

GREAT REFORMERS JOHN REUCHLIN

ONE hears, these days, considerable mention of the Men of the Renaissance what they stood for in European history and what they were trying to accomplish. The occasion for this interest in the Renaissance seems to be the suspicion, growing into a lament, that the moral inspiration of that great intellectual and moral revolt has finally exhausted itself that there is no real place in the world of today, and even less in the world of tomorrow, for the Renaissance Man.

This means, so far as we can see, that we have touched bottom in mining the resources of what we call our Graeco-Christian culture. We can echo the cries of the Renaissance, but we do not shout them with any great certainty or liberating emotion. We say that we have "faith in man," and yet, looking around, we find that this means faith in the men on our side, and often we're not very sure who really is on our side.

The Renaissance and the Reformation conducted a relatively successful struggle against despotic men and despotic customs and beliefs belonging to an outworn tradition. Today, the struggle is against what seem to be impersonal despotic processes and incalculably destructive power which suggests that the struggle is actually against the unreasoning fear that those processes and that power produce in human beings ourselves as well as other men. How can the twentieth century contend against this anti-human despotism of fear?

Something more, doubtless, is needed, than the faith which the men of the Renaissance possessed, and yet, before deciding upon this, there will be value in understanding as much as we can of the inspiration of the Renaissance, and how it accomplished what it did. With this objective in mind, we turn to the life of John Reuchlin, who was born at Pforzheim in 1455, and who lived until 1522, five years after Martin Luther nailed

his ninety-five theses to the door of the castle church at Wittenberg.

Reuchlin was a man who may be taken to represent both the Renaissance and the Reformation, for he loved learning, religion and freedom almost equally. He found northern Europe barbarous, illiterate and ignorant; he left it with the seeds of civilization deeply rooted in German soil. There were others, of course colleagues, friends and pupils of Reuchlin but they, to a man, would have agreed that Reuchlin's contribution was the greatest, that he most fittingly should stand as a symbol for them all. Melancthon, the great German theologian, was Reuchlin's devoted relative and student, and Luther reverently called Reuchlin "Father." Erasmus knew, admired and defended Reuchlin. In England, his friends and supporters included John Colet and Thomas More; in Italy, Marsilius Ficinus and Pico della Mirandola.

Having first taught himself, Reuchlin became the champion of Greek and Hebrew studies in Germany. Through his efforts, the standards of education in the University of Tübingen became so high that students flocked there from all parts of the country. Although Florence was the birthplace of the Revival of Learning, and it was the custom of German youths to go to Italy after completing their courses at home, Ficinus, the great Florentine Platonist, wrote to Reuchlin: "The German youth who visit the academy of Florence come as well furnished as others leave it."

Reuchlin was not a professional theologian, but a jurist. It was his devotion to religious truth which gave such great strength and meaning to his labors on behalf of freedom of thought. To gain his knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, he frequented the company of learned Greeks and Jews. He had no natural love of controversy and

was, if anything, timid rather than aggressive by nature, so that it was his knowledge itself, instead of a penchant for argument, which drove him into a great controversy with the ignorant monkhoods of Europe, bringing him unsought fame in the closing years of his life.

For the sake of the truth as he saw it, Reuchlin opposed the wave of vicious anti-Semitism which broke out early in the sixteenth century, and he endured the terrifying threats of the Holy Inquisition for his defense of the sacred literature of the Jews. In time, men drawn from the entire world of Renaissance learning and idealism formed a loose confederacy of mighty pens for Reuchlin's cause. Against him and his friends were united the orders of bigoted monks and priests, particularly the Dominicans, who became known, collectively, as the Obscurantists men blindly devoted to the authority of the Pope and filled with resentment toward any attempt to question the absolute authority of the churchly institution. The friends of Reuchlin later became the militant leaders of the Reformation, a development which Reuchlin's greatest enemy, the Inquisitor General Jacob Hochstraten, did not fail to point out to Pope Leo X.

Another aspect of Reuchlin's contribution to the Reformation is the direct effect of his stimulation to Hebrew learning among German scholars. Students of religious history have since declared that, through Reuchlin, Jewish learning became principally responsible for the rejection of Roman authority, since study of the Talmud awakened the slumbering forces of revolt in Germany. As Graetz says in his *History of the Jews*:

We can boldly assert that the war for and against the Talmud [in which Reuchlin championed the Jewish Scripture] aroused German consciousness and created a public opinion, without which the Reformation, as well as other efforts, would have died at the hour of their birth, or perhaps would never have been born at all.

