

THE CLASSICAL QUESTIONS

IN an article in the California Institute of Technology *Quarterly* for the summer of 1967, Daniel Bell, professor of sociology at Columbia University, explores the implications of the transfer of power from the business and industrial community to theoreticians of applied science. This is a change Dr. Bell finds to be in full swing. Politicians will of course remain the avenues through which power flows, but the direction of decisions will be increasingly determined by an intellectual elite. Much of Dr. Bell's discussion is devoted to giving evidence of the fact of this change, and to showing how the grounds of executive decision have altered from service to industrial interest to conceptions of public interest. In summary of the dynamics of this system of control, Dr. Bell says:

We have become, for the first time, a *national* society in which the crucial decisions affecting all parts of the society simultaneously are made by the government, rather than through the market; in addition, we have become a *communal* society in which many more groups now seek to establish their claims on society through the political order. And with our increasing "future-orientation," we necessarily have to do more and more planning.

In this development Dr. Bell sees certain opportunities and many new problems. One of the opportunities lies in what he conceives to be the character of the theorists who will undertake more and more decision-making responsibility:

The norms of the new intelligentsia, the norms of professionalism, are a departure from the norms of economic self-interest which guided a business civilization. In the upper reaches of this new elite—that is, in the scientific community—men hold significantly different values which could become the foundation of a new ethos for such a class.

But the problems will multiply, if only for the reason that "in a tightly interwoven society more decisions must be made through planning," and

this can hardly fail to increase the political heat surrounding all such decisions. Involved in this conception is *total* management of the circumstances of human life. How all this will work out in practice is anybody's guess, but it is certain, as Dr. Bell remarks, that both the politicians and the political public "will have to become increasingly versed in the technical character of policy and aware of the impact of decisions," while "the technical intelligentsia must learn to question the often unanalyzed assumptions regarding efficiency and rationality which underlie their techniques." It is in his final paragraph, however, that the comment of greatest significance is made. One could wish that he had made it also at the beginning, and repeated it as a theme throughout the entire discussion, since technical intelligence has the habit of taking such matters for granted. Dr. Bell writes:

But in the end we return to the root questions of all political philosophy: What is the good life? What do we want? The politics of the future will not be quarrels between economic-interest groups for distributive shares of the national product, but the common concerns of a communal society. They will turn on such issues as the demand for a responsible social ethos in our leaders; for more amenities, greater beauty, and a better quality of life in our cities for a more varied and intellectual educational system, and for an upgrading in the character of our culture. We may be divided on how to achieve these and how to apportion the costs. But such questions, deriving from a conception of public virtue, bring us back to the classical questions of the *polls*. And this is as it should be.

We may now say that Dr. Bell has converted the issues of the technocrat society into the problems of philosophy, adding that the only significant change for philosophy, brought by the union of technology and politics, is that its problems have been made more urgent than at any other time in the past. Let us look at what may be

expected—has in some measure already happened—as a part of the transition from an industry-directed society to Dr. Bell's "communal society," or what we have labeled the totally managed society.

What is the critical reality for human beings in a totally managed society? It is that some people—almost certainly a small minority—decide what is good for all the other people. Have we any illustrations in history of the totally managed society? Well, there is the monastery, and there is the concentration camp. Other illustrations might be thought of, but they are nearly all imaginary—such as the ideal anarchist community, or any of the Utopias which depend upon a consensus of agreed-upon ends to be reached by agreed-upon means.

In order to be a good society, the totally managed society would *have to be* a society which succeeds in resolving the subject-object dichotomy. This happens in a monastery—or is supposed to—by reason of the voluntary character of the association and the *choosing* of monastic life on the part of the members of the religious community. Its simplicities are sought, not imposed. What will be admitted to be the very opposite of a good society—the concentration camp—also resolves the subject-object dichotomy, but in this case by absolute suppression of the subjective reality of the inmates of the camp. Indeed, this is the *purpose* of the camp system, as Bruno Bettelheim and others have pointed out. It creates a society intended to make the denial of the humanity of certain people prove out in fact. There is no uglier, no more obscene social device in the memory of man.

Now the totally managed society anticipated by Dr. Bell can hardly be a monastery, and we shall doubtless do all in our power to keep it from becoming a concentration camp; but it seems likely, if Dr. Bell's analysis of trends is in any way accurate, that this society of the future will lie somewhere between these extremes. But *where*, between the extremes? The answer seems simple

enough: the determining factor will be the way in which people perceive other people—not only the way the rulers perceive the ruled, but also, the way the ruled perceive the rulers.

