

## THE GOOD OF MAN

IT is natural, these days, to be looking about for clear expressions in behalf of the good of man which are not only pertinent, but can be regarded without suspicion. There are plenty of platitudes we can all agree on, but what is wanted is a platitude with *leverage*—which makes us see old situations with new eyes. One such expression appeared in *Frontiers* a couple of weeks ago, in a quotation from Andrea Caffi:

As long as today's problems are stated in terms of "mass politics" and "mass organization," it is clear that only States and mass parties can deal with them. But, if the solutions that can be offered by existing states and parties are acknowledged to be either futile or wicked, or both, then we must look not only for different "solutions" but especially for a different way of stating the problems themselves.

This, it seems to us, is a major advance in analysis of the major issues of the times. They are "mass" issues capable of only "mass" solutions, chiefly if not entirely for the reason that we insist upon defining them so that no other solution seems to apply.

Now it is just possible that human problems are much more "subjective" than we suppose, and that many or a large part of our difficulties can be shown to be the result of the way we "think." We should be careful to say that we are not suggesting that they are *all* subjective. This would abolish the inquiry. The proposal is that they are *more* subjective than generally allowed.

It may be admitted, for example, that these are confining and frustrating times. But some men, living in much the same circumstances, are more frustrated than others. Some men are more compliant to, more limited by, the rules established by big institutions. Compare two recent developments in France—the emergence of Existentialist philosophy, with its despairing contempt for mass behavior and mass rules for

behavior, and the development of the Communities of Work, with their extraordinary inspiration for a cooperative mode of existence. Existentialism might be termed the philosophy—and the poetry, perhaps—of frustration, while the Communities of Work are the practice of its opposite—fulfillment.

This is not to heap reproaches on the Existentialists for not being "practical" and "constructive." Someone has to play out the game of the logic of Western values to a last, expiring gasp, if only to prove the need for new ways of looking at things. Caffi pays tribute to the Existentialists when he says:

In Europe, we haven't got empty space to escape from the suffocation of mass regimes. The only escape open to us is a bold and uncompromising recourse to reason (which, among other things, would mercilessly ridicule any form of authoritarianism, theocracy, "ideocracy," or of what Sartre calls *l'esprit de serieux*) and to a sociability so refined, so vigilant, and so tolerant, as to give the individual, together with a sense of common purpose and solidarity, a feeling of full personal independence.

The point is, men must learn to stop waiting patiently for the "correct" mass solution to be worked out.

There are areas, of course, where individuals seem relatively impotent. How can an "individual" decide to "make peace" or even "get along" with the Russians? The Quakers do what they can in this department, and have published a book about the experiences of their delegation to the Kremlin. Not much, perhaps, will result from this mission. Probably there was amusement in various quarters over the "naïve" Quakers who suppose that brotherly love can penetrate the cynical armor of the communists. But of one thing we are sure: If not only the Quakers, but hundreds and thousands of other people,

individuals and loosely organized groups, manifested a similar independent interest in peace, and, with the diverse approaches and attitudes many backgrounds would naturally produce, proceeded on similar attempts to find out what could be done, *something*, eventually, would be done.

We have it straight from Thoreau, Tolstoy, and Gandhi that the impotence of the individual in a mass society is largely of his own making, as, also, is the mass society.

Activities of that sort by individuals would probably bring considerable anxiety to the State Department, but this should not worry anyone except those who are resigned and content to live in a mass society where decisions are manipulated over their heads. Our idea of a good State Department is one which must, every day in every way, take account of the positively expressed concerns of the people for peace and a peaceful future. How different this would be from a State Department which has to worry only about the *fears* of the people, and the aggressions of Senator McCarthy!

It would be a mistake, however, to limit this discussion to national and world politics. It stands to reason that the psychology—almost an "ideology"—of dependence upon institutional power and authority has penetrated our lives in less obvious ways. Regardless of what one may think of the germ theory of disease and the practice of artificial immunization based upon it, developed by Jenner, Koch, Erlich, and many others, there is a disquieting side to the passivity of the population in respect to the hope for relief from such dread diseases as polio. The publicity for public health measures emphasizes almost entirely the doctrine of specific measures for specific diseases, with very little said about the natural immunity which may result from having bodies which are vigorous and disease-resistant because of general good health. Quite apart from the results of the Salk vaccine for polio, which at the moment have seemed ominous enough for a

jury of medical authorities to order the suspension of its administration to children (*Time*, May 9, says that many California doctors "insisted that it would take years to prove the Salk vaccine's safety and said they would not give it to their own children"), there are psychological criticisms to be made of preventive medicine which relies wholly on the obedient assent of the people to measures which are devised and understood only by experts and specialists. Health gained by this means—if it *is* being gained—is of dubious long-term value, since the method used effectively converts the population to the view that only advanced medical technology can assure it. Again, the "mass solution" is established as supreme.

