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INEXTINGUISHABLE REASON

THE eighteenth century probably had justification for being known as the "Age of Reason," if, indeed, any period of human history deserves this flattering description. It was a time, at any rate, in which human confidence in the resources of reason was great enough for that confidence to be recorded in revolutionary political documents. The closing years of the eighteenth century saw a climactic expression of a faith that had been growing throughout the Enlightenment—faith that the natural laws of the universe can be discovered and comprehended by man, and that a social order conceived in terms of those laws would provide justice and freedom for all men.

The ideal of reason, the instrument of human understanding, was thus the source of an incalculable energy which produced vast changes in European and American history during the past three hundred years. The accomplishments of reason—or accomplishments hailed in the name of reason—have been chronicled by several of its champions, figures of the nineteenth-century world of learning: W. E. H. Lecky, who wrote the famous works, *History of European Morals,* and *History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe;* John W. Draper, who is still remembered for his *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science* and his *History of the Intellectual Development of Europe;* and, finally, Andrew D. White, an American whose *History of the Warfare of Science with Theology* (1898) was perhaps the last of the great rationalist studies of the emancipation of the Western mind.

More recent books on intellectual history have been obliged to include chapters on the disillusionment with reason, or at least to report the attacks of skeptics and critics upon what now seems the naive optimism of earlier protagonists of reason. One such book, John Herman Randall's *Making of the Modern Mind,* gives an excellent account of how modern rationalism, under the influence of scientific materialism and mechanistic theories of causation, literally devoured itself. At the hands of the skeptics and agnostics of the twentieth century, reason lost its character of a human faculty capable of reading out the secrets or "truths" of nature for all to understand. The assumptions of Natural Law and Natural Right, on which the Age of Reason had based its claim to progress, and on which the Age of Revolution had founded its claim to accomplishing justice, were gradually abandoned. It was probably Dr. Freud, more than anyone else, who administered the *coup de grâce* to the declining faith in reason, and whose influence entitles us to call the present an "Age of Rationalization."

There are at least three reasons, however, for speaking of the present as an "Age of Rationalization." First of all is the fact that modern psychological studies have made us extremely conscious of the human tendency to falsify motives and explain what we do or want to do in terms that will win social approval as well as personal self-esteem. Today, in consequence of this awareness, a man will say, "I may be rationalizing, but . . . ," or he will say, "Of course, I'm rationalizing; I admit it; but. . . . " A hundred years ago, a man who spoke in this way would probably be accused of spineless hypocrisy, but now he is often regarded as being "honest," or "facing facts." The impartiality which the rule of reason was supposed to establish is now thought to be practically impossible. A man may even refer to his "biases" or "prejudices" with a certain pride, as though they give him a claim to distinction, constituting, perhaps, the only "individuality" he can rightfully regard as his own.

These attitudes, which will be familiar to every reader, have the broad effect of installing a common complacency toward all acts of manifest self-interest and partisanship, whether private or public. The hope of rational or impartial composition of differences wanes, with increasing reliance on brute force as the means of protecting ourselves against

"injustice"—or, actually, we should say, "interference," since the very concept of *justice* is emptied of meaning by a decline of faith in reason. All the abstract concepts of value lose their significance in a world where reason is denied essential validity, since all general ideas have originated through the exercise of the processes of reason, or what we thought or hoped were the processes of reason.

Thus, in the long run, the application of scientific method, which was itself a product of the Enlightenment, and the new faith in reason, has destroyed our faith in reason, and relieved us of the difficult and often painful obligation of trying to be "reasonable" beings.

But if the larger questions that reason was to help us resolve are no longer acknowledged to be real, reason has not been abandoned as a *tool* to be used for lesser purposes. In philosophy and morals, rationalization may be an epithet signifying inevitable self-deception (it has of course a better if less popular meaning, also, in this connection), but in industry the term has been adopted to signify the principle of efficiency. To *rationalize* a process of manufacture means to review it and change those phases of the process which are merely "traditional" outmoded remnants of an old way of doing things which no longer "make sense" in the context of modern technological procedures. Reason, in other words, has grown in utility value, but has lost its dignity.

