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A NEW SPIRIT

A NEW mood or spirit is entering the serious writing of our time. To characterize this spirit briefly, we should say that it represents a new respect for man—for the potentialities of human beings. Men have always said that respect for man is "important," so that this may be thought nothing new. Its novelty, however, lies in its power to persuade, to convince. There is substance and particularity in this new respect for man.

Here, we plan a brief survey of the evidence of this spirit in modern literature and discussion. It will be far from any pretensions to completeness, resting its case rather on the fact that examples are chosen almost at random—mostly from writers who have been previously noted in these pages. Individually, one may say that the writers we shall quote or refer to are simply "good"—that they by no means represent a unique development. Taken together, however, they may be seen to form some sort of advance phalanx of tomorrow's liberal thinking. This, at any rate, is what we have to suggest.

We begin with Lewis Mumford. There is great clarity in Mumford's criticism of modern Western civilization. He seems to be one of the few men of our time who are able to expose the defects of the age without experiencing alienation as a result. He has, so to say, "understood" this period of history. In the concluding chapter of *Art and Technics*—a book well worth owning—he raises basic questions:

> Why has our inner life become so impoverished and empty, and why has our outer life become so exorbitant, and in its subjective satisfactions even more empty? Why have we become technological gods and moral devils, scientific supermen and esthetic idiots—idiots, that is, primarily in the Greek sense of being wholly private persons, incapable of communicating with each other or understanding each other? I put these questions in the most extreme form possible, for the sake of clarity, trusting that you will supply the shadings that would turn these diagrammatic contrasts into workable truths, giving due weight to all the symptoms of health integrity, vitality, creativeness that are still visible in our society.

Art, for Mumford, is the manifesto of the inner life. For him, therefore, the art of a time is its own best commentary.

> The healthy art of our time is either the mediocre production of people too fatuous or complacent to be aware of what has been happening to the world—or it is the work of spiritual recluses, almost as withdrawn as the traditional Hindu or Christian hermits, artists who bathe tranquilly in the quiet springs of traditional life, but who avoid the strong, turbid currents of contemporary existence, which might knock them down or carry them away. . . . The fact that such artists live and quietly sustain themselves is in itself a good sign, though it reveals nothing about our further social development, since this kind of artist has always found a cranny to grow in under the most unfavorable personal or social conditions.
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> What these self-enclosed artists reveal is the unshakeable determination of life itself, as I think it was Amiel who said, "even under conditions .of maximum opposition by external forces."

In passing, we may say that the representatives of the new spirit belong to no party nor appeal to a particular "public." They have no "academic" stamp on their ideas. They write down their perceptions without reference to "schools" of opinion, for those who have a similar inclination to get at the core of things. The importance of this sort of writing is that it is impossible merely to disagree with it or say it is unimportant. You are obliged to work with what Mumford says to form your own conclusions. Here he offers the basis for a social theory of esthetics, placed in relation to a philosophy of life:

> All that art is and does rests upon the fact that when man is in a healthy state, he takes life seriously,

> as something sacred and potentially significant; and he necessarily takes himself seriously, too, as a transmitter of life and as a creator, through his own special efforts, of new forms of life not given in the natural world. . . . What exists outside man, as raw nature, the artist takes into himself and transmutes: what exists in himself, as sensation, feeling, emotion, intuition, insight, rationality, he projects outside himself in forms and sequences not given in nature; so that the growth of human culture is not simply marked, as Mr. Arnold Toynbee supposes, by the transfer of interest and power from the external world to the interior, with an increasing "etherialization" of the material conditions of life: it is likewise marked by a transfer of man's innerness to the outer world, with a corresponding materialization of man's subjective powers, a corresponding outward manifestation of his inner creativity.

Unlike Toynbee, who may be taken to represent the ripe but inadequate wisdom of a past tradition, Mumford has no text to prove, no scripture to support. He finds his meanings in living experience and speaks directly to his readers in the non-traditional terms of immediate discovery. We have quoted him at some length because he has heretofore been neglected in these pages. With Mumford, we would place Lyman Bryson, as another man of endlessly fertile thought for the present and the future. The exciting thing about these writers is that their reference-points are in the things they write about—in what they and we may observe for ourselves—and in the high confidence they feel concerning the human adventure. They are not partisans of any faith save faith in man.

