

SALVATION REDEFINED

SOLOMON was probably right when he insisted that there is nothing new under the sun, yet, at the same time, there is no denying the feeling that Solomon's claim seems to sell out the sense of discovery felt from time to time by all human beings. Perhaps, from some timeless viewpoint, nothing *is* new, under our or any other sun, but when you live in time, something seems to be new practically every day, requiring us to take its measure and fit it in with other elements of experience.

It is logical, of course, to argue that Solomon, being a wise man, was not concerned with the mere "incidents" of life, but with truth, and that what he really meant was that there are no new "truths." This sounds reasonable, since the more fundamental the form in which we are able to state what truths we know, the less subject to time they appear. A basic scientific law, for example, is unaffected by the passage of centuries. It did not begin with its human formulation, despite the sense of novelty produced when men first began to use it to reinterpret natural phenomena.

In the field of morals, the same general timelessness of truth should be even more acceptable. Men use the expression, "The Eternal Verities," to represent ideas which lie at the foundation of all ethics. Sometimes, however, an Eternal Truth has a difficult time in penetrating some very non-eternal phase of human experience. To keep on being eternal, a truth must continue to exist on earth as well as in heaven, and this means, so far as we can see, that a continual reinterpretation or re-embodiment of that truth is necessary. Whenever men stop pressing the truths they have into the service of new forms of analysis, their understanding of truth becomes merely "conservative," and this leads, in short order, to partisan "truths," and ultimately to

corrupt systems with only a faint resemblance to what the ideas behind them were originally intended to mean. The inevitable result of this development is the practical rejection of the *idea* of truth, and the substitution of other objectives in human life.

There are various cultural stages in the development of the contempt-for-truth state of mind. The first stage, judging from past experience, is hypocrisy. People pretend to respect yesterday's version of the eternal verities while acting in ways which are the negation of any sort of truth. Then comes an angry but principled rejection of traditional truths, which is a natural enough reaction to widespread hypocrisy. The great movement set in motion by Karl Marx and some others is typical of this phase of the breakdown of allegiance to traditional morality. Finally, a vast confusion ensues, as a result of the mingling of practically every degree of acceptance or rejection of traditional ideas of truth, to which are added all the notes in the scale of hypocrisy.

Then, within all this welter of claims and counter-claims, lonely voices are sometimes heard above the tumult, declaring what has happened and calling men to reflect upon its significance. This, we think, is the moment when ancient truths begin to have some hope of gaining a new cultural embodiment. Men working in various fields find themselves experiencing a sense of moral discovery, each expressing what he has to say in his own idiom. But since they are all reaching toward what may be called an eternal meaning, their words, if not identical, often combine in noticeable harmony. In our time, Gandhi has spoken to Asia and to the world with this effect. From Africa we have heard the voice of Albert Schweitzer. In Italy men like Ignazio Silone and Carlo Levi have begun a current of thought that is worthy successor to the best in European culture.

And, closer to home, Dwight Macdonald's *Root Is Man*, it seems to us, has turned the idiom of politics into an instrument for self-discovery, even though he makes no pretensions to lofty moral stature.

Of all these, Gandhi probably used the most universal language, and gained the greatest recognition. An interesting thing about Gandhi's movement has been the semi-sincere respect it won throughout the world. The idea of absolute rejection of war touches a chord of appreciation in all but the hardest of hearts. Underneath the layers of suspicion, compromise, and cynical feelings about "idealism," there lies in all men a core of hope that some day the world will learn to live at peace. Men honor that hope when it manifests more strongly in other men, in much the same way that they honor the memory of Christ, since they are unable to abandon these profound longings of the heart. On the other hand, the respect which the Gandhi movement gained was largely emotional, often seeming to be little more than some kind of genuflection to an ideal regarded as impossible of attainment. And meanwhile, an inner recognition of this moral ambivalence adds to the total repugnance of the situation.

Writing shortly after Italy made peace with the allies, Ignazio Silone expressed his disgust for the way in which the Italians were wasting the opportunities afforded them by their liberation from Fascism. His comments, which start out at the political level, soon extend into a review of the general moral condition of man. He offers what amounts to an assessment of the present in terms which should be illuminating to all those who attempt to evaluate the contemporary scene.

Our present job [he wrote] is to learn how to recognize the symptoms and forms of the decadence, and to take energetic measures against its spread.

Nobody expects a democracy to develop without competition among parties, ideas and interests, or safe from the dangers implicit in all competitions. But no struggle will yield the healthy fruit of liberty so long as each participant—or the majority—

conceals his private objectives and means, and reverses the order of gravity of the questions to be solved, by putting fictitious, misleading or secondary goals before concrete and urgent human needs. Unfortunately, it is more difficult every day for even the expert observer of the Italian scene to decide which of the competitors is not playing with false cards. Democrats masquerade as socialists, reactionaries as liberals, clericals as free-thinkers, reformists as communists, foreign agencies as ultra-patriotic parties. The more sincere and modest politicians justify these falsifications in the high name of tactics. Indeed, in most of the parties, today, tactics has supplanted thinking and planning. "Tactics" is the first word that sucklings learn to lisp in party foundling-homes.

