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CONTRASTING WORLD VIEWS

WE turned, recently, to a resource that is always available—the books on our shelves—and read a little in a collection of Albert Camus' essays which, shortly before his death, he had selected for publication in English. The book is part of the Modern Library and is titled *Resistance, Rebellion, and Death.* It opens with four letters "to a German Friend." The first of these letters was written in July of 1943. In it he says:

> I want to tell you at once what sort of greatness keeps us going. But this amounts to telling you what kind of courage we applaud, which is not your kind. For it is not much to be able to do violence when you have been simply preparing for it for years and when violence is more natural to you than thinking. It is a great deal, on the other hand, to face torture and death when you know for a fact that hatred and violence are empty things in themselves. It is a great deal to fight while despising war, to accept everything while still preferring happiness, to face destruction while cherishing the idea of a higher civilization. That is how we do more than you because we have to draw on ourselves. You had nothing to conquer in your heart or in your intelligence. We had two enemies, and a military victory was not enough for us, as it was for you who had nothing to overcome.
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> We had much to overcome—and, first of all, the constant temptation to emulate you. For there is always something in us that yields to instinct, to contempt for intelligence, to the cult of efficiency. Our great virtues eventually become tiresome to us. We become ashamed of our intelligence, and sometimes we imagine some barbarous state where truth would be effortless. But the cure for this is easy; you are there to show us what such imagining would lead to, and we mend our ways. If I believed in some fatalism in history, I should suppose that you are placed beside us, helots of the intelligence, as our living reproof. Then we reawaken to the mind and we are more at ease.
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> But we also had to overcome the suspicion we had of heroism. I know, you think that heroism is alien to us. You are wrong. It's just that we profess heroism and we distrust it at the same time. We profess it because ten centuries of history have given us knowledge of all that is noble. We distrust it because ten centuries of intelligence have taught us the art and blessings of being natural. In order to face up to you, we had first to be at death's door. And this is why we fell behind all of Europe, which wallowed in falsehood the moment it was necessary, while we were concerned with seeking truth. This is why we were defeated in the beginning: because we were so concerned, while you were falling upon us, to determine in our hearts whether right was on our side.

Camus wrote to his German friend from his heart, speaking for France, yet he knew quite well that not all Frenchmen thought as he did. He explains in his preface:

> When the author of these letters says "you," he means not "you Germans" but "you Nazis." When he says "we," this signifies not always "we Frenchmen" but sometimes "we free Europeans." I am contrasting two attitudes, not two nations, even if, at a certain moment of history, these two nations personified two enemy attitudes. To repeat a remark that is not mine, I love my country too much to be a nationalist. . . . I loathe none but executioners.

Like Socrates and Plato, like Emerson and Thoreau, indeed like the Buddha and Lao-tse, Camus addressed himself to the best in human beings, no matter whatever else was in them. And like all these great predecessors, he spoke to individuals, not clubs or parties. There seems a sense in which all his work, his novels and plays as well as his essays, are informed by an understanding of the truth in Dostoevsky's Legend of the Grand Inquisitor in *The Brothers Karamazov.* Mankind does not love freedom so much as security, as the old inquisitor maintained, and Jesus had appealed to the noble and self-reliant qualities in human beings, to which only the few responded. Yet those few keep on working to inspire their fellows, regardless of how hypocrites and conformists distort what they say.

How do the times of Plato, of the Neoplatonists, differ from our own? Circumstances are of course very different. Our man-made environment has been transformed, but human nature, as a reading of Plato will show, has remained much the same. Yet the inner environment of the ideas we have about the world and about ourselves is radically different. For the Greeks, the world, the other planets and the sun, all embodied life and intelligence and purpose—the universe had meaning, even though that meaning may have remained obscure, and the meaning was moral. According to Socrates, the man who sought and practiced justice was a moral man, and human life was a school of morality. Politics, as the pursuit of power, was useless unless it grew from the determination of just men. Plato withdrew from public life in his youth, since he saw little but corruption in the practice of politics in his time, resolved to devote all his energies to discover ing how and whether or not virtue can be taught. For him, this was the pursuit of meaning.

