of them a little, it is therefore no more than a secondary psychological divinity that lives in our looking-glass and answers to our name. It belongs to the order of the Penates. It is subject to pain, greedy for incense like false gods; and, like them, it is food for worms. It expands when praised. It does not resist the power of wine, the charm of words, the sorcery of music. It admires itself, and through self-admiration becomes docile and easily led. It is lost in the masquerade and yields itself strangely to the anamorphosis of sleep. And further, it is painfully obliged to recognize that it has equals, to admit that it is *inferior* to some—a bitter and inexplicable experience for it, this.

Here is the poet, cast as philosopher, psychologist, and mystical explorer—with the role of iconoclast added to all three. We dare not turn away from such men whose searches and sufferings have taught them at least how to look for what every man longs to know.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

GOODMAN'S EDUCATIONAL .PROPOSALS

THE lead article in MANAS for June 9, an interview with Paul Goodman, has proved—as we expected—a stimulant to further discussion. A letter from a teaching professional, for example, criticizes Mr. Goodman's "emphasis on libraries and museums as key factors in a true learning process." The possibilities of decentralizing overpopulated urban schools, however, is what we understand Mr. Goodman to have been exploring: instead of having one large plant with complicated administrative problems, why not lease a number of "store fronts" where small neighborhood groups of youngsters can experience something close to what serious university students get in a seminar or tutorial meeting? The facilities of libraries and museums would then serve, quite properly, as community property for the "storefront" schools.

Mr. Goodman's critic apparently feels that this is an ingenious sidestepping of the *present* problem of improving the classroom approach in existing schools:

> This approach would remove the child from society into a special school (or storefront) which is atypical of the society in which he lives. This approach is a flight from society, not reformation of it, though its exponents constantly come up with numerous statements as to how society has injured the child, and how "their" school is either repairing this damage or putting the learner on the proper path. What is ignored constitutes the real problem; not education on a tight little island, but education within society as it is. Unlike an experiment in the physical sciences which establishes a principle which is then extremely useful and of practical consequence our little "education laboratories" are of little consequence so far as the actual process of social reform is concerned. To be of significance, a reformer must be concerned with society as it is and present plans which will be applicable in the large. Society does not move forward because of an idea. Just as notes on paper are sterile until interpreted by an expert performer the isolated social experiments must be of such a kind that they give the teacher everywhere and in a variety of conditions an impetus and means of implementation of ideals which relate to existent society.

Yes, Goodman is certainly bypassing temporarily the strenuous efforts of devoted teachers to improve patterns of existing education in the public schools. But it is also apparent that he is proposing immediate practical action to *lessen* the isolation of the school from the community. We quote Mr. Goodman:

> In the end there's no growing up except into the community. What we do in formal schooling is to abstract from the community things we think are useful for the child, and then we cut them up into little bits and pieces called lessons that unnaturally abstracts them further. Then somehow the child is supposed to go out into the world and reapply all this. It seems to me it would be much more rational to say, "Let's not abstract these things in the first place, but try to make communication bridges whereby the child can safely be exposed to what's real." As a method, it's much more psychological.
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> It seems to me then that the real way of coping is to cut the whole school institution much more down to size. Therefore have a very small school, say in a storefront, with up to 30 kids right off the street, and so that the children can leave and get out if they feel frightened. Tell the kids: You don't need to stay if you don't want to. Just hang around—it's your block; you're used to it. Leave anytime you want and come back when you want. We might then perhaps alleviate the shock effect of going into that other world. Also if we cut down on administration and a lot of the capital costs we can increase the important point of education—namely exposure of children to attentive adults who can answer their questions and put things in their way. We have one school for slum children in New York that I have some connection with—my daughter teaches there—where the ratio of teachers to students is about one to eight whereas in the public school system it's about one to thirty-five. And yet the budget for that school is no higher.

In the opening section of *Utopian Essays and Practical Proposals*, Mr. Goodman is concerned with the fact that long-established schools often do not allow the working-out of spontaneous conflicts of ideas and interests. For example, the teachers who devote themselves to advocacy of

changes in curriculum, backed by psychological and sociological studies, may localize the area of conflict with the administration. Goodman wants both students and parents to take part in a continual process:

> In our era, to combat the emptiness of technological life, we have to think of a new form, the conflictful community. Historically, close community has provided warmth and security, but it has been tyrannical, antiliberal, and static (conformist small towns). We, however, have to do with already thoroughly urbanized individuals with a national culture and a scientific technology. The Israeli kibbutzim offer the closest approximation. Some of them have been fanatically dogmatic according to various ideologies, and often tyrannical; nevertheless, their urban Jewish members, rather well educated on the average, have inevitably run into fundamental conflict. Their atmosphere has therefore been sometimes unhappy but never deadening, and they have produced basic social inventions and new character-types. Is such a model improvable and adaptable to cities and industrial complexes? Can widely differing communities be accommodated in a larger federation? How can they be encouraged in modern societies? These are utopian questions.

