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AMERICAN SELF-CRITICISM

IT is reasonable to assume that George Orwell had Soviet Russia chiefly in mind when he wrote *Nineteen-Eighty-Four.* His previous book, *Animal Farm,* was a satire on the Communist society, and *Nineteen-Eighty-Four,* which brought to a climax the cycle of utopia-in-reverse books that began with Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World,* suggested that the once-free West had finally succumbed to the example set by its socialist competitor. This is a useful form of criticism, even if Orwell's desperation led him to write a book wholly unrelieved by any kind of hope. We have the idea that the most valuable books of sociological analysis, these days, are those which expose to Western readers what the two societies—"East" and "West"—have in common, instead of emphasizing the differences. Quite conceivably, as the years of cold-war rivalry go by, the differences will grow less and less important. An observation of Francois Mauriac, French Catholic anti-communist, has enough pertinence on this point to be quoted (from *Le Figaro):*

> It is not what separates the United States and the Soviet Union that should frighten us, but what they have in common . . . Those two technocracies that think thermelves antagonists are dragging humanity in the same direction of dehumanization . . . man is treated as a means and no longer as an end—this is the indispensable condition of the two cultures that face each other.

Two things may be said about this sort of statement. First is the undoubted fact that a number of Americans will take it to heart, wonder about it, and admit at least a partial validity in the criticism. They will also read *Nineteen-Eighty-Four* as a sermon addressed to themselves, and when busy bureaucrats try to draw themselves up into menacing figures, literate citizens will ridicule the "Big Brother" tendency they find emerging in American society. There is, in short, an articulate sector of self-criticizing public opinion in the United States, and its voice becomes more powerful every day.

The second thing to say is that the epithet of "Materialism," implied by Mauriac and used by unnumbered critics of American culture, is seldom uttered with any real understanding. It applies, of course. It applies all over the world, but the annoying thing about American materialism is its undoubted success. In Europe, successful materialism is usually limited to the best people, and European mechanics who come to America are soon delighted by the rewards so easily enjoyed by the American working man. They notice the absence of social barriers, too. William H. Whyte, Jr., in *Is Anybody Listening?* (1952), gives the reactions of European workers and union officials to a recent visit to the United States:

> "Contrary to the impression gained from many American films only a small percentage of American workers and their families live in tenements." (British trade-union officials)
>
> "The relations between management and labor in the great majority of mills which we visited were excellent. There was often a sense of camaraderie based upon mutual respect . ." (British cotton-spinning team)
>
> "Sometimes we had to ask ourselves whether it was manufacturer or trade union member speaking to us." (Danish ready-made-clothing team)

This is not of course an answer to the charge of materialism, but it disposes of whatever element of envy may be in the accusation.

To understand what American materialism is really like, an actual experience of being *in business* in the United States may be very useful. American business is not all "big" business. There are still countless small businesses throughout the country, which are obliged to keep pace with the rate of progress set by large industry. It is difficult to think of the people so engaged as "materialists." It is true that they work hard for money, and that their lives are largely dominated by business interests. They send their sons to college and are puzzled when the

young men return home with a condescending attitude toward commercial enterprise. "What's wrong with being in business? It sent you to school, didn't it?" And so on.

Then there is the undoubted pleasure that men take in their work. When machines turn out products, the man who assembled the machines, hired the help, and found the customers is almost bound to feel a swell of pride, or at least a sense of accomplishment. Is this materialism? The efficient performance of economic functions, surely, does not make a man a materialist, but the performance of no other functions may make him into the kind of a person who abandons himself to economic pursuits with a fervor that is really neurotic. Then, if it happens that he is one of the few who are very successful, he may find himself developing a kind of ideology—even a theology—to dignify a life that sorely needs dignifying. Here, we think, is the materialism that is becoming characteristic of the American scene, and deserving of attack.

From one point of view, what America needs is twenty-five or thirty years of time for the next generation to grow up and take the reins. If we can assume that the young of today have qualities similar to the young of thirty years ago, it can be argued that they possess an eagerness for productive work, and will want also some reasonable vision of the future. Thirty years ago, the American Way of Life had not yet been seriously questioned. It had been sloganized, but not theologized. The Managerial Revolution was on the way, but it had not arrived. In another thirty years, all the pompous nonsense about business as a Way of Life may be seen for what it is, and a large crop of determined heretics may blossom forth.

Interestingly enough, it has been the alliance of business with psychology that has produced the theology of business—and therefore its materialism. And it is this alliance which has brought the clearest symptoms of revulsion from intelligent Americans. We have in mind two books—the one mentioned above—*Is Anybody Listening?* by William H. Whyte, Jr., and the editors of *Fortune*, and *The Relaxed Sell* by Thomas Whiteside, of which the title essay and several other chapters appeared originally in *The New Yorker*.