We see other people as subjects by identifying with them. We see them as objects by avoiding identification with them. It could be argued that far more important than the transition in the power relations of society described by Dr. Bell is the change, if any, in the assumptions controlling the way people think of other people. What really good reasons have we for not assuming that the totally managed society could easily become a concentration camp? Or, in other words, what are the chances that the thinking about other people of scientifically trained theorists will acquire a component of strong awareness of other people as subjects?

How will the facts of the behavioral scientist be made to equate with the potentialities seen by the educator and the therapist? Whose urgencies will have priority? (The echoes of tired political liberalism hardly affect this equation at all, any more.)

When managers deal with human beings, what *are* the facts? Are they developed by "trained observers" who describe the behavior of people, or by an understanding of how those people see themselves? To what extent can the way people feel about themselves be taken as the cause of how they behave? In a recent paper concerned with preventive social measures in behalf of mental health, Dr. William Ryan, of the Yale Medical School, reports on the findings of workers in this field:

To a significant extent and in a significant number of cases, emotional disorder is based on lowered self-esteem. Self-esteem in turn is largely dependent on the exercise of a minimum quantity of power in relation to one's environment as well as the perception of oneself as a minimally powerful person. Powerlessness is a major characteristic of low income neighborhoods and of the residents of these neighborhoods which in turn leads to significantly lowered self-esteem in such populations and

significantly higher levels of emotional disorder and other forms of social pathology.

To press home his point, Dr. Ryan quotes from Kenneth Clark's report on the HARYOU project in Harlem. Titled "Youth in the Ghetto—The Consequences of Powerlessness," this report says:

In short, the Harlem ghetto is the institutionalization of powerlessness. Harlem is made up of the socially engendered ferment, resentment, stagnation, and potentially explosive reactions to powerlessness and continued abuses. The powerless individual and community reflect this fact by increasing dependency and by difficulty in mobilizing even the latent power to counter the most flagrant abuses. Immobility, stagnation, apathy, indifference, and defeatism are among the more obvious consequences of personal and community impotence. Random hostility, aggression, self-hatred, suspiciousness, seething turmoil, and chronic personal and social tensions also reflect self-destructiveness and nonadaptive reactions to a pervasive sense and fact of powerlessness.

Two comments seem pertinent here. One is concerned with the fact that the rendering of social problems into the subjective terms of failure of self-esteem and feelings of powerlessness is characteristically, in our society, an "end of the line" diagnosis. That is, loss of self-esteem becomes significant and noticed only when it is massively reflected in human desperation. It claims attention only when it reaches some kind of absolute. In short, we have the well-established habit of regarding other people as "objects" until, under the anti-human pressures of the environment, the suppressed subjectivity of some human group declares itself in a wild, irrational burst.

The second comment relates to the ambiguity of the language descriptive of subjective reality. Self-esteem is not a word with only one meaning. "Powerlessness" can result from environmental confinements, but it is also the condition of the victim of self-defeat. On the whole, self-esteem and powerlessness are terms with objectivizing feeling-tones. Words with a meaning similar to

"self-esteem," but with a higher charge of autonomy, would be "self-respect" and "dignity." And, instead of "powerlessness," there is loss of a sense of "meaning." But these descriptions do not seem as appropriate as the objectivizing words because we turn to the problem in its acute phase—at the point where subjectivity is recognized only because it is *failed* subjectivity.

But when the analysis passes from diagnosis to remedy, the objectivizing tendency is of necessity reversed. Dr. Ryan found, for example, that you do not "give" power to powerless people because you *can't*. They have to *take* it. They have to initiate action themselves—what we sometimes speak of as "participation." Dr. Ryan writes:

Working with such indigenous groups in this way requires patience and restraint, since, as middle-class professionals who occupy a higher power and status position, we find it almost impossible not to believe that we could manage these enterprises better. (It is doubtful that we really could, of course.) But we try to operate on the assumption that effective power can not be *given*. It has to be taken.

What basic principle is here involved? Dr. Ryan finds its simplest expression in the formulation, essentially Bruno Bettelheim's, that "the essence of being human is to act on one's own behalf in a context of mutuality based on an accurate sense of causality." This "first principle" became clear to Bettelheim under what could be called the "last" circumstances—in a Nazi concentration camp. As Dr. Ryan says:

Bettelheim calls this type of human experience an "extreme situation." It is characterized by its inescapability, its unpredictability, and its condition of absolute powerlessness to ward off the most terrifying of dangers. He describes how this combination of circumstances—which represents the very antithesis of the requirements for being human . . .—had the effect of utterly dehumanizing and destroying the personalities of most of the prisoners. Those who survived this dehumanizing experience were able to do so by continuing to behave as human beings.