At an entirely different level, something of this spirit is manifest in the new fortnightly, *Reporter*. Here is a paper of current commentary which seems without the tiresome bias of party politics. There is no ulterior motive—at least, we have found none, as yet—in this magazine. Sooner or later, the party spirit in journalism eats away the human spirit. With it goes the sharp edge of understanding, the illuminations of subtlety. The dull averages of mass appeal are really an insult to human intelligence, a blight on the educational process. One may wish, with Simone Weil, for the suppression of all party organs or slogan-bearing transmission belts of "group opinion." Thought is the one thing that ought never to be "collectivized." It may be true that "good" movements need their channels of expression, but in this case they ought to be plainly marked for identification, with ends and means equally open to examination and criticism unhampered by organizational interests. We offer, in short, the proposition that if it were possible to free the world of tendentious writing, the practical problems created by the loss of organs of propaganda and political organization would soon be solved by other means.

Great works often result from the release of the mind from the party mentality. Emerson is a familiar example of this intellectual blossoming, but a more recent instance is found in Dwight Macdonald, whose break-away from all conventional forms of social and political analysis led to the writing of "The Responsibility of Peoples" and "The Root Is Man"—essays on the socio-moral aspects of twentieth-century culture which may some day be regarded as having as much importance for our time as Rousseau's *Social Contract* had for the eighteenth century. Macdonald declared for the return of human values to politics. No one has pointed out so clearly the immorality of the union between Hegelian abstraction and the coercive might of the State.

The rejection of organization as an end in itself, seen as a practical necessity by Evan Thomas ten years ago and set down in his pamphlet, *The Positive Faith of Pacifism*, is already reflected in new social formations, pre-eminently in the French "Communities of Work." Here the ethical relationships of man with man in community take precedence over any sort of striving after "power." In fact, the futility of "power" as an objective in human affairs may turn out to be the great political and moral discovery of the twentieth century. Those who give this

discovery voice are surely the authentic prophets of our time.

Nor is the age without ethical genius. The contribution of both Gandhi and Schweitzer—to note the same civilizing trend in both East and West—has been to help people to see the crimes involved in modern war. Schweitzer teaches the gospel of reverence for life, and Gandhi turned the principle of non-violence into a dynamic of social action. We have the habit of searching the past for "hero symbols," but here, in these men, are Apollos enough for our time, for have not Gandhi and Schweitzer attempted to raise above the horizon the sun of a new era of peace? Some may see only an opportunity for bitter irony in the fact that, last October, Prime Minister Nehru of India told the officers and men of the Indian navy that they ought to regard themselves as ambassadors of good will and "to spread the message of India abroad" in the world, but it seems to us that the demilitarization of the military arms of government can begin in no other way. Mr. Nehru also congratulated the Indian navy on its disregard of caste barriers in the selection of its personnel, and urged the men to "develop team spirit and dedicate themselves to the ideals and teachings of Gandhi."

In the East, the new nationalism that is creating nations out of peoples long under the heel of Western colonialism strikes a new note, articulating the idea of world solidarity with the spirit of national birth. Soetan Shjarir of Indonesia writes:

> Because ultimately all nations must form one humanity embracing the whole world, becoming one race—the human race living in one society based on justice and truth—we must no longer be ruled by the narrow prejudice that divides human beings into different strata according to the color of their skins, or their differing traditions and inheritances. In the end these narrow feelings must cease to influence our lives. Once free of these bonds forged in a raw period of our evolution we shall know that there is a vast difference between loving the land of our birth and hating foreigners. . . . Our nationalism serves only as a bridge to reach a human level that nears perfection, not to gratify ourselves, far less to do damage to human intercourse. We keep firmly to our faith in humanity in general. We are no enemies of humanity. Our nationality is only one facet of our respect for humanity.
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> Consequently our relations with other nations will be good if others can appreciate or at least understand our national ideals, but will be difficult to develop favorably if they still continue to worship an outdated nationalism, adhering to a narrow-minded national egoism and imperialism that has proved to be harmful to the world and humanity.

Shjarir's insight into the role of the West in contributing to the rise of the new East, despite the exploitation of imperialist nations, reveals a rare understanding of the processes of history:

> In penetrating deeper and being made more receptive to the overwhelming riches of the Western mind, they {the Asians} regained their inner certainty. They allowed themselves to be influenced by those elements of culture that could be fertilizing and developing, to form free and harmonious personalities. And at the same time they realized that it also belonged to the Western tasks to conform to standards of truth, beauty, and goodness. These were the same ideas that had already been proclaimed by the prophetic figures of the East, though differently formulated and applied.
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> The West itself has also been in a process of revision and purification for a long time. Among themselves they knew that the application of knowledge and technique could have fatal results, if at the same time moral standards were allowed to be overthrown. The chaotic condition existing among the world powers with all that it implies (annihilation by the atom bomb) arises from man's self-doubt and from the lack of inner moral resistance.
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> The essential task of modern man today, whether he comes from the East or the West, is to rescue himself from this abyss by endeavoring to fix again his known position, and reestablish his absolute presence, his destination in the cosmos. In all this he must be led by standards of truth, beauty, and kindness, which form the components of human dignity. These universal values are today no monopoly of the East, nor of the West; these are the tasks of fundamental man. . . .

