

THE FORM OF HUMAN LIFE

SOME triteness attaches to the statement that human beings invariably seek some form of "self-realization" in their lives, yet no other generalization serves so well to convey the motive which creates the *form* of human existence. In a paper which appeared in the *American Anthropologist* for June, 1955, John Gillin, of the University of North Carolina, makes some comparisons between the *ethos* of North Americans and that of Latin Americans, helping to illustrate the meaning of the quest for self-realization. Prof. Gillin writes:

Both North Americans and Latin Americans place high value upon *individuality* (other words may, of course, be used). Yet, I believe that it can be demonstrated that although cognate words may be used in Spanish, Portuguese, and English, the Latin American notion of the value of the individual differs radically from that current in the North American culture. To put it as succinctly as possible, each person is valuable because of a unique inner quality or worth he possesses. The United States credo, on the other hand, holds (at least ideally) that the individual merits respect because he has the right to be considered "just as good as the next person," or at least because he has the right to "an equal chance" or opportunity with other persons. In other words, in the United States the average individual is seen in terms of his *equality* with others—equality, either of right or opportunity. In Latin American culture, however, the individual is valued precisely because he is not exactly "like" anyone else. He is special and unique. This creed may not always be honored toward social inferiors. But it can be shown, I believe, that almost all persons in superordinate positions, whose statuses involve human relations and who expect to hold them long on any other basis than naked force, do follow the culture pattern of at least ostensibly respecting the inner uniqueness of others. This inner quality is often spoken of as the "soul" (*alma, anima*), which Latin Americans are not at all loath to discuss at great length.

Prof. Gillin's title is, "Ethos Components in Modern Latin American Culture." He manages to

lend substance to the subtle Latin conception of "soul," which, in this secularized context, becomes operative as *la dignidad de la persona*—an expression which the author warns us cannot be fully translated into English by the literal rendering of "the dignity of the person." Prof. Gillin makes brief historical explanation of this feeling. He suggests that medieval Christian belief in the soul doubtless plays a part, but that native American Indian ideas, including the notion of "guardian spirits" and "soul loss," are also involved in the concept. He continues:

As Waldo Frank has written, "The Spaniard believed in his own person. The most tangible reality in the world was his individual soul. . . ." An Ecuadorian writer, Benitez, holds that in the New World the Spanish conquerors exaggerated the concept of individual worth because they were "marginal men." These men were "nobodies who wanted to be somebody." In the new lands they conquered they made themselves *hidalgos*—"sons of someone" (*hijos d'algo*). Each person had to insist that he was distinctive, because he had no ascribed distinction. Perhaps the present-day almost universal usage of *distinguido* in polite Latin American speech (as contrasted with Spain) is a reflection of this attitude, certainly it is commonly applied in polite discourse to persons who can lay little or no claim to being "distinguished" in the sense of having received social recognition for their accomplishments; in English it is perhaps better translated as "distinctive," *i.e.*, the person referred to is *distinct* from others simply by virtue of being himself. . . .

On the basis of much time spent discussing this concept with Latin Americans, I believe I am correct in saying the *dignidad de la persona* refers to the inner integrity or worth which every person is supposed to have originally and which he is supposed to guard jealously. It should not be confused with dignity of social position or dignity of office. The latter concepts are fully recognized and strongly motivating in Latin American culture, but belong to another category of mental patterns.

Prof. Gillin feels that this idea of the individual or person is a controlling value in Latin American life, shaping behavior in ways that are often difficult for the North American to understand. For example, for there to be trust in personal relationships between Latin Americans, the individuals must know one another. Trust (and on occasion distrust) naturally flows from "knowing" a person, yet Prof. Gillin points out that "the impersonal confidence which, say, a buyer has toward a salesman of a large established corporation in the United States is not yet a part of the pattern in Latin America." Again, the Latin who fails to resist slurs upon his inner integrity is looked down upon as much "lower" than an ordinary law-breaker. The ceremonial politeness of Latin American custom serves in one of its functions to guarantee avoidance of such unpardonable insults.

This quest for personal fulfillment, Prof. Gillin suggests, strongly modifies the use made by Latin Americans of the political forms of democracy which their countries have adopted either from the United States or from the French Revolution. Further, the bold and unashamed acquisitiveness of North Americans is neither liked nor understood by Latin Americans:

On the most mundane level, I believe that it must be admitted that Latin Americans on the whole are not primarily motivated by pragmatic, materialistic, or utilitarian considerations. This does not mean that they are not *capable* of learning or practicing patterns whose goals are utilitarian. For example, U.S. corporations and Point IV officials have proved that Latin Americans are quite able to learn and to follow the routines of modern mechanics, industrialization, scientific agriculture, and so forth. They learn the routines, but they are not primarily *interested* in or attracted by the underlying premises involved. It is true that all Latin Americans, except the millionaires, complain of their poverty and hard lot. But words and perhaps concepts have a higher value than things. The pragmatic, empirical investigation of premises and of data is not congenial, or highly motivating, to the Latin American, as of the present. We must be clear that in stating this we do not make value judgments. Who is to say that the North American practical point of view is more

valuable than that of the Latin Americans, who are primarily interested in spiritual values? . . .