In our own time we view the world—and the entire universe—as we have been taught to think by the physical scientists. No one raises the question of the "meaning" of the world, which is conceived to be a vast accidental machine which in some measure we have learned to operate. Whether the world may have a meaning independent of what we can do with it gets no attention. Our knowledge is all operational, and amoral. In his book, *Saving the Appearances*, Owen Barfield tells a story to show the kind of knowledge we have:

> Take a clever boy, who knows nothing about the principles of internal combustion or the inside of an engine, and leave him inside a motor-car first telling him to move the various knobs, switches and levers about and see what happens. If no disaster supervenes, he will end by finding himself able to drive the car. It will then be true to say that he knows how to drive the car but untrue to say that he knows the car. As to that, the most we could say would be that he has an "operative" knowledge of it—because for operation all that is required is a good empirical acquaintance with the dashboard and the pedals. Whatever we say, it is obvious that what he has is very different from the knowledge of someone else who has studied mechanics, internal combustion and the construction of motor cars, though he has perhaps never driven a car in his life, and is perhaps too nervous to try. Now whether there is another kind of knowledge of nature, which corresponds to "engine knowledge" in the analogy, it seems that, if the first view of the nature of scientific theory is accepted, the kind of knowledge aimed at by science must be in effect, what I will call "dashboard knowledge."

In modern times—starting, say, with the eighteenth century—men concerned with the injustices going on in the world, and convinced that better arrangements could be put in place, began to think about the political changes that seemed at least possible. One great result was the French Revolution, which became the archetype, in the years that followed, of other radical changes in the forms of government around the Western world. In France there were of course differences of opinion among the various groups of Revolutionists, but absolute power was finally obtained by the Jacobins led by Robespierre, who executed his rivals, including the King and many of the French nobles and aristocrats. The Jacobins, as Ortega shows in *The Modern Theme*, were Cartesian rationalists absolutely convinced of the righteous logic of their reason. All who differ from their conclusions "assume a positively criminal aspect" and must be destroyed—the accomplishment of the reign of Terror. But enough blood had been spilt to horrify the French, and the Jacobins followed their victims to the guillotine.

Not long after that Napoleon came to power and the Revolution was at an end, more or less of a failure. Applying Barfield's analogy, you could say that the French Revolutionists made the mistake of supposing they understood how to transform society by the politics of blood and terror, supposing that the passions of the Paris mob could be a substitute for the will of the people. But their Cartesian confidence gave them no understanding of human nature. In her book,

On Revolution, Hannah Arendt draws a comparison between the French and the American Revolution, pointing to the irony that the French Revolution, which was a failure, became the accepted model for later revolutionists, while the American Revolution, which was a success, was ignored.

Why was the American Revolution a success? Mainly because the Founding Fathers were experienced, well-read, and sagacious men well aware of our ignorance of human nature and the difficulty of foreseeing what will be the outcome of political decisions. They guarded against the assumption of political power and divided the decision-making functions to protect people from themselves. They well understood that a political transformation does not necessarily lead to a moral regeneration—a lesson that has been more or less ignored by later political reformers. Only Gandhi realized this, perhaps even more clearly, and he said that the liberation from Britain was only the beginning for the social and moral changes that needed to take place in India. This is still the realization that both revolutionary and political reformers need to absorb.

Among contemporary thinkers, only the anarchists seem to have grasped facts of this sort, and while the previous generation of anarchists seemed to think it necessary to have one last "revolution" to put an end to all authoritative government, the anarchists of today are wary of any sort of political involvement. As George Woodcock puts it in a review of the anarchism of Paul Goodman (in a new edition of *Anarchist Papers* issued by Black Rose Books, in Montreal—$12.95 in paperback):

> Anarchists often deny tradition, since the appeal to the past seems to them a way of admitting the validity of authority. Yet no observer of the movement can fail to note how interested they are in the ancestry of their teachings, and how much attention among those among them with a historical bent—like Kropotkin, Max Netlau and Rudolf Rocker—have given to the construction of family trees reaching back not merely to the French Revolution or to the Diggers in the English Revolution but to distant forebears like Zeno the Stoic and Lao-Tse and Jesus Christ, whose apostles, according to one historian of the movement, formed "the first anarchist society."

Woodcock also says:

> Goodman's views on education show, admirably, the nature of both his conservatism and his traditionalism. He recognizes and lives by the great philosophies and the great poetry of the past, and what he perceives with apprehension is the way modern methods and systems of education have broken the lines of connection by which mankind's total achievement over the centuries can remain a living part of the present. One alarming result of this kind of alienation is that science has escaped from the modifying and moralizing influence of the humanities. And so he commends not the invention of new systems, but experiments in simplification, for, as he has said: "A free society cannot be the substitution of a 'new order' for the old order; it is the extension of spheres of free action until they make up most of the social life." (*Drawing the Line.*)
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> And often freedom can involve a stepping back rather than a stepping forward so that it becomes appropriate to consider how the medieval universities operated without the crushing superstructures of modern academic institutions, and how the guild systems of apprenticeship produced not merely good workmen but also well-rounded intelligences, so that we owe to the free cities of the middle ages so many of the innovations that led to the enlargement of life during the modern era.

