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BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

LAST year I had the good fortune to be in Europe for ten months. I was able, with some leisure, to reflect upon my own attitudes and opinions about the United States, as well as those of Europeans. Since that was my first trip abroad, I was amazed at the new perspectives that were opened to me toward my own country. I learned while there more about America than I did about Europe. The reasons for this are obvious: In Europe I got, not one but two new perspectives on the United States—that of the Europeans, and my own from outside the situation; for once the trees did not obscure the forest.

Certain basic differences in European and American outlooks were brought home to me with an impact that books and earlier experiences never had. Now I began to know what it meant to say that Europeans have a sense of History; for the most part, we in America don't.

I lived for two months in Bordeaux in France. Bordeaux, the port of the Half Moon, has been a thriving shipping center since Roman times. The people of Bordeaux have lived under the rule of the Romans, then the Barbarians, next they were threatened by the Moorish invasion, later they knew the hand of the English for over a hundred years, and, most recently, they suffered the German Occupation of World War II. Bordeaux has a history.

Some of my friends in Bordeaux were curious about my background and the city from which I came. My natal city is Denver, in Colorado, and it has one superficial parallel with Bordeaux: it too is a provincial city of half a million population. But there the parallel ends. Denver was founded during the lifetime of my grandfather, and even though of such recent origin, there is scarcely a trace of an original building. The oldest structure in the city is barely seventy years old. Today in Denver not two out of every five residents were born there. Roots are not deep. Not one person in a thousand in Denver knows anything about its brief history, and not one in 10,000 cares. Denver has no history. It has a present and a future.

Little wonder that the American-French dialogue emits so much static. The psychology of the people from the two countries, whatever they may share of Western Culture, differs in fundamental ways. When Americans, without a remembrance of the past, make proposals for the present and the future, Europeans often wince, for they remember the past. When, for example, Americans propose German rearmament, when American officials sit in conference with former Nazi generals discussing the procedures of armament, the French—and many other Europeans—think of the past: of 1870, of 1914, of World War II, of the Nazis and of the Occupation, and their inner being says "no" even if their statesmen say "yes." To create a new German army means to restore to power German officers, most of whom commanded Hitler's armies, and whom the French associate, rightly or wrongly, with World War II and Nazi totalitarianism—the past. From a French viewpoint this easy acceptance of the enemy of yesterday as the ally of today seems *historically* inaccurate, for it seems to say, "The French resistance to Hitler was a mistake. Hitler called upon the West to ally with him against Russian bolshevism. The Nazis were right all the time." Yet to question the .French resistance of World War II today in France is to bring into question the wellsprings of French social cohesion and integrity. The French do not want to rewrite this history. They have described and defined World War II, and the Resistance, as having been both right and necessary. The future of a democratic France in good part rests upon this description.

To undermine it would be, in the fullest sense of the word, demoralizing. If the French ever go to war against Russia, they want that war not to be a continuation of Hitler's fascist war against bolshevism but rather to result, if it must, from the failure of honest efforts at cooperation with Russia.

It follows from all this that French national morale goes down, not up, when the Americans make proposals about cooperation with a German army led by some of the same men who only yesterday were France's totalitarian conquerors. Not that the Americans may not be *objectively* correct, but that they sometimes fail to recognize the subjective force of French feelings and experiences, and the French sense of *history.*

What I am suggesting here is not that Americans should not make proposals, or undertake actions, but that any proposals made should take account of intangible psychological factors.

Another underlying difference between European and American outlooks on the nature of the world around us is closely related to this sense of history. It is the sense of tradition and custom. In Europe, despite the tremendous changes and eruptions which have resulted from the great world wars of the twentieth century, from the Great Depression, and the rise of Fascism and Communism, there is much that remains the same. Life holds, for many Europeans, certain fixed relationships and institutions. Europeans tend to have a high resistance to change in certain crucial areas of their social and personal life, as well as their intellectual and spiritual life. It might be said that they first look to the past before venturing into the future; or even that they sometimes consciously hold on to a certain aspect of the past in preference to the future. A friend of mine said rightly, I believe, that he had not met a Christian until he went to Europe. What he meant was "Christian" in the generic sense, the primitive sense: deeply contemplative men with a sense of sin, and of guilt. American Christians are too pragmatic, too optimistic, to be Christians in the same sense. Americans expect to succeed. European Christians do not, necessarily, nor do they always seem perturbed at the idea that they might fail.

There is in much of Europe a prevailing undertone of resignation, an acceptance of the end of an historical epoch, leaving many Europeans with not quite enough reserve to make the supreme effort necessary to adapt adequately to the demands of a new time. This view is my own and may be challenged by others. I would make reservations with regard to Britain, for the British are not yet prepared to yield, and there is there a reserve of underlying optimism not so easily detected on the Continent.