The historical consequences of the decline of reason are equally interesting to examine. Both the great totalitarian movements of the twentieth century reflect the vicissitudes of the faith in reason. Communism, the older of the two, began as a social-humanitarian application of belief in reason. The Hegelian original of the Marxist Dialectic was a form of objective idealism, in which the unfolding of history was seen to be a rational process which could be studied and understood by the human mind. In turning the Hegelian Dialectic on its head, Marx substituted non-rational forces to take part in the dialectic, but retained the claim that the *processes* of history are rational, proceeding, that is, according to the principles of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Marxism, moreover, became known as *scientific* socialism, which was a way of adding to the claim that communism is an inescapably rational interpretation of history. After the revolution, however, the allegiance of the communists to the principles of the dialectic was transferred to the Communist State, which now became the symbol of absolute rationality. Rationality, for the Communist, is essentially political and obtains all its norms and definitions from the political requirements of the Communist State, reaching its *reductio ad absurdum* in the eccentricities and sudden reverses of the Communist Party "line."

The irrationality of communist rationalism arrived at a peak when the claim was made that correct understanding of dialectical materialism—and, therefore, of everything else—was possible only for those who have an "unexceptionable line in politics." This claim was made in 1933 by a then authoritative spokesman of the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute of Moscow. Sidney Hook writing in a Farrar & Rinehart pamphlet, *The Meaning of Marx,* made the following analysis of the claim:

> It is not enough to be a member of the Communist Party—this is only a necessary condition—one must have an "unexceptionable line in politics" correctly to understand dialectical materialism. What does it mean not to have an "unexceptionable line in politics"? It means to be in disagreement with the views of the leader or leading group of the party. If one agrees with Bukharin about the rate of agrarian collectivization and not with Stalin, or with Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution and not with Stalin's theory of socialism in one country, one is not in a position to expound or understand properly dialectical materialism. True insight into *anything* is determined by a correct political line and a correct political line is determined by the enlightened leadership. There is only one step from this theory of divine illumination of the bureaucracy to the theory of the divine right of the bureaucracy. And I submit that this is more than a figure of speech for as I shall show below, "nature" in the orthodox philosophy of dialectical materialism plays the same role as "God."
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> One of the minor dogmas . . . which strengthens the belief in the infallibility of leadership derives from an abuse of the Marxian distinction between a subjective intention and an objective consequence.

> Official communists are quick to accuse other communists, who disagree with them and criticize the official line, as "counter-revolutionists" because their criticisms are sometimes seized upon by non-communists. The ground offered for the use of such harsh terms is the principle: "Subjective intentions are irrelevant in judging an action; only the objective consequences must be considered." If this principle is assumed as a postulate then it requires only one plausible material premise to get both a startling and an amusing conclusion. The argument runs:
>
> (1) Subjective intentions are irrelevant in evaluating an action; only objective consequences must be considered.
>
> (2) A political mistake, by definition, has counter-revolutionary consequences.
>
> (3) If *S.*, our leader, makes a political mistake, he is a counter-revolutionist.
>
> (4) But *S.*, our leader, cannot be a counter-revolutionist.
>
> (5) Therefore *S.*, our leader, is in political matters infallible.
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> The conclusion in a weakened form permits *S.* to make only little mistakes, *i.e.,* those that have no serious consequences.
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> I submit that if postulate (1) and material premise (4) be granted, then the conclusion cannot be avoided. Official communists *insist* upon postulate (1); and the material premise (4) is assumed on psychologically necessary grounds by all who join a revolutionary party.

While this pamphlet was published more than twenty years ago, Mr. Hook's analysis stands as a classical indictment of the communist use of "reason," and as a more general illustration of the subordination of reason to the control of irrational absolutes which, either openly or covertly, are made to dictate the results of all processes of reasoning. Nazism, the other totalitarian movement of our time, was outspoken in its contempt for reason, and for any pretense at political systems which claim the guidance of reason. But even though the democratic world fought against Nazism, and defeated it in the name of reason and sanity, there can be no doubt that the rest of the world, whether democratic or authoritarian, was greatly impressed by the power exercised by Hitler and his associates through irrational appeals. Here was further evidence of the "feebleness" of reason, and a frightening indication of the vulnerability of liberal democratic societies to the inroads of political emotionalism.

Fortunately, there is another side to the reaction against reason. Although in many cases the various demonstrations of the weaknesses of reason led to a kind of pouting rejection of the rational spirit, thoughtful men have made its decline into an occasion to study the way in which reason was raised to such high authority. Such investigators find, for example, that hardly one of the ancient philosophers displayed the exclusive confidence in reason that was characteristic of the leaders of eighteenth-century thought. For the Greeks, reason occupied a kind of middle ground between Opinion and Illumination. Intuition was not held by them in the contempt so often heard for it during the early decades of the twentieth century.