The root of mental health, then, lies in the subjective feeling of *being able to act*—and to act on a real world with the possibility of achieving a real result.

Here, we recognize without difficulty the intuitively perceived reality behind all the justifications of *laissez faire* economic theory and other "individualist" contentions. What has been notoriously missing from these contentions is the *ethical distribution* of this reality, so that other people are seen as subjects who must also feel able to act in their own behalf, in order to remain human.

How does this issue affect the planners of whom Dr. Bell expects so much? It affects them by making them responsible for constant recognition of all other people as subjects.

Why should this be difficult? It is difficult for two reasons. The technocratic theorists are trained to regard as "real" only what can be given objective definition. They tend, therefore, to recognize men only as objects and human reality as objective human behavior. The other reason is that, in the dominant "business society" of the past hundred years, the freedom to act in one's own behalf has been made virtually synonymous with *acting to acquire goods* in one's own behalf. From this identification it soon becomes plausible for planners to argue that if everybody has a fair share of goods, the subjective need to act in one's own behalf can be satisfied by careful economic planning and equitable manipulation. In this way, the historically typical use men have made of their freedom is assumed to be the freedom itself. And from this assumption—which becomes sacrosanct, since it solves the problem of both freedom and justice—grow all the moral imperatives of the planning operation. It is this derived moral quality of the imperatives which enables the subjectivity of other people of all the beneficiaries of the planning—to be ignored. All must now adjust to these imperatives. How could there be any reason for *not* adjusting?

One wonders how the duplication of past conformities will be avoided by the planners of this future society. Not freedom, but the fruits of statistically verified use of freedom in the past, will be spread around more evenly. In one of his papers in *Literary and Philosophical Essays* Jean Paul Sartre gives his impressions of "Individualism and Conformism in the United States." What Sartre says with quiet irony could almost certainly become, for one kind of technocratic planner, a completely straight-faced justification:

American individualism . . . is not incompatible with conformism, but, on the contrary, implies it. It represents, however, a new direction, both in height and in depth, within conformism.

First, there is the struggle for existence, which is extremely harsh. Every individual wants to succeed, that is, to make money. But this is not to be regarded as greed or merely a taste for luxury. In the States, money is, I think, the necessary but symbolic token of success. You must succeed because success is a proof of virtue and intelligence and also because it shows that you enjoy divine protection. . . .

The meaning of this individualism is plain to see. The citizen must, first of all, fit himself into a framework and protect himself; he must enter into a social contract with other citizens of his own kind. And it is this small community which confers on him his individual function and personal worth. Within the association, he can take the initiative, can advocate his personal political views and influence, if he is able to the line of the group.

Just as the solitary person arouses suspicion in the States, so this controlled, hedged-in individualism is encouraged. This is demonstrated, on quite another level, by industrialists' attempts to encourage self-criticism among their personnel.

When the worker is organized, when the propaganda of government and management has sufficiently integrated him into the community, he is *then* asked to distinguish himself from others and to prove his initiative. . . . I have said enough, I hope, to give some idea of how the American is subjected, from the cradle to the grave, to an intense drive to organize him and Americanize him, of how he is first depersonalized by means of a constant appeal to his reason, civic sense and freedom, and how, once he has been duly fitted into the national life by professional organizations and educational and other

edifying organizations, he suddenly regains consciousness of himself and his personal autonomy. He is then free to escape into an almost Nietzschean individualism, the kind symbolized by the skyscrapers in the bright sky of New York.

The point of this quotation, here, is that its laconic impersonality and descriptive accuracy forces the question: Well, *why not?* Make any substitutions you like; people will still have to "become" individuals, and if the technocratic planners of the future are able to remove the "harshness" of the struggle for existence, what is really wrong with this picture?

The man who thinks of human excellence in terms of rich subjectivity will be aghast at this response. But what can he find to say?

He *might* say that Sartre's account of the Utopia of the West sounds unobjectionable as a planning objective mainly because our society recognizes no crisis in subjectivity until it finds expression in the terms of extreme economic deprivation. He might go on to say that while, as Dr. Ryan points out, poverty and social disorder are the familiar circumstances of the felt deprivation, the only genuine relief comes when the victims of these conditions make their own plans and act them out. The main burden of Dr. Ryan's paper is that social workers in the field of mental health *must avoid acting for* the individuals needing help. A tender regard for their subjective being is the only way to help.

It is reasonable to think that if corresponding psychological disorders were to emerge at the level of income groups where no material deprivation exists, this would be regarded as a totally inexplicable phenomenon. It would certainly bewilder and frustrate the planners, who might begin to feel something like the tired and frightened middle-class parents of the present hippy generation.