But let's compare and contrast some of these attitudes with those of Americans. It need hardly be said that we are lacking in traditions as compared to other, longer-established societies. But I doubt if many Americans have fully recognized or understood the depth and rapidity of social change in the United States during the past twenty years alone. Have you taken a look recently at one of those sociological studies turned out in the "thirties"? Among them were careful studies of American communities and classes, complete with statistics and prognoses. In a typical Middlewestern small town, class lines were considered solidifying, and, statistically, only a tiny percentage of young people could ever be envisioned as continuing their schooling beyond the high school level. But what of such predictions today? Something has happened in the past twenty years that nobody predicted, and which few, if any, have properly described. Certainly none of the old analyses adequately describe it. Many Americans have said, rightly, in my opinion, that the Marxian analysis fails to account for all of the factors. After all, why should it, when it was originally conceived in the middle of the nineteenth century? But what these many American critics of Marxism haven't admitted seems to me to be equally true: the

Adam Smith-Free Enterprise analysis can't account for the changes, either. It was conceived in the eighteenth century. So it is that another point at which the American-European dialogue breaks down is at the verbal level of economic and cultural analysis. Words like "free enterprise," "capitalists," or "economic determinism," used in either their eighteenth or nineteenth century meanings, tend to obscure and confuse rather than to communicate.

In France I discovered that, in one sense, a majority of Frenchmen are Marxists. By that I do not mean they are Communists, but simply that Marxian analysis and a general nineteenth century Marxian viewpoint is widespread among all classes. In the past Marxism has been a useful tool, and continues to be so for discussion of certain domestic issues. When a Frenchman talks about "class consciousness" he knows what he is talking about. In France there is a class struggle in the clearest sense of that phrase. Today in America when a union man goes on strike, he is likely to spend much of his time painting his house or watching TV until the issues are settled by collective bargaining. In France striking is not so light a matter; in fact, it may be a matter of life or death. When French workers strike there is more at issue ordinarily than wage rates or hours: this may be the time when the capitalists will be overthrown. Or, conversely, it may be the time when they, the workers, will be crushed.

So it was that I discovered, when talking to Frenchmen about economic problems or problems of international relations, that they automatically begin with Marxian assumptions. They—and "they" might include anyone from professors and students to workers or businessmen— they would begin to talk about the "American Capitalist Press" or about how the Korean War was started in order to prevent a depression in America. Along the way it usually became apparent that their "Capitalist" was a stereotyped figure, and that if he bore a resemblance to anybody, it was to some French businessmen and industrialists whose ways of doing business seldom accord with prevailing American methods. But how could I object to this interpretation, since in America the dominant mythology is that of "Free Enterprising" and "making one's way"? If we insist on describing ourselves to ourselves and to the world at large in this mythological vocabulary, we mustn't be disturbed if others become confused about us.

Another aspect of American life which is of unending concern to other people throughout the world is that of American race relations and discrimination against minorities, especially the Negroes. Everywhere I went in Europe I was sure to meet people who, somewhere in our conversation, were going to ask me about discrimination and segregation. Such concern and interested inquiry I welcomed as right and just; I had no defense for discriminatory practices. But slowly I came to realize from these conversations that we in America at present have a tremendous advantage and opportunity in the whole area of prejudice between ethnic groups. It is that we have *real* problems, and that we are working toward their *real* solution.

Let me give you an example of what I mean. In Bordeaux one evening I attended a dinner party in a friend's home. I was the only foreigner; it was an opportunity for me to meet local people and for them to meet an American. Early in the evening the subject of discrimination against Negroes came up. Most of those present had read two or three American books, readily available in French translations, such as Lillian Smith's *Strange Fruit* or Richard Wright's *Black Boy*. We discussed something of backgrounds and development in the American South, and noted in passing the racist undertone implicit in the Anglo-Saxon heritage of the United States. In due course the conversation moved to other fields. Then it happened. Toward the latter part of the evening one of the women present asked me why there were so many Negro soldiers in the American Army units in Bordeaux. I replied that, so far as I knew, there were two

reasons: first, a number of engineering units were stationed there, and Negroes in the American Army still are predominantly in engineering outfits—in conformity with the only-recently-changed policy of segregation in the Army. Second, there are many American Negroes; that, in fact, about one American in ten is a Negro. Hence, it followed that any large contingent of Americans abroad would include a substantial number of Negroes.

Having given an answer, I then asked, "Why do you bring up this question?"

"Well, doesn't your government know that many of them go with our girls?"