Apparently, the idea of intuition or illumination had too great a functional similarity to Revelation to permit it any respect on the part of the scientific rationalists. A *reasoned* conclusion could be explained, but not an intuitive insight—which is still without much explanation. A dogma of revelation has in common with an intuition the fact that both are presented by an irrational source: one comes from the voice of Heaven, the other from a mysterious "self" within. Neither source has any standing in modern science. From the viewpoint of mechanistic explanation of human behavior, an intuition is just as objectionable as the rule of a church council. Accordingly, scientific discipline required that intuitions be either denied, ignored, or ridiculed; or, at most, they could be allowed only a "poetic" value.

It was doubtless natural that the rediscovery of the importance of the "irrational" in human experience should begin with the dredging operations of Dr. Freud and recognition of the involuntary misuse or exploitation of reason. The very subtlety of intuitive perceptions is enough to make the neglect of the latter comparatively easy, especially when the foreground of human attention is fully occupied with rational activity. Fears, anxieties, and insecurities—most of all, doubtless, feelings of guilt—on the other hand, are titanic forces

which can hardly be denied. Is it so wrong to suggest, however, that the efforts of the psychoanalysts have been to enable the victims of psychic disorder to cope with their ills on a "rational" basis? When a worldly wise person minimizes the power of reason by pointing to the revelations of the analysts, have we not to admit that those revelations are themselves the result of the exercise of reason? A disturbed man learns to control himself by gaining objectivity toward the cause of his disturbance. Objectivity is a result of rational investigation.

The decline of reason has also been marked by a revival of mysticism. This interest has followed at least two avenues—a turning on the part of thoughtful Christians to the mystical element in Christianity, and a renewed attention to the content of Eastern religion and philosophy. Western or Christian mysticism has been largely quietistic in mood, but examination of Indian and Buddhist mysticism has led to the discovery of ancient psychological disciplines and to a new philosophic interest in Oriental metaphysics.

The role of reason is today equivocal from a number of causes. First, there has been a breakdown in the eighteenth-century theory of knowledge, in which it was assumed that rational methods, aided by the techniques of science, would eventually remove every veil hiding the mysteries of both nature and man. It was once hoped that scientific progress would vindicate the claims of those who offered naturalistic systems of ethics and believed that education would be able to bring the masses of every civilization up to the level of the new, scientific way of life. This has not happened. Instead, the masses give evidence of being frightened almost to death by the "promise" of science—in the form of atomic war—and in lands where technology is backward, the perverted "reason" of Communism seems to hold more appeal than the offerings of the defenders of the liberal tradition.

Even "liberal education" is today in jeopardy from the creeping paralysis of political hysteria. Impartiality is hardly possible in a world where the Stalinist theory of "objective morality" has overtaken the more eager defenders of the "free world," who now suggest that an effort toward "impartiality" in regard to communism or even socialism is a step along the way to a betrayal of "free enterprise" and, therefore, the democratic way of life. Partisanship, for many, has already become a rule of survival, in this world of fiercely competing ideologies. Righteousness thus obtains its "objective" definition from military necessity.

Probably the most legitimate questioning of reason comes from those who, in an effort toward complete honesty, discover that their own convictions have been arrived at by what seem to be non-rational means, however rational they may appear in retrospect. The sweep of feeling which makes a man cleave to some fundamental loyalty as his guide in life surely involves a higher authority than the plodding methods of reason.

In any event, we seem to be entering on a period of history in which we are relatively free to choose our theory of knowledge, to assess the various modes of human knowing, or attempts at knowing, and to formulate our conclusions afresh. What, ultimately, will be the place assigned to reason in this process of reorientation and revaluation remains to be seen. All that can be said, now, at a point which might well be the beginning of the process, is that whatever we finally say about reason will be in some measure, if not in large part, the product of reason itself—the result of reflective evaluation. And this evaluation is possible for human beings because they embody the vision of self-consciousness and have the capacity to compare and evaluate the values, goals, and methods they embrace.

Reason may not determine what we are, nor even what we become, but it is certainly the means by which we take and give an account of ourselves. Without it, we would have no hope of thinking about what we are, nor of *choosing* what we may become.

REVIEW
"TIME FOR LIVING"

GEORGE SOULE'S book of this title is an economic and technological complement to Lyman Bryson's *The Next America.* A well-known author and reviewer who teaches at Bennington College, Mr. Soule discusses the mechanistic society of the future with a bit of welcome optimism—at least in respect to the opportunities in store for men who *desire* to be original and creative. *Time for Living* is less a prediction of what America may become than a balanced discussion of what individual Americans may do about the "exploding curve" towards automation.