The Relaxed Sell is not direct criticism, but it is devastating. Mr. Whiteside reviews and analyzes techniques of American selling much as an entomologist examines a colony of ants. What is appalling about the book is that what it describes turns the "wheels of progress" in the United States. The story of the invention and promotion of the first leaky and inefficient ballpoint pens is funny, but after you've read it you may take pride in the fact that you were reactionary enough to resist using one for quite a while.

Then there is the amount of "science" and "art" which goes into the staging of a television program designed to make children demand a new breakfast food. It is this, really—the scientific study of how to make people want things enough to buy them—which qualifies America as a subject for study from the *Nineteen-Eighty-Four* point of view. From the same general background are drawn the techniques employed in the selection and management of "personnel" in industry. The familiar term is "social engineering." Mr. Whyte has this to say early in a chapter on the subject:

> The closer one gets to the heartland of social engineering, the more difficult it becomes to do justice to the social engineers' ideas. For this reason we will present as much of the case as is humanly bearable in the social engineers' own words. The reader, as a result, is about to come across the strangest language ever penned by man. Translation, however, is worth the effort: underneath all those big words it is you they are talking about.
>
> A rough paraphrase indicates that to become a social engineer only two basic premises need be learned. The first is the primacy of the group. Its harmony is the important goal, and the individual has meaning chiefly as he contributes to that goal. This premise digested, you are now one step from being a social engineer. For the second premise flows naturally from the first. To achieve this "integration" we must turn to "scientific" techniques. By measurement and codification you enable people to find out how everyone else is thinking and unthinking and adjust accordingly. In a word, groupthink.
>
> . . . the new democratic leader will be permissive, his voice never raised, the kind that

> makes a point of always using "we." He will be a "citizen engineer." A "peace planner." An "integrative leader." Or a "group mediator." A "community clinician."
>
> If our society comes to an end it will not be with a bang or a whimper. The sound track will be the soft tinkle of rimless glasses on a conference table.

The thing that worries Mr. Whyte—and it should worry all the rest of us—is the fact that social engineering is having amazing success. It does seem to be possible to sell more breakfast foods by using statistical studies to discover which advertising appeals are the most persuasive. And bright young men who want to get ahead are eager to learn the techniques. At the vulgar level, social engineering is merely merchandising, but the method reaches up to the higher ideological levels in the form of plans for an entirely "adjusted" society. Whyte remarks: "Re-examine the basic concepts of social engineering and what do you find, essentially, but an advocacy of conformity made scientific?" The trend is insidious and far-reaching. Whyte finds that the heroes and heroines of slick magazine fiction no longer show much resistance to the status quo—any status quo (an observation, incidentally, which is notably untrue of a growing number of contemporary novelists). The system they live in is beginning to take on the rightness and permanence of the static medieval environment. You don't question the assumptions of the System any more; you just work out your problems *within* the system. Mr. Whyte makes about the same analysis of *The Caine Mutiny* that appeared in MANAS several months ago—offering this book as evidence that, in the long run, and in spite of insane commanders, obedience to the rules of the system is the most important thing.

But what is the appeal of social engineering? Whyte makes this answer:

> *They promise us freedom from moral choice.* Through the worship of group harmony, buck-passing a moral decision becomes itself a moral act; the system—as *The Caine Mutiny* advocates—attends to these things so much better than the individual, and he might as well relax and enjoy it. And there is freedom in another sense as well. Moral dilemmas exist because there is uncertainty. If social engineering can abstract a few parts from the whole of human nature and by measuring them predict objectively what once was a matter for guesswork, one's conscience (or worse yet, common sense), the intangibles that make decisions poignant may be obviated altogether. Like a general blessed with perfect intelligence of the enemy, we will have only one valid course before us. We will have finally latched on to certainty. No more impalement on the horns of dilemmas; no bewildering alternatives, no inner grapplings. Measurement. Codification. And the facts will make decisions *for us.*

So, finally, we arrive at the real materialism—doctrinaire materialism. The trouble with the attacks on communism as "materialistic" is that the criticism is all mixed up with debates on economics. *Any* system, socialistic or capitalistic, which is associated with the view that moral choice can be eliminated by science from human experience, will eventually become viciously anti-human if that view prevails.

Religions filled with talk about God and soul and "spiritual values" can be just as materialistic as Marxism, if they involve the submission of the rational faculty—the power of moral choice—to an outside authority. If this is so, and we think it is, the greatest irony of the Twentieth Century is the setting of traditional religion against non-traditional Communism as arch-enemies and symbols of the Armageddon of the modern world. They may be arch enemies, but they are not essentially different in their estimate of man. Both are determined to manage his moral decisions.