Well, how could such embarrassing confrontations be avoided? Only, we think, by a consistent determination on the part of all planners to make no prejudicial assumptions about the

subjective inclinations of "other people." This would mean establishing the conditions for Socratic dialogue and inquiry at all levels of social decision. It would mean putting *potentialities* in the place of "facts," in all relationships in which facts might turn into external pressure in the human choice of values. This will be seen as difficult and, for planners who are used to having their own way, practically inconceivable. Yet if what Daniel Bell calls the classical questions of the *polis*—"What is the good life? What do we want?"—are indeed open questions, not to be settled by any group of experts, then there is nothing else to be done.

Where shall we find men with the qualifications for such a task? Only, it seems quite clear, among the educators. For only educators, whether they happen to be therapists like Carl Rogers, or reformers like Danilo Dolci, or sociologists like Edgar Friedenberg, can be trusted to plan for the subjective reality of individuals, instead of ignoring it in the name of solving the "social problems" of the entire world.

REVIEW

GOTTHOLD EPHRAIM LESSING

IN a period of discouraging social and personal failure, feelings of affirmation seldom find uninhibited expression. A year or so ago, writing in the *American Scholar*, Michael Polanyi told the story of the American historian who only after several years found the courage to declare that the Hungarian revolt in 1956 was an expression of the love of freedom. So schooled was this man in explaining events by means other than the human qualities of human beings, he was almost persuaded that he could not be a "historian" and also recognize the non-mechanistic reality of the Hungarian uprising.

What does it take for a man to address himself to life, instead of to the scholastic interpretations of life made by other men? Involved, no doubt, is the problem of being *heard*. When the academies rule the realm of ideas, when critics maintain sovereignty over the arts, and when ideology limits the inquiry into social and political questions, simple affirmation can gain only a small audience. The man who dares to be affirmative usually seems to others incredibly naïve. It is almost as though he must wait until the prevailing systems of ideas are disclosed to be on the verge of bankruptcy, until yearnings equivalent to his own are born in other people.

But it is not only a question of the audience. The strength of his longing to declare is probably the most important factor. And this is a matter of how much of his sense of being he gets from within himself. It is a question of autonomy and dependency. The autonomous thinker recognizes that he has to cope with his times, but he never thinks of himself as *made* by his times. He uses the materials supplied by his times, and seems therefore to be *of* his times, but he is somehow free. His affirmations come out of a timeless essence of his being. But he finds that it is not enough—unless he has the genius of a Whitman—simply to speak his heart. If he is to be taken

seriously, he has to learn to combine his affirmative expression with contemporary content—that is, he has to show that he understands the grounds of the prevailing orthodoxy before he can expose what is wrong with it; and he has to show, also, what is wrong with the merely "reacting" iconoclasm with which he sometimes seems allied, and to point to the nihilism to which iconoclasm often leads. Successful affirmation, in short, succeeds only by assimilating and transcending the contradictions of an age. And the transcending perspective can come only from within the man himself. It is this unexplainable resource which makes those who oppose him furious. He is not a "party" man.

The men who rise up in affirmation and in some measure also transform their times by making themselves heard are the men who are worth studying. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing was such a man. Born in 1724, Lessing was a central figure of the German Enlightenment. His decisive influence was in religious philosophy. The eighteenth century was a time of bitter controversy between orthodox believers in the Scriptural Revelation and the new critics of religion who insisted that all religious ideas be made to square with what they termed "natural religion." Lessing's role in this controversy makes the content of Henry E. Allison's book, *Lessing and the Enlightenment* (University of Michigan Press, 1966, \$7.50), a volume which examines meticulously the development of Lessing's thought, from youth to maturity.

In 1749, responding to the fears of his father that he would be led away from the true faith by contact with such men as Voltaire and La Mettrie, Lessing wrote:

Time shall teach whether he is the better Christian who has the basic doctrines of Christianity in his memory and, often without understanding them, in his mouth, goes to church and takes part in all the ceremonies out of force of habit or he who has once intelligently doubted and has, through investigation, finally attained conviction, or at least still strives to attain it. The Christian religion is not a

thing which one should accept on trust from one's parents. Most people, to be sure inherit it from them as they do their property, but they show by their actions what kind of Christians they really are. So long as I fail to see one of the chief precepts of Christianity love shine enemy, better observed, so long shall I doubt whether these are really Christians who give themselves out as such.