If the present interpretation of the Modern Latin American culture is correct, some of the basic (if not literally expressed) goals of the culture are: realization of the individual soul; personal adaptation to and/or manipulation of an established hierarchical social structure; and satisfying contact with something beyond this life, or mundane existence. Obviously, for people conditioned to such a culture, the pragmatic and technological approaches do not, in themselves, constitute what might be called a first-order appeal. . . .

Perhaps the Latin Americans are right. Who is to say? Not I, in this article, at least. But I will say this, that the Latin American search for something beyond the self, something above the world of crass, everyday, reality, deserves recognition in its own right and also in the interest of international relations. The yearning for the idea, the concept, the word, the creative interpretation, is, for me, a definite component of the Latin American ethos.

Even if the matter of "spiritual values" may be questioned—since we know of no way in which people can be "conditioned" into *spiritual* interests—Prof. Gillin's analysis seems especially valuable, today, at a time when the problem of human motivation is gaining more and more attention. Actually, what he calls an "ethos component" in Latin American culture—the sense of personal importance and integrity—is curiously lacking in North American culture. The North American is rather "objective" and "impersonal" in his attitudes, so that this study of the Latin American temperament and characterology is informing through contrast. There is a sense in which the strong Latin feeling of *identity* derives from the pre-revolutionary forms of hierarchical society, in which status and the role established by status supplies the feeling of both personal importance and personal responsibility. In the United States, however, we have a society without roots in hereditary and hierarchical tradition. The North American tradition is non-historical, resting upon the principle of *equality*, as Prof. Gillin points out.

Thus *identity*, for the man of North America, is something which is not obtained from the past, but is exacted from the present—it is made from day to day. As Crèvecoeur wrote in the closing years of the eighteenth century:

He is an American, who leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds. He becomes an American by being received in the broad lap of our great Alma Mater. Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labors and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world.

But what is the *form* of the North American's life? He has indeed placed his stamp upon the natural world. The great principle of equality has released endless energies. But in the United States, at least, a kind of stalemate in the struggle for freedom and equality has been reached. Is there no succeeding principle—not a negating but a higher destiny for man? "For the ordinary citizen," as Jaeger says, "who is simply the product of the reigning political principles, there is no . . . problem . . . His membership in the state exhausts his nature."

So far as we can see, the nature of North American society, with its great principles of equality and freedom, imposes a strenuous obligation upon its members, once these principles have attained concrete embodiment. What shall be the form of life, the distinction of individual existence, when not only liberty and equality have been obtained, but also a prosperity beyond the wildest dreams of a century or two ago? What motives are left?

If the establishment of democratic equality be regarded as an advance for civilization—and it seems ridiculous to term it anything else—then we are obliged to recognize also the possibility that one of the penalties of social advance is the requirement of a richer subjective life. When the environment no longer supplies us with motives, purposes, and fulfillments, we have to begin to use our imagination in these directions. If our

circumstances will no longer define our duties and lend meaning to our lives, we must create for ourselves those inner tensions which are needed to map a course between what is and what might be.

Here, then, perhaps, is the juncture of human history at which the present finds the modern world, and in particular the North Americans. We must find inner goals to replace the outer objectives that have been achieved.

But this is sure to find objections. How, it will be asked, can we claim to have reached fulfillment of equality and freedom, when prejudice sneers defiance in the South, and vested privilege still flaunts its power, despite the glamorizing transformations and cosmetic masks supplied by "public relations" experts?

This is a fair question. A fair answer, we think, would urge that no achievement in the broad conduct of human life can ever remain in static equilibrium. The defects in our practice of equality, the failures of our system in affording freedom to all, are not to be remedied only by insistent demands for equality and freedom, even to the point of revolutionary action all over again, but rather by deepening the content of our lives through better and more intelligent use of the freedom and the equality we have.

The fact that must be faced is that the man whose social being is defined by the principle of equality cannot enrich his life either by violating equality—which leads to a perversion of the meaning of his age; or by making a fetish out of equality—which delivers the nation into the hands of demagogues and invites the gross atavism of a "revolt of the masses." The kind of distinction or sense of personal integrity that must be sought by free and equal men is a distinction which does not grow from *comparison* with other men—a quality of life, in short, which can neither be improved nor diminished by competition.

This is a sort of distinction which is blighted by pride—beside which pride can have no purpose or being.