Lest some of the statements to be quoted sound Pollyannaish, we should first call attention to Soule's perception of the fact that tomorrow's mechanization and automation, unless matched by philosophic and ethical development, will be fully as tragic as the glum prophesiers of doom have portrayed it. On the characteristics of a technological society, Soule writes:

> No nation can with dignity govern its action by the opinion of others. But any nation, like any person, may benefit by seeing itself occasionally through others' eyes. Do Americans themselves know in what direction they are going? Do they understand what it is they are striving to protect from internal and external danger? Answers to such questions, to be sure are intangible and difficult to put into words. Sometimes, however, it appears that the most valiant warriors for "Americanism" are, unlike great Americans at previous times of crisis, more concerned to cherish the past than to work out a vision of the future. There could be no greater betrayal of the national tradition than this.
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> If this nation is now distinguished from others by its successful dedication to technological advance more than by anything else, it would be well to question where that dedication is leading, not just tomorrow or next year, but in the more distant future. Are there now, or will there be, new occasions for rational choices of grand policy such as were recognized and debated by Americans of former centuries? Are the great controversies that accompanied the beginning and the middle course of the industrial revolution forever stilled? Perhaps it would be well to shut off the television set, leave the car in the garage, and silence the telephone long enough to engage in a little speculative reflection about the future of the civilization of which technological advance has turned out to be at once the motive power and the visible symbol.

From a scientific point of view, according to Soule, there are many things that machines can accomplish more aptly than men, outdoing human "muscular effort, manual dexterity, even logical thinking and calculating." There is room for debate as to just how far machines can carry the skills of "logical thinking," and we should maintain, with Plato, that the higher powers of reason involve far more than routines of intellect. However this may be, it is apparent that the real problem for the citizens of a wealthy country in the future will consist in what they choose to do with large amounts of time once spent in purely routine production. Soule makes his best contributions on this point. Beginning with one of Erich Fromm's assumptions—that there are two forms of "anxiety," the better sort being productive of philosophical inquiry and deepening perception—Soule notes the rapidly increasing interest in serious literature and extended education. With each year, he contends, thousands of people are becoming "intellectually hungry" because their "anxiety" is constructive and provocative. Aside from the fact that advancing technology will require more rigid governmental controls to ensure smooth functioning—a danger which Soule readily admits—one should not, in his opinion, overlook the possibility that time for thought may mean time for awakening to the responsibility of individual choice. In his concluding chapter he says:

> In the type of culture characterizing the United States at least, advancing technology progressively allows the individual to exercise more choice as to what extent he wishes to use the market mechanism as a means of satisfying his wants, and to what extent he wishes to satisfy them by direct action of his own. It is not likely, in this culture, that markets and market values will ever disappear in the areas where the citizens show by their patronage that they wish to make use of commercial products. But in areas where commercial products cannot be had so cheaply or are not so good as the things that the consumer can make in his own time, an older type of private enterprise will flourish—the enterprise of the individual

working for his own satisfaction. In satisfaction of some wants, products of any sort cannot successfully compete with non-commercial uses of time open to the individual. These include, of course, the practice of the arts, intellectual pursuits, and cooperative or social activities of many kinds.

Particularly interesting are some paragraphs dealing with the future of the "arts"—closely paralleling suggestions made recently in these pages:

> The ultimate development of technology with its democratic leisure class, however, offers hope that the gulf between the artist and the public may be bridged. In the first place, the creative spirit, as working hours shorten and vacations lengthen, may subsidize himself modestly by occupying paid jobs which still would leave time and energy to do his proper work. In this respect he may be as well off as those in the past who were able to obtain sinecures, like John Stuart Mill as an employee of the British East India Company, or Nathaniel Hawthorne in the United States consular service. A person who wants more than anything else to write poetry, paint pictures, compose music, dance or engage in other creative arts therefore is not obliged, and certainly has less need than in the nineteenth century, to make his living by the sale of his product. But what about his audience? Interaction between artist and reader or spectator is an essential part of the creative process. If the book is not published, the picture viewed, the musical composition, drama or dance performed, it does not come to life. The new society of which signs are beginning to appear bears promise of better publics also. Taste improves and appreciation is sharpened most of all among those who themselves have some experience in creative work. If a large number of people are interested enough in creative arts themselves to produce or perform, the public for the more gifted is almost certain to improve both in quality and in quantity. Eventually this might cumulate in a force that would affect even the great mass-production and commercial avenues of communication.
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> In the meantime smaller or more local audiences may be found. Technology has even contributed to the mechanics of new printing devices that can produce, not formal books as we know them, but neatly printed and legible copies in small numbers, at negligible costs. There are local and regional art shows, theaters, concerts. Channels are opening between the creative artist and the consumer that are not encumbered by the heavy costs and cumbersome requirements of commercial mass production.
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> The question remains whether the creators themselves will have profundity, genius, superlative ability. Nothing distinguishes the great professional from the talented amateur more than the extent to which he pours into his work every energy and skill he can muster. The other requirement is of course that he shall have abundant resources within him. To achieve greatness in philosophy, science, art, requires dedication of a high order. What, someone may ask, does this have to do with a nation in which a democratic leisure class has turned to aesthetic or intellectual hobbies? Will not great work and great endeavor be drowned in a flood of mediocrity? Perhaps. But perhaps also average people will more and more come to regard what they can do with their unpaid time not merely as amusement or escape, but also as the serious business of life. That is what they may come to live for. Insofar as they do so, they will have absorbed the mood and the moral standards of the dedicated artist and will be better prepared to perceive and honor his superlative achievements.