This insistence on a religion that is applied grows, with Lessing's intellectual development, into an analysis of the entire field of apologetics and becomes a conclusion reinforced by understanding of the relativism of religious perception throughout history. As Mr. Allison says in his Preface:

It was, Kierkegaard tells us, Lessing who first suggested to him the concept of the leap and the famous formula "truth is subjectivity," and it was also, I believe, Lessing who more than anyone else led Kierkegaard to see the paradoxical nature of Christianity's claim to ground an individual's eternal happiness upon a historical event.

Lessing . . . was the founder of a whole new conception of religious truth and one of the most articulate and profound advocates of the doctrines of man's spiritual development. Thus, although he was in many ways a child of his age, these basic insights led him far beyond the superficial rationalism of the Enlightenment's approach to religion. As we shall see, Lessing was the first thinker to separate the question of the truth of the Christian religion from the question of its historical foundation. This distinction enabled him to combine a rejection of the "historical proofs" for the truth of the Christian religion with a recognition of the speculative and ethical significance of Christian thought. This led him inevitably to the development of a relativistic, evolutionary conception of religious truth. In the light of this new conception the Christian religion is no longer seen as the absolute word of God but as the highest expression of the religious consciousness at a certain level of its development.

Mr. Allison follows Lessing along a path exposed to many influences, showing how he absorbed the inspiration of Spinoza and Leibniz, and how, throughout his life, he maintained that thought must be reflected in consistent action. There was no anti-intellectualism in this view, only a rejection of speculation which does not lead to a

morally informed life. The Leibnizean influence can be discerned in Mr. Allison's summary of the closing section of *The Christianity of Reason*:

He begins by characterizing the simple beings, who are the ultimate constituents of the universe, as "limited gods." As such, their perfections are similar in kind, although not in degree, to the Deity's. The most important of the divine perfections are God's consciousness of and ability to act in accordance with his perfections. Since finite beings possess similar perfections, albeit to a lesser degree, they can be ranked according to their consciousness of these perfections and their ability to act in accordance with them. Those who are sufficiently conscious of their perfections to act in accordance with them are called moral beings, and this leads Lessing to a formulation of the moral law: "Act according to your individual perfections." The fragment ends abruptly with the reflection that there are beings who are not sufficiently conscious of their perfections.

In the end, Lessing's relativistic, subjective view of religious truth is seen, not as an attack on the idea of ultimate truth, but as an explanation of the shortcomings of *any* time-bound version of ultimate truth—as seen through the finite perceptions of a particular age of history. Every historical expression of the truth is certain to be transcended by a better one—one which, with the development of man himself, more clearly embodies the verity which exists outside of time. Not "possession" but continual search is the hallmark of the truly religious man. "Possession makes one content, indolent, proud. . . ."

It follows that, at the hands of Lessing, religion lost none of its genuine mystery, which was the mistake made by the rationalists who wanted to reduce religion to a species of scientific humanism. In his culminating work, *The Education of the Human Race*, Lessing finds the climax of religious awareness in his transformation of the New Testament idea of personal immortality, viewed as a result of divine rewards and punishments, into the conception of endless rebirths of the soul on earth, as the means of attaining the highest understanding.

COMMENTARY

THE ONLY RELIGIOUS TEST

IN practical terms, the origin of evil for modern man is a misconception of how to end "the discrepancy between his potential and his actual self." (See *Frontiers*.) The elimination of this discrepancy is a growth-process, not a belief-process.

People have been taught to believe that they will feel comfortable (be "saved") if they adopt correct beliefs. But no kind of "belief" can make a man really comfortable, although it may have a temporarily comforting effect. And feeling comfortable is not a healthful objective for a human being.

Beliefs—even the best of beliefs—can relate only to a static harmony. The world never remains static, so that the man who relies mainly on beliefs is eventually confronted by a bitter necessity—he must either change his beliefs or stop the world from changing. And since changing his beliefs would be an admission that he has been wrong (*not saved*), he attempts the impossible—to keep the world unchanged. His failure to do this generates "religious" hate for the people who are making his beliefs appear false.

This divides the world into numerous warring camps—into bristling, righteous "good" people who must everywhere oppose the "bad" people, and these multiply endlessly because of the many bad beliefs in the world. There is no solution for this proliferation of evil to be found in argument about beliefs. The evil comes from *relying* on beliefs.

On the other hand, beliefs are not themselves evil. If a man lacks knowledge he has to live by something, and what else is there but belief? It is the human condition to live by a small amount of knowledge and a large amount of belief. The evil comes from supposing that beliefs are the same as knowledge.