It is just possible that even the evolution of the science of medicine is conditioned by the mood of "mass solutions," and that quite other discoveries and advances in the control of infectious disease would be made in a culture which laid greater emphasis upon the importance of the self-sufficiency of the individual in matters of health as well as in other areas of life. What ought to be considered is the practically infinite adaptability of organic life and the fact that the development of any science is in some measure the outcome of its basic philosophical assumptions. Consider for example the virtual revolution produced in modern medicine by the concept of psychosomatic causes of disease. Now if diseases themselves may be partly caused by psychic factors hitherto unrecognized, and if many generations of physicians have been treating those afflictions from a purely physical point of view, in complete ignorance of their connection with the emotions, then, from a larger, social or "cultural" point of view, a general theory of the practice of medicine may contain delusive assumptions which remain uncritically accepted until another great discovery exposes their error.

What we are suggesting is the proposition that a health measure which tends to undermine the psychological independence of people may, in

the long run, be less efficacious for physical health than is generally supposed.

Even if this correlation seems a bit far-fetched to some readers, there can be no doubt about the fact that a general suspicion of mass solutions is in the making. This is especially evident in the modern novel. From the story with "social" implications of a generation ago, the best writers of our time have turned to the problem of the individual. The old union slogan, "*Organize*," no longer supplies a theme for ardent young men who sit at typewriters, dreaming of a better world. The problem now is how to free oneself from the tyrannies of organization. It is not a matter of choosing the "right" organization. Even the writers who, from close observation and experience, have developed a special aversion to monolithic political groups like the Communist Party, champion the opposing political institutions of the "free" democracies with noticeable reluctance and distaste. (The Appendices added by Dwight Macdonald to the Cunningham Press edition of *The Root Is Man* provide many illustrations of this feeling.)

It is only because "mass solutions," in a world which has relied upon them too long, seem necessary to simple survival that such men are willing to tolerate them at all.

So, as Caffi says, "we must look not only for different 'solutions' but especially for a different way of stating the problems themselves." People cling to mass solutions as to dear life for the reason that it seems incredible to them that there is any other approach to human problems. But if, by refusing to define these problems in a way that seems to demand mass solutions, we learn to meet them more as individuals, the feeling of individual competence may grow, and the time may come when mass solutions will be rejected on principle, as not only impracticable, but irrelevant as well.

## *Letter from* **ENGLAND**

LONDON.—The pending general election to be held in May will not be fought upon the greatest issue ever before the people of Britain; for that was disposed of recently quite simply by an open vote in the House of Commons. For once Conservatives and Socialists were of one mind, and the decision was then taken to manufacture the H-bomb. That decision, described by Churchill as the most tremendous ever made in parliamentary history, calls for a somewhat closer scrutiny than it has been generally accorded; for it reflects the views of two political caucuses, rather than the majority of those who voted as they did. There were 109 Socialists who were bitterly opposed to the making of the H-Bomb, who voted the other way. They did so at the behest of "Party Loyalty," and to escape the odium that now attaches here, as elsewhere, to the Party man who becomes a deviationist. Had these 109 voted in accordance with their consciences, and not as ordered by the Party Whips, Britain would not be committed to the making of the H-Bomb. The implications of this very tragic affair are that we have now in Britain a political system in which power is exercised by two small rival caucuses, each with a sheeplike following of toe-the-line back-benchers. Only one man took dramatic and direct action to register disapproval, namely, Sir Richard Acland, Bart., Member for Gravesend, and a Socialist. One would have expected a gesture of that kind would have brought other resignations; but it brought none. Not only that, this noble protest has not even stopped the mouths of the cowardly who write off Acland as a "Peace Crank," and that despite the fact that he refused a commission and served in the war as a common soldier. What, then, is the general feeling, so far as one can gauge it, with regard to this fearful commitment? Your correspondent was able to get some idea over Easter when he took over Acland's Committee H.Q. in Gravesend while Acland took a brief holiday from the arduous of fighting a bye-election (now merged in the General Election). Over Easter I had nineteen men and women canvassing in that constituency, and I asked each to give me a rough report of the attitude of people approached on the issue of the bomb. Here, very briefly, are those reactions summarized: (1) Party loyalty came before all other loyalties. Acland had "let the Party down" by resigning. (2) We ought to have nothing to do with the H-Bomb; but must follow the Party lead. (3) Couldn't care less. It'll be over very quickly.