In India, President Rajendra Prasad has called upon Indians to return to a more realizing practice

of Gandhian ideals. Gandhi, he said, studied every aspect of Indian life, and this enabled him to understand fully the feelings and sentiments of all sections of India. He (Gandhi) "understood the shortcomings and difficulties of the people and suggested practical steps to do away with them." The interesting thing, here, is that the President of India addresses himself to the problem of human attitudes, and not to the immediate objectives of political reforms or goals. He also comments on the influence of the West in Asia:

> The light that has emanated from the West seems to have swayed us and gripped our imagination. The result is that whenever we have to take a decision on any issue which confronts us, we have one important consideration in our minds and that is what other nations will think of us—whether they will like the step that we take or not and what will be our ultimate position in their eyes.
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> The main result of this attitude on our part is that we begin to attach more importance to things belonging to the West and less to our own.

These quotations illustrate the caliber of the new leadership in the East. It is a leadership which places primary emphasis on the fulfillment of basic human responsibility at home.

In the realm of philosophy, the most significant advances in the West toward understanding the East seem to lie in the works of men influenced chiefly by modern psychological studies. Socially and politically, Edmond Taylor's *Richer by Asia* has no rival in its grasp of the moral and philosophical values of traditional Eastern thought. Taylor's book is a brilliant comparative study of East and West—far more important, we think, than the better known Northrop volume. At the psycho-philosophical level, the writings of Erich Fromm and Joseph Campbell reveal the irresistible attraction of Eastern philosophy of soul. While the soil of the works of such men is the rich field of Freudian and Jungian clinical and cultural observation, the seed of inspiration found in what they have to say seems clearly to have an Eastern source—the teachings of Buddha and the Upanishads. Modern psychological thought has thus come full circle, and is now exploring the profound idea of the Self found in ancient Oriental scriptures—again, a revival of faith in man in the most refined and philosophically mature expression known to history.

John MacTaggart, a somewhat obscure although influential British thinker, once remarked that Hegel, to whom so much of modern political philosophy is owing, neglected the individual because he had no interest in the individual. MacTaggart undertook to correct this omission in Hegel in his *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology*. The fruit of this effort, pursued by some who knew MacTaggart's work and by many who did not, is already evident in the new spirit in philosophy. At the political level there is Macdonald's return to classical humanist values and his brilliant critique of collectivist or "progressive" politics. In philosophy there is the unparalleled *Human Situation* by W. Macneile Dixon, and the more recent *Nature, Mind, and Death* by Ducasse. Meanwhile, Dr. J. B. Rhine and others are supplying ample evidence of the importance of a psychology of the individual—even, perhaps, of the individual soul.

While the effects of all these influences, so far as the general public is concerned, are not yet perceptible on any measurable basis, they will, we think, eventually become visible in terms of actual changes in outlook and interest for millions of people. In both East and West, there is great promise of better philosophy, better life, for all.

REVIEW
FACTIONALISM—ROMAN AND CALIFORNIAN

Now and again someone like Mr. Steinbeck, who is to be quoted below, relieves the agony of human strife by pointing out that much we beat our breasts about is merely ludicrous. An agony worth enduring has little breast-beating about it, or histrionics of any sort, for real agony involves far more of striving than of contention. Yet before we realize this, how much we have to learn about contention!

Contention is of itself a proper subject for "escape reading." As the psychologists have pointed out, those of unstable emotions—who feel each day a deal of contention and hostility—work off some of their stored-up grievances vicariously through fiction-inspired fantasy. (We may reserve a doubt that anything actually is "worked off" in this way, but, from the short-term point of view, escape-reading may reduce a bit the incidence of wife-beating and husband-poisoning.) But even if personal or factional contentiousness can be written off as emotional immaturity, unfortunately, the things that happen to history when this quality erupts cannot be written off in any way at all. The past, viewed from the standpoint of those people contentious enough to leave bloody and hateful impressions on their time, is a bitter, endless struggle. The future, viewed by the factionalist, holds no better prospects. So we have come to believe that it is not so much this faction or that, this "cause" or the other, as it is the fact that some men gravitate towards contentiousness just as others gravitate toward depravity.

And of the two, we are not sure which is the worst. While the "depraved" may bring revulsion and the "just-like-kids" factionalists awaken our sympathies, the latter may easily grow so skilled in self-deceit that they eventually lose all sense of ethical value, too. The religious factionalist can be, and usually is, excessively self-righteous; a sense of superiority tends to make the needs of others and even their rights seem progressively less important, so that finally a Torquemada can burn bodies with the excuse that he is saving souls. An outright political factionalist, not having to bother with religious circumlocutions, reaches this sort of conclusion sooner—he is forthrightly abusive and cruel to those who espouse a different ideology, or who have developed a dissimilar notion as to how the social contract should be worded.