Anarchist critics in the present are especially valuable for the reason that they have no aspirations toward political power and no interest in devising defenses of the policies which are making the planet less and less inhabitable by human beings and other forms of life. An example is the chapter on Social Ecology in Murray Bookchin's recent book, *The Modern Crisis* (New Society Publishers, 1986, $7.95 paperback). Bookchin says:

> We are clearly beleaguered by an ecological crisis of monumental proportions—a crisis that visibly stems from the ruthless exploitation and pollution of the planet. We rightly attribute the social sources of this crisis to a competitive marketplace spirit that reduces the entire world of life, including humanity, to merchandisable objects, to mere

commodities with price tags that are to be sold at a profit and economic expansion. The ideology of this spirit is expressed in the notorious marketplace maxim: "Grow or die!"—a maxim that identifies limitless growth with "progress" and the "mastery of nature" with "civilization." The results of this tide of exploitation and pollution have been grim enough to yield serious forecasts of complete planetary breakdown, a degree of devastation of soil, forests, waterways, and atmosphere that has no precedent in the history of our species.

In this respect our market-oriented society is unique in contrast with other societies in that it places no limits on growth and egotism. The antisocial principles that "rugged individualism" is the primary motive for social improvement and competition the engine for social progress stand sharply at odds with all past eras that valued selflessness as the authentic trait of human nobility and cooperation as the authentic evidence of social virtue, however much these prized attributes were honored in the breach. Our marketplace society has, in effect, made the worst features of earlier times into its more honored values and exhibited a degree of brutality in the global wars of this century that makes the cruelties of history seem mild by comparison.

In our discussions of modern ecological and social crises, we tend to ignore a more underlying mentality of domination that humans have used for centuries to justify the domination of each other and, by extension, of nature. I refer to an image of the natural world that sees nature itself as "blind," "mute," "cruel," "competitive," and "stingy," a seemingly demonic "realm of necessity" that opposes "man's" striving for freedom and self-realization . . . Progress is seen as the extrication of humanity from the muck of a mindless, unthinking, and brutish domain or what Jean Paul Sartre so contemptuously called the "slime of history," into the presumably clear light of reason and civilization.

What has been the result?

This all-encompassing image of an intractable nature that must be tamed by a rational humanity has given us a domineering form of reason, science, and technology—a fragmentation of humanity into hierarchies, classes, state institutions, gender, and ethnic divisions. It has fostered nationalistic hatreds, imperialistic adventures, and a global philosophy of rule that identifies order with dominance and submission. . . .

The split that clerics and philosophers projected centuries ago in their visions of a soulless nature and a denatured soul has been realized in the form of a disastrous fragmentation of humanity and nature, indeed, in our time, of the human psyche itself. A direct line or logic of events flows almost unrelentingly from a warped image of the natural world to the warped contours of the social world, threatening to bury society in a "slime of history" that is not of nature's making but of man's—specifically, the early hierarchies from which economic classes emerged; the systems of domination, initially of woman by man, that have yielded highly rationalized systems of exploitation; and the vast armies of warriors, priests, monarchs, and bureaucrats who emerged from the simple status groups of tribal society to become the institutionalized tyrants of the market society.

Bookchin contrasts with this the *Mutual Aid* of Peter Kropotkin and quotes from William Trager's *Symbiosis* (1970) a striking passage:

The conflict in nature between different kinds of organisms has been popularly expressed in phrases like the "struggle for existence" and the "survival of the fittest." Yet few people realized that mutual cooperation between organisms—symbiosis—is just as important, and that the "fittest" may be the one that helps another to survive.

Critical writing such as Bookchin contributes makes clear how influential on our behavior is the way we think about ourselves and the world. When we believe, with the physicists, that the world is without meaning, it seems to us wholly natural to pursue power as the highest good, the consequences of which are now before us.

A question, one seldom raised, may be asked. What would be the prevailing attitude, today, toward the world and its resources, and toward ourselves, if the mindset of the times were based on the idea of reincarnation, as it was centuries ago in India, as Plato taught, and as the Neoplatonists such as Plotinus and Porphyry maintained? Would we then regard the world as a jumble of forces accidentally focused on our planet, holding no future save the ultimate heat death of universal entropy? Or would there be a sense of at least the possibility of fulfillment and

completion of our unfinished business in some future life?