This, however, is not Mr. Whyte's comparison, but our own. Here, and in conclusion, we should like to note that Mr. Whyte's vigorous reproach and analysis of the methods spreading in American business were the outgrowth of a study inaugurated by *Fortune*—the American magazine of business, big business. American "materialism" is filled with contradictions!

REVIEW
IDEALS IN STRANGE PLACES

THIS time around we'll leave it to readers to do their own philosophizing about modern fiction, being content to provide some possibly provocative material. The brilliant iconoclasm and debunking of many novelists still allows striking glimpses of honor, integrity, genuine love, and kindness, and the three pocket volumes presently before us are somewhat surprising in this regard.

Lowell Barrington's *The Deserter* (now retitled *The Bad One,* in a bid for greater sales) is the story of a man named Corey who deserts his post during a World War II battle in North Africa. His excuse for desertion was good enough to convince him, but did not convince a court-martial, and so, being himself "innocent" in his *conscious* mind, Corey served out a prison sentence in the turmoil of an inner conflict over his unadmitted guilt. Finally he discovers that a man he left behind in battle lost his sanity in ensuing events; thus, after his release, Corey is drawn by an unconscious prompting of integrity to offer help to this broken personality. The "deserter" gradually grows to know himself, develops strength from giving the help, and finally faces his own partial dishonesty. And this new-found integrity is carried through to the end, a promising career and an attractive marriage being shelved so that he may finish his task. Aiding a madman is thankless work, but if it is perceived as one's natural "dharma," even this can seem the most important work of all. An unusual theme to encounter in a luridly advertised paper-back book, is it not?

Martin Dibner's *The Deep Six,* termed by a reviewer "an engrossing, violent, and often brutal account of Navy life during the second world war," wedges in entirely unwarlike sequences from time to time. Lieutenant Austen, the hero of the tale, grew up in a devout Quaker family and, while convinced of the necessity for his participation in war, remains at the same time a champion of the principle of non-violence whenever he can see how to apply it. In the midst of battle, when two "tough" men crack under the strain, it is Austen's task to arrest one of them, hate-filled, an armed madman whom he tracks to a secluded corner of the ship. Austen has faith and compassion even for a man regarded by everyone else as a perverted destroyer. Here is part of this "ahimsa" incident, taking place in the bowels of the ship at the end of a bloody sea battle:

> Austen shook his head doggedly. Edge drew back his fist. Austen closed his dazed eyes. Edge did not hit him again. He stepped back. Austen opened his eyes.
>
> "Go ahead, Mike."
>
> "You yellow bastard. You ain't fighting."
>
> "No."
>
> "No guts. I oughta cut you to ribbons." His voice was filled with a furious perplexity.
>
> "Why, Mike? Why?"
>
> "I'll tell you why!"
>
> Instead he turned away and leaned against the steel shelving. His body heaved convulsively. His knotty fingers twitched.
>
> Austen pulled some cheese cloth from one of the shelves and wiped the blood from his face. He picked up his coat and put it on. The pain shot through him. Some of the blood on his cheek soaked into the wool collar and he tried to wipe it away.
>
> "It's your own goddamned fault," Edge blubbered.
>
> "I didn't say anything, Mike."

Later, making a report, Austen finds it impossible to explain his action:

> "He had the .45, didn't he?"
>
> "Yeah. He had it."
>
> "And he slugged you when you tried to take it away?"
>
> "Yes."
>
> "Did you slug him back?"
>
> "No."
>
> "Why the hell not?"
>
> Austen grinned faintly. "Passive resistance. Ever hear of Gandhi, Dutch?"
>
> "Gandhi who?"
>
> "Okay. Never mind."

Dibner seems to echo the *Bhavagad-Gita,* in which the teacher, Krishna, explains that, even in the midst of violence, it is possible for a man to stand for something higher.

Gordon Forbes' *Too Near the Sun* is another brittle, cleverly worded tale exposing the meaninglessness of life among the dissolute rich. The tragic "hero" of this story keeps pace with his contemporaries, but it is "the front of an out-dated man, a man of honor, for whom there was no place this side of the grave." While laying bare the interminable Roman holiday of life among members of the California country club set, Forbes obviously believes that riches and privileges are among the most insidious of curses. Happiness and usefulness are discovered by those who are not born to the purple—by the highway patrolman, the courageous waitress, a drive-in proprietor, and his friends.