Now for our quotations, which are selected from two works of fiction and submitted as case studies—not really fictional at all—in just how far the factional view of things can take people when historical conditions are "right." The first is from Paul Wellman's *The Female*, story of the Emperor Justinian's courtesan consort, Theodora. According to Wellman, a wholly senseless division between factions in Constantinople played a major part in the city's destruction and nearly brought about the end of the Empire in the East:

> The Greens . . . and the Blues. What strange complications those curious and yet dominating factions of the Hippodrome caused in the life and history of the empire, and the world!
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> They were an inheritance from old Rome, where, in her days of glory, gladiators fought in the Colosseum, or charioteers drove in the Circus Maximus, wearing liveries of white, green, red and blue.
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> Very quickly the populace adopted the colors, bet on them, and became aligned into factions wearing each their favorite hues and becoming fierce rivals in and out of the spectacles. The reason for this curious hostility was the passion for gambling which was a disease of Rome, and still more so of the populace of Constantinople, which copied Rome's follies without also emulating her virtues.
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> In an indolent, decadent population such as that of Constantinople, long debased by imperial largesse through which it achieved an easy and parasitical existence, and with the love of slothful pleasures which characterized its mongrel racial strains, gambling was the supreme passion. The Byzantine would bet on anything: one could see at times little children, hardly past the toddling stage, squatting in the streets and matching coppers.

As early as the times of Nero in Rome the Greens had absorbed the Reds, and the Blues the Whites, so that there were two factions only. In Constantinople this division was fixed and pronounced, and it was now said that the colors represented the eternal struggle of the green earth with the blue sea.

So bitter was the enmity between the Greens and Blues in and out of the Hippodrome that street riots were common and deaths frequent. Down the very middle the strange dissension split the populace of Constantinople, extended out to the remotest parts of the empire, divided friends and even families, overturned laws, terrorized thrones, and even took opposite sides in the ferocious religious controversies of the times.

Turning from Mr. Wellman to Mr. Steinbeck, we learn that the same psychological conditions may prevail in societies most respectable. No gladiator fights or bloodletting chariot races marred the churchly piety of Pacific Grove, California, yet though the flesh there was comparatively weak, the spirit was willing—in the case of The Great Roque War:

Pacific Grove sprang full blown from the iron heart of a psycho-ideo-legal religion. It was formed as a retreat in the 1880's and came fully equipped with laws, ideals, and customs. . . . Once, during its history, Pacific Grove was in trouble, deep trouble. You see, when the town was founded many old people moved to the retreat, people you'd think didn't have anything to retreat from. These old people became grumpy after a while and got to interfering in everything and causing trouble, until a philanthropist named Deems presented the town with two roque courts.

Roque is a complicated kind of croquet, with narrow wickets and short-handled mallets. You play off the sidelines, like billiards. Very complicated, it is. They say it develops character.

In a local sport there must be competition and a prize. In Pacific Grove a cup was given every year for the winning team on the roque courts. You wouldn't think a thing like that would work up much heat, particularly since most of the contestants were over seventy. But it did.

One of the teams was called the Blues and the other the Greens. The old men wore little skullcaps and striped blazers in their team colors.

Well, it wasn't more than two years before all hell broke loose. The Blues would practice in the court right alongside the Greens but they wouldn't speak to them. And then it got into the families of the teams. You were a Blue family or a Green family. Finally the feeling spread outside the family. You were a partisan of the Blues or a partisan of the Greens. It got so that the Greens tried to discourage intermarriage with the Blues, and vice versa. Pretty soon it reached into politics, so that a Green wouldn't think of voting for a Blue. It split the church right down the middle. The Blues and the Greens wouldn't sit on the same side. They made plans to build separate churches.

Of course everything got really hot at tournament time. Things were very touchy. Those old men brought a passion to the game you wouldn't believe. Why, two octogenariaris would walk away into the woods and you'd find them locked in mortal combat. They even developed secret languages so that each wouldn't know what the other was talking about. . . .

Well, we can laugh at "The Great Roque War"—with non-television-inspired laughs at a premium these days—and we shall all undoubtedly shake our heads at Mr. Wellman's account of the extreme factionalism which engulfed Constantinople in flames. But only when a man can shake his head and/or laugh at *himself* when exhibiting similar attitudes is he well on the way to that "emotional maturity" psychologists are always talking about.

COMMENTARY
THE COURAGE OF THE NEW FAITH

ONE thing not immediately evident in this week's discussion of "A New Spirit" is the fact that courage—mainly, the courage to dissent constructively from established opinion—is necessary to those who give this spirit voice.