(4) Acland is right. (5) If the Russians have it we must have it, too. (6) The manufacture of H-Bombs will act as a deterrent to Soviet aggression. (7) This type of argument: Are we to sit still and be wiped out?

Nowhere was the *moral* or the genetical issue touched on. It was accepted that, if necessary, we shall loose upon cities bombs that will destroy all living things within them. From this horror not even the Archbishop of York recoils. It is "*My survival on any terms.*" Yet the people who talk like that are by no means inhuman monsters, but kindly folk, like any others. It is difficult to understand their points of view; but, pondering the problem in a slum house patched and mended to act as a political campaign H.Q. over Easter, a few thoughts came to your correspondent. First, that very few people have the imagination to grasp what the use of the H-Bomb would involve in present destruction and future genetic ruin. Second, that some people relegate the problem, as they put aside the thought of death—it is too horrible to dwell upon. Others, again, are overwhelmed by a sense of the impotence of the individual in the face of political power. But few, if any, seem to appreciate the fact that our democracy is now of so attenuated a kind that it can scarcely be said to exist. The man who is returned to Parliament is a very big shot in his Constituency: but in the House of Commons he is like the smallest boy in a very large school. He has to do exactly what he is told. A referendum on the simple issue would, undoubtedly, have produced a very different answer. And, following this terrible decision, come, here and there, somewhat faintly, perhaps, but very bravely, certain warnings—from physicists, biologists and meteorologists and others concerned with science and life. But the Churches are silent in the main, the only powerful opposing voice being that of Dr. Soper, the Free Church leader.

Acland will, no doubt, be defeated by a Party man. But, as your correspondent said to him: "You may be defeated at the polls, but already you have raised the MORAL issue, and set in movement that little lump of yeast that leaveneth the whole lump."

How strange that humanity should be so casual, so indifferent, to the menace from science and politics to the race!

ENGLISH CORRESPONDENT

## *REVIEW*

### "THE AGE OF CONFORMITY"

THIS title of Alan Valentine's new book (Regnery, 1954) is at the very least challenging, for liberal language has become so common that no one, any more, wishes to admit to being a "conformist." While not as provocative an eye-catcher as David Riesman's "The Lonely Crowd," the two titles can be easily shown to bear close relationship: the "crowd" is "lonely" because following the *standards* of the crowd does not bring happiness or self-realization, and an age suffering from the delusion that absorption in mass standards will bring happiness is, clearly, an age of conformity.

Mr. Valentine is not a sociologist, but a "businessman, educator, administrator and writer." He demonstrates, in *The Age of Conformity*, that it is possible to state a fundamental philosophical thesis capably in a bit less than 180 pages—a very encouraging revelation. This book is a plea for recognition of the serious dangers of mediocrity; the "mass-man" is not only lonely and unhappy—he also easily becomes tyrannical and an opponent of free thought. Classic opposition to conformism has weakened, for, as Mr. Valentine shows, "liberals" have somehow reversed their nineteenth-century course, and now stand for the virtues of the government which governs the most, rather than least. Approaching the problem treated in Dwight Macdonald's *The Root Is Man* from a cultural viewpoint, Valentine arrives at a conclusion identical with Macdonald's—we need radical changes in our political vocabulary.

In the first chapter, Valentine unobtrusively states his intent:

Many Americans are troubled that our concepts of democracy are being watered down by the undemanding standards of our popular culture. One man is disturbed by our mounting juvenile delinquency, another by our commonplace culture, a third by our fuzzy thinking, a fourth by our political amorality. Few have tried to analyze the relations between these phenomena or to consider their over-all

connection with developments like urbanization, industrial complexity, big government and popular sovereignty. These factors need synthesis. Aware of the tremendous difficulties involved, I attempt that synthesis, and hope that it will challenge others to dig deeper.