Reuchlin's controversy with the Obscurantists began with the determination of John Pfeffercorn,

a baptized Jew, to persecute, ostensibly in order to convert, his former co-religionists. In this project he obtained the protection and encouragement of the Dominicans of the University of Cologne. With only a scant knowledge of Hebrew, Pfeffercorn issued a series of vilifying attacks on the Jews, representing them as "more dangerous than the devil, as bloodhounds whom it is a Christian duty to persecute, to deprive of property, children, and books, to pray to God for a judicial punishment upon them, and to condemn those who protect them as worse than the Jews themselves." The work in which these sentiments appeared was described, "I am a little book, the Foe of the Jews is my name," and was published in Latin in Cologne in 1509.

Pfeffercorn persuaded the Cologne monks to ask the Emperor Maximilian for an inquisition against the Jews and their blasphemous books, which, he contended, contained attacks on the Christian religion. Under pressure and contrary to his better judgment, Maximilian issued a mandate requiring that all Jewish books injurious to Christianity be sought out and destroyed, and Pfeffercorn was appointed executor of the imperial mandate. Meeting much general opposition to his program, Pfeffercorn later returned to the Emperor to ask for a second mandate that would empower him to destroy arbitrarily all Jewish books but the Bible. Maximilian then ordered an investigation by scholars acquainted with the Hebrew language a move which brought Reuchlin into the controversy as one of the scholars requested to report.

Reuchlin approached his task warily, knowing well the power of his opponents. He admitted that books directly attacking Christianity might be destroyed, but said that of works in this class, he knew of and had read but two, and that these writings were considered apocryphal by the Jews themselves. He then launched into a defense of freedom of conscience. Discussing the Talmud,

he allowed that scattered references might call Christ a misleader of the people, but what could justify Christians in destroying a book they could neither read nor understand? If, words could not refute the Jews, should flames be used to take the place of reason? Having argued, not for its destruction, but for more intensive study of the Talmud, Reuchlin went on to defend the Kabala, an occult treatise of the Jews with which Pico of Florence had acquainted him. The Kabala, he maintained, was a work of great value; two popes had ordered it translated into Latin. Reuchlin believed that the Kabala contained the key to the revelation made through Moses. In his work, *De Arte Kabalistica*, Reuchlin said that the higher truth of religion "was not generally communicated by Moses, but only to the elect, such as Joshua, and so by tradition, it came to the seventy interpreters. This gift is called Kabala."

To the contention that the Jews would remain Jews unless their books were destroyed, Reuchlin answered that if they studied their own books carefully, they would be led to find the truth, and if they did not so study, destroying the books could hardly convert them to Christianity. He concluded his defense of Hebrew literature by saying that the suppression of the Jewish writings would only confirm the idea that great power and value resided in them, which Christians could not oppose with reason, but only with force and violence; therefore, he urged, it would be far more advisable to order every German university to retain two teachers of Hebrew for at least ten years, so that students with good knowledge of the Jewish teachings could convert the Jews with kindness and the persuasion of reason.

The Cologne Obscurantists were much inflamed by these opinions, and were successful in preventing Reuchlin's report from reaching the Emperor. Accordingly, in 1511 Reuchlin published the report himself, including fifty-two additional arguments against the destruction of the Jewish books. As Pfeffercorn had named one of his attacks on the Jews *Handspiegel*, or *Hand-*

Mirror, Reuchlin called his volume *Augenspiegel*, or *Eyes' Mirror*, and added a commentary on Pfeffercorn's work in which he reduced the latter's entire arguments to "thirty-four falsehoods." The character of *Handspiegel* is illustrated by the fact that Reuchlin had to defend himself against the charge of having been bribed by the Jews. Evidently anti-Semitism, in its more virulent forms, at least, has changed very little with the centuries.

The theologians of Cologne, friends of Pfeffercorn, soon found numerous "heresies" in Reuchlin's *Augenspiegel*. Reuchlin, apparently, had been guilty of certain Kabalistic deviations from Christian orthodoxy. Several universities condemned the book and at length he was asked to appear before the faculty at Cologne to answer for his errors. Some correspondence ensued, but meanwhile the popularity of *Augenspiegel* grew, and the support of the learned went increasingly to Reuchlin. In 1513, the Emperor, tiring of the controversy, ordered both sides to be silent, which did not increase the love of the monks for Reuchlin, who seemed to be escaping them completely. Now, the Inquisitor-General, Jacob Hochstraten, openly entered the fight. He hastily called for an inquiry against Reuchlin's works. Pressing his charges without much attention to approved inquisitorial procedure, he heard his own witnesses, condemned *Augenspiegel* as heretical and ordered it burned in the market place. He also ordered everyone possessing a copy to give it up on pain of excommunication. Meanwhile Reuchlin's representatives appealed to Rome. The pope referred the matter to an ecclesiastical hearing at Spire, which eventually declared Reuchlin's book free from heresy and enjoined Hochstraten to keep perpetually silent and to pay the costs of the action. If he refused, he was to be excommunicated forthwith. Hochstraten, however, relied on the prestige of his order with Leo, and although he was a second time defeated in court, he finally escaped with only some reproofs; from the Roman judges in 1516. In 1520, the knight, Franz von Sickingen,