"What difference does that make," I replied, "if, as I was told earlier this evening, you bear no feeling of racial prejudice?"

A gasp ran through the room, and there was a moment of painful silence, which was finally broken by one of the men. He spoke softly, as though thinking aloud: "Do you know," he said, "I have never before thought of it, but if there were many Negroes in Bordeaux, we too would probably have a problem of racial discrimination."

What he was recognizing was that problems of ethnic discrimination are real and complex. Underneath the surface of almost all cultures there are irrational substrata which, when circumstances favor them or stir them, emerge and create real dangers in a society. In short, he was recognizing that he and all the company gathered in that room had the capacity within themselves for the kind of behavior they deprecated in others. He realized that racial hatreds and prejudices are not simple matters, but that to overcome them is a real work which begins within oneself and from there moves into the social arena to help create the kind of conditions under which men, whatever their origin, can agree to live together equally and amicably.

It was at this moment that I appreciated the importance of some of the things that have been happening in America. There is no doubt that next to certain areas in Africa, we here have probably the most intense race problems and widest scale of racial discrimination and segregation in the world. But our hope lies in the fact that we also have here the largest and best-trained minority of people—of all races—equipped and in the field to combat racial prejudice. People who have faced the problem in themselves and have largely solved it. People who are helping to emancipate others both at the personal level and by working to create the kind of social conditions that will make that emancipation easier for hard-pressed individuals. I should insert a note of reservation here. I view with concern some of the pressures brought to bear to overcome prejudice. Here I refer to the use of national symbols as the force to batter down prejudices between Americans. This is the psychology of the brotherhood of Americans, but it falls well short of the brotherhood of man. Unfortunately, it suggests merely that Jim Crow is anti-American rather than that Jim Crow is anti-human. But, with that aside, it is not without significance that America has produced in recent years the greatest body of literature on prejudice, the largest trained leadership, and an ever-growing body of people who are sloughing off more and more of the racist myths which have strengthened prejudice in the past.

Lest anyone think I am suggesting we have the race situation well in hand, let me repeat that the major effort still lies ahead. But I am saying that the road is clearly staked out, that we have a good supply of machinery on hand, and a growing reservoir of intelligent leaders from all ranks, so that we can face the task, not with despair, as one might be tempted to face it in South Africa, but with great hope and redoubled enthusiasm.

Nor am I saying that Europeans don't know anything about prejudice and hate. I am only suggesting that their heightened awareness and interest in American race problems is in part a reflection of a rapidly changing aspect of American society, for much of their awareness has

come through a reading of the literature, or a seeing of the drama, which Americans have produced as a part of an internal protest and movement against racist practices.

Whatever the disadvantages of lacking a sense of history, there are advantages. Whatever the shortcomings of being young and immature, there are compensations. Perhaps the changing racial situation in the United States gives evidence of that. Sometimes it helps to be able to forget the past, and to throw off its burdens. If racism is one of our heritages from the past, let's throw it out and not waste a moment in regrets. If being young means being more flexible and better able to adjust, having determined whether that for which adjustment is asked is good, let's be young and optimistic, and naive enough to adjust. Let's *live* in the present and hope for the future, and perhaps we can communicate some of the strength that comes from such youthful buoyancy to others who have maturity but who lack hope. There are many things we can learn from Europe and the rest of the world, but let's put off learning the depths of their despair. When we know that ending racial discrimination is not a patriotic American act but a commitment to justice and equality for all men everywhere, we may have something that others will want to share unequivocally. Today there are aspects of American practices that often attract others, but when these practices are presented as The American Way of Life, let the buyers beware! And they do. One thing that becomes clear about America when seen from a perspective abroad is that, in this period of heightened nationalism everywhere, the American brand often shows up badly because it is so self-conscious and unsure of itself. In France there could be no such thing as an un-French Activities Committee, since Frenchmen are capable, as all the world knows, of anything. And nobody knows this better than a Frenchman. In Britain there is no such thing as an un-British Activities Committee because, as one Britisher pointed out, to have one would be un-British!

Europeans, then, take their nationality for granted; it is a part of them. A man may be a scoundrel—even a traitor —but he is still within the fold. But being an American is more difficult. One has to work at it. And there are no sure guides. Besides, everybody is different, so we tend all to work very hard at being alike. We dress alike, eat alike, try to think alike. Still it doesn't quite come off. So committees are set up, or set themselves up, to impose standards. The result is not a meeting of minds, but an effort at enforced conformity.