The courage may be of different sorts. In the case of Easterners who contended for political freedom, dissent from the laws of foreign rulers meant years of punishment. Both Gandhi and Nehru spent the best part of ten years in prison; Shjarir was confined for eight years of his life in Dutch detention camps.

Literary and professional dissenters may have an easier time, but they cannot enjoy the securities which come from being spokesmen of entrenched groups or parties. The path of the constructive dissenter is a thorny one, from beginning to end. At the beginning, he must make his way as a free individual in a world which, by conservative instinct, tends to recognize only those who express familiar opinions. Then, when his vision becomes known, he has to fight to keep it from being made into a "popular doctrine." Actually, the representatives of the new spirit do not embody opinions so much as they bring a liberated attitude toward the holding of opinions. It is this attitude which is important, and not the opinions or views which happen to be associated with it. For in this attitude we find the new faith in man.

The genuine teacher, for example, may say very little of what he believes about the nature of human beings: this is revealed in how he behaves. If he waits for the child or youth to make his own discoveries; if he is scrupulous in not permitting his own opinions to be absorbed by the impressionable minds of his pupils, then he has faith in man.

The teacher, then, feels an innate distrust for the deliveries of organizations and "schools" of thought. It is not that what may be heard or learned at these sources is necessarily false, but only that they commonly deal in conclusions, not investigations. Their interest is in discoveries already made, not in the mysteries which lie ahead. The teacher, concerned with the young who have their discoveries before them, can not afford to mingle his energies with people who manifestly do not understand the law of human individuality—that every man must do his own pioneering—which leads to the rule that the teacher must try to make it impossible for those entrusted to his care to *avoid* discovery.

Churches, for the most part, provide comfortable escape from the ordeal of discovery. It is even a dogma of Christianity that Jesus bore the burden of religious discovery for all who will believe in him—through what is called the Vicarious Atonement. All faiths, whether religious or political, which can be set down in the form of a creed are in danger of becoming betrayals of the individual, who is told that the great discoveries have all been made, that he need only believe. Of course, the individual is invited to participate in *symbolic* discoveries of his own, through the ritual of the Sacraments; or by attending mass meetings in which the Leader is revered and a second-hand participation in *his* discovery is attained through the dissolving emotionalism of the party.

It should not be difficult to see that the excessive specialization of modern life—the subdivision and delegation of responsibilities which once belonged to the individual—is not due only to the progress of technology. It results also from the decline of belief in man. There is no reason why technology *had* to reduce human beings to the condition which Mumford describes so well:

> My basic assumption is that our life has increasingly split up into unrelated compartments, whose only form of order and interrelationship comes through fitting into the automatic organizations and mechanisms that in fact govern our daily existence. We have lost the essential capacity of self-governing persons—the freedom to make decisions, to say Yes or No in terms of our own purpose—so that, though

> we have vastly augmented our powers, through the high development of technics, we have not developed the capacity to control those powers in any proportionate degree. As a result, our remedies are only further symptoms of the disease itself. . . .

As Mumford elsewhere shows, this condition is the outward measure of our inward dejection and fear of making discovery. Lacking art in life, we capitulate to the powers that be.

So, we come back to the expression of the new spirit as the only resistance movement worth joining, these days. It may seem nebulous, but that is only because it is truly free, and the free things of life are quite naturally without body and concrete presence in a world where "automatic organizations and mechanisms . . . govern our daily existence."

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

AN article in the *Humanist* for November-December, 1954, provides a useful approach to "religious education." Writing on "Bringing up Children in a Humanist Home," Virginia Flemming reveals, in a way that should interest those of Christian background, the full candor with which many agnostics view their difficulties when it comes to "moral training." Articles in the *Christian Century* often show similar humility concerning the transmission of the conventional Christian heritage to the young, so that a neutral bystander is encouraged to respect the integrity of both, despite their opposition to one another.

Turning to Mrs. Flemming's piece, originally published in England, we note in particular the following statement of the typical humanist dilemma:

> Before two years old the development of a child will be little affected by whether its parents are pious Christians or good Humanists. But very soon after two the children of Christian parents begin to be aware of and drawn into the religious practices and thought of their parents. They soon learn to say some simple prayer to a God who is asked to take care of them and those they love and to help them to be good. They know their parents go to church; Christmas and Easter will be kept as religious festivals, the meaning of which will be progressively imparted to them. Before ever they go to school they may have learned to sing hymns and carols which fit in with the prevailing conception of and attitude towards God and Christ, the creation, death, and immortality. The background to their character development will be the teaching that God made and loves us all and wants us to love each other, that He sends us "all things bright and beautiful" and above all the baby Jesus, for all of which we should thank Him.
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> If parents merely refrain from creating such a pattern of thought, practice, and feeling they are already giving a different starting point in life to their children during the vital years between two and five. Many sensitive and responsible parents feel conscious of a vacuum which they wonder how to fill. Their position is not made easier if round about four years old their children hear of Christian beliefs from some other child or grown-up person, which is likely to happen. As soon as children go to school it will happen in a sustained way backed by the authority (at least the acquiescence) of the entire staff. Parents who do not share the Christian faith have then to decide, probably when their first child is four and certainly when it is five, whether or not they mean sincerely and openly to reveal their own disbelief; and many shrink from an avowal of disbelief. But the absence of religious thought and practice in the home will reveal itself in any case unless some positive presence is perpetrated. Very often of course one parent, usually the mother, is more Christian in sentiment than the other. There is rarely the question whether or not the more Christian parent has a right to impart Christianity, but the proper role for the more humanist partner is very much in question. Parents find it hard to express any comparable conception of their own about the world which has any comparable backing by even a small social group, and they have no hallowed tale to tell. The third is that most people think of all their ideals and principles of human life as being essentially Christian, and this "Christian ethic" has always been conveyed in the framework of the Christian religion. Very few people are at all clear how to educate children ethically outside the Christian religion. If parents felt dear and confident about this third difficulty they would more easily deal tactfully and courageously with the first two difficulties, despite the aggravating problem of conflict between home and school as things are at present.

It has always seemed to us that the only possible common denominator for agnostics and liberal Christians is to be found in a deeper appreciation of what may be gained from study of comparative religions. A few philosophers and psychologists have been on this track for some time now, and men such as Erich Fromm or Joseph Campbell—perhaps we can add Harry Overstreet—do not seem to weaken Christian inspiration by calling attention to the psychological similarity between Christian, Buddhist and other legends. For instance, if the language of symbolism, in which most religious stories are told, is "the one universal language the human race has ever known"—to quote Fromm—varying forms of religious expression may be viewed as intuitive approaches to reality, each touching upon verities pertaining to "the soul."

The sectarian Christian, of course, will not take kindly to the suggestion that Christianity is but a single expression of man's eternal search for the meaning of the mysteries of life. But if the Christian is principally concerned with furthering the realization of the oneness of all humanity, rather than recognition of the superiority of his personal faith, no such stumbling block will appear.

The Humanist, on the other hand, is naturally drawn to seeking, with a measure of sympathetic interest, for the roots of spontaneous religious feeling in human nature. Mrs. Flemming remarks that "it is the role of the educator to cherish and support the spontaneous capacity for recognizing the needs and claims of other creatures, so that to consider them becomes a developed and approved habit which strong desire can never wholly push aside." Many have supported orthodox religious traditions, perhaps, simply because they valued the role of tradition in encouraging ethical awareness. Mrs. Flemming admits this when she says that "there is little hope of growing up so spontaneously considerate, and with so strong a sense of justice that no conscious self-mastery is needed, no conflict experienced, no sacrifice felt, no habit of surmounting desires and feeling required."

So the issue remaining for liberal Christians and Humanists to decide revolves around the question of just where religion comes from in the first place. If religious appreciation is innate, if respect for symbolic legends and tradition is a normal and natural human feeling in a healthy society, *every* inspiring legend or doctrine may be regarded with sympathy. One must, to be sure, learn to distinguish dogmas which encourage the authoritarian spirit from creedal emphases which are genuinely humanitarian, but this is precisely what most liberal Christians seem to be trying to do anyway. Humanists like Mrs. Flemming, on the other hand, recognize that every happy child begins early to develop his own capacity for ethical concerns. "Everyone knows," she writes, "that young children need to feel safe in the loving care of people whom they trust. Then, very early, a friendly, happy responsiveness to people begins to develop as simply and naturally as curiosity and activity. Between two and four, friendliness and affection begin to show a new quality. Little children begin to show that, at times at least, they think of living creatures as hungry and wanting food, cold and wanting warmth, bored and wanting a picture book, having a birthday and so requiring a present, with sympathetic and practical concern. They do something about it." This, it would seem to us, represents the bedrock upon which the best of all religions—philosophical religions—can be built. The advantage of acquainting children with the story of the Buddha, as well as the story of the Christ, however, is considerable, for provincialism and exclusiveness are clearly the chief foes of the very spirit both Buddha and Christ sought to foster among their disciples. We can hardly imagine either of these inspired beings exhibiting rivalry toward any other, or lacking respect for the particular points of emphasis found in another's teaching; and, if this be true, the man whose religious sympathies are broad best shows by this breadth his appreciation of the teacher he follows.