became Reuchlin's champion and obtained a final decision in the aging scholar's favor from Rome. (This decision, however, was later reversed by Pope Leo, who had become frightened by the power of the Lutheran revolt.)

During this long struggle with the Inquisition lasting fully ten years Reuchlin came to symbolize the cause of religious freedom and the integrity of the man of learning. He withstood the animosity and rabble-rousing vengeance of the monks. While he quailed for a brief period before the ominous threats of the Inquisition, he soon recovered his courage and openly maintained the cause of justice and freedom of conscience until his death. At a time when popes declared they would rather meet the enmity of a reigning king than antagonize the orders of mendicant monks, Reuchlin stood firm against them, with only his conscience, his pen, and the voluntary support of other conscientious men to defend him.

To grasp the full measure of Reuchlin's service to northern Europe, it is necessary to realize that there was little or no love of learning in Germany at the time of his birth. There were a few town schools and monastic schools where Latin was taught, and a little Aristotle, but Germany had no Dante, no Boccaccio, no Petrarch or Laurentius Valla. And in Germany, philosophy was more of a slave than a hand-maiden to theology. All teaching was dogmatic exposition. No libraries existed except in the monasteries or the courts of princes and the homes of occasional men of great wealth.

To this land, arid of learning, Reuchlin brought knowledge of Greek. He opened the portal of language to the riches of Platonic and Pythagorean philosophy. Reuchlin's introduction of Hebrew grammar to his countrymen was the beginning of a self-reliant study by Germans of the Bible. Jerome, author of the Vulgate, as Reuchlin pointed out in *Augenspiegel*, failed many times in translating the Old Testament, for want of knowledge of Hebrew. By teaching the Germans Greek, Reuchlin performed a similar service

respecting the New Testament. A firm grounding in Greek gave the Reformers full confidence in their opinions. There was reason for the complaint of the monks: "The Greek language must be guarded against, for it occasions heresies." And when defending himself for having found errors in the Vulgate of Jerome, Reuchlin declared, "Though I honor Jerome as a holy angel. . . . I honor truth more. . . ."

The accomplishments of men like Reuchlin and his followers are not easily understood from a reading of conventional histories of the Reformation. Theirs was a Christianity very different from the Christianity we know today. It was religion ensouled by the spirit of Platonic idealism, by the mysticism of Erigena and Eckhart, strengthened by a knowledge of Rosicrucian secrets and enriched with the occult lore of the Kabalists. These men were, as Francis Barham says,

inspired by doctrines which have since almost evaporated from society. They were, most of them, impressed with a full belief in those very powers of mythology and transcendental philosophy which invested the ancient world with so brilliant a renown. The universal and intense presence of the invisible God, the harmonic scale of Divine hypostases and characters, the refulgent ladder that stretches from heaven to earth, on which angels ascend and descend, were no dreams to them. The living and presiding spirits that pervade the stars of heaven, and fill up the destinies of all mental and physical creations, were no poetic fictions. The pre-existent glory of earthly intelligences, and their lapse into these regions of materialism, was no preposterous fable. And then universal salvability of those who follow the career of education for immortality, no enthusiastic hope, no vague imagining. (*The Life and Times of John Reuchlin*, by Francis Barham, London, 1843.)

Such was the faith of Renaissance Man. The world of spirit, of divine things, interpenetrated with the earthly world, and men of freedom felt themselves to be living in both worlds, the natural denizens of each. Thinking upon the spiritual world of their origin, they found in their earthly existence a mission to fulfill.

It does not seem possible, now, in the twentieth century, to attempt a literal revival of Renaissance beliefs. But what shall we believe in? The psychological truth that greatness of heart the greatness we need in the present hour grows from deep philosophical conviction, is not a truth that can be set aside. It is a fact of history that in order to live an engrossing life, one must have an engrossing faith. It is this which the men of the Renaissance and the Reformation possessed, and which we lack, today. And if we can no longer mine the resources of Greek philosophy, of Pythagorean mysticism and Kabalistic alchemy, we shall have to discover other philosophical riches by looking elsewhere, and more deeply either this, or manufacture our own, from the fabric of experience and the emergency of our need.