Sociologists like Riesman have dealt with the consequences of urbanization, while a few independent critics like Dwight Macdonald have analyzed "the big government" phase of the modern mass society. But synthesis is indeed "tremendously difficult," and Mr. Valentine's efforts in this direction merit considerable appreciation, particularly for his analysis of "popular sovereignty." He invites us to face the fact that "in those areas of life and thought—such as politics, cinema, press, radio, entertainment and mass production—where popular preference has been most compulsive, the symptoms of mediocrity are most apparent." Here we find intimations of the thesis of Ortega's *The Revolt of the Masses*: It is easily and misleadingly assumed that government "by the people" produces the ultimate in political and social value. However, the mass-man doesn't really think at all, and hence the standards developed are bound to be, in Platonic terms, *psychic* rather than *noëtic*. In other words, creative or individual opinion isn't "popular" today, while in an ideal liberal democracy the reverse would be the case. We are victims of "seduction by slogans." Mr. Valentine writes:

Most confused liberals oppose absolute values on the grounds that they are authoritarian and hence tend toward fascism. This is a double fallacy. All authority is not fascistic and all standards are not authoritarian. The crucial point is whether the absolutes are imposed from without or are voluntarily observed. Personal absolutes personally maintained are the essence of democracy and the antithesis of dictatorship. Freedom is itself one of the absolutes, a standard by which men can measure their lives, and only men who can maintain firm values can maintain freedom. In their absence, the state assumes the moral role, and gains in authority until its rule becomes an end in itself, and rectitude becomes whatever the state says it is.

We are having a preview of the state as the only definer of virtue in some of its investigations of nonconformist individuals. The state, or its committees, can only assume such a role when society is caught without common value convictions and standards of right procedure. Marxism has its appeal to men with value vacuums because it lets them hide their uncertainties behind the fatalism of economic determinism. Communism goes further, and relieves men of every decision and every standard by the dictum that there is only one absolute virtue—the party. There can be no morality, and hence no freedom, unless men possess the courage and the will to make their own decisions.

Democracy must therefore take no liberties with a man's personal liberty. Yet in modern democratic society the individual's personal privacy is attacked by mass living, his personal contemplation by mass activity, his personal self-realization by mass conformity. The individual will continue at odds with the mass until society establishes absolute values more affirmative than pragmatism and incentives more elevating than the pursuit of power and security.

Mr. Valentine does not encourage a return to theology. Since theology and conformity are natural associates, it is quite apparent that an argument against conformity is not an argument in favor of theocratic solutions. It is necessary, Valentine contends, to understand that the basic American sentiment in regard to liberty, expressed by such national heroes as Jefferson and Lincoln, is a matter of philosophy. It has been too easy, for instance, for the American public to delude itself into thinking that ideal democracy is achieved when the "people's" control of cultural standards has been established. On the contrary, a democracy measures up to its promise only when the majority learn to appreciate the intellectual and ethical leadership of those who provide a higher set of standards than those in current usage. Successful democracy is not by divine appointment, but comes from human intelligence and effort:

We must regain our perspective of ourselves. Even Americans are only a part of the stream of human history and we delude ourselves if we try to ignore it. Only when a people begins to see its own

thoughts and emotions as part of the long ascent of humanity does it start to mature.

So Mr. Valentine is not arguing for traditional Christianity, nor for recognition of some élite, but only for awareness that a lack of respect for creative opinion on philosophical, social, and political questions results in the stoppage of cultural evolution. "Science" itself does not, cannot, and should not assert that human values can be discovered by either laboratory or statistical means. The key to political and social salvation lies in philosophical thinking—the desire and will to reevaluate our present bases of thought and conduct.

In the last chapter in *The Age of Conformity*, Valentine sums up:

Men who urge a deepening of tradition and faith are not, in spite of reports to the contrary, defying the progress of modern science. Science and the spirit are not in opposition but complementary. Because science is neutral regarding humane values, the scope of its service to mankind is limited. It cannot civilize the emotions or ameliorate materialism. It cannot uplift the heart or guide the spirit. This is the business of the older arts, and free society will not realize its cultural promise until it stops regarding philosophy, religion, letters and the arts as decorative but secondary, to be acquired by commercial transaction as adornments for economic man. Society cheats itself when it makes art smart, literature a fashion, education a ready-made suit, philosophy a game of chess and religion the last refuge of the defeated. When thought or creation must be molded to what is chic, they lose their integrity and society loses its standard for evaluating them. Emotional sincerity must be the first criterion in judging art and thought, rejecting all pretense, patronage and desire to conform.

The chief significance of these arguments lies in their emphasis upon the need for courage in formulating one's own honest opinions—whatever the subject. Art and literature are, then, fully as important as "communism" as subjects of discourse, for we gain and keep "freedom" only by active, original thinking about everything. This, we recall, is the thesis advanced by Robert M. Hutchins in *The Higher Learning in America*.

## *COMMENTARY* CONCERNING COOKIES

A LETTER received several weeks ago from a reader seems to fit in with this week's discussion of "mass solutions" (see lead article), although on a much smaller scale. The writer, obviously a parent with first-hand experience, speaks of a practice which will be familiar to many readers, but which it may not have occurred to them to question. He says:

I've noticed that the Girl Scouts have developed some institutional rigidities and questionable techniques—or so it seems to me.

