VOLUME IX, NO. 38
SEPTEMBER 19, 1956

IDEOLOGIES AND ALIENATION

AN ideology is a systematic account of the nature of things which is believed in, campaigned for, but not ultimately known to be true. Politically, an ideology claims to define the way to the good life; religiously, it charts the path to salvation.

Those who have grown to maturity during the first half of this century, and have in some measure participated in the enthusiasms and prejudices of ideological movements, are bound to have experienced also a kind of alienation from those who were outside the ideological fold. The most obvious case of this, of course, was in the radical movement. Young intellectuals who grew up in an atmosphere of Marxist thinking were bound to have little respect for the businessmen who support the ideology of capitalism. In addition, anyone who had much money, however obtained, was likely to be regarded with suspicion. Extensive possessions were a mark of betrayal of the suffering masses; ease of life was taken to be evidence of indifference to the poverty of others— as, no doubt, it often was, and is.

Emotional rejection of unbelievers was almost a psychological necessity for the ideologists who looked forward to the day of class victory, when the exploiters would be expropriated, the die-hards liquidated, and a new order of social justice established. It is difficult to plan to shoot a *good* man at the barricades; the man you shoot must be either evil or contemptible, or irreclaimably perverted by the environment that is to be changed, so that his surgical elimination becomes a duty.

Now those who were boys during World War II, youths in 1929 and the Depression years, still eligible for the draft in 1941 and 1942, and susceptible to the appeals of the revolutionary movement, did not of course all regard the social changes they looked forward to in terms of a violent conflict to alter the status quo. But insofar as they shared the ideological thinking of the times, they experienced an alienation from prevailing institutions and the more vulgar expressions of "Americanism." They had a tendency to discount as unimportant large sections of the population— not abstractly, as a part of "humanity," but practically, as deluded victims of the System. So with all the expressions of typically *bourgeois* culture. These were regarded with both disgust and contempt.

It is fair to say that, today, very few Americans have retained ideological grounds for alienation, yet the emotional habits of alienation remain. This presents something of a psychological problem, since there is an obligation to sort out these habits, not necessarily in order to abandon them altogether, but at least to eliminate the uncritical and involuntary aspect of the emotional responses they represent.

At this point one may ask: Can a man really live without an ideology? Without, that is, believing in a theory of progress which, for the most part, is still unproved by experience?

The ideologist, of course, maintains that his doctrine is proved by experience. This justifies his being a campaigner; or, as his critics would say, a fanatic. But proof of social or religious theory from experience is always problematic. Such proof, at any rate, is very different from proof of a mathematical or physical proposition. The right answer in a factual question is not arguable when it is produced; but the right social or religious answer has no such simple test, and getting it will by no means assure that people will agree that you have it.

The relaxation of beliefs in ideology has resulted more from a general disillusionment and an actual horror at the results of the ideological

movements of the twentieth century, than from a careful analysis of the nature of ideological commitment. There is perhaps an instinctive reluctance to be "drawn into" another movement, on the part of many people, but this is different from a measured study of the various crusading gospels of our time. Such study, however, ought to be pursued, since without it there is danger of a fall into apathy, or infection by a new ideology.

Gandhi makes a curious contrast to the typical ideologist of, say, the '30's. Gandhi rejected violence altogether. He would work for revolution, but not the sort of revolution the Marxists looked forward to. Gandhi did not condemn rich men because they were rich. He proposed that they could act as stewards or trustees of their wealth—as voluntary "banks" where the resources of the society could be conserved. He condemned no man because of his socio-economic status, although he might have much to say about how men used the power their status allowed. Gandhi was also a kind of socialist, yet he was a strong critic of the industrial system. Those who expected the revolution to come about through the organization and finally the revolt of an industrially employed proletariat thought that Gandhi was a dreamer who opposed the natural dialectic of social transformation. Gandhi was also a moralist who preached strange doctrines of asceticism incomprehensible to materialist thinkers.

Was Gandhi an ideologist? That is, do Gandhi's views, taken as a unified outlook, constitute an ideology?

The answer, we suppose, is a matter of definitions, although not entirely.

In the first place, Gandhi did his best to prove his beliefs as he went along. If violence intruded among his followers, he called a stop to the campaign. He seemed to be more interested in human attitudes than in great political results. It is true that he wanted the British to quit India. But he wanted this mostly because he felt that British rule introduced a mechanical block to the moral regeneration he hoped would take place in India. There could be no real social and political responsibility on the part of Indians so long as the British were running things.

Are, then, Gandhi's views on non-violence and truth "correct"? Well, many people think so. The people who practice them think so more than others. The point we should like to make here, however, is that the Gandhian outlook while revolutionary, has no room for any sort of alienation from *people*, although it rejects most of the processes and attitudes typical of the status quo.