Letter from **ENGLAND**

LONDON. Upon his installation as Chancellor of Cambridge University in June, 1948, General Smuts referred to the conditions necessary for creative freedom, now under heavy attack everywhere:

Break the bonds which shackle the human spirit, enlarge the bounds of human reason and freedom, inquire freely into all matters of knowledge, follow the argument whithersoever it may lead: such is the great adventure of civilization, and of its teaching and research laboratory the university.

It is only necessary to state the problem in order to see what a large part must be played by Foreign Affairs in the machinery and thought of modern governments, from the point of view of "the great adventure of civilization." If war be but a continuation of national policy in a competitive world, it is not without interest to observe that Capt. Cyril Falls (military historian) in his *The Second World War* (1948) makes it abundantly clear that the Allies contributed, no less than did their opponents, to the general debasement of civilized behaviour. For one thing, he brings home the ill consequences of "area bombing" (quite apart from its purely military drawbacks) in darkening the future, and declares that the earlier talk about military objectives "was for the most part cant."

One is reminded of Prof. R. H. Tawney's dictum (*Equality*, 1931): "To convert a phenomenon, however interesting, into a principle, however respectable, is an error of logic. It is the confusion of a judgment of fact with a judgment of value." We should pause before we accept present canons of conduct and taste as principles of behaviour.

These matters inevitably form the background, recognized or not, of today's moves in diplomacy and foreign affairs. We may normally disapprove of cruelty and deception; but we are apt to forget that behind the statesman and

the soldier there too often lurks the thinker in his study, forging the hidden weapons of the mind wherewith these others may oppose the formation of nuclei of universal brotherhood. In his review of Hitlerite precursors (*From Luther to Hitler*, London, 1948), Prof. W. M. McGovern shows clearly that new political ideas derived from Darwinism, when linked with eugenics and the racial doctrines of Gobineau and Houston Chamberlain, furnished a basis for the Nazi racial ideology. If we add to the fruit of this harvest the fashionable philosophical definition of the Good, in terms of approval or desire, as being merely that which the things we call good possess in common, it is not astonishing that we find the western world appearing as the spectator "of a degradation of standards paralleled only by the sequel, in the fourth and fifth centuries, to that loss of initiative which paralysed the creative minorities of Antiquity."

In the light of these historical and ethical considerations, diplomacy and statecraft in international affairs become matters of supreme importance to individual men and women, prominent and obscure alike. Delegation of authority, in the sense of representative government, or the grant of power to leaders, carries with it the inescapable sharing of delegated responsibility for future weal or woe. Human solidarity is a fact in nature, and its truth extends to the operations of consciousness. We have to ask ourselves, therefore, if there are (as is commonly held) only two theories about foreign policy, namely, the rationalistic and scientific, and the historical and empirical. The former equates power with atomic bombs; the latter favours expediency over a morality which it argues can be abrogated because of its non-acceptance universally ("the other fellow does not believe as I do therefore, *anything goes*!").

The English people are under no illusions about the horrors of war. They have suffered too much. But it is also true to say that, in the main, they agree instinctively with General Smuts, when

he said at Cambridge that if war is an evil, its ideological substitute is no less an evil, "and must be resolutely faced if mankind is to be saved from an enslavement of the spirit even worse than the old physical slavery of the past." It is really this feeling which determines their attitude to international affairs in East and West. What do the English think is to be done in face of the perils that obviously exist? Their conviction may perhaps best be expressed in these words:

The process is simple. All that is needed is the resolve of hundreds of millions of men and women to do right instead of wrong, and to gain as their reward blessing instead of cursing.

The words are Mr. Churchill's, uttered at Zurich in September, 1946. We can but approve the sentiment, and admit the simplicity of doing right, once the right is known. But how shall all these millions discover what is "right," and gain the resolve to do it? This is the question that our moralists and leaders seem always to leave unanswered.

ENGLISH CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW

BOTH END AND MEANS

IN a new quarterly magazine, *Problems*, published in New York by the Jewish Ethical Society, we have found what seems to us an article of extraordinary insight. It is "Of the Spirit," by Arnold Kamiat. This is no fragmentary vision of the good, no academic synthesis of abstractions, but a driving, practical discussion of what "the spirit" means, or ought to mean, and what ought to be understood by "the spiritual life," in contrast to conventional ideas of morality. Neither Mr. Kamiat's thesis nor any of his meanings is dependent upon the cant phrases of the political and religious theories of the past. Although writing of matters that may be termed transcendental, he appeals directly to the experience of his readers, to their innate moral perceptions, their intellectual understanding and knowledge of historical fact.