Each year they raise money through a cookie sale. Before the sale starts the girls solemnly agree in some sort of ceremonious way that no one will take orders before the cookies arrive, so that everyone will have an equal chance in selling. The fantastic number of cookies that have to be sold, however, always seems to convince some of the girls that they have to break this rule in order to make their quota. These girls thus suffer some sort of moral breakdown, and the ones who stay honest and consequently assume an unfair handicap in the competition suffer a lowering of morale. The sale continues for about a month until the girls and their customers are fed up with the effort as well as the cookies. A very small percentage of the proceeds goes to the local organizations, much more to the national headquarters, and most of it to the cookie manufacturer.

Our subscriber makes a remark about the dietetic value of the cookies which we think had better be censored, then adds:

There are never enough women to sponsor the Girl Scout activities in this area because a woman can't contribute whatever help she's able to give in an informal way—if she does anything at all she must be trained formally to do things in the Right Way, and then commit herself to spend a given amount of time at it. Not many women want to do that, but most of them would like to help out occasionally and informally. And informal procedures are not allowed.

We hope no reader will regard this as an "attack" on the Girl Scouts and the devoted individuals who work in it with young girls in practically all the communities of the United

States. This sort of approach to the problem of fund-raising is a familiar one and is by no means limited to the Girl Scouts: the "mass method" is the typical and commonly approved way of getting together funds for worthy causes. But is the money so accumulated worth the price that has to be paid by the children? Wouldn't methods which develop individual resourcefulness be better, even if the income were much less?

As for the question of committing oneself to contribute "a given amount of time"—here we tend to sympathize with the harassed administrators, who always need help that can really be counted on. Informal methods are one thing, but informal commitments something else, and far less desirable.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

SEVERAL years ago we proposed here something called "the contract theory of education," arguing that children benefit by some simple, stable agreement in respect to their conduct and responsibility in the home. At the root of this idea was the thought—a bit repellent, perhaps, to some—that the child should realize that when his parents generally underwrite continual and dependable support in terms of food and shelter, proper reciprocation is called for by way of obedience concerning practical matters around their home. Though this "contract theory," as presented, aroused more opposition than support, because of its apparent neglect of such qualities as love and the spirit of self-sacrifice, we feel that the idea has sufficient importance to deserve further discussion.

What is a contract? A contract is a relatively fixed, mutually understood agreement that the two parties involved will recognize certain minimal requirements as obligations of the agreement. A conscientious and thoughtful man—or child—it should be noted, will always wish to exceed minimal requirements, whenever it is possible for him to do so. The advantage of clear, detailed agreement upon such requirements is chiefly that the danger of unsatisfied expectations, for both parents and child, is considerably lessened. Lately several considerations have suggested to us that something like the "contract theory" may have important application to adult relationships, and perhaps by inspecting the way in which beneficial relationships between adults might be effected it will be easier to see the value in establishing common conceptions of responsibility between ourselves and our children.

No marriage, one might propose, should begin without such a "minimal" understanding as to what may be reasonably expected, what may be regarded as a fully cognized basis of agreement between the marital partners. We now live in an age where family and "moral" standards are in a state of flux. "Marriage," for instance, may easily mean something entirely different to two different people, according to their philosophical, religious, and social backgrounds. The contract theory, applied to marriage, simply means that a common denominator of expectations is reached

before the marriage begins. If the marriage should ever terminate, such a background gives a much better chance for this being accomplished without recrimination and hostility.

It is not our contention that human relationships should be controlled by any sort of blueprint, nor that a "contract" of any sort will ever ensure the best that may be gained from them. However, it does seem that the greatest gifts in human affairs—love, sympathy, forbearance, and understanding—must be recognized as fully *given*, and not as "due" because of the formal relationship entered through the sacrament of marriage. The attitude of possessiveness, for instance, wreaks havoc in most marriages, unless both partners happen to have exactly the same idea regarding voluntary restrictions of freedom.

There is a vast difference between doing "what is expected" and doing a little more. When one cares enough for a human relationship to exceed the bounds of the "expected," when he or she is manifesting a special love or devotion, it is certainly possible, if the "contract" is clearly understood at all times between the two people involved, for this "excess" of concern and devotion to be fully appreciated. Similarly in the case of one's children. Whenever the parent gives *more* than that which the child has been taught to believe is his due (as a necessary ward of one who saw fit to bring him into the world and care for him during his early years), there is an excellent opportunity for genuine gratitude to result. And when the child exceeds that which is clearly "due" his parents, by additional and wholly voluntary gestures of helpfulness, the parent is similarly able to recognize that here is a *growing trust*—reaching toward over-all harmony and mutual appreciation.