As disturbing as some of the resulting shenanigans may be—and as dangerous to our liberties—it is possible to interpret them, in part, as being clumsy errors which some men are prone to make when engaged willy-nilly in a group effort that is one of the most daring human enterprises recorded: the effort to build a democratic society of equality and liberty for all men, whatever their origin. If we can carry that venture nearer to effective realization, the result will not be an American achievement, it will be a human achievement which will benefit the whole world, having been accomplished by men from every part of the world. This can rightfully be considered the hope that the New World has symbolized to the Old. When Americans have learned to live peacefully among themselves and in the world at large, it will be in part because they will have understood what André Gide meant when he wrote: "Where the whole chorus sings in unison, there can be no harmony."

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Letter from
ENGLAND

LONDON.—A murder, committed in circumstances reminiscent of the films, by a man-sized boy of sixteen, has caused a furor throughout the country on the prevalence of crimes of violence and the prevalence of juvenile crime in general. Lord Goddard, who tried young Craig for shooting dead a policeman when challenged on the roof of a warehouse, now leads a crusade for the reintroduction of flogging for crimes of violence, and good whippings (if whippings may ever so be regarded) for juvenile misconduct. Youths who appear before Lord Goddard are told in most emphatic terms that they are "bad," "young blackguards," deserving of condign corporal punishment, and so on. The popular press, whose intellectual level is low, but whose instinct for touching off the emotional susceptibilities of the public may not be doubted, has, in the main, backed up the Lord Chief Justice with demands for the return of the old, harsh punishments of other days. Flogging, it is argued, is the sole possible deterrent: therefore flogging for crimes of violence should be once more introduced.

The legal profession in England is, and always has been, notably reactionary, unimaginative and sometimes curiously brutal in its attitude towards the transgressor. In 1810 Lord Ellenborough, L.C.J., in opposing a Bill for the abolition of capital punishment for upwards of 200 capital offences—including personating a Greenwich pensioner and associating with gypsies—used these words: "Your lordships will pause before you assent to a measure pregnant with danger to the security of property. The learned judges are unanimously agreed that the expediency of justice and the public security require that there should be no remission of capital punishment. . . ." Lord Goddard speaks today in much the same temper, and he has the support of the majority of the judges, though happily not that of the Lord Chancellor or Home Secretary.

The danger which has been created by Lord Goddard, and which may yet put back the clock of scientific penology a hundred years, is already reflected in a mounting public opinion in support. A Gallup Poll yields a two thirds majority in favour of flogging. And since judicial opinion has, in this country, tremendous prestige, the danger exists that at some moment a government will yield.

In the small space available for this letter it would be absurd to attempt to examine the causative factors of the present prevalence of juvenile crime. But one broad historical truth about crime and punishment may be stressed. It is this: that as punishment has tended to become humanized, crimes of violence have declined. Secondly, that as punishment *has become progressively more certain,* crime has declined. *Certainty of punishment, then, and not the most barbarous forms of it, is the key to the remedy.*

Two further points. Children require for their physical and spiritual nutrition three cardinal conditions: love, the satisfaction of their emotional or spiritual needs, and a decent physical environment. Two wars deprived two generations of children of these conditions and thus produced a fertile soil for the growth of lawlessness. This has been furthered by certain extraneous agencies, among which one must indict the gangster film and gangster "comics."

Last, it is a curious circumstance that the statistics of juvenile crime now being publicized by the Bench and in the press are, so far as your correspondent is aware, nowhere related to the over-all picture of the country's crime statistics. When that is done one finds that the increase of juvenile crime, frequently in the category of violent crime, follows a trend common to offences of all kinds. The hard and unpleasant truth happens to be that all categories of crime have increased steadily since the First World War, and very notably during the last decade. In quite a remarkable way the graph for crimes of violence,

sexual offences, fraud, and larceny describe a harmonious upward curve.

What is happening, then, is not best described as an outbreak of lawlessness on the part of youth, but as one single aspect of a general decline in law-abiding habits.

For what it is worth, your correspondent suggests that, among other probable factors, are two great wars, the break-up of home life, due to war or the continuing house shortage, the short supply of a wide range of commodities, the absence of any living spiritual force, such as dynamic religion, and a growing tendency to abandon principles for expediency—this last reflected in a general decline in commercial integrity. If legislation should, as the result of the crusade of the Lord Chief Justice, bring back the barbarities of the early nineteenth century, we shall certainly be no nearer a remedy, and without much reason to be proud either of our intelligence or equity as social beings.

ENGLISH CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW
THE AMBIGUITY OF LEISURE

IT is a little astonishing to note how much of contemporary writing on psychological subjects incorporates some mention of Erich Fromm; and, similarly, among sociologists, it is quite apparent that David Riesman has earned a like eminence. (Interestingly enough, in reading such men, there seems to be less need for distinguishing between the psychological and the sociological fields.)