The doctrine of rebirth, linked with the ancient idea of Karma, is the moral law of cause and effect. It has been said that this idea of universal process is the teaching of hope and responsibility—certainly the qualities now most needed by all the peoples of the world. It will be asked, "But how can we know that these teachings are *true?"* and the answer to this question does not come easily, since we have a conception of "proof" which rules out the longing and intuitions of past ages as but wishful thinking. Yet if we are willing to try out beginning to think in these terms, as a way of applying the test of practice, we might make some discoveries that provide the evidence we need. A book devoted to this subject: *Reincarnation: The Phoenix Fire Mystery*, by Joseph Head and S. L. Cranston, has recently been restored to print by Gown Publishers and is now available in a paperback of more than 600 pages at $10.95. This work is a veritable encyclopedia of both reincarnation and karma, providing quotation from hundreds if not thousands of world thinkers. This testimony is surely worth examining.

REVIEW
THE CHOICE UPON US

THE fruits of a conference held late in 1983 at the University of New Mexico, in which both physicists and depth psychologists gathered to consider the threat of nuclear war and the basis of such a war in modern thinking, are presented by Image Seminars, Inc., sponsors of the Conference, in a paperback book, *Nuclear Reactions*, edited by Evelyn McConeghey and James McConnell. In her introduction, Evelyn McConeghey gives the reason for the conference and the resulting book:

> For some time we in Image Seminars have been uneasy about much of the "peace education" which is being proposed as an antidote to a world gone insane on the subject of defense and weapons. We questioned the effectiveness of a peace education that consists in a barrage of information about the medical effects of nuclear war, the destructive power of modern missiles, the financial burden of our present so-called "defense program" and the duplicity of elected officials.
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> All of these are known, yet that knowledge has not changed the course of events. In fact, we felt that exclusive focus on the probability of nuclear war could help bring about the feared event. We were seeking through conference a new approach to peace education which would be more basic and more effective than the approaches currently being taken by various peace movement groups. A dialogue between modern physics and archetypal psychology seemed to offer hope of finding effective approaches.

Nuclear Reactions provides the statements of seven participants, who were obviously not all of the same general opinion. However, as Evelyn McConeghey says:

> One point on which all the speakers were in agreement was that the unstable and dangerous world situation is largely the result of a world view which is basically the view that was integral to classical physics, a view of the universe as a machine—a view still held by much of the world's population—a mode of thinking that threatens to bring the human race to an end. It is this mode of thinking (the very manner in which we create our world view) that was seen as the greatest present danger to the planet, for it is this mode of thinking that keeps us preparing for war while at the same time insisting we are doing it to maintain peace.

In our discussion of the content of *Nuclear Reactions*, we shall focus on the first two contributors, Douglas Sloan, editor of *Teachers College Record*, and Roger Jones, Associate Professor of Physics, University of Minnesota, both of whom examine critically the idea of the world as a machine.

Sloan begins by pointing out that modern man looks at the world as a mere "onlooker," one who is separate from the world, but who believes that it may be understood by a study of its parts. This man also thinks that reality is made up of quantitative things which can be measured, counted, or weighed. All else is merely "subjective," of comparatively little importance. These attitudes are not without benefits to the practical man, who becomes better able to manipulate the world around him. But Sloan goes on:

> However, these potential benefits all depend on some connections to the larger matrix of meaning being maintained. If the individual is separated out only to lose connection with the whole freedom becomes not simply critical thinking, but a nihilistic, meaningless thinking, and individuality loses its new potential for entering into a larger unity of free and loving relationships and sinks instead into a kind of atomistic individualism—an individualism cut off from others, cut off from the source of meaning in the world. The modern atomistic individual oscillates continually between lonely separation on the one hand, and ironically, a totalitarian collectivism on the other. An aggregation of atomistic individuals is ripe for being herded together, organized and put into some kind of collective, totalitarian order.

This development has dire implications for education:

> An education that focuses totally on the development of analytical, calculative skills, particularly among children at a very young age, is an education that ironically will never lead to a really developed analytical reason. It will lead instead to a truncated reason that is always subject to irrational urges, and that has no real access to insight and intuition and newness. The present arms race is an

excellent example. Here we have an exquisitely developed narrow reality in the service of the most irrational and brutal drives of the human being.

Dr. Sloan, as a teacher, seeks a transformation in our thinking that would "recognize the priority of life, the priority of consciousness, the priority of quality—not just as a theory, but as realities that begin to dissolve that collective unconscious in which we all find ourselves caught every day." Here are some further implications for education:

> What would such an education be? It would be education in which fairytale, story, myth, history, and poetry provide a joy and immersion in the delights and intrinsic importance of words and the living images they invoke. It would be education in which a lively image-making capacity and rich feeling-life are nourished as absolutely essential to the development of strong thinking, full of insight and new awareness.
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> It is at this point that educators need to ask very, very serious questions about the use of computers in education, particularly for the young child. Are computers going to have the effect of narrowing the kinds of creative, inner qualitative images which the child will have available, particularly if the images that the computers bring are themselves terribly powerful, and operate directly on the child's mind at a time when that mind is at its most plastic and formative stages? In the long run, is that going to narrow and inhibit the development of a lively, full image-making capacity that will be needed for a living/thinking later on?