In his last chapter, Soule's optimism comes to a peak, but in a rational setting: The man who works shorter hours will be forced to determine his own ways of spending time and energy; the "boss" can't keep him occupied, and as a result, he will have to learn to be his own supervisor. Soule concludes:

> The challenge in absence of discipline from a boss is to learn to discipline oneself. If work of one kind becomes no longer necessary, the opportunity arises to find work at something better worth doing. Nothing in history would lead to the conclusion that men and women, faced with new dangers, new challenges, new opportunities, must necessarily fail to govern them. The future offers a supreme test to individuals; it offers an unprecedented expansion of freedom, if they will grasp it, to seek the best—as it may seem to them—in their past traditions. By a new renaissance, they may live out these traditions in the new set of circumstances and values.

COMMENTARY
DEMOCRATIC IDEALS

OUR Indian contributor, C.V.G. [see Frontiers], reproves Americans for thinking that "democracy is sacred, and totalitarianism, evil." He apparently means that it is foolish to insist that other countries follow the same pattern of development as the American Republic. On this we agree.

But while the political forms of American democracy may not be sacred, the values they are intended to represent—and do represent, although very imperfectly—are important enough to be termed sacred. These values are variously defined in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States, and the Bill of Rights.

There is a sense in which the American people, through the agency of the founders of the Republic, undertook to be responsible for these values before the world. Few thoughtful Americans are proud of our execution of that responsibility, although there must have been some success, since manifest similarities exist between the American Constitution and the constitutions adopted by several of the new nations formed in recent years.

America, then, has borne this responsibility, whatever the defects and contradictions of her policies, past and present. Now comes a revolutionary *break* with the democratic, liberal tradition, by a movement which, while voicing slogans that claim to carry the ideals of the eighteenth century on to completer fulfillment, is actually a rejection of *the principle of freedom.* Hegel said, "The State should so act as if individuals did not exist." The Communists have laid the conceptual foundations of their society upon this rule.

Americans are aghast at the widespread indifference to the implications of this rule. It threatens not merely their system of politics, but the ideals their system of politics is supposed to shield and cherish for the general good. Communism represents a terrible discontinuity of moral life, an abandonment of the concepts of value upon which Western civilization is based.

Perhaps Western civilization has failed so miserably that its concepts of value are to be lost by default. Perhaps the alienation from moral ideas, made into a new theory of progress by the Communists, was no more than the filling of a vacuum produced by Western irresponsibility. Perhaps, as C.V.G. suggests, the totalitarians will eventually abandon the rule of terror and allow independent thought to flourish at some time in the future—become, that is "democratic."

These things are possible. But while conceding them to be possible, let us understand what is going on.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

EDITOR, CHILDREN . . . AND OURSELVES:

Having just finished reading *Truants from Life* by Bruno Bettelheim, following Fromm's *Psychoanalysis and Religion* and *The Forgotten Language,* I can only agree that these books complement each other and afford opportunity for correlation on specific points discussed.

The point of most significant contact between Fromm and Bettelheim, it seems to me, lies in Fromm's explanation, and Bettelheim's *demonstration,* of the meaning of symbolism in human life. Having read *The Forgotten Language,* I was introduced to a real respect for our "symbolic life." Once a person is to some extent schooled to think symbolically, he finds himself trying to decipher all sorts of previously ignored meanings around him—in religions and out of them, in day dreams and night dreams, in advertising and movies, in amusements and wars, but mostly in his own thoughts.