As readers of *The Lonely Crowd* know, Riesman has long been interested in "leisure attitudes" and "leisure behavior." Now an article by him in the latest *Antioch Review* adds some interesting notes and comments to his major research work. He begins by saying:

> Many people are uncomfortable when discussing leisure: as with sex, they want to make a joke of it. And there is no doubt that most of us feel vulnerable in a milieu that increasingly asks us whether we are good players as well as good workers—a problem St. Augustine's serious-minded, self-deceiving elders do not appear to have faced. For us, at any rate, there is nothing easy about effortlessness. I want here to trace some of the sources of vulnerability.

Riesman tells how he once interrupted himself in the middle of a lecture to a group of University of Chicago students to question the effect of his remarks on his listeners. He had been attempting to persuade these conscientious traditional-culturists that the leisure time they spent at the movies could be made more interesting by attempts to understand and appreciate popular culture media. Believing that American motion pictures can often be seriously discussed with benefit, and that "such supposedly passive pursuits as movie-going can obviously be the most intense experience, the most participative," Riesman was urging these ideas on his listeners, when, suddenly, he realized that he "might be imposing upon a group of students already zealously engaged in self-improvement still another requirement—and this in the very act of seeking to liberate them from a common prejudice against American movies." "I could continue my lecture," he explains, "only after I had made some of these misgivings explicit, and had indicated that I came to offer some of them an opportunity, not another extra-curricular curriculum. Since so much of their leisure was already highly self-conscious, I hesitated to add to the burden. All planning for other people's leisure has to face this fundamental ambiguity, a form of the ever-present problem of the unintended consequence."

But this is only one aspect of the "ambiguity" of attitudes toward leisure. Riesman's *Lonely Crowd* takes note of the increasing number of people who are less individualistic, more sympathetic to the "ever-shifting judgments of significant people within one's purview at any given moment"—the "other-directeds." The characteristics of this group, Riesman says, are noticeable at work, at play, *and* at school. "The students I was talking to," Riesman writes, "being in the main other-directed, were ready to shift their leisure behavior at a moment's notice; they had learned to do so in playing the popularity game which starts in kindergarten or shortly thereafter. I could envisage a group of them going to a Sam Goldwyn movie and, coming out, being very self-conscious as to how they ought to respond to it, whereas earlier they would have gone to it with the excuse that they needed to relax a bit before hitting the books again."

But now to the second and by far most intriguing part of the problem. Neither play nor leisure, Riesman feels, can be fully satisfactory unless it affords some kind of challenge. We must go back, he says, to what play really means—what it means to the child, who knows the most about play. When we do so we are compelled to recognize that "work and play are not yet, for the child, independently organized; and what he makes of play as he develops depends to a very considerable extent on the society's interpretation of his play"—is it regarded as child's play, as useless, as preparation for life, or is it simply disregarded? Riesman answers:

> I think we can say, indeed, that the child's play serves as the principal model for all later efforts to free leisure time from its burdens and to cope with its puzzling ambiguities. We all of us know, if we think about it, that children's play is by no means always

> free and spontaneous; it is often filled with terror and morbidity; but at its best it is surely one of the unequivocally good things of this earth, and no wonder we try to recapture it as Paradise Lost. But if we look closely at children's play we can observe something else which may even give us a clue as to how that recapture can, in part, be achieved, namely that the child's greatest satisfaction appears to rise from experiences of mastery and control. As Erik H. Erikson has noted in imaginative detail, the developing body itself provides a graded set of experiences, anyone can observe this who watches children play with their new-found mastery of walking or running or talking or diving. Play seems to reside in a margin, often a narrow one, between tasks which are too demanding, and those which are not demanding enough to require the excited concentration of good play. A child or adult who is simply going through the motions is not engaged in play or leisure as we have been talking about it here, however the society may define it. But without some social forms for leisure and play, forms which have to be broken through, I do not think we will have much play either. For the demand that play be constantly spontaneous, unchanneled by social forms, is too overwhelming; spontaneity, as we have already seen, is lost if we strive too hard for it. Thus, play would seem to consist in part of giving ourselves tasks, useless in any immediate sense, which challenge us but do not overwhelm us—tasks which allow us to practice our skills on the universe when not too much is at stake. Some of us, who lose this ability in our waking lives retain it (Erich Fromm points out in *The Forgotten Language)* in our dreams, which can be astonishingly witty, brilliant, and artistic—an indication, perhaps, of the child still buried within us, not so much in Freud's sense of the vicious child but rather of the child natively gifted with the capacity for imaginative play.