There is one aspect, however, of religious education which Humanists typically neglect, and it may be this fact that contributes a slight tone of frustration to Mrs. Flemming's article. Help on this problem is supplied by Alan Paton in an article in the *Saturday Review* for Dec. 4. There Mr. Paton discusses the fairly extensive literature developed around the theme of "the returning Christ," and shows why the task undertaken by novelists who have chosen the theme is far from an easy one. He writes:

> Most difficult of all is the effort to relate the human and divine to each other. . . . If the emphasis is on the supernatural the story quickly becomes implausible. If it is on human and ethical aspects the Christ figure easily deteriorates into a sentimentalist or moralist, teaching Victorian manners or socialist politics or simple human kindness. On the one hand the task is that of portraying authentic majesty; on the

other it is that of rendering perfect humility. Only an author capable of both should undertake to write about Christ.

How to portray "authentic majesty" is not only difficult for novelists, but also for Humanists and Christian instructors. The common assumption of liberal thinkers, that there is nothing mystical about majesty, is, we think, a mistaken one. That wise and good man, Albert Schweitzer, is a mystic, Gandhi was a mystic, and so were Jesus and Buddha.

Therefore, it seems likely that it is by arousing similar proclivities in the young that the religious sense may best be helped to full development. But "mysticism" must be individual; when it is organized it may lose both heart and meaning. Each child needs to find his own Christ, although with help to his imagination from the tone and quality of the legends passed on by his elders, and with encouragement to dwell upon the idea that there may indeed be beings who are more than men such as we. Mysticism, as we would choose to have it defined, need not imply abnegation of reality, but only a recognition that feeling and intuition, as well as reason, may bring us closer to the meaning of the great puzzles of life.

FRONTIERS

"We Asians"

IN the *Reporter* for Dec. 16, Han Suyin, the Eurasian doctor who won so many Western hearts with her exquisite love story, *The Many-Splendored Thing* (MANAS, Jan. 6, 1954), writes of affairs in Malaya, where for more than six years, British administrators of the Malay Federation have been trying to suppress the guerilla rebellion and terrorist campaign of the Malayan Communist Party. The terrorist army is comprised of an estimated 3,000 to 6,000 troops who are able to keep Malaya in a virtual state of siege.

Apart from general information supplied about Malaya, the interesting thing about this article is its comment on the mental attitude of the inhabitants. The population is made up of about three million Malayans, three million Chinese, close to a million Indians, and fifty thousand Europeans. The Communists are preponderantly Chinese, although it is said that some thirty thousand Malay villagers have been converted into Communist sympathizers and must now be wooed back to loyalty to the government. The British have accepted the responsibility of preparing the inhabitants of Malaya for self-government. Malaya's largest city, Singapore, is a Crown Colony, and the British are in the awkward position of having at the same time to administer Malayan Federation affairs through the Colonial Office, to suppress a Communist revolt, and fulfill their commitment to guide Malaya "along the road to independence."

Political immaturity and a racially composite population cause even the Malays to admit that independence will be difficult, but warnings from the British administrators are becoming a bit tiresome to these people. Han Suyin writes:

> . . . there is such a thing as protesting too much. All these things would be much more convincing if they were not so often and so tactlessly let out by a government whose colonial taint renders it suspect of hypocrisy, of making excuses, of exaggerating and "bluffing," as the local expression puts it, in order to maintain its hold on the country.
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> "If we left Malaya, you'd be at each other's throats tomorrow. It would be frightful, just like in India."
>
> "It is our moral duty to protect you people. Especially you Malays. You can't look after yourselves. If we left, tomorrow Malaya would be Chinese."
>
> "Malaya would be Communist tomorrow if we left."
>
> Now all this may be completely true, but it is extraordinarily obtuse to think that Asians today will accept these judgments. Asians today are sensitive, quicker to resent insults than any European. The old days of being kicked about still rankle in their memories, and racial discrimination is not over.

While the violence of Communist terrorism—Asians killed by the guerillas are fifteen times the number of Europeans killed—has largely wiped out the prestige once enjoyed by the Malayan Communist Party as leader of the Resistance against the Japanese, the failure of the Malayan people to give the government enthusiastic support in the fight against the terrorists has explanation only on psychological grounds. A young English doctor said to Han Suyin:

> "They'd rather have Communism, however much they're frightened of it, because it's Asian, than white colonialism." He added: "I guess I'd feel the same way. Being English, if England were Red, I'd still rather have an English Communist government than any other country ruling me."

A similar mood pervades Indonesia. While the free Indonesian government successfully put down a Communist revolt without help from the Western powers, Miss Suyin tells of a certain European who was sent out of the country for saying that "Communism is worse than white colonialism." This attitude, she adds, "must be understood to comprehend the present situation in Southeast Asia."