Douglas Sloan rises to eloquence when he comes to the education we need, and which our children need.

> It would be an education guided by an awareness and respect for the rhythms and growth of learning, rather than by hothouse attempts to force young children to become little calculating adults, and little breathing computers.
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> It would be an education that values meaningful social relationships and the presence of caring, trustworthy persons. It would be an education that nourishes social feeling and social responsibility, and fosters a desire to understand the needs and outlooks of others. It would be an education, for example, that would prepare us to understand the Russian people about whom a colossal ignorance exists from top to bottom in our society; possibly because we now have an education in which the other is not seen as a source of genuine knowledge. . . .
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> To realize these possibilities would mean beginning to discover the grounds for hope that can also nourish us and provide the kind of steadfast courage that we are going to need in the decades to come in order to halt the drive toward destruction in which we are now caught.

Roger Jones, whose *Physics as Metaphor* was reviewed in MANAS a few years ago, does what he can to restore the dignity of mind and its central role in the life of human beings. After summarizing the effect of scientific thinking since the time of Copernicus, he says:

> Not only do we have a picture of a vast universe which reduces us to insignificant, feeble and minuscule creatures, but our very existence has no rhyme or reason. It is pure chance. Quantum mechanics, in fact, tells us that the ultimate basis of all physical occurrences is random chance. There is no intelligent plan or order except at the level of statistics and probability. The fact that life and consciousness exist doesn't have any meaning, significance, or purpose. We are not here for any reason. . . .
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> Furthermore, the very desire to find purpose and meaning—the human quest of many thousands of years standing—is itself considered to be unscientific, and worst of all, anthropomorphic. What could be worse than to be anthropomorphic—to foolishly seek human meaning in a nature which is obviously dead, inert, meaningless and lifeless? It is primitive and superstitious to search for meaning! What science has been all about for the last 500 years is to overcome all the anthropomorphism, mysticism, superstition, and wishful thinking of the previous 2,000 years (and probably many thousands of years before that).
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> I often think that if one cause needs to be championed in taking a stance against modern science it is anthropomorphism—it is the defense of human meaning, intelligence and spirit in the cosmos. . . .
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> Science, which had its roots in this quest for meaning, purpose and value—to anthropomorphize the world, if you will—this quest somehow got converted into the scientific approach, into the mathematical description. And the psychic, inner realm was somehow left out of the picture. Scientific

> description became dominant, forgot its roots and finally denied the very existence of meaning. There is a supreme irony in the fact that quantum theory—the end product of our long quest for meaning—now tells us that the world is meaningless. . . . The search for knowledge and understanding—the attempt to find meaning—now negates the very search itself. Something has to be crazy about that.

The meaninglessness of the world, according to science becomes a natural framework for nuclear war.

Roger Jones concludes his essay by asking:

> Are we going to continue to allow ourselves to be belittled and diminished for wanting to find meaning? This quest is part of our nature, part of the nature of the cosmos. It isn't just an idiosyncratic, neurotic tendency in human beings to want meaning. The meaning is in the cosmos and we are part of it. We participate in it, and our consciousness is part of it all. It is natural for us to want to tune in on that. . . We can no longer allow our mechanistic dreams and nightmares to dominate us. We can make the beautiful dreams that foretell that world's future or we can fall prey to our own horrible nightmares. The choice is up to us.

COMMENTARY
IN THE OZARKS

A BOOK we have been reading requires notice here—mainly because we couldn't stop reading it until we came to the end. It is *A Country Year* by Sue Hubbell, a lady in her fifties who is no longer married because both she and her husband decided they no longer needed to live together and he went away, leaving her the beekeeping business they had, both content with this arrangement, or they became so. What is compelling about the book is the lady's competence in making her own life on a bee farm and the pleasure she finds working rather hard at things which, at first, she knew little or nothing about. Women will enjoy this book, and so will men. We don't have much space here so it seems best to let Sue Hubbell speak for herself. Out of her Foreword:

> I have lived here in the Ozark Mountains of southern Missouri for twelve years now, and for most of that time I have been alone. I have learned to run a business that we started together, a commercial beekeeping and money-producing operation, a shaky, marginal sort of affair that never quite leaves me free of money worries but which allows me to live in these hills that I love. . . . Over the past twelve years I have learned that a tree needs space to grow, that coyotes sing down by the creek in January, that I can drive a nail into oak only when it is green, that bees know more about making honey than I do, that love can become sadness, and that there are more questions than answers.