It is not easy to find passages to quote which reveal Forbes' backhanded "idealism," since most of them are entangled with complex phases of the plot, but that is precisely what can be interesting about this sort of writing. Protests against superficiality—including sharp thrusts at the sort of smugness which hides social, economic, and racial prejudice—run throughout the book, and may have a greater effect upon some readers because they are unlabored and spontaneous. Here, however, is a sample of the sophisticated humor of Forbes' dialogue, illustrating his indirect method of social criticism:

> "You hate our coast culture," Ashton said, sipping his drink. "You Maryland Visigoth. You barbarian. You don't see the splendor of our life. There are more and bigger swimming pools in the San Fernando valley than in all Lahia. Did you know that? We're the genre of the future out here. Supersonic, rarefied, sun-tanned gods and goddesses. Get with it. Get dark glasses today. Get your redwood and glass, sliding-walled, solarized, panchromatic, diatomaceous living space among the eucalypti. Slide to divide. Living-dining, or dining-sunbathing, or living-sunbathing, or make one giant barbecue area when you have the old gang from Fosbee, Arkansas, over for a *luau."*
>
> "You'll have to translate as you go. I know what a *luau* shirt is."
>
> "Of course you do. We've given it to the world. We're moving, out here. Hitched to the most colossal power plant in the world. Milled heads, ported and vented, channeled and blown, running on a high-lift cam—"
>
> "That's enough. Why don't you put out a handy Conversations in Californian Made Easy pocket manual?"
>
> "Your reflexes are dead. Too much plantation living. Too much peepin' through the honeysuckle. Too much hog fat and grits. Change your dark glasses. Get a hotter car, push out more of those walls."
>
> "At least we don't measure our biceps with a tape on the beach. And throw girls around like footballs."
>
> "Not big enough. Puny, back there. Out here everybody nine feet tall, oranges for heads. Don't need heads. Just cars and places for cars. Giant Servo Center. Oil change, three minutes. Park here for wash and wax, seven minutes. Eat? The Thrifto-Baggo-Shoppo-Mart, an acre and a half of everything. Why live in chains? Why live anywhere you can't get an oil change in three minutes? Now I ask you."

COMMENTARY
"MASS MEDIA"

SOME years ago, Oswald Garrison Villard warned (in *The Disappearing Daily)* that intelligent Americans would probably have to cross the newspapers off their list as means of communicating with one another. If a man has something important to say to others, Villard believed, he will probably have to print it in a pamphlet, and then work out some way to get circulation. For the daily newspapers are not for intelligent communication.

Now comes Joseph Wood Krutch in the *American Scholar* for the Summer of 1955 (the issue quoted in Frontiers) with the same estimate of radio and television. His remarks are addressed in particular to those who deplore what travels through the air to radio sets and television screens, yet feel that the "medium" is still a great thing:

> But, they say, it *could* be first-class. There is no reason why Sophocles instead of Milton Berle, and Plato instead of Arthur Godfrey, should not be piped into every home.

The point, however, is that this "piping in" technique is precisely what neither Sophocles nor Plato were ever intended to put up with. As Mr. Krutch amply explains, the people with products to sell over the radio and by television don't *want* you to think. "Their methods are calculated not merely to make that audience believe what it is told, but also to believe just because it has been told. Their aim is to hypnotize and condition. The last thing they want is any thinking-for-yourself." Then there is this statement for those who have let themselves be beguiled into the hope that if only the *right people* had control of the channels, world peace would be just a matter of hours away:

> Nothing more dearly distinguishes a method of communication from a technique of indoctrination than the fact that education demands from the subject some effort, especially some effort of attention, while propaganda does not. The advertiser will go to any length to make everything easy. The educator will see to it that something is expected of his pupil. He knows that no one can learn anything worth knowing unless he is willing to learn, as well as willing to be taught. He knows that learning how to learn is more important than any specific thing he can "communicate." And the grand question has now become whether or not the new techniques of mass communication inevitably and by their very nature weaken the power to learn at the same time that they make being taught so easy.

Of course, Mr. Krutch and the others who think this way about "mass communications media" would find it much easier to make the force of their reasoning felt if they had some alternatives to offer besides writing articles for the *Atlantic Monthly* or the *American Scholar*. The fine magazines have the double disadvantage of being low pay and reaching very few people. Meanwhile, the portrait of the "mass audience" found in studies of popular culture is so discouraging that the feeling of crisis is just around the corner for intellectuals who want to do something about it. "The problem," they insist, "is world-wide. We can't fool around with little pamphlets when millions have to be influenced. We've *got* to use the mass media."

Well, we can think of only one intelligent man, maybe two, who make extensive use of the mass media without succumbing to the debasement of what they have to say. Lyman Bryson is the one, and Edward R. Murrow is maybe the other. And they are probably all the traffic will bear. There is little use, we think, in trying to beat the don't-think-for-yourself boys at their own game and over their own medium. In the first place, they won't let you, and in the second place it won't work.