Anyway, Bettelheim was fascinating, rather than simply interesting, because I had already gained an insight into the nature and function of symbols. The reason this was so helpful is because the children in Bettelheim's school lived essentially symbolic existences. They could not seem to ask for help nor realize their problems except through the "forgotten language" of symbols. Deprived of the power of, or desire for, adequate expression, they resorted to these basic forms of communication. At any rate, if the staff in the school had been unable to perform the alchemy necessary to translate the symbolic lives of the children into a fund of usable information, I feel that the children could not have been helped to any appreciable extent. Their terrible problems would have remained hidden.

At this point I looked back into *The Forgotten Language* and noted the following passage:

> Symbolic language is a language in which inner experiences, feelings and thoughts are expressed as if they were sensory experiences, events in the outer world. It is a language which has a different logic from the conventional one we speak in the daytime, a logic in which not time and space are the ruling categories but intensity and association. It is the one universal language the human race has ever developed, the same for all cultures and throughout history. It is a language with its own grammar and syntax, as it were, a language one must understand if one is to understand the meaning of myths, fairy tales and dreams.
>
> Yet this language has been forgotten by modern man. Not when he is asleep, but when he is awake. Is it important to understand this language also in our waking state?

Bettelheim's presentation of the case histories of four emotionally disturbed children is surely important in appreciating the best in today's psychology. The treatment methods related there are truly fitting and ingenious ways to help confused souls—souls whose task it is, according to psychologists, to understand and master difficult situations and confused emotions they fall heir to. By the same token, just as the school attempted to make whole, functioning beings out of partially developed, badly oriented beings, so are we all constrained by the desire for a fuller life to undertake this task for ourselves.

In his *Psychoanalysis and Religion,* Fromm discusses two opposing schools of opinion among psychoanalysts concerning "normality." One school has it that the normal person is one who fits gracefully into the behavior patterns of his culture. If he cannot accept his society's standards, he is in need of help. Happiness is to be realized by gaining respect from others, and from the resultant feeling of "belonging." The other school, obviously represented by Fromm, holds that the "normal" man is one who fulfills his deepest needs as a human being of integrity—needs which are presented regardless of the type of culture he is in—and which, if disregarded, result in a man at odds with himself. The necessity for happiness, in these terms, is primarily

the need for self-respect; secondarily, the need to do useful work.

When Dr. Bettelheim took over the school, he found that the children had been encouraged to conform as much as possible to accepted standards of behavior, without apparent insight by the staff into the barren place where their inner psyche remained chained. Their "abnormalities" were kept under control, and the appearance of conformity was regarded as the beginning of a cure. Bettelheim began a reorganization as soon as possible, under the persuasion that Fromm's type of normality was to be sought. Bettelheim realized the crucial importance of the individual child's assuming the job of rehabilitation as his own, and the utter futility of trying to foist standards of behavior upon him.

The Orthogenic School offered a setting for individual growth by making available at all times a warm and sympathetic environment where the children could live and move at their own speed. When they realized they would have to become their own censors and make their own decisions, they reacted at first with great alarm. They hadn't liked being told what to do, but they now feared the real effort involved in figuring out how to act for themselves. This meant becoming responsible, integrated persons—a task which cannot be taken lightly even by adequately functioning adults.

Truants describes the painful process of changing undesirable traits by the same children who are saturated with them. In adults—those not caught in emotional and physical prisons, as with these children—the process of change must surely be as exacting, and fraught with the same possibilities of failure, for they have had longer to solidify undesirable habits.

Venice, Calif.

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Since our review of Bettelheim's *Truants from Life,* we have been keeping in touch with an evening study-group using this volume as text and springboard for discussion. The content is being examined sentence by sentence—for a reason we may have neglected to stress during the first general summary: An institution concerning itself with people all other institutions have failed to help must be an unusual one. There is the additional fact that the successful rehabilitation of one child who has been passed over as hopeless by other agencies may bring to light knowledge useful for thousands of others.

We have no way of knowing how closely the work of the Sonia Shankman Orthogenic School is being followed by the psychologists of other and much larger institutions. But reports from the participants in this study-group indicate that every parent and teacher may learn a lot about children and about himself by giving a close attention to Dr. Bettelheim's four case histories.

FRONTIERS

The Folly of Political Absolutes

INDIA'S apparent complacency* to the menacing potentialities of Communism has worried and been variously explained by Western political observers. Some read in it India's conviction of the futility of armed resistance to evil. The successful outcome of Gandhi's passive resistance to British rule would seem to point to a far superior technique. Those who take this view regret India's failure to distinguish between the benevolent British and the barbarous Soviets. Mr. Adlai Stevenson, who came to India in 1952, wrote: "The Indians fought only the civilised British. They knew that to lie before a British tank would throw them into jail. They probably do not know that a Soviet tank would keep rolling over."