Thus there is a sense in which the whole tragedy of man lies in his eagerness to mistake his beliefs for finalities. A man who has finalities has no need for growth, no need for self-examination, no need for questioning. He is simply *right*. There is no more desperate situation, since such a man has become the enemy of his own growth.

It is of course possible to be right. But the man who is right never mistakes his beliefs for knowledge. He knows that even good beliefs cannot be more than instruments for growth. He knows that if beliefs lead to partisan rejection of other men, they cannot be true. This is a very ancient test of beliefs. There is no other, while to be truly human is to pursue growth in the midst of admitted uncertainties.

CHILDREN

. . . and Ourselves

IF I WERE CENSOR-IN-CHIEF

[For this week's "Children" article we reprint by permission a chapter from H. Gordon Green's *Professor Go Home*, published by Harvest House Ltd., of Montreal, Canada. Copyright © Canada 1967 by H. Gordon Green.]

A FEW months ago there was a great hullabaloo in California about whether or not the Tarzan books should be allowed in the school libraries. As a matter of fact, one conscientious teacher took it upon herself to remove these books without waiting to see whether the authorities were going to take official action or not. And what was all the trouble about?

Well, it appears that when Edgar Rice Burroughs concocted the idea of a white man living in the jungle with the apes, he was so busy trying to figure out what kind of adventures such a man would be called upon to survive that he didn't give much thought to that important story element called romance. Eventually, however, he did manage to work a girl into the series. Contrary to popular belief, this was not Maureen O'Sullivan but a girl called Jane.

But now, fifty years after these stories began circling the world, it has suddenly occurred to some of the piously worried in California that there seems to have been no mention of Tarzan and Jane ever getting married. Before anyone knew just who started the whole ruckus, a literary search had been instituted to see just how Jane got into Tarzan's tree house in the first place, and sure enough, she just seemed to be there. There seemed to be no mention of any wedding certificate or ceremony.

So the wrath of the righteous broke and the battle against the Tarzan books was on. Actually, Edgar Rice Burroughs came to the rescue of his hero himself, and showed that in an earlier and little-known book, Tarzan and Jane had been married by a duly certified clergyman. And with this comforting thought in mind, the battle seems to have ended.

But surely, the very fact that such a tempest could cause so great a commotion is worthy of some serious study. Wouldn't you think that in California, which has surely the most picturesque love traditions and divorces in all the world, people would have been willing to overlook the question as to whether or not a man and a woman living the life of apes in the jungle had managed to secure the services of a qualified marrying parson? Wouldn't it have been much more pertinent for these people who were so zealous about the welfare of their children to ask, "but are these Tarzan books really good literature? Good enough to occupy space in our school library?"

But the fact is as sad as it is inescapable. Where sex is involved, no matter is too trivial to escape someone's wrath.

In our own country, the federal government in 1959 amended a section of the Criminal Code to define obscene literature as "any publication a dominant characteristic of which is the undue exploitation of sex, or of sex and any one or more of the following subjects, namely, crime, horror, cruelty and violence." A further amendment prescribed that any person charged with sale or distribution of such literature would be required to appear in court and show cause why such material should not be seized. In all fairness to the government, it should be admitted that this law has not yet been applied in any outrageous fashion, but the law is there just the same, and we can only hope that some future legislator who might be unduly excited by the lack of purity won't use it as a dictator might.

In Canada as in California and Boston, whenever you mention the word "censorship" one immediately thinks of literature which abounds in sex. We have always been uneasy if we ever have any reason to suspect that our young people might be reading something which would give them more knowledge of the process of life than what they should properly learn at school studying the birds and the bees.

But why should the whole accent on censorship be aimed in that direction and so little concern shown for the kind of reading matter, or show, or radio

commentary which uses hate for its major attraction, and which admits of no patriotism but prejudice?

At my own home I am presently being called a little Hitler because there is a certain radio station on our dial which I turn off every time it is tuned in. Why? Simply because the chief drawing card of that station is a commentator who insists from breakfast to bedtime that there should be no public ownership, that even such utilities as hydro and railways should all be private businesses; that we should quit being so cowardly and gird our loins with atomic warheads at once; and that the enemy is anyone who doesn't agree that our way of life is the only one this earth has room for. The last time I had to listen to him he made the bland assertion that China should certainly not be admitted to the United Nations because they are not a nation. They are a mob of mad men.

THE COMICS THAT AREN'T FUNNY

I make no excuse for censoring a station like that out of my home whenever I can get away with it. I also make no excuse for my antipathy to certain of the comics which we persist in importing from the U.S. And if I were the censor-in-chief, one of the first things I'd try to keep away from our children would be such lurid, red-blooded, hate-rattling features as Steve Canyon or Terry and the Pirates, and others of their kind which just can't wait for that third world war to get started.