What sort of life is it in which a man can take no pride? Even the question makes a difficulty, since achievement and pride in what has been accomplished seem almost inseparable to us. There have been men, however, whose greatness brought them no pride because they felt no inner need to be set apart from others. Their "equality" was not a slogan, but a natural feeling of fellowship for all human beings. Such men have set themselves free from the furies of ambition and from the jealousies which mar the goodness of a free society.

Those who have read about the importance of "self-esteem" may think that this is a somewhat heroic requirement. But perhaps we have been willing to settle for too little as the measure of human excellence. Perhaps we have conceded too much to the "psychology of adjustment" and have expected too little of what we call "ordinary" men. What are we working toward, after all? Just *ordinary* lives? What of dignity is there in a culture which needs psychologists to plan sops for the "self-esteem" of its members, lest they become defeated and petulant? The sick in mind and emotions may need this sort of help, but people who declare themselves to be free can hardly seek this sort of paternalism, for themselves or for anyone else.

The heroic, we might remember, is known to us by reason of human behavior. What we know of human greatness does not come to us from either science-fiction or divine revelation. Why should we set our *ideals* any lower than the reach and vision of the best of men?

REVIEW

THREATS TO INDIVIDUALITY

WE are moved to words of praise for the Twenty-fifth Anniversary (Autumn, 1956) number of *The American Scholar*. Entitled "New Departures and Directions—1932-1956," it features such writers as Margaret Mead, David Riesman, Joseph Wood Krutch and Harlow Shapley. One detects, moreover, a rather remarkable blending of these essays, and not because the writers all speak of similar things. We should say that it all boils down to the fact that the past conception of "individuality" is on the wane, and a new idea of "self-reliant man" is now emerging.

All the writers are bound to refer to the present "economy of abundance"; the members of an earlier generation, who strove mightily for prosperity and leisure, had an incentive our present generation lacks. There is now so much leisure and so much abundance that, while the tensions between the generations have noticeably lessened, the obvious query is, "Where do we go from here?" David Riesman suggests that, in time, this "will bring a quiet crisis of meaning" in the lives of many. We shall discover, he concludes, "what it feels like to belong, by birth rather than individual effort, to an economy (though it be a war economy) of abundance."

Joseph Wood Krutch brings a familiar irony to his discussion of the "economy of abundance":

One thing seems clear. When man's first duty comes to be consumption, he suffers a strange loss of dignity, and not only he but the coming generation come to be valued chiefly in terms of their potentiality as voracious consumers. One advertising executive exulted publicly over what he called the present "bumper crop of babies" which will soon be ready to be taught "psychological needs" and the mystery of "psychological obsolescence." According to one of the leading "magazines of business," the cigarette and whiskey manufacturers who suffer from the fact that only the "lean crop" of the depression years is now coming into maturity as a consumer of their wares, are "anxiously eying the years when the bumper crop (apparently the accepted phrase) of World War II

babies—now helping dairy, food and shoe companies ring up record-breaking sales—become old enough to take up smoking."

At various times, various cultures have assigned their own characteristic reasons for believing in the sacredness of human life and in the value of each individual man. Once it was that every man had an immortal soul. In less religious but romantic ages it was usually that he had a unique personality. Then in societies dominated by utilitarian thought, it became that he could produce something. But, now, at last, it is only that he can use something up. Scorn not the Common Man, says the Age of Abundance. He may have no soul; his personality may be exactly the same as his neighbor's; and he may not produce anything worth while. But, thank God, he consumes. He eats baby food in infancy, begins to smoke and drink in adolescence, and understands psychological obsolescence when he grows up. He performs his essential function, and we honor him for it.

Margaret Mead's essay, "Our Documentary Culture," indicates the extent to which individuality is subverted when we accept what the statisticians and the advertisers say about us. Miss Mead paints a formidable picture of the tendency to define ourselves by way of stylized rationalizations:

There has always been in the United States a curious paradox between the belief in a world in which any man could be President and the actual narrow range of competition in which most people compete only with those very close to them, with brothers rather than with fathers and uncles, and very seldom hope to get out of their own league. As the Cinderella story and the Horatio Alger myth are repudiated and the fictionalized hero is replaced by a creature constructed from a market survey and illustrated by a photograph, there comes to be a corresponding narrowing of ambition and a shortage of imaginative models for change. As long as one can check one's knowledge of foreign events, preference in books, church attendance and satisfaction in marriage on a scale and can find oneself in the upper percentiles, there is a theoretical satisfaction, although in actuality it is dust and ashes. Americans who grew up believing you should hitch your wagon to a star, or even those who were reared by people who courted such a belief, find the rope slackening in their hands even while statistics, posed photographs and rating scales show them to be successful, contented and well adjusted.