This seems to us an interesting way of suggesting that the evaluation and philosophizing capacities of the individual need to be liberated from cultural, religious, and social confines in order to allow uninhibited spontaneity to our supposedly "happy" moments. Riesman did not fear that the group of Chicago students he addressed would become too contemplative, but rather that they should regard "contemplation" as a kind of recommended procedure, like so many vitamin C pellets per day.

All this can be summarized, it is true, by the old moralism that no one is happy in either work or play unless he gives "the whole of himself" or "the best of himself" to what he does, but it seems that further specific analysis is imperative if we are now to give more "wholeness" to our activities. Riesman notes "that many of our workaday tasks as adults can be handled with a certain quality of leisure if we are able to regard work as a series of challenging tasks to be mastered, where the net of expectations surrounding us is at the same time not too frightening." But then there is this further paradox:

> On the other hand, we can be playful at work as a way of *evading* demands, sometimes by being one of the boys, pretending to ourselves and others that, if we really worked, we would get to the top. Students often play such games with themselves. But this is not really carrying out in adult life the effort at competence which is our lesson learned from the play of the child. That requires that we work at the top of our bent, while at the same time enjoying the very processes of accomplishment—enjoying our awareness, for example, of all that is going on in a classroom; enjoying our understanding of a technical problem; enjoying ourselves, in other words, as functioning and effective human beings.
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> We get here, it is apparent, into very deep waters indeed, where the boundaries between work and play become shadowy—as I think, for other reasons, they are tending to become in our society anyway—waters where we are looking for a quality we can only vaguely describe: it is various and rhythmical; it breaks through social forms and as constantly recreates them; it manifests itself in tension, yet not too much of it; it is at once meaningful, in the sense of giving us intrinsic satisfaction, and meaningless, in the sense of having no pressing utilitarian purpose. It is some such model as this, I suggest, which haunts us when we consider leisure and judge its quality in ourselves and others. It is a model which has been elaborated in our culture, and yet which transcends culture.

Let us have more of Riesman. We probably shall, for he seems prolific as well as ingenious and far-reaching in his observations.

COMMENTARY
MORALITY IN TRANSITION

ALMOST any expression of impersonal optimism, these days, requires a daring imagination. To be able to discover in the present scene in the United States evidence of deeply constructive enterprise—as does, for example, Roy Kepler in this week's lead article—indicates an approach to human striving which sees in bewildered gropings after an ideal a more profound promise for the future than the certainties of yesterday's moral systems can afford.

The thesis that we should like to defend, in connection with Mr. Kepler's optimism, is that Western man is now undergoing a transition in moral philosophy—that his sense of good and evil, of right and wrong, is becoming increasingly psychological. This change in the base of moral reflection is thoughtfully described by Gordon Chalmers in *The Republic and the Person:*

> What we said in the Broadway plays of World War II and the films that followed them, what we said in the editorials and from the pulpits, was that the evils of dictatorship are everywhere implicit in men's thoughts; that they have blazed forth time and again to consume the urbane and the civilized; that because of them fascism and nazism were putting out the lights in the capitals of Europe. No mammoth searching of the soul is performed to perfection, but this confession and self-review was well supported in this country. We need not boast of it, except to remark that it was better expressed and better received than might have been thought possible.

The most obvious surface effect of a change of this sort appears as indecision and weakness, as was noted years ago by Raoul de Roussy de Sales (in the *Atlantic Monthly* for January, 1942):

> What may turn out to be the most important and characteristic trait of the times we live in is the existence of a universal and deeply rooted opposition to war. This sentiment is so general and so new in some of its manifestations that it will take the perspective of history to analyze it fully and to appraise correctly its influence on the state of mind and on the behavior of the millions of men and women who are involved directly or indirectly in this war.

De Sales saw in this development a tangible threat to the survival of Western society, and we hardly need to be reminded that the Hitlers and Stalins of our time have been quick to charge the democracies with "decadence" on much the same grounds. Conceivably, however, the day will come when this very "weakness" and "indecision" will be recognized as negative by-products of the birth-pains of a new age of inward morality. The thing is not impossible.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

THE pros and cons of the influence of group opinion (discussed here last week) provides an introduction for some passages from Farley Mowat's *People of the Deer*. Our last week's correspondent spoke in favor of breaking up large school groups as a means of arresting the development of "crowd" emotions and opinions. Mowat's recital, on the other hand, indicates some other possibilities.