And I think I'd try to change our ideas about violence too.

Now I know that there seems to be no sure answer yet as to whether the portrayal of violence in a movie or television show is likely to put a scar on a child's personality or not. On the one hand we have always had a rather belligerent group of parents and professionals who will declare that no matter how much the villain deserves his fate, that kind of show which holds the viewer in mid-air because of its violence, and because everybody in it bleeds freely, is bound to affect the child's personality.

On the other hand, we have some pretty smart people who point out that millions of readers have been soaking up detective stories for most of their

lives without any thought of becoming criminals themselves. They are merely armchair addicts.

As for me, I'm not too sure who is right about this. But of one thing I am unalterably certain and that is that as for me and my house, I resent the kind of show where killing is treated so lightly that knocking a man off with a bullet in his belly is nothing more than a jolly little game. No more serious than busting a balloon.

And that's exactly the kind of show that too many of our smart advertising men are aiming directly at our kids.

The other night I happened to be forced into watching the weekly show of one of those Hollywood cowboys who look and talk so clean that they are sometimes hired to go around the country just setting a fine example. And believe it or not, in the course of a single half-hour program, this shining hero had shot three crooks dead as a doornail, knocked a fourth one over a cliff with his bare knuckles, captured a wild stallion, played his guitar twice and tried to sing with it, advertised a certain breakfast cereal I am not going to advertise, and showed his audience how to make their own glass of chocolate milk.

And finally after mixing the killing right in with the singing and the chocolate milk as if one was just as important as the other and just as easy, he ended the evening with a prayer. "May the Good Lord take a likin' to you!" he said.

I can't help but wonder what the Lord thought of that nationally sponsored prayer. Or what He thinks of our pious conviction that the mere mention of sex is a mortal sin, but hate is only patriotism, and light-hearted killing is mere entertainment.

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FRONTIERS

The Great Contempt

. . . the Pale Criminal hath bowed his head: in his eye speaketh the supreme contempt. "Mine I is a thing to be surmounted: to me mine *I* is supreme contempt of man:" thus speaketh his eye.

NIETZSCHE, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*

A FEW years ago the average African knew that in the United States and in South Africa many people whose names indicated Jewish origin came out unreservedly on the side of their dark-skinned fellow men and opposed the brutal and ignorant prejudice at work against them. They fought in the front line, went to jail, and published books to arouse the so-called conscience of the world.

That was some years ago. Today the average African believes that "the Jew" is his enemy, that the world's most dangerous and unscrupulous exploiters are Jewish, and that his distrust of "the white man" should only be surpassed by his hatred for the Jews. He knows these things because he has been told them.

How can this remarkable reversal be explained? To say that Zionism is regarded as white imperialism in the coloured world is not enough. To blame Pan-Arab propaganda emanating from Cairo is not enough. It may explain the source of the change but not the success of such propaganda.

Most human beings are at a rudimentary stage of their personal development. Everyone understands the discrepancy between his potential and actual situation. To respond within ourselves, or even stand up to external challenges is not a course that appeals to many. The simpler way is preferred, which externalizes one's own inadequacy and weakness, placing the blame squarely on the shoulders of others. White men easily find their universal scapegoat in "the rigger," Communists in the "class enemy," Christians in the "unbeliever," antisemites in "the Jews," and Jews in "the Germans."

How then did Africans and West Indians become anti-Jewish? A deep psychological need was satisfied when they hit upon a group whom they—themselves exposed to the contempt or, worse still, the toleration of their environment—could hate and despise. This readiness to turn against "the Jews" was promptly exploited by their political leaders, who saw in it a chance to direct the distrust for the white man against a defenseless group, itself held in contempt even by "the whites." Secondly, they ingratiated themselves with those who, for various reasons, happened to be anti-Jewish. Lastly, but not least, they saw in the declining Jew-hatred a signal for anti-coloured excesses, and vice-versa. Forcing attention once more on the "Jewish conspiracy" they hoped that coloured people might be spared the worst enmity and attacks of prejudiced white extremists.

Man's desire to belittle and look down upon his fellows rarely finds expression in personal forms, such as excessive vanity, spitefulness and private feuds. More frequently its manifestations are in the social sphere, and associated with group thinking. "My group is superior to all the others—as a member of this group my own superiority is assured. Person for person, I may be less than some members of the other group, but then it is not a question of weighing person against person. We British (Americans, Russians, Chinese, Jews, Afghanistans) have always been in the vanguard of civilisation, art, science and invention. Our country is the most beautiful, our language the subtlest, our customs the best, and our military prowess unrivalled. The others are a long way behind us, and the race that dares challenge our superiority is a gang of 'liars, evil beasts, sowbellies' (Tit.1:12.) God favours *us*, and, being just, He will surely punish our antagonists." Similar arguments are advanced by the group-thinkers of race, colour, class or denomination.