Finally, there is no reason for assuming that you have to get a million or so people to listen to you in order to do any good. It might be far better to ignore the mass media entirely and to start up other means of communication. As Krutch says:

> I am not at all sure that we ought to take the instruments of mass communication away from the advertisers. Perhaps we should let the advertisers keep them. Perhaps we should have a little more faith in the media which are our own and which we know how to use.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

CORRESPONDENCE PLUS NOTES IN PASSING

Editors: I enjoyed your discussion of my questions about the Murrow program. Now I have another one. Recently I attended a lecture delivered before a local PTA group by a Los Angeles psychiatrist. His subject was "Understanding the Adolescent." He discussed various problems of adolescence in the light of his central idea that adolescence is the period during which most humans gradually learn to become independent of parental restriction and supervision, gradually learn to be free. I thought the lecturer did a good job. At the end of the lecture, members of the audience were allowed to submit written questions. I submitted the following one, which was designed to draw out a point which I thought had been left slightly obscure: "Isn't it important that parental decisions affecting adolescents should appear, from the point of view of those affected, to be fair and reasonable?"

He readily agreed that the parent of an adolescent should always try to be fair, but he flatly advised against any attempt to be reasonable. The parent who attempts to reason with an adolescent, he said, will simply have an argument on his hands and will lose control. The answer was quite unequivocal; I don't think it is likely that I misunderstood. It threw the whole question into confusion for me—seeming to negate everything that the psychiatrist had been saying all evening.

I can readily understand that the use of reason might be impractical with younger children, at least under some circumstances. However, it isn't clear to me how an adolescent can learn to be free without simultaneously learning to be reasonable—thinking would seem necessarily to be involved in making choices. And it isn't clear to me how a parent can help a child through the period of adolescence to the achievement of moral freedom without reasoning with him. I should think the invitation, "Come, let us reason together," ought frequently to be made by a parent to his adolescent son or daughter.

I don't know whether or not the psychiatrist was expressing an "orthodox" point of view of psychiatry or psychology, or his own idea. And of course there may be some subtle point here that I have missed. . . .

THE comments of this psychiatrist are interesting, and provide some inspiration for reflection. Perhaps his extreme view stems from the general inclination of psychologists to react against the attempt of adults to *mold* the reasoning of the young according to adult values. Possibly the psychiatrist regards most "reasoning" as simply rationalizing, anyway, in which case all that a child could get would be a superimposed structure which confuses more than it aids. Taken literally, though, we must flatly disagree with his assertion. We have often argued here that every essential step of a parent's reasoning in reaching a decision in respect to a child should be given to the child, even if the latter is unable to follow all the way. This, for the reason that a genuine attempt to make oneself rational creates a mood, and this, even from the standpoint of the psychiatrist, is a mood that engenders respect.

There is, however, another side of the picture. That is, the adult is in a natural position to make flat decisions about many things, so long as he bears the full legal and financial responsibility for the child. But this itself is "reasonable"! In conversation with adolescents, it is worthwhile to point out that in respect to all such matters as financial support and the allocation of responsibilities around the home, the parent has a "right to be considered right." In this case "right" means *justified.* There is plenty of other legitimate room for the adolescent to show his independence—for instance, by arguing about general points of view and moral strictures—without confusing these issues of value by arguing all practical decisions as well. That immature minds react to external pressures in immature ways has always been a problem. While insipid youths may welcome "directives" from adults, their bolder contemporaries often seem determined to accept nothing. Since our worst politics stem from "over-reaction," helping our children to see the folly of one-sidedness is always important.

* * *

Another novel by Ruth Moore, *A Fair Wind Home* (available in a pocketbook edition), recalls her *Candlemas Bay* reviewed in MANAS a year or two ago. The latter story is still one of our favorite recommendations for adolescents, and while *A Fair Wind Home* may not be as useful for this purpose, we judge that parents who read it will tend to support our opinion that Ruth Moore is a better than average psychologist and philosopher, along with being a writer of exciting tales. The following indicates her capacity to restate some old truths in a fresh and appealing form:

> "They are only the young setting up for themselves," he said quietly. "They do not love you less, only themselves more."
>
> "Selfish and ungrateful, after all I did for them—"
>
> "And who is not? What is gratitude? A belittling thing, Lizabeth!"
>
> "Nonsense. Children ought to be grateful. And look at mine! I worked my fingers to the bone and what did I get for it!"
>
> Frank looked at her curiously.
>
> "And when you were working your fingers to the bone," he asked, "did you do it only because you thought you might get something for it?"
>
> "Don't talk foolish. I thought I might at least expect help when I needed it."
>
> "Or did you do it somewhat for the joy and satisfaction you had in your love for your children? 'Tis a great joy to protect the helpless, but 'tis not selfless, Lizabeth. Look how you are, angry and bitter because what they are doing is being a man and a woman, not two children! Be glad of it that they no longer need you!
>
> "Oh, Lizabeth, what a souring of the good, kind mother's milk, that you cannot see how a grown man does not need his mother! 'Tis we should be grateful to children for being so dear. When we have had them and they are grown, should there be left an ugly thing like a debt to pay? Why, a child repays us a thousand times over by being a child. I say this, a lonely man, who has been warming cold fingers over the great fire lit by his small son—or daughter, 'tis no matter. I am thinking the time will come when I must let my son go to be a man, and I do not know how I will feel. But should I put myself in his way, my great hulk for him to stumble over, when the young have so hard a time, and 'tis no easy thing to learn to be a man?"