Primarily, "Of the Spirit" is a critique of the Marxist view of revolution, but Marx is hardly mentioned, much of the analysis being directed at misconceptions held very largely by political radicals and capitalists alike. The author rejects, first, the idea that the materialism of the present age is a novelty which superseded a more spiritual past. Always, he says, those to whom the things of the spirit matter most have been a small minority. For this minority, he writes,

love, good will, magnanimity, kindness, sympathy, justice, truth, reason, art and beauty are the supreme realities. These constitute life for them; these are the things to be lived, and lived here and now, not in some far-off Utopia. The things of the spirit may be ultimates, but they are to be lived in the immediate here and the immediate now.

Statements of this sort need to be made again and again, because they constitute the verity which doctrinal theories of human betterment consistently ignore or mention only to deprecate as of secondary importance. The real struggle, Mr. Kamiat says, is between the great majority

who give only lip service to these realities, and the few who care for nothing else.

This spiritual minority [he writes] has always provided the world with its greatest and most perplexing problem. In dealing with it, significant alliances have been formed. Radical and conservative, revolutionist and reactionary, exploiter and exploited, master and slave, ruler and subject, priest and atheist, all have stood shoulder to shoulder against prophet and saint, and against the independent seeker after truth. All see in the lowliest and loneliest of men and women of the spirit a menace to the established order of values. Rightly do they perceive in the spirit a revolutionary force, far more revolutionary than the superficial thing that wraps itself in the red flag. Its cry, "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion!" always rings in their ears. Nor can they bear to hear it call them scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!

Mr. Kamiat speaks of the "spiritual illiteracy" and "spiritual immaturity" which make it possible for so many of the majority, whether radical or conservative, to claim that they are seeking after and defending spiritual ends, while their activities involve the use of *anti-spiritual means*.

Spirit [he says] is not a garment to be put on when the season is ripe for its wearing. It is not something that will come to us in the future when we will in some mysterious way become ready for it. Spirit is a way of life, and therefore must be lived, lived here and now, if it is to be real. Spirit is end, and spirit is also means its own means.

A section of this article is devoted to "The Ethical Immaturity of Radicalism," in which the term radicalism is made to apply to the socialist, communist, anarchist and syndicalist movements of this century and the last. The criticism is so searching that it really ought to be reprinted as a short pamphlet and receive wide circulation not just this section, but the entire article. For the present, we can only suggest to MANAS readers that they write to *Problems*, 270 Lafayette St., New York 12, N.Y. for a copy of the July-September issue, in which the article appears.

On the consistency of radical ends and means, apart from revolutionary "theory," we have always been interested, not to say puzzled, by the case

with which some radical intellectuals move into the high-income brackets of capitalist society, whenever opportunity offers and ability permits. It is difficult to imagine a genuine revolutionary rolling in luxury as a Hollywood scenarist, cynically collecting his several hundred dollars a week for writing plausible pap for the masses. One is reminded, also, of Prof. James Burnham, ex-Marxist and author of *The Managerial Revolution*, who is now reaching the great American public through the pages of *Life*, and is also working on a story for book publication and Hollywood production that will deal with the return to the democratic fold of an American Communist couple. There is nothing exactly criminal, of course, in turning an honest penny under the capitalist system; we all have to do it; the point is that most tired radicals, when they stop agitating on street-comers and writing for nothing or almost nothing for the leftwing periodicals, start making money out of the system and do very little else. Even if they still have radical motives, they find no *means* for free individual effort in their theories of radicalism. On a personal basis, therefore, there seems to be very little ethical difference between capitalists and such radicals. According to C. Wright Mills' *The New Men of Power*, radical writers often rise to well-paid positions on periodicals serving the mass public. A former Trotskyist, he says, edits a leading American business journal and a group of magazines with enormous circulation seems deliberately to select for editorial training bright young men from the left. Mr. Mills is endeavoring to show how radical thinking filters down to the masses, but his illustrations must also indicate the attenuation of radical principles and character. The radical movement, in other words, has to eat at Mammon's table or starve; it has no theory of organic social change, no ends that are also means.

Without ends that are also means, the intelligent radical whose radicalism is neither mere intellectualism nor escapism becomes a frustrated man. He cannot go to work. That, we think, is

the basic reason why Mr. Kamiat is right when he says that there is "no old-world vice that radicals have failed to perpetuate." The decadences of the capitalist world taste as sweet to the tired radical as to the tired business man. Both modern radicalism and modern reaction are foes of the human spirit. "Both fear it and both conspire to smother it." Neither has any real use for the qualities of the spiritual life goodness and truth and reason and sympathy and love.