But is it really possible to separate people from what they think and do? Well, it is possible to be patient with children. We expect children to grow up and to alter their ways from childishness to maturity. Are we permitted to take this view of people who are grown up? We can, if we have not already fallen into the bad habit of being excessively paternalistic and superior with our children.

The psychological orientation of the ideologist tends to make him think that he must disapprove and even oppose actions which he would not undertake himself. In his view, the toleration of the status quo is a compromise with it. The difficult part of this situation is that apathy toward the status quo may indeed be a compromise with it. On the other hand, an *attack* on the status quo in some particular relation may have neither educational nor practical value in bringing about changes. Morality in this case becomes almost entirely subjective.

The French have a saying which throws light on this situation. "To understand all," they say, "is to forgive all." The ideologist is an unforgiving man. His dogmatic tendency inclines him to a sectarianism which prevents his understanding anything but the narrow program dictated by his system. Accordingly, there are many things he refuses to forgive. And he regards forgiveness as sentimental rubbish. He sees it as

an apology for doing nothing about the miseries of the world.

Now it may be that we have here an explanation of the fact that great religious teachers have seldom shown an interest in politics. Believing that men must learn to improve their lives by inward self-transformation, they left the outward arrangements to others. Hence, from the point of view of political ideologists, religion is a reactionary force which permits men to devote themselves to "spiritual attainments" without regard for social injustice. And in its corrupt forms, religion does just that, and becomes, in addition, the "opiate of the people," as Marx said.

The attractiveness of an ideology is that it allows beautifully clear definitions of good and evil to be made, and charts a course which can be followed with the full zest of the party spirit. It is rich in righteousness and proud in its condemnation of wrong. Its supporters are able to feel that they are doing the real work of the world.

So we come back to the question: Can a man live without an ideology? Or, can there be a faith for living which is without typical ideological content?

Such a faith is certainly possible, so long as the man is willing to acknowledge that certain areas of life are shrouded with uncertainty, and will probably remain so in any foreseeable future. It is necessary, also, to work out a scheme of meanings and values which constructively relates the individual to his environment. The unities of a philosophy of life seldom present any great problem, initially. It is the differences we have trouble with. All men, we can say with conviction, are brothers. The difficulty is with those who do not conform to our idea of brotherly behavior. Until we know more about the differences among men, we can have only tentative conceptions of the best way to achieve the ideal social order. Similarly, we should probably remain in doubt about what is "good" for all men. What is "good" for men is so largely affected by what men *think* is good for them. And there is no reason to suppose that this problem can be solved by trying to get all men to think alike, and thus agree upon the good. That men think differently about the good is what makes them human beings.

So far as we can see, these considerations are fatal to any ideological approach to human problems. They are really the considerations the anarchist offers in the forefront of his philosophy. But since anarchism, in proclaiming its truths, tends to ignore the manifest human tendency to establish organized forms of cooperation, we are left without what may be called a *practical* replacement of ideology, if we pursue the question no further.

Can there be non-ideological forms of social organization? Well, there can be associations undertaken in a spirit of search, a spirit of wonder, with acknowledgement of uncertainty. It is the need of the ideologist to *convince* that makes him dangerous. He wants to be believed, to dispel all doubt. His solutions, therefore, tend to involve him in anger and alienation.

We see that this question leads us into deeps of philosophical and religious inquiry. Actually, we are invited to accept as a substitute for ideology the Socratic form of inner security. By admitting our ignorance, we gain the strength which comes from being able to differentiate between what we know and what we don't know. Having made this distinction, our whole feeling in respect to influencing others to agree with us changes. We are no longer under an anxious compulsion to make others think as we do, so that they will join and strengthen us. We no longer seek support in this way, since we have learned that it is not worth anything to us, or to anybody.

We become indifferent to the polemics of argument and the techniques of conversion. We recognize that truth is an infinitely delicate plant that is withered by the slightest gust of passion or ill-feeling.

Remains the problem of social injustice, with which the ideologist was concerned. How shall it be dealt with? The anarchist solution cannot be applied until all men are perfect—or much more perfect than they are—and we have had more than enough of ideologies.

There is one answer to this from the viewpoint of the non-ideological individual. It is that he cannot change the world single-handed. The operations of human life are proceeding all about, moving according to various assumptions and theories. If there are delusions in those theories, fallacies in the assumptions, they will not collapse all at once. They can, however, be modified, little by little. The non-ideological individual can accomplish much by working to reduce the dogmatic certainty and exclusiveness in ideological doctrines. If he acts politically, he can keep the mood of divine revelation out of his pronouncements. He can endeavor to demonstrate the importance of distinguishing between knowledge and guess, fact and hope. He can reject the view that truth is decided by vote, that righteousness is proved by victory. He can study the problem of being honest with himself, which is no mean feat in a society pervaded by ideological clichés.