There is, in short, a clear distinction between expecting only the minimum of understanding in regard to one's personal interrelationships, and believing that the minimum is all that can be attained. We do not for a moment hold that human motivations are necessarily inspired by purely selfish considerations. An ideal family contract, like an ideal "social contract," is impregnated by the faith that men need freedom—over and above the bare necessities of mutually recognized obligation—to find themselves and subsequently to give of their best. Freedom, on this view, a view

endorsed by the constitution of the United States, is a stepping stone in the development of responsibility.

But what, really, is the meaning of "freedom" in regard to personal relationships? On this subject we feel that psychologists such as Karen Horney and Erich Fromm have thrown a good deal of light, for both have indicated that no genuine love can be possessive. This is an admission, and a significant one, indicating that a human being is capable of transcending his own selfish concerns in a *selfless* concern for the welfare of another. It is true that our own needs and desires are usually responsible for bringing us close enough to another human being to enable this transcendent attitude to grow, but, to use Horney's phrase, one who is "capable of loving" must be capable of placing the welfare of another beyond any conflicting immediate wishes of his own. When we respect another human being sufficiently, we recognize that his or her choices must be viewed as inspired by a constructive or meaningful intent. To constrict or attempt to confine the choices of another, on the other hand, is a mark of disrespect and distrust. This is why it seems of primary importance to limit our specific aspirations to a minimum, and regard those whom we profess to love as *essentially* free agents.

It is not difficult to see how this applies to the relationship between parents and children during their formative years. No child will feel himself fully loved unless he feels himself respected—unless his own desires and inclinations, even when they diverge from the parent's well-worn path, are greeted with consideration and more interest than alarm. From this perspective, "love" is something which must be learned, and unless the parent shows the way by evidencing respect in his relationship with his children, it will be difficult, if not impossible, for the child to truly "love" the parents. Some homes are afflicted by a child's resentment of a parent's freedom, but the children, in this case, demand excessive attention only because they feel insecure (as psychologists tell us). When parents "give in" to their child's possessiveness they are, however, more the victimizers than the victims, since the child has not as yet had much opportunity to recognize the right of others to be free. The adult, on the other hand, has had abundant opportunity to see how necessary "freedom" is to his own inner sense of well-being. He respects, for instance, the employer who allows ample room for

initiative, who refrains from peeking over an employee's shoulder on numerous occasions. The best employer—who hires the best employees—recognizes that each man capable of trust should be allowed to evolve his own methods, at least within the confines of what is possible for a given enterprise. In the most ideal research centers, where the results of any new development need precise integration with the processes of industry or correlative research, each man enjoys appropriate prerogatives in respect to investigation and experiment. The director of such research would never attempt to integrate the activities of his staff at every step of the way; he waits for a line of investigation to reach some sort of fruition, before considering the problem of integration. So it should be, we think, with our children. If we pre-judge the worth of various lines of interest developed by them, try to dissuade or deflect them, neither we nor they acquire a fair basis for independent evaluation. Similarly, it must be, with husbands and wives who, if the condition called "love" is present, will be primarily concerned with assisting the other party to the marriage in any line of endeavor or interest chosen.

The "contract theory," then, does not produce goodness, truth, love or beauty, but it *may* serve as useful reminder that no human being should be required to do without the recognition of certain clear areas of self-determination. When we fail to think through, specifically, what can rationally be "expected," we usually end by expecting a number of things not within our rightful ethical province to demand. Therefore, deliberate agreement as to obligations can actually serve as a guarantee of freedom, and, if Karen Horney is right in insisting that no true love can exist without respect for freedom, the longest way around may, here, again, be the shortest way home.

## *FRONTIERS*

### Check Your Mind Outside

DURING the past twenty years or so, in Russia and in its satellite countries, there has occurred a series of "trials" of high-ranking Communist officials which feature dramatic and seemingly ridiculous "confessions" by such officials of conspiracy and treason against the State. It is easy to see how such "confessions" can be obtained, but it is not immediately clear to rational minds just what purpose they are intended to serve. A brief discussion of this question appeared in *Time*, Dec. 29, 1952, in connection with the Slansky trial in Czechoslovakia, in the form of a quotation from Raymond Aron, a French political commentator:

"It was not necessary to have a trial in order to rouse the passions of anti-Semitism, and as an instrument of government, a trial is singularly inefficient. Either the masses believe in the truth of the confessions—and in that case, what must they think of a party ruled by spies for so long?—or else they do not believe in it, but then the purpose attributed to the trials by Western commentators is not achieved."