It may also be suggested that this reflexive state in which we live is a kind of stepchild of some of the most important developments of the last quarter-century—of increased awareness of ourselves as individuals with a partly forgotten past, as members of a culture many of whose values are unformulated but nonetheless real. It would be easy to blame our present state on an exaggerated self-consciousness which has destroyed both innocence and spontaneity. But it may also be blamed upon those who have used the tools which have been developed by the therapist, the teacher and the research scholar as implements of manipulation within a system which they despised and hated, often quite unfairly, but from which they continued to draw a livelihood. The frustrated novelist who sells his soul to an advertising agency or a public relations firm, the frustrated liberal who condones the use of sensational sex stories to sell a politically liberal newspaper, the cynical reformer who thinks the only way to get members of Congress to do a good deed is to offer them bad rationalizations—these are among the people who, out of disillusion, self-contempt, and contempt for their employers and their audiences have helped to construct this world of semitruths and manipulated backgrounds and faked shadows within which young people find the images on which to model their lives—and so seem to their elders to be "conforming."

Harlow Shapley elucidates the last transition that has taken place in our view of "Man and the Universe"—a development with definite bearing on the need to reorient thinking about "individuality." Physics has brought us an expanded view of the cosmos—and a paradoxical view of man's significance in it. Shapley sums up:

To put it briefly: biochemistry and microbiology, with the assistance of geophysics, astronomy and other sciences, have gone so far in bridging the gap between the inanimate and the living that we can no longer doubt but that whenever the physics, chemistry and climates are right on a planet's surface, life will emerge and persist.

This consequence has long been suspected by scientists, but the many researches of the past few years in the field of macromolecules have made it unnecessary any longer to postulate miracles and the supernatural for the origin of life.

And here we must end with the simple but weighty proposal: There is no reason in the world to

believe that our own mental stature has not been excelled by that of sentient beings elsewhere.

In conclusion, I need not emphasize the possible relevance to philosophy and perhaps to religion of this fourth adjustment in man's view of himself in the material universe.

In other words, "physical" individuality is picayune in its import, while psychological growth alone is seen to be important. Whether a new, a more intense, and more spontaneous individuality will grow in our present cultural surroundings is not, of course, up to the statisticians at all. The issue will be decided by those who give constructive release and articulation to discontent with the confinements of past definitions of The Individual.

COMMENTARY THE WILL TO SURPASS

ONE might suppose, from the slightly apologetic tone of the closing paragraphs of this week's lead article, that there has never been a culture or civilization which did not offer some sort of reward to ambition, some solace to vanity, as an "incentive" to achievement. The idea of human life without the emotional satisfaction of pride is presented as though it were a counsel of perfection, beyond the reach of "ordinary men."

The fact is that the Hopi Indians, in their unique way, have long cherished and put into practice ideals of this sort.

When the Hopi is a boy, he learns to run. This is both a rite of the tribe and a "competitive sport." Running, for the Hopis, is a discipline of the body and of the psyche, and Hopi youths try to win the honors which attach to being the best runners of the tribe. And the best runners are very good. Some Hopis have run for the United States in the Olympic games.

But when it comes to works of the mind, the properly *human* activities, the Hopis are not competitive at all. In *The Hopi Way*, Laura Thompson tells about an American school teacher who tried to use customary methods of spurring laggard pupils to greater achievement. During an arithmetic session, she called on a bright Hopi girl, asking her to go to the blackboard to show the class how a problem ought to be solved. But the Hopi girl was not responsive. Instead, she was terribly embarrassed at the idea of being held up as an "example" before the other children. She did not want this sort of distinction and she was humiliated by the action of the teacher. She would be glad to *help*, but to have her special abilities paraded—this, she felt, was almost indecent.

Lots of people in our own society have moral instincts of this sort, but they get scant encouragement from their culture to be guided by these feelings. Yet we know from our folk wisdom that "comparisons are odious"—as they were to the Hopi girl. Why should we be reluctant to set standards for ourselves of this sort—standards which are deeply rooted in self-respect?

There is a great difference, after all, between self-esteem and self-respect. A man with genuine self-respect has little need for self-esteem. The man with

self-respect never feels himself overshadowed by the achievements of others. He does not feel envy because his measure of himself has a more solid base than the opinions or the admiration of others.

Think how hazardous must be the "security" of those whose sense of well-being grows out of some conventional measure of distinction. Thorstein Veblen coined the phrase, "Conspicuous Consumption," and Joseph Wood Krutch, in the *American Scholar* article quoted in this week's Review, extends the role of Consumption to a *reductio ad absurdum*: "Scorn not the Common Man. . . . He may have no soul; his personality may be exactly the same as his neighbor's; and he may not produce anything worth while. But, thank God, he consumes."