From the viewpoint of the non-ideological individual who wants to participate in well-considered projects of human betterment, there is the long-term problem of deciding on what human betterment is. A man who wants to better the condition of other men has to consider human needs—food, clothing, shelter, culture, the arts, and ethics, or philosophy and religion. He can feed the hungry, but he ought to admit to himself that the well-fed are often neither happy nor wise. If he decides to feed the hungry, he ought to realize that his activity will not necessarily lead to there being more justice and freedom in the world. Feeding the hungry, however, may still be the best thing for him to do. He has to decide.

He should study, perhaps, the history of social reform and become acquainted with the great political transformations of the past thousand years or so. Where, he should ask himself, are men better than they were before? What is the yardstick of "better"?

We do not deny that there has been progress, but ask that it be defined.

Is our philosophy better than that known to Buddha or Plato? Is it, if not better, more widely known and practiced? Are we braver? Is integrity commoner? Are we more happy and contented, along with our longer lives?

These are old questions, but none the less important to ask.

Perhaps we can say that there is really more freedom in the world. But if we say this, we need to add that there have been terrible losses of freedom for many millions during the past fifty years. Freedom, apparently, has its hazards. You might even say that freedom is a condition of life in which human beings become entitled to encounter the most dangerous hazards.

The basic trouble with the ideologies, so far as we can see, is that they are an attempt to guarantee what men will do with their freedom, once they get it. This, of course, is not freedom at all.

The reason we like the Constitution of the United States and the Declaration of Independence is that they seem to represent the least ideological of all theories of government. By implication, these documents define the good life as the free life, and let it go at that. They declare for the pursuit of happiness, but they do not tell us what happiness is nor how it is to be obtained.

Some weeks ago there was a discussion in these pages of the decline of ambition. The decline of ideology is the decline of social ambition. The problem, in both cases, is to avoid the lethargy which easily supervenes. The man who no longer strives for an ideological solution to the world's ills sometimes turns into a contributor to them, or a passive participant in the

world's neurotic processes. It takes effort to live in the neighborhood of mediocrity without succumbing to the habits of mediocrity. To admit that the businessmen along Main Street are human beings who ought not to be made the butt of ideological ridicule and rancor, should not mean acceptance, also, of the merchandising "philosophy" shared by most businessmen, and their wholly inadequate objectives in life.

Most of the things the ideologists have found wrong with our society *are* wrong with our society. We can be extremely thankful to them for their uncompromising criticisms of modern civilization, especially the cultural indictments they have offered. The rebels and the revolutionaries have this to their credit—they gave up what their often superior intelligence might have won them personally in order to become champions of the weak and the enemies of systematic injustice. If we ignore these charges, we have no business talking against the ideologists and system-builders, for they are better men than we are.

By the revolutionary efforts of the ideologists, we have at least come to learn that social changes instituted by violence, in order to realize ideological programs which are theories of the good, but not *knowledge* of the good, bring a terrible harvest of unexpected results. We have learned this, but the good is still unachieved and still desirable. We need to understand, now, both why and how many of the evils of old systems always crop up in the new systems. We need, in short, to know more about *systems*—what you can do with them and what you can't. We need to know how the pattern of social relationships fosters the development of the individual, and how it holds him back. We need to recognize that some people need systems far more than others—that what helps one man will stifle the creative expression of another.

We need to admit that the man who shouts loudest for a system is probably a man who wants an escape from individual responsibility, a refuge from decision; and that, on the other hand, people who are learning to make decisions for themselves often need a framework of administrative support from which to reach to greater independence.

Some day, perhaps, we shall have only one sort of institution—schools; and then, after that, we shall have only those who go to school. Until then, we must improvise as well as we can.

REVIEW
HIS BROTHER'S KEEPER

THE BATTLE DONE by S. Leonard Rubinstein (Willian Morrow and Popular Library) is the story of Ben Hoffman's stint as an American Jew in charge of a prisoner-of-war camp full of Germans in the southern United States. There is plenty of action in this novel, but what you remember is the psychological action, which is best of all. Hoffman gets this job because he speaks German and has limited service classification.