Mr. Adlai Stevenson's understanding of the philosophy of passive resistance was superficial and his acquaintance with its history imperfect. The Indian passive resisters were by no means always sure that their defiance of authority would—and the British Government did not always throw them into jail. More often than not, the British relied on their batons and bayonets to dissuade the passive resisters instead of on the comparatively tame expedient of throwing them into jail, and only when these measures failed did they try more imaginative methods. The Gandhian passive resister was expected to have a measure of courage and determination which brutality of repression could not overcome. Soviet ruthlessness to political opposition could have more efficiently struck terror in the hearts of rebels, but the average Indian could believe that the unflagging persistence of determined and indomitable passive resisters could end such tyranny. To the Gandhian, the hypothetical situation in which Soviet tanks mow down passive resisters cannot last, for it will inspire a stream of people imbued with the rightness of their cause and ready to sacrifice their lives for it; there cannot be an indefinite perpetuation of evil.

It is, however, purely academic to speculate on the prospects of success of the Gandhian technique against Soviet colonialism—it was attempted only to point out an aspect ignored or not well-considered by Western critics of India's attitude to Communism. Western observers who have tried to interpret India's apathy to armed preparedness to Communism have not unnaturally believed that India has exalted the creed of non-violence and passive resistance into absolutes with universal applicability. This interpretation, however, is not correct.

Though he was a staunch advocate of non-violence, Gandhi was by no means a pacifist. He insisted that his non-violence was that of the brave and the strong. He did not rule out force completely; and even approved of it under certain circumstances. A young girl once wrote to him complaining about a misbehaving youth whom she was obliged to attack with her books. She wanted to know whether Gandhi approved of her action. Gandhi categorically did. When Kashmir was invaded by Afridi tribesmen in 1947 and the Kashmir Government appealed to India for help, Gandhi approved of India's dispatch of troops.

The eminent suitability of non-violence to subject India did not induce Gandhi to recommend its universal acceptance. He knew that to do so would be to move from doctrine to dogma. The propounder of absolutes ignores or denies the validity of experiences or circumstances different from his own, and is dangerously inclined towards an attitude of intolerance. Such intolerance is all too foreign and inimical to the moral purity of great means and ends. The absurdity of militant sects of certain great religions points a possible course for ill-guided Gandhians. That such tendencies are not altogether absent is indicated by the *Harijan* editor's reference to the "Messiah Complex" in Vinoba, noticed in MANAS for Aug. 17, 1955.

The consequences of an inclination towards absolutism in values, even when the morality of those values is unquestionable, as in the case of non-violence, will be apparent from the disharmony

* I am styling it as "apparent," for, when we have unmistakable evidence of Communist expansionism, I am sure India's disapproval of it will be spontaneous. But at present Communist aggressiveness is by no means so obvious to India as it is to the Western powers and the United States.

between the West and Russia. Relations between them have suffered because Western politicians impart a simplicity to the issues at stake between them, *viz*., democracy is sacred, and totalitarianism, evil. The sanctity of political democracy obsesses the West so much that the historical factor is ignored. Democracy in the West resulted from slow political evolution and was a product of history, the different operation of which in Russia was not tolerated, much less understood, because of violent Western disapproval of Communism. When the Russian Revolution of 1917, which held out great promise, seemed to be running amuck, there was naturally much distress and disapproval. It required more than ordinary detachment in the West, steeped in the belief that democracy was *the* and not just *a* way of life, to realise that history might be unfolding differently in Russia and that political moralising was ultimately irrelevant in the historical context. Communist depredations in Russia in the years following the Revolution, under Stalin's dictatorship, terrified and angered the world, but Communist terror had a self-righting mechanism which went mostly unnoticed. Communist persecutors, like Yezhov and Beria who presided over the liquidation of thousands of Russians, were themselves purged by a system the controls of which were operated by historical forces rather than by the personal wickedness of Stalin and his compatriots. This aspect of Soviet history working itself out through Stalin as a man of destiny has been portrayed by a Frenchman, Yves Delbars in his *The Real Stalin* (George Allen and Unwin, London.) From recent trends in Soviet Communism, it is not unlikely that the nightmarish futility of the terror method has dawned on the Soviet leaders. When Malenkov was succeeded by Bulganin as Prime Minister, after he had made a confession of failure, characteristic of all Communists in disgrace, he could, unlike Beria, escape with his life. There have also been reports of relaxation of rigours inside Russia. In these circumstances one is tempted to reflect on the "meaninglessness" of prolonged Soviet terror since the Revolution. But that "meaninglessness" has had to be demonstrated by history, which could not be hustled.