What a distinction! Is this the climax of the American Dream?

It is an irony beyond expression that the Christmas season—a time when the most elevating influence of the Western religious tradition is supposed to be upon us—should have been turned into a Saturnalia of Consumption. Whence this insensibility to the beneficence of Christendom's highest Holiday?

Either the crassness is innate, or it is something acquired. Our own view is that it is acquired—that Christmas would never have been perverted into a commercial institution if the Christians had not made the tragic mistake of locating the essential meaning of the Christ idea in a miraculous Being—the "Son of God"—who lived many centuries ago. Christmas should be a time of account-taking of our own nature and intent—not of someone else on whom our welfare is supposed to depend.

We know—from better and stronger intuitions than allowed any theologian of orthodoxy—that we depend upon ourselves. We do not really believe the Christian claim of the Vicarious Atonement. It is against Nature and against all experience. But, being human, we allow ritual and lip-service to emasculate the meaning of Christmas, through the pretense that conformity to custom exhausts its potentialities.

We are forever losing the essences of life by accepting its meaning from custom, conformity and outside authorities, whether of religion or science. This is the only real failure, the only real immorality, of which most humans are guilty, and from it flows most of the pain and sorrow of our lives.

CHILDREN and Ourselves

PERSPECTIVES USA, Summer 1956, provides a valuable discussion of the origin and meaning of the present educational debate between champions of John Dewey and the various shades and degrees of "traditionalists." The article, titled "American Higher Education," by Fred M. Hechinger, education editor of the New York *Herald Tribune*, is chiefly concerned with stating principles around which a synthesis of educational aims can be achieved, and he provides a detailed report of a five-year experiment conducted at Amherst College, in a deliberate blending of theory and tradition. Amherst, according to Mr. Hechinger, offers "a masterful fusion of the best in the experience of tradition and experimentation." At Amherst it is assumed that "the common core of subject material" should be prescribed by those who understand our cultural roots and the relationship of history and philosophy to the problems of a working democracy. However, the Amherst *approach* to the acquisition of "basic skills in liberal arts is thoroughly modern and progressive." Hechinger quotes Prof. Gail Kennedy (Amherst) in description of the plan:

During the first two years at college at least four things need to be done. First, certain basic skills in the liberal arts, particularly in English, foreign language, and mathematics, must be reinforced and developed . . .

And finally, we felt there should be a beginning *at the beginning* of "honors" type of work.

By starting "honors" work in the first year—giving each student some tutorial or seminar instruction—Amherst fuses the prescribed—the essential heritage of man—with the elected—the special, personal growth of the individual mind. Take, for instance, the freshman course in physics and mathematics which every Amherst student must take. Professor Arnold B. Aarons, a physicist in charge of the program, explains: "We approach science as the liberal art it is and always has been—one of the studies worthy of a free man, a product of the human intellect and imagination with structure and form and beauty in its own right."

Mr. Hechinger examines two "extremes" of education at the college level; St. John's of Maryland stands for an intensified version of the Hutchins' "Great Books and Great Ideas" program, and Bennington College in Vermont centers around Deweyan philosophy, where "the individual stands at the center of everything; the education designed for her is hers alone: it cannot be duplicated because each person is a unique entity." Hechinger continues:

But if it may seem from the difference in mechanics that the progressive schools and the Chicago rebellion were moving off in opposite directions, there is a fairly simple reason why this was not true: the fundamental aim of those who planned the curriculum—for the entire student body, as at Chicago (with the hope that the individual would use his strength to emerge with all his differences intact and reinforced), or for each separate student, as at Bennington (in the belief that this was the only way to safeguard and draw out the differences)—was much the same: understanding. . . rather than mere acquisition of knowledge.

All the progressive colleges have this in common: their methods sound "permissive" but they actually lean heavily on diligent personal guidance. Whether the student's program is carefully revised after some initial testing and exploring on the part of the student, as at Sarah Lawrence; whether the student is held to a range of required general education that is not nearly so wide nor so aimless as it might appear at first glance, as at Antioch; whether the job is done in repeated personal conferences, as at Bennington; the effect is the same.

Since we have long believed and maintained that much of the factionalism between the "modern educationists" and the "traditionalists" is both useless and subversive of educational progress, Mr. Hechinger's documentation is especially welcome; with the development of each contrasting philosophy over a period of years, the impartial observer is able to note a natural—and inevitable—convergence. This may be illustrated by two quotations, one from the explanation of the St. John's curriculum by its founders, and the other a paragraph from John Dewey's *Common Faith*. As follows:

The St. John's curriculum is seeking to convey to the students an understanding of basic problems

that man has to face at all times. In doing that it may help the students to discover a new kind of historical perspective and let them perceive through all the historical shifts and changes the permanence and ever-present gravity of human issues.