The Ihalmiut, primitive Eskimo citizens of the northern barrens, are, in reality, unlike ourselves in a number of ways. For one thing, their basic communal problems have never seemed even temporarily unsolvable, despite the inevitable collection of petty failings and weaknesses they admit to having as persons. Mowat does not neglect the latter, lest, perhaps, he sound too ecstatic in praise, yet as he continues we see how closely the Ihalmiut have approximated what Westerners often regard as utopian dreams:

> The Ihalmiut are only men, after all, and not infallible. Therefore, there are deviations from law, and there are crimes in the land; for no race of men can be free of these things. But there are also certain forces which the People control and which in turn direct the actions of men, and these forces keep the law-breaking within narrow bounds. To understand these forces is to realize why the Ihalmiut have no need of our laws to maintain the security of their way of life.
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> There is absolutely no internal organization to hold authority over the People. No one man, or body of men, holds power in any other sense than the magical. There is no council of elders, no policeman. There are no assemblies of government and, in the strictest sense, the Ihalmiut may be said to live in an anarchistic state, for they do not even have an inflexible code of laws.
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> Yet the People exist in amity together, and the secret of this is the secret of co-operative endeavor, limited only by the powers of human will and endurance. It is not blind obedience or obedience dictated by fear. Rather it is intelligent obedience to a simple code that makes sense to those who must live by its rules.
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> Now and again a man may willfully step over the borders of the unwritten law. Perhaps he may refuse to share his deer kill with a less fortunate neighbor. Let us look at the result.
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> Does the starving man revenge himself by killing the one who refused him, and then take what he needs from the man he has killed? Not at all. He goes elsewhere for help, and never by word or deed does he show any overt resentment or anger toward the man who turned a deaf ear to his plea.
>
> However, methods of punishment do exist. Should a man continuously disregard the Law of Life, then little by little he finds himself isolated and shut off from the community. There can be no more powerful punishment in the lonely wastes of the Barrens, and in fact it is a punishment which can easily be fatal in a world where man must work closely with man in order to live. A small dose of ostracism usually brings the culprit to an acute awareness of his defects and he ceases to transgress the law. Thus while there is no overt act of justice or of social revenge, nevertheless the object is achieved and the wrong-doer almost invariably returns into the community once again, with no permanent stigma attached to his name. The law does not call for an eye for an eye. If possible the breaker of law is brought back to become an asset to the camps. His defection is tacitly forgotten, and to all intents and purposes it never happened at all.

If there are readers who become a little impatient with our enthusiasm for certain of the ways of primitive societies, we sympathize. Obviously, *we* cannot live as simply as the Ihalmiut, for we are not as simple as they. Our justification for praising the Ihalmiuts and others rests simply on this ground: If any utopian practices exist among the members of any civilization, whatever their degree of cultural or intellectual attainment, does this not indicate that such accomplishments are theoretically within our own reach? What we "can't" do, then, may simply be what we profess to be presently too difficult for us to do.

Consider the matter of "group opinion." Public or group opinion has often become the enemy of free inquiry and of creative thought in

Western culture, but this seems to be because the greater complications of our lives and our intensely competitive egocentric drives make it much more difficult to think in community terms. If we are ever able to do as well with our potential capacities as the Hopis and the Ihalmiut have done with theirs, we may discover that the best and highest society can be much more anarchical than we would believe possible, even in the midst of an industrial economy, and that public opinion can be conservative without becoming reactionary.

As a distinguished philosopher recently remarked, there is no logical reason for equating our idea of justice, or our hopes for better regulation of human behavior, with the idea of punishment. If what we are really concerned about is improved relationships between men, retribution for an "evil" committed is entirely wide of the mark. The *moral* necessity is only that man gain broader and better horizons which, once achieved, will afford a sympathy and compassion which naturally reject injurious motivations and deeds. Society, at least, only benefits when something like this has taken place within the heart and mind of the offending citizen, there being no value in punishment *per se*.

We have come a long distance from the school-yard play-groups whose tendency to "mobism" occasioned our correspondent's remarks last week. But are not some of the same factors involved? That "mobism" which is dangerous is stimulated not alone by numbers, but by the highly competitive, essentially selfish impulses and feelings of children who derive sustenance for these emotions from the homes and society in which they live. Jeering and tormenting are but two of the tendencies which commonly result from self-centered individualism, yet they are such potent and fearsome levers that it is small wonder many young children would rather do anything than deviate from group patterns of behavior. Enlightened group opinion, on the other hand, or the instinctively constructive group opinion such as seems to prevail among the Ihalmiuts and the Hopis, is not concerned with *forcing* anyone into conformity but only in re-educating those whose actions are destructive to the community as a whole.

Unless there is a psychic and moral change of emphasis provided by enlightened teachers, the youngsters of our age will, in crowds, inevitably be affected by the deleterious emotions of "mob" reactions. For this reason we feel that our correspondent's proposal for smaller play groups is well conceived and entirely practical.