* * *

A motion picture commendation, perhaps to be our only one of the year, goes to J. Arthur Rank's *The Little Kidnappers.* Seldom have we seen any screen effort manage so well in helping adults to understand children—and other adults to understand themselves.

FRONTIERS

A Liberal Reassessment

THESE are not days of fervor for Liberalism. Time was when the liberal could with good conscience echo the Marxist slogan that capitalism contains the seeds of its own destruction, and do so without endorsing the class struggle or subscribing to any program of social change involving violence. The liberal could believe this while working for the ideal of a Welfare State to be attained by gradualist, democratic means. Now, however, he is obliged to admit that materialistic humanitarianism tends to destroy itself with even greater rapidity, so that he is left with only the ideal of liberal *methods* to defend. But except for socio-political abstractions, he has no particular goal to be reached by these methods, although the preservation of the latter seems difficult enough to engross all his energies, at the present time.

Robert Langbaum, writing in the Summer *American Scholar* on the role of the liberal during the "cold war," proposes a taking of stock of the issues. Lately returned from a visit to Europe, Mr. Langbaum finds himself reflecting the European attitude toward American fears of communism, and his article "Cold War Troubles at Home," starts out as an endeavor to understand this reaction in himself.

Why, first of all, is there so much hullabaloo about the "communist menace"—so much more, that is, than in Europe where there are substantial communist minorities with legal political standing? Mr. Langbaum finds several reasons. First, real communists are so difficult to find in the United States that practically nobody knows from firsthand experience what they are really like. This results in the creation of a "mythical" enemy who grows terrible in proportion to his scarcity. Langbaum writes:

> . . . the French and Italians, at least, have in their Communist parties an enemy large and real enough to absorb whatever cold war energies they have mustered. There are advantages, paradoxical as it may seem, in having a sizable Communist party with its place on the ballot, its acknowledged supporters and its deputies in parliament. The enemy does not take on metaphysical proportions; he is perfectly measurable and you have a ground on which to combat him. You do not have to confuse yourself by worrying about how much freedom to grant him, or whether he is real or phantom. You can neither invent him nor determine what is to be done with him since he is too substantial for the one and too powerful for the other. Best of all, you do not have to look around for ambiguous people upon whom to pin the Communist label when there are so many self-avowed candidates for the honor. Because the energy the French and Italians expend against their candidates has its entirely adequate counterpart in reality, the fight is no different in quality from any other political fight. It is dangerous politically, but not psychologically and morally.

Here in the United States, however, since communists are so hard to find, the zeal of the search for them soon transfers itself to discovering "subversive tendencies" in Pinks and liberals. The "right-wingers," Mr. Langbaum suggests, "find the latter game not only more absorbing but more rewarding. For again, the liberals are competitors for power, and a great many more legislative seats and government jobs are to be acquired through labeling them Communists than through dragging any real Communist out of his insignificant corner."

A second reason for the excessive fear of Communism by Americans is the very real sense of responsibility felt by the people of the United States in being the strongest military power in the world. The Americans now have the initiative in world affairs, and it is like having a tiger by the tail. The peoples of Europe enjoy a blessed impotence in these days of dreadful decision. While their calm appraisal of American anxieties may be just enough, the circumstances of the cold war place them on the sidelines. But the Americans must call the play. Having proclaimed our leadership of the "Free World," and having the Bomb, which, although ours, hangs like a Damoclean symbol of disaster over our own heads

as well as over the heads of other nations, we feel isolated out in the center of the field of decision. Langbaum comments:

> The bad results of our sense of inadequacy all stem from fear of America's new position—a fear which is boundless because it is only half conscious. In order to find an adequate counterpart for this fear and an outlet for the crisis mechanism which it sets working in us, we introduce into our political controversy the spirit of crisis, we exaggerate the malevolence and power of our adversaries. We are equally zealous in hunting down our enemies where they do exist and in inventing them where they do not.
>
> What with the Communist leaders having been jailed and the Administration having assured us that all Communists, fellow travelers and remotest acquaintances of fellow travelers were now ousted from government, I spent last summer abroad, secure in the sense that the country was reasonably safe from communism. When I returned to find that the Attorney General was proposing a new system of legislation to "rid the country of subversives," my reaction was a European one: But where are they ever going to find any more subversives?