* * *

The ideal ends to which we attach our faith are not shadowy and wavering. They assume concrete form in our understanding of our relations to one another and to values contained in these relations. We who now live are parts of a humanity that extends into the remote past, a humanity that has interacted with nature. The things in civilization we most prize are not of ourselves. They exist by grace of the doings and sufferings of the continuous human community in which we are a link. Ours is the responsibility of conserving, transmitting, rectifying and expanding the heritage of values we have received that those who come after us may receive it more solid and secure, more widely accessible and more generously shared than we have received it. . .

Here, Mr. Hechinger points out, is the philosophical bridge between "conservative" and "progressive" schools, and it seems to us that the gradual revaluation taking place at the university level is very much needed also at elementary and high school levels. To this end, consideration of such presentations as Hechinger's "American Higher Education" could prove most beneficial; all of the transitions of theory in recent history can seem to be interlocking and complementary, if it is recognized that the full value of any particular point is not apt to come clear without fervent advocates. There is really no need for relinquishing the values of strict discipline in mastery of the liberal arts simply because one holds that the individual student, be he child or young man, should be the center of attention in the teaching-learning process.

According to Hechinger, the trend is clearly away from excessive specialization, both at places like St. John's and in Deweyan circles. For this reason, perhaps, the ideal role of the University teacher—the "intellectual" or "scholar"—is being assessed in broader terms. An article in the *Saturday Review* for Nov. 10 by A. Whitney Griswold, President of Yale University, discusses

"scholarship" in relation to the psychological, ethical, and social life of the average man. He is not, to be sure, talking about elementary schools, but the teaching profession cannot be riven by a sharp division between levels of instruction. Perhaps the "high-level" thinking of Dr. Griswold, and of Emerson, whom he quotes, is but another way of expressing the same devotion to teaching and truth-seeking.

Dr. Griswold feels that we should say less about "intellectuals," so-called, and be more concerned with the "role of the intellect," in all men, everywhere:

The scholar is not The Intellectual. He is Man Thinking. Man Thinking is not the member of a race apart. He is the citizen performing the function appointed for all citizens in a civilized state, a function without which there would be no civilized state. He is Everyman purposefully apprehending the meaning of things. Granted that there are degrees of competence in this art, as there are in all arts, and that its practice is, like all arts, primarily an individual affair, it is in no sense snobbish or anti-social. The right to practice it is part of the birthright of all men and the need is the need of all. . . We would do much better, I think, to seek it out as such rather than as the personification of a special privilege or the esoteric monopoly of a few. By liberating the scholar in all of us we shall create a reservoir to relieve our teacher shortages while our hunt for Intellectuals loses itself in the desert.

I must now defend the proposition that the scholar is a teacher. In Emerson's definition, I do not see how he can help but be. No matter how silent or inarticulate he is, or how much inclined to keep his thoughts to himself, he generates currents that he cannot contain. "Nature provided for the communication of thought by planting with it in the receiving mind a fury to impart it," says Emerson in one of his later essays. 'Tis so in every art, in every science. One burns to tell the new fact, the other burns to hear it. Between the true scholar and the teacher there is no fundamental incompatibility but a fundamental affinity of the most intimate kind.

FRONTIERS Religion in Our Time

THE *Anglican Outlook* for November has an article by a Canadian anthropologist, Edmund Carpenter, that adds considerably to the critical comment on the "religion of reassurance." (Prof. Carpenter's article, "Let's Stop Huckstering Religion," first appeared in *MacLean's Magazine*.) It begins with a familiar inventory of the "sales" gimmicks of Billy Graham and Norman Vincent Peale, getting down to cases in a general analysis:

As any slick salesman knows, you can sell *any* product if you employ the right techniques and don't disturb the status quo.

Such merchandise belongs on the same shelf with the self-help books, those little fix-it kits for cracks in the psyche. These books work in the suggestive twilight of abnormal psychology and supernatural revelation. Like Dr. Peale, they attempt a brotherly reconciliation between psychoanalysis and religion. They have influence because they allegedly carry the combined authority of the Bible and medical psychiatry.

These are the How-to books—How-to-Be-Happy in so many lessons, How to Conquer Your Handicaps, How to Stop Worrying and Start Living, How to Get Rid of Fear and Fatigue, How to Remember. They belong to those great American traditions of self-confidence and know-how, of self-reliance and faith that "will" and "mind" can overcome any obstacle—"You can do anything: You can be anyone!" More glib than critical, they are full of good cheer, defiant optimism, and breath-taking simplification.