COMMENTARY

CHRISTMAS EDITORIAL

IT is seldom that one magazine prints for an editorial an announcement by another magazine. However, with Christmas almost here, we can think of no better use of our space, this week, than to reprint from the Summer, 1948 *Politics* (just out) a portion of Nancy Macdonald's report on the *Politics* Packages-for-Europe program:

We desperately need more American families who will become regular package-senders. Today we have on our active list 485 European families who are receiving packages of food and clothing regularly from our readers. (218 are German and Austrian, 132 are Spanish Republicans living in France, 135 are of various other nationalities.) Of these, 86 families have no regular donors and to them we send commercial packages from our general fund as often as we can. . . . What we need is a regular package-sender for each one . . .

At the moment we have unfilled requests for a hearing aid, surgical girdle, pills for anemia, medicine for women with multiple sclerosis . . . During the past year we met many such requests . . . We supplied a number of layettes for newborn babies . . . We bought underwear, blankets, coal to help keep our families warm.

And we got letters like this: ". . . I can understand, of course, that this help cannot last forever. But without your help we would simply starve. It is hard for me to write you like this. But it is for my daughter, Annemarie, who is so thin and who often has fainting spells. And Annemarie is the only thing I have left in this world. I hope you don't mind. . . ."

In September we Dwight and I had to send \$150 worth of CARE packages from our own pockets because no money had come in to keep a few packages going to our 86 donorless families. And in addition we expended another \$150 during the summer for food, postage, cleaning and medicines which has not been repaid. *At this writing we have \$16.31 in the Politics-Packages-for-Europe fund. . . .*

But above all we need friends who will send packages regularly themselves to one of . . . the 86 families who need your friendship and your aid. *Please write in to us today and tell us what you can do.*

45 Astor Place, New York 3, N.Y.

Politics began this program in October, 1945. Nothing of any contribution is spent for administration if you give money, it goes for food

and other necessities, all clerical help, etc., being voluntary. But, as Nancy Macdonald says, the real need is for persons to adopt families on a package-a-month or a package-a-week basis.

A tremendous impetus to the whole package-mailing idea was given by the Macdonalds, back in 1945, and they've never stopped working at it. They probably don't care much about "recognition," but they certainly could use some help.

CHILDREN ... AND OURSELVES

A CORRESPONDENT writes:

In a recent column you said, "Far more important than what adolescents do is how they think about what they do," and that "it is the basic moral direction of their actions that counts." Suggestions of this sort to adolescents sometimes seem "stuffy" to them, and one may also appear to be leaving out something very important that there is a certain exhilaration in doing things impulsively. To have to *think* about it first seems to take all the joy out of the experience.

This question raises a subtle point. Perhaps, in such instances, both the parent and the child are partially right. Formal processes of thought many times amount to a stepping aside from the vital currents of life's experiences. Our somewhat plodding analytical efforts tend to remove us from the sphere of adventure and intense experience, *unless* the thoughts can be fully incorporated in behavior. The child usually suspects that the parent's request for "more thinking" is part of a maneuver for restrictions on behavior. Young people have an aversion to all thou-shalt-nots, for as one author has put it: "While youth is concerned with working out a philosophy of life, old age is absorbed in working out a philosophy of death." A "philosophy of life" is sometimes built upon an enthusiastic entry into every sort of available experience, whereas "a philosophy of death" not the Socratic kind may be a protective device by which we seek to preserve ourselves from turmoil, social difficulty or physical destruction. A concern about death is the concern for self-survival, which inevitably translates itself into terms of protective restrictions on our behavior.

The defense of the unfettered attitude may be assisted by citing two opinions. Confucius remarked that he was finally able to reach a state where the things he "desired" were also the things that were good for him. Thomas Carlyle, approaching the same basic question, wrote that

"the end of man is an *action* and not a *thought*, though it were the noblest." Both Confucius and Carlyle are saying that the object of living is not to evade certain experiences or feelings, nor to escape the difficulties of turbulent action, but to exist undisturbed and creative in the *midst* of turbulent action.

Such deliberations lead to the Platonic formulation that each man is a psychic-self as well as a moral-self and a physical-self. The important distinction between Plato's point of view and all theological discussions of the good and evil in man is that Plato envisioned no need for escape from the psychic self; he looked forward, as the tenth book of the *Republic* relates, to the *return* of the "moral self" to the very realm of psychic disturbance which had been quitted. For Plato, this return meant the rebirth of the soul on earth a new taking up of a fascinating burden, instead, after death, of a permanent sojourn beyond the ravishments of sensory experience. Perhaps the child, in an instinctive repudiation of "safe" or "Prudent" approaches to life, bequeathed to us by the sin-conscious centuries of the past, is trying to assert his faith that the object of life is simply to *live* not to "learn" to avoid mistakes, not to reach Heaven or Nirvana. That child needs to think, to choose wisely, but he need not think that the mind must always express itself in terms of restrictions.