Now for the other side of the picture. What Mr. Langbaum says about the liberal reaction to McCarthyism is good evidence for the proposition that liberals are competent to judge liberalism, since a liberal is by definition a man who tries to look impartially at the evidence on both sides of any issue. In any event, this writer finds elements of frantic emotionalism in the fight against McCarthy which seem to parallel the witch-hunting anxieties of the right-wingers. Borrowing from memories of an experience at the university where he teaches, Mr. Langbaum tells of the feelings which pervaded the liberal professors when McCarthy was scheduled to speak on the campus:

> Looking back now on that feverish week, I see that the thing we were afraid of was what polite people call a "scene," some subtle infection of atmosphere in the hall, some effluence which McCarthy in the flesh might project, against which our neighbors, if not ourselves, could not stand proof. A young Republican suggested, I remember, that one of our professors might debate with McCarthy; the suggestion was greeted with wry smiles all around. For though we dared not admit it, we were afraid that logic and argument would be so much chaff in the wind before the brutal insistence of his mindless repetitions. Here was another autonomous force—like that of the bomb and the world events leading to explosion of the bomb, like that of the dark, unknown populace out there who were potential McCarthy supporters—unsusceptible to rational control. We were afraid to face McCarthy because we had no confidence that reason would stand up against his sub-rational appeal.
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> That was our mistake, as it has been the mistake of liberals generally in dealing with McCarthy. For if it is dangerous to underestimate the enemy, it is at least as dangerous to overestimate him; since in politics, as elsewhere, "thinking makes it so." To lose the sense of one's power is in fact to lose one's power. To believe the enemy powerful is to make him powerful. If there is one lesson to be learned from the recent collapse of the McCarthy myth, it is that the inventors and sustainers of that myth have not been those who admired McCarthy but those who feared him. His admirers seem to have thought of him not as the invincible medicine man of the mob instincts, but rather as a counter-revolutionary underdog fighting single-handed against the powerful forces of an entrenched radicalism. It is not these people who are likely to have deserted him, now that his reverses have made him more an underdog than ever, confirming their suspicions that the country is being run by left-wingers. The vociferous demonstrations against the Senate motion to censure McCarthy are a sign that the solid pro-McCarthy core will grow more solid than ever, provided the Senator continues to fight.
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> There were, to be sure, the good people who, still misled by McCarthy as late as last spring, were finally disillusioned by the revelations on their television screens. But I cannot believe that at so late a stage in the game their number can have been sizable enough to account for McCarthy's loss of prestige. No, the McCarthy myth collapsed when those people who had feared him were surprised and relieved to find how easily he could be punctured once anyone in authority cared to do it, and how ineffective, how even absurd the old threats and blusterings could look. The McCarthy myth collapsed when liberals came to feel that reason is still in authority in this country.

We now arrive at what seems to us the important part of Mr. Langbaum's article—the

point to which all this discussion and quotation leads. For the writer now proposes that both liberals and conservatives suffer from a common affliction, and this removes even a nominally partisan flavor from what he has to say. He offers what is in effect a kind of psychoanalysis of the "cold war troubles":

> Liberals see clearly enough, of course, how disproportionate to the actual danger is the right-wingers' fear of Communist infiltration. But we have not, I think, been sufficiently aware that we have poured into our own counter attack the same excessive energy, that we have used the McCarthy scare in the same way that the right-wingers have used the Red scare—as a quantity more psychological than political, as a projection of our fears and self-distrust before the vast responsibility of American power.
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> For the McCarthy and Red scares have this in common: In both cases Americans fear a loss of control over their own minds and wills and, consequently, over the forces at their disposal. In both cases, we know that the enemy is no match for us numerically or politically; yet when we express our fear of him, what we are saying essentially is that we fear he may be able to convert us without our wanting or even knowing it, that we fear in him a certain witchcraft power to infiltrate beneath our skins, making us be and do something other than what we want. The fear that we will become Communists or Fascists matches, I think, the more fundamental fear of our own capacity for destruction, the fear that we will one day drop the H-bomb and destroy the world without wanting to.
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> The issue now migrates from the political arena and enters the region of morality and integrity. If we can accept Mr. Langbaum's diagnosis, it is no longer a political issue but a strenuous philosophical question. First, to what extent do we insist upon controlling our "own minds and wills"? Or, how determined are we to be "rational" in our judgments?

This writer in the *American Scholar* argues with the general philosophical assumptions of the American tradition before him, moving from these premises. It goes without saying, he implies, that the principle of thinking for ourselves is highest in the hierarchy of our values, since a democracy in which the people no longer think for themselves is no longer a democracy, but has become a pseudo-democracy. Let us say that he is right—that, ideally, Americans still cherish the right of independent decision as the life-blood of their society. Why, then, should there be this weakening of confidence in the methods of democratic procedure—the fear that if certain individuals or parties gain the ear of enough people, their witchcraft will be stronger than our reason?