The quality of the story is illustrated early in the book in an interchange between the German camp cook and the American sergeant, Hoffman:

> "Herr Hoffman?"
>
> "What?" Ben said thickly into the steak.
>
> "You think Germans are stupid, don't you?"
>
> Ben swallowed and wiped the crevice of his chin. "No. Why?"
>
> "Do you think to fool us? Many of the guards are intelligence agents. We know you speak High German from the university. But these others! I, myself, could tell you what part of Germany each one comes from."
>
> "You're crazy," Ben said. "I am the only one who speaks German. Who are these others?"
>
> "Levin," the cook said. "Cohen. Irving Kind."
>
> *"Lump!"* Ben said. He wiped his hands on the napkin, pushed back his chair. Standing up, he whispered loudly to the cook.
>
> *"Sie sind Jaden.* Jews speaking Yiddish. Which I, too, can speak if you wish." He laughed. "*Naar!* How come you can't tell a Jew when you see one?"
>
> "What's so different about a Jew?" the cook asked.
>
> Ben stopped at the screen door. He walked back to the cook.
>
> "Forgive me, my friend. Thank you for the steak. Your question is proper."
>
> At the intersection before the barbed wire square, a truck swung out wildly to miss the jeep. That Jerry, Ben thought, realizing that he had driven full tilt through a Stop sign. Asking *me* the question I should have asked *him.* He turned the wheel angrily toward the compound.

Ben Hoffman is equal to the situation of running a POW camp made up of all kinds of Germans, including completely unreconstructed Nazis. The quality of his mind emerges early in the war, when he is at Stanford being trained as a linguist. He also studied Geopolitik, and German culture:

> The word "Nazi" lost shape in his mind. He said, in an economics class, "Blame solves no situation. You tell me about inflation under the Weimar Republic. That situation could not continue to exist. Those who allowed that situation to exist are to blame, not the Nazis—if you want to talk about blame. Nazis are the monstrous result of a situation. Nazis are a consequence. So are Fascists. So are Communists."
>
> A classmate shook his head. "I've seen everything now. A Nazi Jew!"
>
> "No," Ben said, "although I don't doubt that some Jews would have been Nazis if they hadn't been disqualified by the rules. No. Nazis should be killed. I just want to understand what a Nazi is. They're monsters, but still they're human beings. What the hell makes human beings Nazis? I want to know."
>
> A gray-haired soldier asked, "Ben, what makes you sure Nazis are human beings?"
>
> "A man is a human being," Ben said. "Nazis are not a different species; they're warped human beings. All I'm asking is: What warped them? What makes Nazis? Nazis are a horror because they are taught to hate entire catalogues. If we hate categorically, too, what difference between us and Nazis?"
>
> Ben loved to hear himself talk. Words built a solid structure of logic. Argument was a craft. He felt an artisan's pride.
>
> "It is necessary to kill Nazis," he said. "It is even more necessary to admit Nazis are made and not born."

When Ben took charge of the camp, under the authority of a captain who spent his time elsewhere, he found that he did not need to alter his ideas, although he had to improvise now and then to keep them straight. One difficulty was in explaining to the German prisoners that the Negro

field hands—"working in gangs in the fields, cawing like blackbirds, jabbering and screaming in Geechee talk, not a word intelligible"—were like that, not because they were born so, but because they were made so:

> And who made them the way they are, the prisoners ask. This old fat gentleman, courteous and benevolent, made them so. And who made him so? Keep it up, boy, you re doing good. Conditions made him so. It's nobody's fault, is it? It's never anybody's fault, is it? Why am I, kind soul that I am, warden of men locked up behind a wire fence to practice their human dignity? I'm fighting evil. I'm the warden of evil. . . .

It was Hoffman's good luck that he was put in charge of a POW camp, and not sent to the front, where he had thought he wanted to be. But it wasn't good luck because nobody shot at him down there in the deep South. He was lucky because the situation he was in allowed him to keep on with the war inside himself. Joe David Brown wrote of war at the front:

> Things go better when,
> Finally,
> Men learn that it is only a trade
> (A stinking, filthy trade)
> And learn to use their tools
> . . . .
> You learn to mistrust volunteers
> In the Army
> And men who are fighting another war
> Within themselves.

It is the people who can't stand the strain of the war within themselves who stir up the wars between the nations. That's their way of getting catharsis. They feel better if they have an enemy to shoot at, instead of one that tortures them from the inside.

But Hoffman found no peace, although he became a stronger, wiser man. A book like this makes you wonder whether the longing for a flat, passive, inner peace is not a principal cause of war—the war with guns.

One German prisoner, Walther, was drawn to Hoffman.