Despite the fact that we are a pleasure-seeking society, we pursue enjoyment with a certain sense of guilt, and this might account for the fatal attraction of many kinds of depravity. The idea of original sin still lurks in unsuspected corners of our minds, as psychiatrists are constantly discovering. While spending a large portion of our money on dissipations and "pleasures of the senses," we do not do this with full enjoyment. We are afraid to *think* about our enjoyments for fear that such thought will compel us to deny ourselves the things we wish to do, but we want our *children* to think, precisely because we feel it better for them to deny themselves the things *they* wish to do and of

course we want to do most of their thinking for them. We wish them to be disciplined, often because of a sense of guilt stemming from our failure to discipline ourselves.

This may sound as if we are building up a defense for the child who tends to forget all duties and responsibilities, all sense of moral concern, in the pursuit of impulsive action a manifestly absurd position. Naturally, such defense is not our intention, yet a recognition of the complexities in the desire to justify spontaneity may lead to a better understanding of our children's tendencies and to some new departures toward harmonizing moral and emotional impulses. It is not, for instance, necessary to deny that spontaneous action is the best sort of action if it is mature. By "spontaneous" action, we mean that action in which we can engage wholeheartedly and immediately, without indecision and the delay of troubled conscience. Yet only those impulses which reflect the most satisfactory action possible in any given moment are truly rewarding. The desire of a youth to throw himself entirely into the excitement of a game can only be fulfilled if nothing important is left undone before participation in the game begins. The child who wishes to play football, though he is supposed to mow the lawn, does not necessarily have to choose enjoyment in his own terms at the expense of a sin against his parent's conception of good and evil. His "impulse" may drive him to run all the way home from school, mow most of the lawn, run all the way to the football game and finish the lawn next morning.

If a child can do this, or its equivalent, his "impulses" may lead him to the highest development of his capacities, and it is possible that even fantastic attempts to "do everything at once" should not be discouraged by parents. Of course, the parents are completely right in suggesting "that it is the basic direction of actions that counts." But no slur need necessarily be cast upon the potentialities of spontaneous feeling. We can eventually be spontaneous and moral at

the same time, if Confucius is right, whereas we usually suggest to children that they must mournfully choose the least attractive of the two.

FRONTIERS

FRONT AGAINST DISASTER

EVER since, some weeks ago, we discussed Fairfield Osborn's *Our Plundered Planet*, we have had the impression that a new front for human betterment is slowly forming a front that is at once scientific, humanitarian, and non-ideological, although it may advocate ideas destined eventually to become "political," in the sense that opposition to war, famine and suffering often takes on political significance.

Participants in this front, hardly yet a "united" one for which we probably should be thankful include crusading soil conservationists such as Mr. Osborn and William Vogt, the leaders of the organic gardening movement and their many thousands of followers, and a handful of sociologists who are devoted to the reconstruction of community life.

Behind the arguments of the conservationists seems to be the recognition that a country overtaken by permanent famine will have a regimented, rationed society as inevitably as a country overtaken by a permanent state of war or fear of war. And the children of believers in free speech are as vulnerable to malnutrition as the children of totalitarian lands. Hungry, undernourished children, we have been told again and again, grew up into neurotic candidates for Hitler's Storm Troopers. Twisted and dwarfed in body, they lacked the stamina to resist the moral corruptions of Nazism. They didn't *have* to embrace the Nazi dogmas, of course; like the fraction of men who resisted to the end to death or liberation the dehumanizing process of the concentration camps and the death camps, they might have seen, had they been morally strong, that to become Nazis was to perpetuate for future generations the sufferings they had themselves endured; but they chose the easier way of hating and blaming others, instead of the strenuous way of rebuilding their lives and their country for good. Chronic hunger, among peoples with imperialistic tendencies, seems to have this effect.

The familiar political solution for such developments is war, generally applied by other

nations after the cycle of human degradation is complete, the neurosis of hate and resentment hardened and fixed. Then, to the accompaniment of blaring self-righteousness and vows to erase the fascist infamy, a crusade is launched to protect the "free" peoples of the world from maddened, invading hordes of unrighteous men; and, when the war is over, the conditions from which maddened, unrighteous hordes usually arise have been multiplied a hundred or a thousand fold. This is the course of the political "solution" oversimplified, perhaps, in some respects, but not overdrawn, nor with neglect of any factors which can change or essentially modify the end result.