Prof. Carpenter's notice of the fact that these books ride the authority of both "the Bible and medical psychiatry" recalls a phrase used by Arthur E. Morgan years ago. Discussing the ingredients of civilization, he spoke of men who are *builders*, who through patient effort accumulate for their time and culture the strength and qualities of humane existence, contrasting them to others who find ways of dissipating these hard-earned assets, calling the latter "trigger-men." The "trigger-men" are leaders who involve their nation in costly wars, or who with emotional appeals waste the national substance in futile

enterprises of one sort or another. So is lost the usufruct of centuries. The writers of shallow volumes which skim slogans from religion and modern psychology are the "trigger-men" who exhaust our moral capital—who cheapen the difficult wisdom of both science and religion by making it conform to selling formulas—the prime rule being, *don't disturb the status quo*. As Prof. Carpenter says:

An air-conditioned conscience is clean, contented, and backed by a growing number of psychologists and evangelists. But it's sealed off from life, unfettered by any sense of social responsibility.

According to the apostles of optimism everybody can be happy or should be happy, and if he isn't happy then he should be happy he isn't happy. As for teaching us how to get on with people, they preach a kind of Machiavellianism, not for princes but for the little man. Somehow they manage to convey the idea that you can be selfish as long as you persuade yourself that you give "service" to others.

Dr. Peale, according to Prof. Carpenter, is retailing a kind of "faith-healing" for the troubled and disappointed psyche:

For Dr. Peale, life's only goal is to feel peaceful. If getting rid of anxiety requires you to amputate your whole struggle toward personal and religious growth, do so. If you are troubled by the state of the world, the nature of truth, or any other concept that arouses anxiety, turn your mind to "positive" thoughts. Avoid unpleasant realities; they only create unfavorable moods. For example, after establishing his own conventional anti-Communism and pro-Americanism, Dr. Peale advises that the less thought about Communism the better, because it's an unpleasant subject.

Prof. Carpenter objects to this treatment because it ignores the larger problems beyond the control of the individual. It does pull the shade down on unpleasantness in the outside world—and this is bad enough—but, worse, it assumes that the conventional measures of "success" can be related to *spiritual* progress, or rather spiritual "harmony." Along with the outside "status quo," it brazenly accepts the inner "status quo" of ordinary, acquisitive, ambition. About the worst thing that can be said of the customers of the

"religion of reassurance" is that they are *able* to believe in it. How far away from the realities of human hopes and aspirations can you get?

Billy Graham, unlike Dr. Peale, has no use for "modern prosperity." Nor does he preach the disappearance of evil from looking in another direction:

On the contrary, he plays up the Devil. Why? Because he knows that his audiences do not want to wrestle with the problems that oppress them. Emphasizing the Devil's power, "a creature of vastly superior intelligence," he warns: "You cannot argue with him for he is the greatest debater of all time." . . . The listener is removed so completely from his social and historical context that he ceases to be an individual. As Samuel Pepys said after hearing one of Dr. Bates' sermons: "He is making a very good sermon, and very little reflection in it to anything of the times."

Or as Graham himself has phrased it: "The storm was raging. The sea was beating. The lightning was flashing the thunder was roaring, the wind was blowing, but the little bird was asleep in the crevice of the rock. That is peace: to be able to sleep in the storm."

Billy Graham cuts the Gordian knot with the sword of suppliant belief in the Bible, and in nothing else; Dr. Peale offers the more sophisticated doctrine of "positive thinking," but in neither case is any real thought allowed. Instead, the benefits of religion are to be obtained by a kind of emotional surrender: you give *all* your devotion, refusing to ask questions which destroy the illusions you have embraced, and the magic will work. If it doesn't, you are holding out on God!

A long passage of analysis by Prof. Carpenter affords another level of insight:

There is no doubt that many of these sermons and books contain grains of common sense. One finds it hard—in some cases sacrilegious—to quarrel with any single statement. One statement by Graham I found deeply moving. Concepts like Peale's "self-emptying" aspect of worshipful meditation might have been formulated by a Jesus or a Gandhi.

But these leaders believe what they said, while Dr. Peale appears not to listen to his own words. *They* regarded religious growth as an end in itself; to Dr. Peale it is little more than a means to such goals as money, success, power, vacations on Waikiki Beach and popularity.

More important, *they* taught that the human soul is too deep to be grasped in even a lifetime of study. Dr. Peale *guarantees* the answers. He deals in phony solutions to real problems, obscuring the authentic Christian diagnosis and prescription, which is a good deal less palatable and a good deal more costly than Peale's brand. It is this very shallowness of the concept of "person" that makes his "rules" appear easy. He never touches on man's unconscious, which is the reservoir not only of his hates but also of all his nobility.

This whole cult exploits the most superficial aspects of religion and psychoanalysis as a revelation of deep understanding. They name an emotion instead of describing it; they analyze it without conveying it. In the end we get no real understanding of any problem, or a proper picture of the personality and its specific struggles. . . .