Walther was barely a man, twenty-two years old, Nazi educated. He had almost given up hope of filling the vacuum that Nazism and the war had left in his life:

> "Ben," he said, "I tell you I can believe in nothing—not even in your democracy. You tell me to believe only that every man has dignity.'
>
> "That's all," Ben said.
>
> "I can't believe even in Christianity," the German said. "How could a man who could die be a God?"
>
> "Are you a Jew?" Ben said.
>
> "I don't believe even that Goring and the high Nazis will be punished by your democracy," Walther said. "The big ones always stick together. It is only the little men on both sides who suffer."
>
> "Are you a Communist?"
>
> Walther put his head in his hands. "Ben, I don't know anything—I can't believe anything. I can believe only that the winner is always right. I can't do anything but be cynical."
>
> Ben said, "Be cynical. It's healthy. . . . Democracy is cynicism," he said slowly. "It protects man from himself. It knows human nature. One man's ambitions are limited by other men's ambitions. Democracy allows all men to restrain any one man. It doesn't make a religion of any one man's goodness. We agree only on mutual good. . . This means that no man can be a total force for bad. It also means, thank God, that no man can be a total force for good." He hesitated and added, embarrassedly, "We *are* our brother's keeper."
>
> Walther looked at him. "Why do you say 'thank God'?"
>
> "I think Hitler believed himself a force for good, don't you?"
>
> Walther's face set brutally. "What a question, Ben! I don't care what that foolish man believed; he hurt my life, that I know."

Hoffman's very uncertainty about a great many things makes him something of an educational force among the Germans. They, too—or many of them—were also uncertain. Here was a man in authority who was uncertain. Not that Hoffman let them get away with anything. He ran the camp with rigorous justice and with all the discipline that was necessary to keep order. In fact, Hoffman was what might be

called an ideal educator in an extreme situation. He was sure of some things—enough things—to command respect; and unsure of enough other things to command another kind of respect.

Hoffman read a lot. "Thank the good Lord, he thought, for books. They teach me that life is not a conspiracy against me. I am not an alien sufferer. Everyone suffers. I didn't understand that as a child. I was the only sufferer."

There is something of the quality of Ignazio Silone's *Seed Beneath the Snow* in this book. Hoffman is tired of slogans and labels. When Walther tells him, late in the story, that he wants to be a "liberal," like Hoffman, the sergeant says: "I know too many liberals, who cry about the people they can't help, and are cruel to the people they can help." The book is also a little like Macdonald's *Root Is Man,* in that Hoffman refuses to speak in ideological terms:

> "You talk about the dignity of humanity," Walther said. "You are not selfish. You are a liberal."
>
> "I am selfish. I am not liberal. And I talk about my dignity. I believe human beings are sacred. But I am entrusted with only one human being. Me. My duty is to fulfill and take care of myself."

Walther exclaimed, "You talk like a Nazi!" Ben replied:

> "I don't act like one, Walther. For all of any man's talk he can do good in only a limited area. I do my best with people I meet. I don't feel guilt about anything else. Not about Negroes, starving Indians, or even Jews stacked in Nazi furnaces. I worry only about the way I treat my family, my friends, my acquaintances, my prisoners. I'm not liberal and I'm not Nazi." . . .
>
> "When I am free," Walther smiled, "I will remember not to be a liberal."
>
> "Just be a good man," Ben said.
>
> "I will," Walther said. "When I am free."
>
> "Now," Ben said. "No man is ever free of other men."

So, when books like this are being published; when they are engrossing stories as well as bearers of this kind of intelligence; and when they circulate in hundreds of thousands, as most of the 25-cent paperbacks circulate, we feel encouraged.

COMMENTARY
THE CAPRICORN SOCIETY

WE learned of the Capricorn Africa Society through Laurens van der Post's book, *The Dark Eye in Africa.* The organization originated seven years ago in Africa, intending "to establish a society in which there will be no discrimination on racial grounds; opportunities will be open to all, and human capacity and merit will be the only criteria for responsibility in public affairs." The larger objective is "to create, before it is too late, a new political faith acceptable and emotionally valid for all races." The society was founded by Col. David Sterling. The chairman of the London Committee is Sir John Slessor, Marshal of the Royal Air Force. Alan Paton, author of *Cry, the Beloved Country,* is a member of the Capricorn Society.

The general objectives of the Society are defined in the "Capricorn Contract," which was endorsed by some 140 delegates who attended a convention of the Society last June at Salima in Nyasaland. The delegates were from the "Capricorn Territories" (the Rhodesias, Nyasaland, Tanganyika, and Kenya) and included all races.

The "Capricorn Contract" envisions a scheme of social organization for African territories which has hope of "uniting the black, the white and the brown man in one patriotism and one allegiance," in order "to provide the stability essential to the orderly development of Africa and thereby the happiness of its peoples." The members seek full self-government and Dominion status for each of the Capricorn territories, with a constitution conceived in the spirit of the aims of the Capricorn Society and with provisions which take account of the methods proposed by the Society for the social and political development of Africa. These methods are presented as "the outcome of many years' study by committees drawn from each of the races of Africa and each of the territories of 'Capricorn Africa'."