The feeling in Malaya about the defeat of the French by the Viet-Namese at Dienbienphu in Indo-China was probably characteristic of the

mood throughout non-Communist Asia. Miss Suyin and an acquaintance "were struck by the peculiar cheerfulness of the people with whom we discussed Indo-China." She continues:

> None of them were even faintly leftist—or anywhere near it. Many would have had to run away if Communism came. Yet they are pleased about Dienbienphu. If asked the reason for this not so secret elation and they trusted you, they replied: "Well of course in one way I don't like it. I don't like Communism. But in another way I'm pleased about it because the French ought to have got out long ago. It's a good lesson for the whites. Colonial government is out." Some added: "Shows that we Asians are not inferior. We can beat the whiteskins any time. Korea. Now Indo-China."

Even those who hate and fear Communism hate white colonialism more. "There is a new pride in being Asian as opposed to being European. Very often one hears the phrase 'We Asians'."

From the political viewpoint, Asian leaders who seem to side with a colonial administration have little hope of holding office in the countries longing for freedom. It will be remembered that Soetan Shjarir, the Indonesian leader named by Robert Payne as responsible for the continuance, amplitude, and form of the Indonesian Republic, harmed his political reputation with Indonesian extremists by showing a willingness to treat with the Dutch. Miss Suyin writes:

> There is an understandable reluctance for any Asian "leader" worthy of the name to be associated too closely with a colonial setup for fear of being called a stooge. Few men have been able to achieve this balancing feat—to serve the interests of the future Malayan nation as well as to be nominated to responsible positions in the present government. Such an association proves in the long run derogatory to the Asian concerned. He loses stature in the public eye, his honesty becomes suspect, and he gradually ceases to represent anything but himself, for he is emotionally out of tune with his own countrymen. Such a fate has overtaken the well-known and certainly able and courageous Dato Onn bin Jaafar, who deserved better for his great services to his country than the comparative obscurity into which he has sunk.

There is no use in feeling a fretful impatience at the unwillingness of Asian populations to "see the light." They are going by the most certain light they have—the experience of a century or two of foreign colonialism and intervention in their lives. While the colonial administrations may have done them "some good," it is not their economic welfare, but their self-respect as human beings that is at issue. There is no way around this problem except to give them their freedom as soon as possible. This view is confirmed in a full-length study of Malaya by Victor Purcell, just published by the Stanford University Press. Dr. Purcell concludes that only a free Malaya will resist communism, that British policy is a hindrance, and that the key to the problem lies in helping the Chinese component of the population to join in the political life of the new nation.

While not so categorical in her judgment, Han Suyin shows how difficult it becomes to reach any other conclusion:

> However well-intentioned the colonial power may be, however extensive its social-welfare measures, painstaking and modest its officials, it is a living contradiction because its aim must be suspect—the benefit of the mother country rather than that of the country ruled. Anti-colonial emotion versus the colonial-directed (so it seems) war against Communism provokes a dualism in each and every thinking person which in turn frustrates his efforts. The energy that ought to go into a healthy rebellious opposition to colonial tutelage is unable to proceed because of its own fears, and is frittered away in negative criticism, hostility, apathy, indifference. . . .
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> The anti-communist propaganda dispensed to Asia has so far been surprisingly obtuse, tactless, and ill-timed. It has pushed and heckled and threatened, taking no account of the new pride of Asians. It has been too anxious to preach, as if talking to children, and has not allowed Asians the dignity of thinking things out for themselves.

What the peoples of the West are called upon to show, today, is more than anything else a faith in man—the man of the East as well as of the West. If communism is an evil, and if that evil is as plain to see as we think, we shall have to let the Asians discover it for themselves. The present

policies of Western nations give every evidence of preventing Asians from reaching the same conclusion we have reached about Communism. This is no longer a matter which can be "reasoned" about. The West has no credit for being especially "reasonable" in the East. And even Western anti-communist propaganda, as described above, is blindly geared to colonialist psychology.

Again we recommend Robert Payne's *The Revolt of Asia* as an ideal primer for the study of all these questions. While written several years ago, this book seems to us to be the best possible preparation for understanding "we Asians." It contains passages like the following:

> In the East traditions are dying hard, but they have a habit of reviving during times of revolution. In a single generation, the old Chinese traditions of scholarship almost perished with the disappearance of the imperial examinations, but already great scholars like Wen Ti-tuo have shown that scholarship deserves a place in the government. In the West the scholars have betrayed the cause of government, and they are no longer appointed to embassies as they were in the time of Boccaccio and Dante. It is significant that Soetan Shjarir, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Mao Tse-tung are scholars in their own right, with the historian's understanding of the political forces at work and the poet's sensitivity. Democracy, decaying in the West, is being revived in the East. If democracy can be maintained on its new soil, the war will not have been fought in vain.