Moreover, every solution is guaranteed to be custom-made for YOU. But what we find is sweeping solace. The same solution for everyone. No individual differences. People think they are getting individual understanding when what they receive is generalized consolation. William Lee Miller wrote: "The drugstore I went to this morning had a new sign tacked to the screen door: 'Norman Vincent Peale solves YOUR personal problems—in LOOK Magazine.' My personal problems? In *Look* magazine? No, thank you."

What is really wrong with all this? A capsule judgment would be that the hucksters of religion insist that everything can be settled—has already been settled—by what they have to sell. All you have to do is buy it and use it.

The truth is that *nothing* is settled by any man for another. This means, in general, that so far as religion and philosophy are concerned, nothing is ever settled at all, ultimately. No solution, that is, which is taken to be a finality, can ever *be* a finality. The only truth about human problems is the truth that they continue on and on, although we may eventually be able to take on greater

problems than the ones which presently engage our attention. The greatest men we know of always had problems. They were great *because* they dealt with great problems—the common problems of mankind. Jesus had problems. Buddha had problems. Prometheus had problems. The difference between the great and ourselves is that the great graduated from petty to larger problems. A man without problems would be a man out of a job.

A news note in a world affairs column in the *Anglican Outlook*, in which Prof. Carpenter's article appears, is too good to ignore:

EGYPT: Roman Catholic, American Presbyterian and Church of England mission schools in Egypt have decided to comply with the law requiring them to teach the Koran to their Moslem students. Two Scotch Presbyterian schools which refused to do so were confiscated.

When the local newspaper of Princeton, Ind., favored its readers with a series of advertisements celebrating the home-like qualities of the town tavern, Princeton's Council of Churches offered gentle objections. The newspaper, anxious to cooperate, turned future tavern advertising down. But after a couple of months, the paper fell from grace by running a quarter-page for a national brewer. Then it became evident that national beer advertising would appear twice each month. This time the Council of Churches consulted its conscience and decided to put no more pressure on the newspaper. Instead, the Council prepared its own advertising, which the paper dutifully published, also in quarter-page space.

The Council advertisement set out to tell the people of Princeton "the other side of the alcohol ads." First it listed the number of alcoholics in the United States at 3,000,000. To this were added an equal number of "problem drinkers." The next item was the fact that in from twenty to forty per cent of the automobile accidents which occur each year, alcohol is involved as a cause. Other

gruesome facts are entered in the debit account of alcohol, making a picture which, if exaggerated here and there, is still a picture which ought to be looked at by everyone, drinkers or not. And it is certainly, as the Church advertisement declares, "a picture the alcohol and tavern business is afraid to advertise!"

What particularly annoyed the members of the Council of Churches, we suppose, was the plug for drinking as part of "the American Way." To single out beer as the offender was perhaps pushing the case against liquor a little beyond the call of duty, but the church people were at least ready to put up their own money to have their say, and the newspaper proprietor, contrary to expectation, decided to run the ad without charge as his contribution to Princeton's sobriety.

But after this is told and admired, the fundamental question of why so many people drink to excess remains. No one has a real answer, nor is the "horror story" of the consequences of drink a notably successful preventive. On the whole, the alcoholic is a psychological mystery. While, for each alcoholic, a plausible list of "causes" for his illness can be put together, persons affected by the same causes but who do not drink can be discovered with equal facility.

Social historians who studied the effects of enclosure of the common lands in England, and the gradual absorption of the resulting landless population by the new-born factories of the Industrial Revolution, tell us that a terrible drunkenness afflicted the English poor from this time on. The workmen in the factories drowned their drab lives and their economic enslavement in gin. There was nothing else they cared about enough to do, so they drank until they were numb.

A modern student of alcoholism has concluded that the alcoholic will remain an alcoholic until he finds something he wants to do more than he wants to drink. This checks with the judgments of others as to what is behind the *malaise* of modern man. It is a disease of

aimlessness and frustration—a kind of Babylonian Captivity which can overtake any culture where the ends pursued by most men are not really worthy of human effort. For such men, drink is not a curse, but blessed forgetfulness.

We wish the Council of Churches had felt it worth while to pursue questions of this sort in their advertisement. Why is there so terrible a void in the lives of these people, that they take refuge in drink? The unco guid, too often, are people with so little imagination that they are insensible to the vapid tastelessness of their lives. They don't "take to drink" because they are attached to other affairs—affairs superficially less destructive, perhaps, but as blinding as any intoxicating potion to the authentic values of life. In such cases, "strength of character" is hardly a factor.

The trouble with the simple, frontal attack on alcohol as "sin" is the same as the trouble with most of our moralizing about the kind of a world we live in. The *really* bad things about our lives are not even noticed, while righteousness rides to church every Sunday morning on white-walled tires.