The printed filth of newspapers encourages and confirms this kind of self-deception. Governments and leaders flatter their subjects;

schools and universities carefully nurture the virtue of "patriotism," and monuments in the big cities speak of the peoples' gratitude to their "great sons."

What else but contempt is there in store for the crank who wants to go his own way, unmolested by collective claims of nation, race, class or creed? He is despised by all, the white and the coloured, the Jew and the Greek.

Group-contempt embraces us all, tormentors and victims, the slayers and the slain. If we try to escape we are called traitors to whatever we try to escape from.

Then there is another rich source of contempt: moral superiority. Antagonism against "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings and such like." (Gal. 5: 19-21.) These are the words of one of the great calumniators of man, Saul of Tarsus. He also warns against guilt through association: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" (2 Cor.6:1s.) and "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit." (Col. 2:8.) In the Epistles you will find many more similar passages.

"Moralic acid" (Nietzsche's telling expression) is absorbed by nearly every human being in early childhood. We learn our moral values at the same time and in almost the same way as we learn the alphabet or the tables. The result is devastating. We feel contempt, throughout our lives, for unmarried couples, illegitimate children, adulterers, homosexuals, traitors, criminals and drug-addicts. We are incredulous and even shocked when we meet someone who disagrees with our indignant judgment. And should the dissenter go so far as to express disapproval for the institution of present-day marriage, for witch-

doctors, priests psychologists and broiler-men, our indignation would wax yet more intense: the dissenter is the very Antichrist whom a just God will punish with eternal hell-fire.

Behind it all is the desire to acclaim our own moral superiority by dissociating ourselves from elements even more despicable (adulterers, fornicators, illegitimates, homosexuals, criminals, addicts) than we know ourselves to be.

Yet another source of self-esteem coupled with contempt for others is our intellectual superiority. The so-called educated man or the self-taught person, the professional worker or the avid reader, "recognise" the inherent worthlessness of their fellow men in comparison with themselves. Their achievements in the sphere of intellect, however second-hand and puny, entitle them to look down upon others with a smile of indulgent and tolerant contempt.

The worst kind of contempt born out of blatant rationalisation is displayed by the snob in reverse. A sense of insecurity (called inferiority complex in modern jargon) prompts "the Negro" to despise "the white man"; a Jew, the Greek; a worker, his "social superior"; a hippy, the square; a homosexual, the "normal" person; a criminal, the suburban bourgeois and an uneducated man, the intellectual. This "reversed" contempt is often more aggressive, and almost always more intolerant, than the socially condoned forms of prejudice can ever be.

The victim of any contempt, even of contempt born out of group-prejudice, is always the individual. Social, moral or intellectual discrimination demand his subservience, his "mea culpa" or even his destruction. Group-prejudice tries to enforce humble and self-effacing submission ("he should know his place"). Moral righteousness demands from the offender expiation, the mending of his ways, or his submission to a "cure." Intellectual pride requires his lip-service to values he does not understand. "Reversal" is still more pitiless, not allowing for

any mitigation of the "crime" of the despised object.

In response to the contempt of his environment the hapless victim may choose various courses. One is to *escape* contempt: the man who denies he is a Jew, part-coloured or a homosexual, is an example. Or he may *challenge* contempt, defiantly asserting the very attribute or quality which brought the wrath of his environment upon his head. Or else he may even *evoke* contempt, a deep-rooted desire of some who are distrustful and afraid of their fellows, almost persuading them to express contempt. This masochistic pleasure in self-effacement is brilliantly shown by Dostoevski when his Marmeladow (in *Crime and Punishment*) makes himself appear as degraded as possible.

All forms of contempt and of compliance by response are expressions of an almost universal self-contempt due to man's awareness of the discrepancy between his potential and his actual self. Whether we discover it or surmount it in ourselves, there is only one way in which we can meet it: not by judgment, which itself always contains an element of contempt, but by acceptance and love, which will inevitably overcome contempt and prejudice. It is true that contempt and prejudice may destroy us before they disappear. It is also true that bombs dropped on our habitations may kill us before war is conquered. Yet as individuals the only thing we can do is to reject the principles of division and assert the principles of unity. Our personal attitude is not enough to save the world, but it is the only thing we can contribute to its salvation.

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London