The crest of the Society shows a Zebra within the outline of the African continent, with this symbolism:

> The Zebra has black and white stripes but is one living organism and has one heart. Racialism, white and black, the one stimulating the other, is strengthening its hold year by year in Africa. The Capricorn Society believes that this destructive spiral can only be broken by creating a new concept of patriotism and a new political faith capable of binding together Africa's people in a loyalty more compelling than that of race or tribe.

Membership in the Capricorn Society is £1 a year. Copies of the Capricorn Contract and other literature descriptive of the Society's aims will be sent upon request. Inquiries should be addressed to the Capricorn Africa Society, 43 Cheval Place, London, S.W. 7, England.

Readers of Nevil Shute's 1953 novel, *In the Wet,* will be interested to learn that Mr. Shute's idea of the multiple vote—a plan under which each citizen's ballot increases in weight with his educational qualifications—is a part of the Capricorn program.

Since the Capricorn Movement is so manifestly without self-interest and sincerely devoted to the welfare of all the races of Africa, we hesitate to offer any criticism of its plans and undertakings. However, two points may be mentioned. In the fifth "precept" of the Capricorn Contract, responsibilities of citizenship are defined as including the obligation "to defend the State if called upon to do so." It would seem advisable, in any ideal conception of a social order for the future, whether in Africa or anywhere else, to broaden the meaning of "defend" to cover non-violent methods, should an individual elect to make his contribution to defense in this way. The spread of Gandhian ideas and techniques in Africa surely justifies this anticipation of future methods of adjusting differences.

Then, in respect to the ultimate termination of the communal economic arrangements of tribal life in Africa, the Society might find it judicious to assume that some tribes or other social units may

prefer to adopt a form of cooperative economics, instead of the scheme of private ownership which the Capricorn Contract seems to regard as a natural goal of social and economic progress in Africa. After all, certain American Indian tribes have found both social and economic salvation in this way, without abandoning their ancient traditions of communal ownership. The cooperative has proved a natural economic form for many Indians (see John Collier's *The Indians of the Americas*), and it is possible that African whites may in this instance profit by the example of other races and cultures. In addition, the impressive record established since World War II by the French Communities of Work would be worth the study of the Capricorners. (See *All Things Common* by Claire Huchet Bishop.) We are not proposing an alternative "blueprint" to be followed, but simply a greater permissiveness in plans for the economic arrangements of a liberated Africa. Lyman Bryson's *The Next America* is another text that indicates the need for flexibility in all plans for future social organization.

CHILDREN
and Ourselves

ONE of our subscribers invites discussion of the fascination for children of toy firearms. Since this reader is confident that all the useless gadgets which encourage thoughts of war and violence should be dumped in the ocean, the problem seems to be how the pacifist-tending parent of an "average" child can intelligently counteract the "normal" desire on the part of her boy to have whatever the neighborhood boys have. So, while toy guns, and a MANAS reader's dislike for their associations, may not be a valuable topic all by itself, the psychological issues raised by this particular emotional conflict are certainly worth considering.

But if playing around with imaginary killings and battles is corrosive to the young—and we think this to be the case—it does little good for parents simply to forbid toys which add technical spice to the game. For the penalty the parent pays is apt to be a judgment on the part of the child that he is being unduly restricted. This often leads to secretiveness, and to an unfortunate and sometimes wholly unwarranted presumption that because certain toys are forbidden, any sort of endeavor which smacks of danger or excitement will also be forbidden. But there is a middle ground between prohibition and the acquiescence— a middle ground some parents seem to know little about. For instance, a child can grasp the nature of his parent's personal feeling—well enough to understand why make-believe firearms will never be chosen for birthday presents. He may also feel free to make some contrasting choices of his own without really endangering his relationship with the parent. If he *trades* with another child one of his non-lethal playthings for a gun or a miniature jetfighter, the situation, to him, becomes a bit different. Perhaps then a discussion is in order, and that discussion might begin with an attempt to understand the fascination of guns, with some parental sympathy for the fascination— even if you, as parent, loathe them. The child needs to know the difference Between your opinion and your prohibition. He needs to know that your opinion will not *always* lead to an absolute prohibition, so that he has that all-important sense of leeway. A parent must allow his child some different ideas, tastes, and patterns of behavior, even if he does not approve them.

Often, at this point, it is possible for the parent to say that the child will have to earn his own money to buy such toys, giving evidence of the parent's right to determine what activities will be directly supported. So the discussion of guns is like the discussion of anything else, so far as education is concerned. The teacher and the pupil—the parent and the child—must be identified in cooperation and yet remain separate as individuals. There must be the area of dependence—recognized as such—and there must also be an area of relative independence, wherein the child or pupil is accorded the right to what the teacher holds to be wrong opinion—or to make occasional mistakes in taste or judgment.