She and her bees—hives on other farms as well as hers, because the farmers want the bees to help with pollination—make enough honey for her to live on. This is not really a book on beekeeping, but a book about living with and getting along with bees—bees and other creatures, such as black rat snakes, one of which swallowed a pair of baby phoebes whose nest was under the eaves of her honey processing house. One day she heard a terrible ruckus outside, to find that a rat snake had managed to invade the nest and swallow the little birds. She "grabbed the snake by the tail and shook him hard. The baby birds dropped from his mouth, wet but undigested." She threw the snake as far as she could, put the birds back in the nest, and, remarkably enough, the parents accepted this service. The little phoebes eventually learned to fly.

That is one of the adventurous parts of this book, which has more variety than anyone can imagine. (Random House is the publisher.)

One thing more may be added about this lady. She becomes as "activist" when she finds reason to do so. She says:

> Once I tried to stop a war, and once I really did help to start a labor union at a library where I worked. But, on the whole, the world has cheerfully and astutely resisted my attempts to save it: And now that I've spent my winter saving my particular ninety acres of it from the floodwaters of a dam, I am left to wonder, as usual, what I have done. Upon examination, the dam proposal turned out to be as lacking in reality as faerie gold, but the local people were sure that it was real. . . . The people who wanted the dam were those who thought it would be good to turn the town into the sort of place that had a McDonald's. Those who opposed it thought this would not be good at all.

With the energetic help of Sue Hubbell, the opposition, made up of sensible Ozarkers, won.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
WORDS AS WEAPONS

ANATOL RAPOPORT is Professor of Peace Studies at the University of Toronto. In an article in et *cetera*, the review of General Semantics, for the Spring of 1986, he says:

> Most of us are mesmerized by words that evoke certain reassuring images but which, if they stand for anything at all, stand for just the opposite of what they evoke. Let us look at some of these words. If we call ourselves general semanticists, our job is to compare maps with territories, words with what they are supposed to represent in the world of not-words, the world of real events.
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> First and foremost, let us look at "defense." All the ministries of war have become "ministries of defense." Their business, however, remains what it has always been—to prepare and to facilitate war. Why have they been renamed? Because it has become much easier to sell "defense" than to sell war. "War" evokes images of killing and devastation. There was, to be sure, a time when it was not hard to sell war. When World War I broke out in Europe, streets were filled with cheering crowds. Women threw flowers and blew kisses at snappily dressed young men marching off to fight for the country. Flags waved; trumpets blared; drums rolled.
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> Four years of rotting in the trenches, retching and gasping in clouds of poison gas, spilling bowels from bellies ripped by artillery splinters almost cured Europe of the war disease but not quite. It took another bigger spasm to do this. However, in 1939 there were no cheering crowds, no blaring trumpets. The mood was sombre and resigned. Then this bloodletting too was over. This time, Europe seems to have been cured for good.
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> At present it is impossible to sell war to the Europeans.

Yet Europe seems continually on the brink of war. Why?

> It isn't war among themselves that hangs over them; it is the spectre of war between the Big Two. Note, however, that it isn't promise of glory or even frenzy of patriotism that sells war to the Americans and the Russians. It's "defense"—a shibboleth. You can't argue against "defense." "Defense" evokes images of protection.

But for the kind of war the Americans and the Russians are obliged to contemplate, its justification as defense is a fraud. There is no defense against nuclear explosion. Nuclear weapons do not protect, they only destroy. All that can be done in the name of "defense" is general destruction, amounting, as Rapoport says, to "the capacity for replying to genocidal madness with genocidal madness.

> There is no getting away from this conclusion. But the war planners have another word to conjure with: "deterrence."
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> So now let us look at "deterrence." The big selling point made about "deterrence" is that it has kept peace in Europe for forty years. This is a clear instance of the "elephant argument." A man who kept snapping his fingers was asked why he was doing it. "To keep elephants away," was his reply. When it was pointed out that there were no elephants in his vicinity, he said with a self-satisfied air, "Effective, isn't it?" . . .
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> In what way do nuclear weapons deter? By inducing fear of retaliation, they tell us. This would make sense if it were advantageous for one side to destroy the other, provided this could be done with impunity. Then the prospect of retaliation would presumably remove the temptation to attack. Note, however, that neither side pictures *itself* as a potential aggressor. In both cases, it is the *other* side that must be deterred. "Deterrence" is a posture reflecting chronic fear. . . .
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> Recently, an official from the Soviet Ministry of Defense showed me a pamphlet, which demonstrates that Americans initiated every round of the arms race by introducing some new weapon or delivery system. It also shows that the Russians were able to catch up within five to ten years. There is no reason to question those data. The pamphlet purported to demonstrate two things. First, that it is the Americans that are driving the arms race. Second, that the Americans' attempts to run away with it have been until now frustrated that the Russians have always been able to catch up and will continue to do so. But putting the blame for the arms race entirely on the Americans is only half the truth. Unwittingly, the pamphlet revealed that the Russians share in the blame. Their "catching up" drives the arms race just