These "ceremonies of self-accusation," Aron believes, can only be understood as "religious rites, rather than instruments of a rational method. . . . The goal is to manifest the absolute nature of the supreme power by forcing millions of men to act and talk as if they took absurdities to be the truth. . . . All religions tend to impose upon the faithful the image of a world which is more true than the world of the senses. In Stalinism, that world is simply the interpretation which the party gives to events, an interpretation which is never definitely fixed. By confessing crimes which they have not committed, disgraced officials help create this super-reality, of which the party is supreme master. The method will be applied to all enslaved countries so that it shall be understood finally that no one opposes the party.

"The faith which the trials are intended to spread has for its object neither the testimony of the victims nor the doctrine of the masters, but the omnipotence of a party which must [be made to] seem stronger than truth itself."

In a famous essay entitled "The Will to Believe," William James distinguished between two meanings of the word "faith." One kind of faith, widely prevalent

but rejected by Prof. James as a perversion, is presented in the form of the schoolboy's definition: "Faith is when you believe something that you know ain't true."

In their *Principles of Anthropology*, Chapple and Coon examine in some detail the class of cultural phenomena technically known as "rites of passage"—the ceremonies used by primitive (and other) peoples to induct individuals into such institutional orthodoxies as occupational or professional guilds or societies, religious organizations, secret societies, or into the complex, closed, rigid, and all-inclusive systems of tribal *mores* which govern all aspects of the lives of primitive peoples, and to which all members of a tribe without exception *must* be conditioned. One series of such rites of passage, that of the Poro Bush society (a complex religious institution made up of members of skilled crafts and professions into which young boys are initiated), formerly practiced by the Mano people in Liberia, is described in part as follows:

. . . each boy is taken first to a secret house where he is dressed up in a shirt inside of which are a plantain stalk and a bladder full of blood. In front of the raffa fence, one of the dancers appears to run a spear through each boy in turn. The boy falls with the spear sticking out of him, and blood flows. The boy, obeying instructions, falls as if dead or unconscious. Then the dancer picks up the boy's limp body and throws it over the fence, where two other dancers catch it. One of these puts the boy on his feet and tells him to run in a certain direction, while the other drops a heavy log on the ground to convince the boy's mother, waiting on the other side, that her son is dead.

Inside the Bush, the ceremony is opened by a rite calculated to inspire strict obedience in the boys. First, one of the officials shows the boys a tray of fingers and toes cut from sacrificial victims, and tells them that these were taken from boys that had peeked in earlier ceremonies, or who had scoffed. To make this even more impressive, the officials then grab one of the boys and accuse him of peeking or making fun of the Poro; they kill him at once in front of the other boys, cut him up and cook him, and all the company present, including the boys, eat. If they happen to

catch a woman peeking through the raffa fence, or inside the Bush, they kill and eat her also. . . .

Once the boys have been duly impressed by these rites, the process of instruction begins, and they learn the details of agriculture, trades, herb medicine, and the like. . . . When the period of instruction is over. . . . they are sent out into the outer world again, and they run about the village, pretending to be strangers and to know nobody. Their parents then find those who have survived the ordeal, which is the great majority, and the boys pretend not to recognize their parents. Finally, their parents take them home and the boys are thereafter free to marry, to adopt a trade, and to live in general as adults. . . .

. . . The mock killing of the boy and tossing him over the fence is the rite of segregation; the sacrifice is, among other rites, a rite of transition, and the return of the boys, pretending not to know their parents, represents incorporation. After their emergence from the Bush, they have been thoroughly conditioned to a new set of relations and they can adjust themselves to their families on a new level. . . .

To be an individual is to be unique, and we are all born individuals. There are perceptible physical and mental differences between any two of us—even, we are told, between so-called identical twins. And between any two people other than identical twins, these differences are gross and obvious.

To be human is to be, in a profoundly important way, equal *with* all one's fellows—to enjoy with them the possibility of personal growth, development, and learning. Not the possibility of equal growth, of course, or equal rate of growth, but just the possibility of growth: *the possibility of developing one's individuality*.

Members of free societies are equal in the further sense that they all enjoy a generally accepted right to develop, without hindrance, their individualities—the right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness"—and the right to offer unique contributions toward the development of their society.