Now for the specific discussion of guns. No child minds talking—or even listening—so long as the right time is picked, and so long as he does not feel that the "talk" is merely a formality to disguise the fact that he is about to be required to adopt the parent's point of view. But if the parent is really *willing* to talk about guns, and not simply his or her dislike for them, why not begin by listing *all* the things which can be said about firearms? If a parent asks a child why he is interested in guns, and is not prepared to help him search deeply for reasons, the question is purely rhetorical. For while the child will not be able to formulate the reasons for his fascination without help, he will be aided by knowing something more about his own attraction. And the parent who knows more about the attraction will at least proceed, as age and time permit, from a balanced educational perspective.

A gun is a symbol of strength and power. Boy children, especially, hunger for the feeling that they are not deficient in either quality—that they can hold their own against others who may employ force. With a gun, the small man becomes the equal of the large man, the puny boy equals the muscular ones and the adolescent, even, is able to think himself ready to cope with either the criminal or lawman. The history of individual firearms is the history of growth in the realization that, among men as not

among animals, resourcefulness and inventiveness, plus fearlessness of spirit, can outweigh the physical fortunes of birth. We have lived through many centuries of violent history-making, and the saga of the gun is so intertwined with the ideal of fearlessness in the mass ethos that youngsters are going to respond to the tradition in some degree, whatever the attempts of parents to introduce a deeper view.

Children do not know any of this, of course, but their emotions know it. When they play with toy guns they are participating in the danger and daring involved in wars, Western pistol fights, and the endless battle between lawless and law-enforcing persons. The man with the gun is the man no longer helpless, able to be just as "strong" as his fearlessness will permit. There is also, unfortunately, the power of the gun in the hands of those who, with warped emotions, like to injure and to kill. The boy whose air-rifle is secretively employed to shoot harmless birds has fallen into the net of this least excusable employment of firearms. As the personification of the "hunter," he becomes so intoxicated with his bit of power that its cruelty is not realized. Neither he, nor his counterpart who merely plays games of fancy with toys, has anything in common with the genuine frontiersman, whose gun gave him food and protection in the wilderness.

What does all this come to? Perhaps that guns are real values when viewed from a certain perspective, creating their own mores, with use running the gamut from extremes of valor to extremes of brutality. The pacifist-tending parent needs to understand the appeal of firearms, its psychic role in Western culture, if he is to help his child to see that there is *another* perspective on heroism. If he cannot grasp, with the same sort of sympathy as that extended by the percipient psychologist, the logic of the "gun perspective," he is in a poor position to influence his child to look beyond this to another point of view. If, during the years of adolescence, his son hungers for hunting, he might with profit share some target practice rather than outlaw or berate the whole procedure. In the handling of guns, one has in this way a far better context for discussing their use than from the proverbial armchair. To suggest some unusually good Western tales wherein the hero is such precisely because he looks beyond "gun psychology"—even though he finally "slaps leather"—may be a big step in the right direction at certain times.

And then there is the fact that boys who are proud of the physical strength and proficiency they have developed often seem to lose interest in irresponsible violence. Physical training, even during the earliest years, provides an excellent and natural counteractive to the urge to retaliate against real or imagined physical dominance by "equalizer" means. The boy—or man—who has respect for himself, physically, in at least one department of strength or skill, commands some sort of respect; more important, he feels a measure of self-respect, and men of self-respect are less likely to provoke violence on the part of others, or to wish to inflict it.

The association of guns with war is something else again, and a very interesting topic for talk with children. The hand gun and the rifle have become almost entirely insignificant in war. These weapons are "equalizers" in individual combat, but individual combat never takes place at all, by design, in modern war. The big guns and big bombs are equalizers, too, but in an entirely different manner, for the brave and the cowardly, the strong and the weak, die together. Skill and nerve, just as physical strength, count for less and less. And this is something that your gun-toting youngster should come to know—that the tradition of guns has really been outlived in any sense which connotes adventure; the taste for guns is really out of style, and if children know that this is so, and how and why it came to be, they will know a good deal.