The bald fact which remains, after matters of "moral responsibility" or "guilt" have been decided, is that the destructive processes which preceded the war, are associated with the causes of war, which are vastly accelerated *by* the war, and which survive in amplified power *after* the war, are still regarded as separate, distinct, and even unrelated to the war itself.

What are those processes? They are many, but they have a single origin in the psychology of imperialism imperialism toward nature and toward man. The conservationists attack directly the attitude of imperialism toward nature. Armed with facts and figures, they keep saying, "You can't get away with it." Nature is not an inexhaustible horn of plenty. Spend a day at the library, and read what they say. Read Fairfield Osborn's *Our Plundered Planet*, read William Vogt's *Road to Survival* and Ward Shepard's *Food and Famine*. To be sure you know both sides, read the distorting and minimizing review of such books in *Time* for Nov. 8. If you have only an hour or two, at least read the summary of Vogt's views in *Harper's* for last June, C. Lester Walker's "Too Many People" in *Harper's* for last February, another article with the same title in *Satevepost* for Oct. 16, and "Proteins and Procreation" by David Loth in the *United Nations World* for November.

Dr. Ehrenfried Pfeiffer, a spokesman for organic gardening (in his case, for "biodynamic" gardening), recently told a Los Angeles audience of testing a big, luscious carrot for carotene known technically as Vitamin A, but called carotene because carrots

normally contain a lot of it. He found no trace of carotene in the giant carrot a fact requiring some explanation. He blames this lack and many similar deficiencies in common food plants on mistreatment of the soil, usually by the excessive use of strong chemical fertilizers.

When *Time* gets around to reviewing the organic gardeners' ideas, it will probably say that a *real* scientist would have found plenty of carotene in the carrot, just as it said, of the warnings of Osborn and Vogt, "To the real agricultural scientists, close to the soil and its sciences, such pessimism sounds silly or worse." But we find Dr. Pfeiffer's science "real" enough to want to quote some more from his lecture, such as the fact that pastureland sprayed with liquid manure will grow lush, green grass which cows will devour avidly, but which often kills the cows with acute inflammation of the heart muscles. Liquid manure, it seems, is "green" it has not had time to ferment and contains too much potassium. Plants overfed with potassium absorb far more than they need and take on so much water in the process that they don't get other important minerals, sodium, for instance. The cows died because their organisms drew on the stored sodium in the heart-muscles to correct this lack. The big carrot examined by Dr. Pfeiffer, he said, was grown in soil over-fertilized with potassium.

Other elements important in trace quantities for food-producing soil are boron, copper, cobalt and manganese. One doctor found that undulant fever was caused by a pituitary and brain deficiency of three of these elements. According to Dr. Pfeiffer, in two years this physician has had no recurrence of undulant fever in 450 patients treated by restoring these elements to their bodies in the proper proportions.

For the thinking of the people who are working, in one way or another, for the humanization of the social community, read the books of Arthur Morgan and investigate the work of Community Service (Yellow Springs, Ohio). For another phase of the problem, John Collier's *Indians of the Americas* and the *News Letter* of the Institute of Ethnic Affairs (810 18th St., N.W., Washington 6, D.C.), in particular the July-August number, provide basic

material. In the latter publication, Mr. Collier quotes from Ward Shepard:

Mankind is fighting a slow retreat before the gathering forces of famine. An ominously and swiftly increasing process of soil destruction is undermining the foundations of our shaky civilization. . . . Armed with machinery and industrialism, modern man is devastating the farms, the grasslands and the forests of most of the world. In the long evolutionary chain of life, he is the only creature who has achieved the dubious distinction of being able to destroy nature's harmony and fecundity on a cosmic scale.

Mr. Collier is himself concerned with what he calls the central crisis of our time the "pulverization and erosion of the social being of culture and community and social personality through uncontrolled industrialism and through mass communication at lowest-common-denominator levels: a social, intellectual and spiritual erosion and wastage fully paralleling the wastage of forests and soils and phosphates and the pollution of waters and the wreckage inflicted upon the ecological web of life."

When the issues presented by the conservationists, the organic-gardening nutritionists and by the sociologists of the sort we have mentioned are wholly understood, the political questions of the time will lose much of their meaning, not because there are no important principles represented by those questions, but because they are so badly represented by them that the principles are taking on new forms and must be recognized all over again. The principles which support the good life for human beings have, we think, found a new front and new champions . . . but look into the matter for yourself.