FRONTIERS

Rational Progress

WITH his usual perspicacity (in his introduction to Lange's *History of Materialism)* Bertrand Russell long ago pointed out that "as ancient orthodoxies disintegrate, materialism more and more gives way to scepticism." This explanation of aggressive materialism has interesting confirmation in a controversy which recently appeared in the correspondence columns of the English monthly, *Literary Guide and Rationalist Review,* a publication which probably reflects as well or better than any other journal the gradual decline of what Russell terms "the materialistic dogma"—which was not, as he notes, "set up by men who loved dogma, but by men who felt that nothing less definite would enable them to fight the dogmas they disliked."

No regular reader of the *Literary Guide* can fail to have noticed the persistent tendency among at least a minority of the contributors to this journal to adopt a philosophically idealistic, or even a metaphysical, approach to the problems of life. Agreeably to Russell's thesis, this trend seems to be a result of the general victory of scientific thinking over religious bigotry, during the past century or so. The materialism of the scientists was not a "whole" philosophy, but quite plainly a weapon of controversy developed to refute the anti-scientific claims of orthodox religionists. Today, with the general rejection of a literal interpretation of the Bible and the acceptance of the scientific explanation of things by all except die-hard Fundamentalists in religion, many men of scientific orientation now feel able to pursue metaphysical speculations without feeling that they may betray the cause of Science by admitting an interest in "unseen reality."

While these engagements with metaphysics are cautiously undertaken, they are unmistakably serious. In the *Literary Guide* for last November, for example, a Mr. J. A. Graham protests against the contention of a regular *LG* contributor that immortality is not only an illusory hope for man, but "undesirable" as well. Mr. Graham finds this latter claim "astounding," and writes:

> . . . I am prepared to grant that, if one is a world-famous scientist or author and has on the whole made a pretty good thing of life, an attitude of indifference in regard to immortality may have a certain plausibility. . . . But suppose that one is not one of those fortunate individuals who (in Landor's words): having warmed both hands before the fire of life, when it sinks are ready to depart. Suppose we consider the case of the twenty-four cadets who lost their lives in the bus accident at Chatham. How, from their point of view, is one going to find satisfaction in a view of the universe according to which a man lives only once?
>
> The fact is that the majority of people desire a future life. How many of us, other than those of a defeatist mentality, if given the option would elect for final extinction at death in preference to living again? That would be an acid test.
>
> It may be (although I do not personally think so) that for Rationalists, pledged to a stern facing of reality, intellectual honesty compels rejection of belief in immortality as an illusion. If so, then I suggest that we had better be content to leave it at that and not pretend that such a view of things can be other than profoundly unsatisfying.

It is a great advance, we think, that someone calling himself a rationalist can entertain these views and find space in a rationalist journal to express them. It seems extremely doubtful that this could have happened, say, twenty-five years ago. The "advance," of course, is in the impartiality of mind displayed in considering such questions, and not in an inclination toward a particular belief. This, as we understand it, is or ought to be the essence of the rationalist position.

Subsequent issues of the *Literary Guide,* however, leave no doubt of the fact that Mr. Graham is one of a small minority of rationalists. Letters in the January number show that the preponderance of rationalist conviction is still in vigorous opposition to the idea of immortality. One objector, after stating the presumed scientific evidence against immortality, goes on to argue against it in specific terms:

> But how can a "second chance" come about when we know that the body perishes at death, and our individuality—our personality—is predetermined by the factors of heredity, circumstance, and environment? Surely this fact rules out the possibility of any return of the individual to this life. Memory functions through the physical brain: of what value would be a second chance without any recollection of our first attempt?

This critic of Mr. Graham disposes of the idea of reincarnation by suggesting that since "we could not return as our familiar selves, but, bearing in mind the heredity factor, we might become an adulterated composite resulting in, say, an embryo British thug, a half-caste bandit, or even worse (genius being rare) . . ."

Communications of this sort make one wish that the defenders of "old--line" rationalism were a little less eager to preserve the nineteenth-century skeptical *status quo,* and a little more familiar with the actual literature of scientific inquiry. For instance, a fair appraisal of the heredity-versus-environment controversy should make it clear that the evidence for both sides is confusing and contradictory. An unprejudiced student might easily welcome the idea of a third factor at work in the shaping of character—the factor of an immortal soul, a being with the personal history, which now subverts the environment hypothesis, and now the heredity theory. At any rate, it seems a bit silly to ignore the difficulties in these doctrines while urging them as arguments against immortality. As for the "composite" result of immortality feared by this writer, these effects seem to be obtained regardless of metaphysical hypothesis, so that they are hardly an argument for or against anything.