The H-bomb itself may be a symbol of that fear, for could there be a more impressive confession of the breakdown of reason? If our hopes for peace, as we are so often told, lie in being strong, instead of in being reasonable, then why should we continue to place our confidence in reason? The obvious reply made to this is that *we* continue to be reasonable, but that others refuse to be reasonable, or will not, at any rate, reason in a manner acceptable to us. This brings about a juxtaposition of arguments with which we have long been familiar—the idea that the cold war is between the reasonable forces on the one hand, and the unreasonable forces on the other. In such a situation, we, despite our reasonableness, must be well armed with the weapons of unreason, and that is why we stockpile A-bombs and H-bombs.

If we can show that our estimate of our own reasonableness is just, then this argument may stand. But if we find in ourselves an unwillingness to examine the claims of other peoples—feel fear, perhaps, of what we may be obliged to think if we study the history of the ideological alignments of the modern world—then we must admit that, instead of self-justification, we have come upon an explanation of our claim that there is "witchcraft" in the persuasiveness of those who oppose us.

A reasonable man cannot fear the reason of his enemies. He can fear only the things with which reason cannot cope. So, then, if he insists that he is reasonable, yet nevertheless fears, he must accuse his enemies of employing dark, malignant powers which render reason defenseless.

And when a man takes a position of this sort, he begins to fear the kind of reason which has the power to explain the actions of his enemy in rational terms. For example, an article in *Harper's* for July tells how the ex-ruler of Guatemala, Jacobo Arbenz, became a communist. The explanation is a sensible one—there were, that is, rational elements in the development of Arbenz' political opinions—even though the reader of the article will not be swayed toward communism in the least by being helped to understand Arbenz' behavior. The point, here, is that we can hardly expect ever to read this sort of analysis of current history in the mass media devoted to maintaining the view that the communists must be purged because they have magical power to corrupt democratic society. A *rational* explanation of how people become communists implies that the communists can be dealt with by rational means. But this is heresy, contradicting the popular view that communists represent the irrational forces of evil. It cannot be tolerated, since it might lead to an understanding of communists as human beings. Accordingly, those who seek to understand communism in rational terms are almost as dangerous as the communists themselves.

The mistake of the liberal, on the other hand, has been his unwillingness to give a serious hearing to the rational case against purely economic theories of social reform and his all too easy assumption that the conservative position need not be understood, since there is nothing to understand except blind adherence to the past. The old-fashioned belief in self-reliance and bearing one's own burdens, even if often pressed into an excuse for a free hand to exploit others by the "rugged individualists," retains the validity it has always had, and there can be little doubt that the Welfare State contains features which may easily sap the vigor and undermine the independence which were once leading characteristics of the American people.

Meanwhile, Mr. Langhaum has some sound advice to offer for the immediate present:

> Conservatives should stop proclaiming that Communist masterminds are making a tool of our government. Liberals should stop proclaiming that they no longer dare speak freely, subscribe to left-wing periodicals, sign petitions, or place their name on lists; their "discretion" may create, without a struggle, the situation they fear. Above all, men of good will, liberals and conservatives alike, must stand firm on the principle that no idea, no intellectual commitment whatever, can be criminal, that only actions against the law can be criminal. One way of giving effect to this principle would be to reaffirm as a rule of intellectual procedure that a man may take any position whatever without having his motives impugned, that we refute arguments with arguments, not with pejorative labels. Another way would be to commit ourselves as openly and indiscreetly as possible, to refuse to preface a statement of opinion with the assurance of that of course we are good Americans. We are good Americans if in our actions we obey the law, and in our beliefs, our conscience. It is only by insisting on that prerogative, and by exercising it as much as possible, that we can keep it alive. . . .
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> It is time to remind each other that nobody, neither Communists nor McCarthyites, can steal our freedom from us as long as we want it. It is time not so much to minimize the danger at home (nobody could do that who has seen the still formidable support McCarthy was able to muster for his Senate fight) as to minimize our capacity to meet it, to make sure we do not forget that reason and good will are still in the saddle in this country.
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> Only with this kind of self-confidence, a self-confidence characteristic of the English-speaking peoples and probably responsible for the success of democracy among them, can we feel sufficiently secure to allot to the suppression of traitorous activity only our police strength, while reserving our moral and intellectual strength for our own self-cultivation. This self-cultivation would have to proceed from a core of identity so secure that we could afford to entertain and, in some cases, absorb foreign and even apparently dangerous ideas. For it is by turning to its own account the ideas opposing it that a culture continues to live and grow.