> as surely, since Americans will not tolerate *not* being ahead. Thus attempts to "restore the balance" are futile. There is no such thing as "balance of power" based on military might. Whatever seems like "restoration of balance" by one side is perceived by the other as a challenge.

The abstract language used by military strategists, as Rapoport says, blocks our "awareness of the gruesome realities of nuclear war," blots out "images of men, women, and children vaporized or literally skinned alive or condemned to a lingering death. None of these images are evoked by sanitized words of defense jargon like 'casualties' or 'acceptable damage'." A Rand strategist once asked his colleagues at the Rand Corporation how many "casualties" the U.S. ought to be willing to "accept" in resisting intimidation by the Soviet Union.

> Some said ten million, some twenty million, some a hundred million. The strategist had his answer. He took the average, which turned out to be sixty million. And this was the figure he plugged into his definition of a "rational" strategy or an "effective" posture of the U.S. vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.

But this way of defining a possible war is not acceptable to a general semanticist. He will ask:

> Have you ever heard a child scream in terror or in excruciating pain? Multiply this scream twenty to thirty million times. Evoke images of the blinded, the bleeding, the mutilated, as well as the temporary "survivors," terror stricken, starving, crazed, delirious with fever, wallowing in filth. Evoke images of gangs capturing what miserable stocks of food they can find, killing to prolong their own miserable lives. Evoke the image of an epidemic of cannibalism. These are the realities of so-called "nuclear exchanges," which strategists picture as a sort of poker game with cities as chips. The language of geopolitics and of military strategy reflects the ultimate virulently lethal language pathology.

At the end of his paper Prof. Rapoport turns to the question of aggression.

> Aggressiveness is important if populations have to be mobilized and induced to kill each other in combat. It may still play an important role in the war between Iraq and Iran or between the Israelis and the Arabs. But when it comes to nuclear war, aggressiveness is totally superfluous. With the advent of intercontinental ballistic missiles, it is not necessary to hate anyone in order to kill everyone. A nuclear war could be "fought" (if "fought" is an appropriate word in this context) by pretty young ladies sitting at consoles that resemble typewriters.

What, then, is the contribution of general semantics to the making of peace? Rapoport says:

> I believe I have already spelled out this role. The jargon of the defense establishment, of geopolitics, of game-theoretically sophisticated strategy must be exposed as gobbledegook, whose only discernible function is to preserve an aura of legitimacy around omnicide.
>
> The first priority in creative application of general semantics with the view of enhancing the prospects for peace ought to be, in my opinion, that of dismantling the myths and superstitions nurtured by pathological language and serving as props for the legitimacy of war and insuring the viability of the most rapacious species on our planet—Status bellagerens, the war-waging state. To repeat: the first priority in applying general semantics in the service of humanity ought to be that of depriving the institution of war and all the supporting institutions of their legitimacy. There have been precedents of such de-legitimization. Absolute monarchy and chattel slavery come to mind. Let us follow the example of the republicans of the eighteenth century and of the abolitionists of the nineteenth.
>
> . . . let us say "We will not!" We will not worship the shibboleths that make us collaborators in the plans for our destruction.
>
> Let us learn to say "no."

The general semanticists are certainly doing their part.

FRONTIERS

Milton Mayer's Legacy

MILTON MAYER, who in years past has probably supplied us with more Frontiers material than any other single source, died this year (on April 20). The editor of the *Progressive*, in which many of Mayer's sprightly writings appeared, Erwin Knoll, began his tribute to Mayer (in the June issue) by saying:

> Someone once called Milton Mayer a Jewish Christian Quaker Thomist. That was a beginning—but only a beginning—toward fashioning a working definition of the man. He was a scholar, a teacher, and a lifelong student; a pacifist who reveled in controversy; an anarchist who cherished tradition; a superb stylist who listed his occupation as hack newspaperman—unemployed."