FRONTIERS

Psychiatric Responsibility and the Law

A CORRESPONDENT recently challenged the criminal courts for their reliance on the recommendations of psychiatrists, contending that jurors and judges have gone much too far in accepting the judgment of presumed "experts" as determining proper corrective procedure. (See MANAS, Sept. 5.) Presently at hand are two articles which provide psychiatric opinion in this regard. One, appearing in *Psychiatry*, deplores the tendency of society to turn such decisions over to psychological experts. This decline of confidence in ordinary human judgment, it is proposed, has caused us to think more in terms of illness and health, emotional balance or unbalance, than in terms of ethics. The writer, Dr. Leslie H. Farber, points out that while the lunatic or the neurotic has been restored by psychiatric insight to membership in the human race, "only slightly more deranged than the rest of mankind and somewhat less deranged than society itself—this was not accomplished without a certain cost." Dr. Farber continues:

> We could now regard our moral, intellectual, and spiritual failures with a greater sympathy or indulgence, not to say complacency, but the price paid for this was to define ourselves altogether in medical terms of health or illness—according to the relative presence or absence of neurosis. So if all our sins or crimes could now be excused on medical or social grounds, most of our greatest triumphs and achievements could also be explained, and even excused, on the same grounds of illness. The new criteria of emotional maturity or social health were not favorable to fanatics, rebels, prophets, or revolutionists—unless, of course, they happened to be political revolutionists of a certain humanitarian color.
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> It is for this reason—because everything uniquely human has been translated into medical terms of illness—that the psychoanalyst is now carrying such a heavy burden of responsibility. He no longer deals merely with problems of medical ethics, or with the moral problems arising from his craft. Morality itself has been turned over to him, along with philosophy and religion. It is not only his patients who ask him to solve their moral and religious problems, to tell them what is human. Nor is it only the artist, the philosopher, the teacher who turns to him; moralists and priests and theologians are now turning to the psychoanalyst for their definitions of man. Needless to say, we never asked for a burden of power such as this, which amounts to our taking over the sole responsibility for the human fate. Yet it is the scientist, and not the layman, who must be blamed for this astonishing situation. For it is the medical man's delusion that psychiatry deals not with spiritual states of grace or vanity or despair—but only with a special pocket of ailments whose cure and cause lie far outside the realm of moral values. So if the theologian applies to the psychiatrist for his diagnosis of despair or sin, it is because he has no idea that he is doing so. He believes he is asking merely for a medical opinion on disease.

Dr. Farber's article in its entirety is excellent, and should be particularly interesting to those who are annoyed with members of the psychiatric profession because of an apparent willingness to wear the mantle of authority.

In another discussion, "Psychiatry and Criminal Law," appearing in *The Menninger Quarterly* (No 2, 1956), Dr. Herbert C. Modlin, senior Menninger psychiatrist, asks for exactly the sort of scientific research our critical correspondent suggested two weeks ago. Dr. Modlin writes:

> Before psychiatrists can assume further responsibility in rehabilitating criminals, they must acquire additional data and experience to link their knowledge concerning treating non-criminal abnormality with treatments directly applicable to criminality. Before lawyers can proceed with enlightened administration as they desire to, they must acquire more directly applicable legal psychology than common sense regarding those who chronically cope with stress through antisocial behavior.
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> We need a research laboratory, a new kind of institution where lawyers, police, penal authorities, clergymen, educators, sociologists, psychiatrists, and other medical men, can embark on an intensive investigation of the criminal. We need to test hypotheses, try new methods, assay current practices, develop as yet unthought of techniques for altering

> personality functioning. We need an enlightened judiciary, and perhaps a courageous legislative body, supported by an alerted populace somewhere that will entrust a number of criminals to such a multi-professional experimental team. This is no visionary proposal; it is a practical suggestion which should be expeditiously set into motion. However small might be the social gain realized, it could not conceivably cost more than it would be worth.

The essential difference between the legal point of view and the psychiatric point of view stems from two causes. First, as Dr. Modlin puts it, "the law's emphasis on punishment is, of course, completely foreign to the medical philosophy of relieving human suffering by mending injuries, combatting and eliminating disease, prolonging life, averting death, easing pain, and teaching health." Second, it is impossible for psychiatrists to compromise with the moralistic assumption that human behavior is *always* motivated by a conscious will, that everyone is capable of normal control. Motivation is of supreme importance to the psychiatrist, yet motivation can be determined—if at all— only after prolonged, dispassionate search.

For a very long time the Law was impatient with psychiatry; now we have finally admitted that this is the "age of psychiatry," and, thus enthroned, psychiatrists tend to become abrupt themselves. Dr. Modlin reminds his associates that the breach must be healed, and healed by the psychiatrists. Neither passive acceptance of the statement of a single psychiatrist in a courtroom, nor hostility to his assumption that he knows something the layman doesn't know, will help. Dr. Modlin admits that certain psychiatrists are much given to "over-zealous statements" which they expect to be accepted meekly, and he concludes this part of his discussion by remarking that "legal minds are not closed; neither are they a vacuum. The psychiatrist must be willing to present, uphold, and argue for his position; as a medical man he is not accustomed to having his opinions questioned and challenged so strongly."