The actions of individuals cannot, of course, be predicted, and the development of a free society consequently cannot be mapped out in advance. But, to people in power, it often seems desirable to plan

the development of societies, or else to prevent the occurrence of any change in them. When such control is undertaken, it becomes necessary to reduce individuality, or at least the manifestations of individuality, to some safe minimum. Because such suppression requires some people to submit to the control of others, it is also necessary that human equality be denied. The suppression of individuality and the denial of equality is the particular business of institutional orthodoxies.

One of the classical denials of equality begins by taking as a basic premise the naturally-occurring differences between individuals and groups, asserts that there is a *necessary* relation between these differences and whatever differences of status and function there happen to be in the society, and concludes that some people are "naturally" inferior and others "naturally" superior. Until fairly recently in this country, for example, women were not thought to have enough "natural" intelligence to vote.

The suppression or disguising of individuality which, paradoxically, must be undertaken by any orthodoxy along with its denial of equality, is in some respects easy enough. Physical differences can be made less apparent by the standardization of clothing and methods of personal adornment—the use of *uniforms*, symbolic jewelry, prescribed ways of shaving, hairdressing, etc. Behavior can be standardized to a considerable degree by imposing routines and by the use of rituals and ceremonies. But there is one aspect of individuality which is extremely difficult to bring under control: the tendency of all men toward independent thinking. Thought control is the basic need of all orthodoxies; its accomplishment is the most difficult problem they face. To reduce curiosity and spontaneity to unobserving and unimaginative conformity—to turn free-thinkers into sectarians—how can this be done?

It is necessary that a set of ideas which guarantees the priority and superiority of the orthodoxy over its individual members—some creed or dogma—be accepted by all members as Truth. And this system of Truth must be *felt* to have a certainty and finality which eliminates the possibility of its critical examination. It must be accepted

without qualification as being eternally, unchangingly, unquestionably Right.

For some people a dogma can be made acceptable by indoctrination: prolonged and forceful assertion overcomes the tendency toward questioning criticism and makes the things asserted True. Some people can be frightened into believing; fear is a great leveller of intellects. And there are those who can be induced to perform an unsupported act of faith; they become convinced that there is a special virtue in believing without questioning the belief.

All methods of processing new members into an orthodoxy have at least one element in common: they require that critical thought be suspended until the protective dogma has been transformed, for the initiate, into Truth. During this first period of intense conditioning the initiate is, in effect, required to check his mind outside: its use cannot be allowed until the initiation is completed.

Once the Truth has been established for him, however, he is free to repossess his mind, so to speak, and to use it to the limit of his reduced freedom. Indeed, he may be encouraged to do this; whatever remains possible for him in the way of thinking is likely to be to the advantage of the orthodoxy. For the body of Truth which he has accepted almost inevitably functions (in the language of the logicians) as a set of postulates, premises, or assumptions: propositions taken for granted. It is used as the basis from which his thought begins, and the more cogent and accurate his thinking turns out to be, the more certain it is that the Truth will be preserved and reproduced in whatever conclusions he reaches. It is a commonplace of logic that conclusions are implicit in the premises from which they are derived. When a set of premises can be dictated, the conclusions derived from them can be guaranteed, *provided the logical manipulations used are logically correct*. The recorded cogitations of some of the medieval schoolmen, for example, are models of technical accuracy: the Truth they started out with was masterfully preserved in them.

The technique, then, is to deprive the initiate temporarily of the use of his mind, to indoctrinate

him, and then to allow him to "cut in" his mind again on the theory that the released intellect will automatically function in the interests of the orthodoxy and will not be turned to a critical examination of the Truth which has been revealed. But does this always work? Do not members of orthodoxies sometimes undertake to examine the basic principles they have adopted?

Not many of them do—perhaps only the most gifted humans are capable of scrutinizing independently the fundamental certainties which have come to seem obvious or self-evident to them. And the orthodoxy often gains more than it loses even when these unusual people focus their minds in the forbidden direction. In general, there are two possible outcomes of such exploration.

The man who undertakes it may become a heretic, and thus a partial loss to the orthodoxy. However, he may sometimes in this case be used to show the remaining members what happens to a non-believer, and some heretics have been of greater value to their orthodoxies in this way than they ever could have been as believers.

Or, he may not become a heretic, even though he finds that he cannot assimilate the revealed Truth. He may conclude, not that the Truth is unreasonable, but that it is beyond the poor power of human intelligence to grasp. He thus uses his mind to deny the relevance of mentality, at once elevating the Truth to an even more impregnable position and himself to a higher dimension of sectarianism: he qualifies as a candidate for an administrative position in the organization.