Democracy is a factor of history and so grafting it to politically immature countries cannot be quite successful. Political democracy implies a party pattern and politics, manoeuvering and power-mongering which do not necessarily draw out the human best. The Madras newspaper, *The Hindu,* writing on Nepal (Nov. 9, 1955), pointed out how the King of Nepal, despite his "democratic inclinations," "has had to carry on a personal government" since party politicians of Nepal could not get together and work in amity. The Government of Pakistan has often had to resort to drastic executive action to check the depredations of its politicians, and its Governor-General has often asserted his faith in "controlled democracy." These are indications of differing, unpredictable historical developments that render political absolutes meaningless.

Indoctrination in Communist States has come in for much castigation. And yet, in a modern democracy like the United States, such indoctrination is all the time present in a different guise. While in Communist countries it is centralised and state operated, under democracy it is decentralised and operated by the pulp magazines, the penny rags, T.V., the screen and the wireless. In this context, it is worth repeating what was quoted from Francois Mauriac in MANAS for Sept. 7, 1955: "It is not what separates the United States and the Soviet Union that should frighten us, but what they have in common." In these circumstances, free thinking in a democracy becomes as illusory, and democracy becomes just as tyrannical and depraving, as totalitarianism.

History is a jig-saw puzzle and as its pieces fall into place, their significances will be correctly understood and the pointlessness of political moralising and the non-existence of political absolutes realised.

C. V. G.

EDITORS' NOTE

This essay by an Indian contributor contains points which seem to deserve special notice. First is

the "realism" of Gandhi. Gandhi and his followers were not playing a "game" with the British. Doubtless the British were more responsive to the moral appeal of non-violence than the Nazis would have been, or the Communists would be, but the facile disposition of non-violence as useful only against "civilized" aggressors or imperialists needs closer examination than it usually receives. First of all, the British were not quite as "civilized" in their maintenance of power in India as is often assumed. Second, there is an element of back-door Anglo-Saxon "racism" or cultural conceit in the assumption that other military occupations or aggressions are fundamentally different from the British conquest of India. Without in the least minimizing the crimes of the totalitarians, we are bound to make the assumption that all human beings have basically the same moral potentialities, and that the relative differences among the various races and nations are just that—only relative. Even if we admit, as we should, that the totalitarian conqueror has parted company with the ideas of traditional Western morality, and stipulate, further, the existence of a psychotic element in the Nazi method of establishing power, the advocate of non-violence starts out with the assumption that violence and injustice are pathological. He would argue that the brutalized men who pursue totalitarian policies do so because they have been warped in nature by the pressures of a society which relies on violence, and that only the absence of violence will offer them any hope of recovery. Actually, the history of Nazism supplies instances of moral revulsion on the part of Germans who, even without the catalyst of a non-violent opponent, reached a point where they could no longer carry out murderous commands.

A second point has to do with Gandhi's qualified pacifism, as noted by this contributor. Critics, again, accuse Gandhi of inconsistency or "compromise" in countenancing resort to force or military measures in certain instances.

Before examining this problem it may be worth while to note that the charge of "inconsistency" has merit only in the eyes of debaters who appeal to moral principle. The practical man need not be consistent, but only expedient. But the practical man is quick to accuse of inconsistency or compromise any opponent who employs moral principles as a reference, whenever the latter seems to deviate from a rigid application of his principles. There is, however, an order of expediency available to the believer in moral principles—the order of educational expediency.

It is necessary, we think, to regard Gandhi in two lights—as an individual and as a leader of the Indian people. What Gandhi would do in his own behalf in a violent situation is one thing; what he would do as a man whose counsel is sought regarding a course of action for hundreds of millions of people is another. Every leader stands in this dilemma, and if the moral capacities of the masses fall below the level which the leader is willing to tolerate, the leader must resign. The choice of this level presumes some kind of "compromise" between the ideal and the politically or socially possible. The leader must decide whether, in the long run, operations at the level of the socially possible will lead toward the ideal, or in some other direction. We conclude that, for Gandhi, becoming involved in certain actions which he would not pursue for himself, but would accede to for the Indian people, was the kind of personal "sacrifice" that he regarded as worth making.

A man who lives in this way is forever drawing "fine lines," and forever open to criticism. Every great social problem is ultimately an educational problem, involving delicate balances and *dangerous* behavior. No man can work in the larger field of education without becoming as vulnerable as a little child.