A paper sent to MANAS by another teacher bears some relationship to this discussion:

> One example of intellectual schizophrenia can sometimes be found in schools of education which discuss in terms of concepts that are far removed from the situation "out there." One too often sees a stereotype analysis with emphasis on methodology. General concepts are used in a glib word game which might ultimately produce an A student. What this approach ignores is that objective factors are given their true significance by their mode of implementation, but this introduces the subjective realm which is not "scientific."
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> For example, the practices of a teacher in the classroom are subtly influenced by a philosophy held by the administration of a school and the larger system. A principal "reaches" into a classroom to influence teaching practice. In the effort to be consistent in thought and practice in terms of this imposed philosophy, the teacher in the modern day classroom finds it difficult to be consistent with his own thought and practice. Or again, a teachers' union may seek to correlate teacher morale with administrative policies and fail because the public is more likely to understand economic arguments. One can count dollars but who can say anything for sure about policy?
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> The "objective" concepts such as pupil-teacher ratio, counselling, remedial specialist, field trip, audio-visual, experimental design, statistical significance level, finance, civil rights, etc., can be changed outwardly but not substantially if the policy which determines implementation does not also change. Most discussions of school problems miss this vital point completely.

FRONTIERS

Works of the Imagination

THERE is a category of men of daring at whom we never cease to wonder—because, no doubt, they never cease to wonder, themselves. It is as though courage of mind were their natural medium, in which they move with a certain finality, although it is plain that they expect no end to their work. Reading in *The Modern Tradition: Backgrounds of Modern Literature*, edited by Richard Ellman and Charles Feidelson, Jr. (published by the Oxford University Press, 1965, at $13.75), we find it not inappropriate to call Emerson a Symbolist—one of those who sense a firmer reality in the questing imagination than in the definitions made by people with foot and slide rules. These are men who may rejoice in company but are not dependent upon it.

From this extraordinary anthology, we take first a quotation from a letter by Flaubert:

> No great genius has come to final conclusions; no great book ever does so, because humanity itself is forever on the march and can arrive at no goal. Homer comes to no conclusions, nor does Shakespeare, nor Goethe, nor even the Bible. That is why I am so deeply revolted by that fashionable term, the *Social Problem.* The day on which the answer is found will be this planet's last. Life is an eternal problem, so is history and everything else. Fresh figures are always being added to the sum. How can you count the spokes of a turning wheel? The nineteenth century is like a slave so proud of his newly-won freedom that he imagines it is he that has discovered the sun. It is said, for example, that the Reformation was the prelude to the French Revolution. That would be true enough if matters could rest there; but the Revolution itself was a prelude to a different state of things, and so on, and so on. Our most advanced ideas will look very silly and out of date when people come to look back on them. I will wager that in a bare fifty years, the terms, *Social Problem*, raiding *the morals of the masses, progress* and *democracy*, will have passed into the realm of dead catch-words, and will seem as grotesque as *Sensibility, nature, crotchets* and *sweet ties of affection*, that were so fashionable towards the end of the eighteenth century.
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> I believe in the perpetual evolution of humanity and in its ever-changing forms, and consequently I abominate all those frames which men try to cram it into by main force, all the formulas by which they define it, and all the plans they devise for it. Democracy is no more man's last word than was slavery, or feudalism, or monarchy. No horizon perceived by human eyes is ever the shore, because beyond that horizon lies another, and so on for ever. Therefore it seems idiotic to me to seek the best religion or the best government. For me, the one on its deathbed is the best, since it is then making way for another.

The man for whom the imagination is the principal tool of his work in life is compelled to seek wholeness in individual being. As an artist he makes others share in that search, and in his reaching after a symmetry which must be left undefined. The following is from W. B. Yeats:

> We make out of the quarrel with others, rhetoric, but of the quarrel with ourselves, poetry. Unlike the rhetoricians, who get a confident voice from remembering the crowd they have won or may win, we sing amid our uncertainty; and, smitten even in the presence of the most high beauty by the knowledge of our solitude, our rhythm shudders. I think, too, that no fine poet, no matter how disordered his life, has ever, even in his mere life, had pleasure for his end. Johnson and Dowson, friends of my youth, were dissipated men, the one a drunkard, the other a drunkard and mad about women, and yet they had the gravity of men who had found life out and were awakening from the dream; and both, one in life and art and one in art and less in life, had a continual preoccupation with religion. Nor has any poet I have read of or heard of or met with been a sentimentalist. The other self, the anti-self, or the antithetical self, as one may choose to name it, comes but to those who are no longer deceived, whose passion is reality. The sentimentalists are practical men who believe in money, in position, in a marriage bell, and whose understanding of happiness is to be so busy whether at work or play that all is forgotten but the momentary aim. They find their pleasure in a cup that is filled from Lethe's wharf, and for the awakening, the vision, for the revelation of reality, tradition offers us a different word—ecstasy. An old artist wrote to me of his wanderings by the quays of New York, and how he found there a woman nursing a sick child, and drew her story from her. She spoke, too, of other children who had died: a long tragic

> story. "I wanted to paint her," he wrote, "if I denied myself any of the pain I could not believe my own ecstasy." We must not make a false faith by hiding from our thoughts the causes of doubt, for faith is the highest achievement of the human intellect, the only gift man can make to God, and therefore it must be offered in sincerity. Neither must we create, by hiding ugliness, a false beauty as our offering to the world. He can only create the greatest imaginable beauty who has endured all imaginable pangs, for only when we have seen and foreseen what we dread shall we be rewarded by that dazzling unforeseen wing-footed wanderer. . . .
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> The last knowledge has often come most quickly to turbulent men, and for a season brought new turbulence. When life puts away her conjuring tricks one by one, those that deceive us longest may well be the wine-cup and the sensual kiss, for our Chambers of Commerce and of Commons have not the divine architecture of the body, nor has their frenzy been ripened by the sun. The poet, because he may not stand within the sacred house but lives amid the whirlwinds that beset its threshold, may find his pardon.

With passages of this sort to choose among, we grow miserly of the space needed for statistics. Quickly, then, this book has sections on Symbolism, Realism, Nature, Cultural History, The Unconscious, Myth, Self-Consciousness, Existence, and Faith. There are selections from about a hundred writers, including, at random, William Blake, Karl Marx, Martin Buber, Walter Pater, Henry Miller, William Wordsworth, Henri Bergson, Rainer Maria Rilke, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus—the common denominator being, as we recognize it, the capacity of the individual to perform sustained acts of the imagination, such that the reader finds in the resulting houses of thought places where he also can think and feel anew. The book has more than 950 pages and is alive with an invitation to all those unlabeled paths which cannot be traversed except in certain loneliness and at some risk. For conclusion, we have this account of modern art by André Malraux:

> It is not a religion, but a faith. Not a sacrament, but the negation of a tainted world. Its rejection of appearances ant its distortions derive from an impulse very different from the behind the art of savages and even Romanesque art, yet akin to those by reason of the intimate relation they create between the painter and the thing created. Hence the curious mingling of acceptance and rejection of the world that we find in the art of the late nineteenth-century masters. Cézanne, Renoir and Van Gogh did not reject it as did Ivan Karamazov, but they rejected more than the social order of their day. Van Gogh's art in his best period had become no more than indirectly Christian; indeed, it was a substitute for his faith. If Cézanne the good Catholic, had painted Crucifixions, they would have been Cézannesque, and that is doubtless why he painted none. As against representation of the visible world, artists try to create another world (not only another representation) for their personal use. Talk of a modern art "of the masses" is mere wishful thinking: the expression of a desire to combine a taste for art with one for human brotherhood. An art acts on the masses only when it is at the service of *their* absolute and inseparable from it; when it creates Virgins, not just statues. . . .
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> For a modern artist any genuine attempt to appeal to the masses would necessitate his "conversion," a change of absolute. Sacred art and religious art can exist only in a community, a social group swayed by the same belief, and if that group dies out or is dispersed these arts are forced to undergo a metamorphosis. The only "community" available to the artist consists of those who more or less are of his own kind (their number nowadays is on the increase). At the same time as it is gaining ground, modern art is growing more and more indifferent to the perpetuation of that realm of art which sponsored it from the days of Sumer to the time when the first rifts developed in Christendom: the realm of the gods, living or dead, of scriptures and of legends. The sculptors of the Old Kingdom and the Empire, of the Acropolis, of the Chinese figures hewn in the rock-face, of Angkor and Elephanta, no less than the painters of the Villeneuve Pieta and the Nara frescoes and, later, Michaelangelo, Titian, Rubens and Rembrandt linked men up with the universe; as did even Goya flinging them his gifts of darkness. As for the art of today—does it not tend to bring to men only that scission of the consciousness, whence it took its rise? . . .