He was seventy-seven when he died. He was born in 1909 in Chicago, attended the University of Chicago in the 1920s, and in the late 1930s and the 1940s served as writer, lecturer, professor, and aide to his close friend, President Robert M. Hutchins. He worked for a time for Associated Press and finally became a successful free lance writer. We have been quoting Mayer since Vol. I of MANAS, and this seems a good time to recall some of the things he said. In our Aug. 19, 1964 issue, we reviewed his book of essays, *What Can a Man Do?* quoting from one on what it had become like to be a Christian in Czechoslovakia. He had been teaching on the theological faculty of Comenius University, when the Communists were running the country, or trying to. It was a strange situation, as he explains:

> What we saw were Christians living lives unimaginable to the American churchgoer who lives (or thinks he lives) as he pleases and bestirs himself about the flooring for the Sunday school gym. Their world—which never was like ours—began breaking up in 1914. Now they live in a new one. This new world requires the Christian church to collaborate in building an order professing both atheist materialism *and* the reform of social conditions that the church supported for centuries.

He grows explicit:

> The Marxists have brought home to the Christians of Eastern Europe the reality of their condition. They are beginning to find out what they can—and must—do in the world and what they can't do. In Czechoslovakia I talked to a man who had just been discharged as the principal of a school for handicapped children; in the fall he would have to go back to the classroom as an ordinary teacher again. Had this happened, I asked, solely because of his religion? "Oh yes," he said. "Our school authorities thought an outspoken Christian should not have the direction of a school in a Marxist state." I said I agreed. And I do agree. I feel that the authorities are acknowledging my own view that Marxist communism and the social gospel are the two real competitors in the world. "Would a Communist be allowed to be a school principal in a Christian country like America?"

Josef Hromadka, dean of the Comenius Theological Faculty, told Mayer:

> "I am not a Communist. I am a Christian. But I know that it is we Christians alone, who are responsible for Communism. We had a burden to discharge in the world, and Jesus Christ left us no room to wonder what it was. We failed. We 'said and did not.' And now another power has arisen to take up this burden. Remember that the Communists once were Christians. If they do not believe in a just God, whose fault is it?"

A Czechoslovakian pastor said to. Mayer: "No one can come to church any more because it is a good place to make social or business contacts. Not even a funeral director, much less a dentist or an insurance salesman, and," with another smile, "not a candidate for public office, oh, no."

Back in the days when he was assistant to Robert Hutchins, president of the University of Chicago, Mayer wrote for the *Saturday Evening Post* (Oct. 7, 1939) an article titled "I think I'll Sit This One Out," declaring his intention to be a conscientious objector if the U.S. became involved in the European war and the draft claimed his services. Then, he contributed a similar article to *Fellowship* for September, 1962, with the title "Rendered unto Caesar," which we condensed and reprinted in MANAS for Dec. 24, 1980. By then Mayer, no longer vulnerable to the

draft, was refusing to pay the half of his taxes that went for war. In this article he said:

> If I need not pay my taxes because I am squeamish about the killing of men, then, says my neighbor, the vegetarian need not pay his for inspection of the killing of animals, etc., and, in the end, no one need pay taxes for anything he doesn't much fancy, and this is Anarchy. My neighbor is not alone in saying it. When the Circuit Court of Appeals was hearing my complaint against the Government, one of the Judges said to my learned counsel, "Is the plaintiff aware that this Court, if it held for him, would itself be laying the axe to the root of all established Government?" And learned counsel said, "I think he is, Your Honor."

Mayer goes on:

> Is a man who is worth anything at all to be diverted from positive horrors by putative horrors? I have no primary obligation to save established Government from the axe, but to save myself from the fire. I will pay for the conveniences of Government, including those conveniences I don't use. I will pay for its inconveniences, because prudence dictates that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes. But why should I pay for its madness—or my neighbor's, if you will—because the madness is established? All the more reason for cutting it off at once; all the more. The Government is anarchical, not I. It, not I, denies the kingdom of God and throws its anarchical bombs into the midst of the family of man.
>
> I am not first of all a doctor of political philosophy, with no better business than to set terms like Anarchy in order (though I may say that if there were only one other term, and that Slavery, I, like Locke's judicious Hooker, would know how to order the two). I am first of all a man, and getting no better; but still a man, born with a set of terms to live by and an instinctive apprehension of their validity. My neighbor says "Anarchy" as if he were affirming the Eleventh Commandment instead of denying the Second and the Sixth. He wags his head and says there is no other way than established Government—or even than this established Government—to manage human affairs.

But Mayer was intent upon managing himself. "But one of us can try to do the right thing all by himself, and maybe, even be effective. The United Nations has not been able to disarm the world by one man; I, all by myself, can be more effective than it has been."

We mourn the loss of Milton Mayer. Fortunately, nearly all of what he said was written down and can be repeated—a legacy indeed.