It should be realized, perhaps, that Silone was himself a veteran in political action when he wrote these words. Something of his thinking is revealed in *Bread and Wine*, the story of an Italian revolutionary and his efforts to move the common folk of his country to throw off the Fascist tyranny. In what follows, here, we have what may be an explanation of Silone's recent withdrawal from politics—an explanation which is repeated in the sequel to *Bread and Wine*, his shorter *Seed Beneath the Snow*. He continues:

In estimating the seriousness of this decadence we must note that it is not confined to Italy, but affects all countries. It is not limited to the sphere of politics, but is universal and all-embracing. A widespread and deep-seated phenomenon of degeneration, it was first defined by Nietzsche, who called it nihilism.

Nihilism is the most conspicuous trait of contemporary life. Nihilism is sacrificing oneself for a cause one does not believe in, while pretending to believe in it. Nihilism is the conviction that there is really nothing behind any faith or doctrine, and that therefore success alone matters. Nihilism is the identification of the good, the just and the true with one's personal interests. But where there is no shared spiritual order, the foundations of social living are absent; the life of society then becomes a question of force, politics a savage contest. Without doubt, fascism has been the most radical and fullest manifestation of nihilism in our times. The public life to which it has given rise displays heroic sentiments that have no root in conscience—a pompous and noisy expression of sham feelings. But

fascism was not dropped upon us from heaven. It was a product rather than the cause of the old Italian nihilism. . . .

Feverish action without faith, rebellion without a cause, suspicion, hate, and betrayal without any large, engrossing passion to lend it even the similitude of dignity—these are the marks of the nihilist degeneration. Few have seen so clearly as Silone its character and effects:

Nihilism is not an ideology. It is not an aberration affecting only a few groups and classes. I cannot name a single contemporary movement or institution that is entirely immune from it.

The following confession comes from the writings of a Catholic priest: "We have reduced the virtues to a single one: Prudence; and the tactics of militant Christians (even they have their tactics!) to the avoidance of persecution." Utilitarian religiosity is nihilistic. Those who urge a return of man to God because this would contribute to the maintenance of public order, those who say "We need God," as a general might say "We need armored trucks," are preachers of nihilism. And many of those who claim a moral authority superior to all partisan divisions are in practice nihilistic authorities. We have heard vehement protest and anathema flung down from the most authoritative pulpits of the Church whenever the interests of the clergy have been offended. But we have never heard any condemnation of the violence and tyranny used in Catholic States by Catholic authorities against their own non-Catholic opponents.

And how differently have we ourselves behaved? The truth is that we are not immune from the same sickness. Socialism that becomes an end in itself and ceases to act as the instrument for a radical humanization of our environment, has not escaped contamination by nihilism. Such socialism is in danger of degenerating into a horrible technocracy.

And liberty itself may be nihilistic. Liberty not at the service of life is transformed into slavery; it operates in the void and culminates in madness, suicide and crime, as happens with Dostoevsky's nihilistic heroes.

This is brilliant criticism; more than brilliant, it is powerful since it has support from Silone's revival of certain simple truths that are worthy to stand with the eternal verities. This becomes evident in the concluding paragraphs of the article

on Nihilism by Silone, which we have been quoting (translated from the Italian and printed by Dwight Macdonald in *Politics* for May, 1945):

It is clear that salvation, the rediscovery of the sacred value of life, the recognition of a common scale of values intimately and sincerely acknowledged by everyone, the founding of a common civilization, of a common solidarity, of an evident and undeniable brotherhood—such salvation cannot, will never be the outcome of a theory or a technique, or of legislative or pedagogic expedients. These things are the tokens of great and true revolutions. These things advance by bitter, dark and painful paths, as has always been the case, and they end in a reconstruction *ex novo* of human relationships in accordance with a reconquered sense of earthly life.

What, exactly, does Silone mean? This is almost an unfair question, for Silone speaks to the heart and the imagination as much as to the analytical, critical intellect. Yet he has an answer—the sort of answer he provides in *Seed Beneath the Snow*. He says:

It is not a mere act of faith when I insist that the nihilist gangrene has not corrupted the entire social body. Let me tell you a story. An old peasant woman from the province Piacenza was arrested by the Gestapo for having sheltered an escaped Croat prisoner. The cross-examination of this woman showed dearly that she had not known the nationality of the prisoner, had not known what or where Croatia was and did not know why or with whom Croatia was at war. But she had known that she ran considerable risk in helping that hungry, shabby man. "Then why did you do it?" the judge asked her. To which the old woman replied, "Isn't he, too, a mother's son?"

In the midst of war this episode may seem absurd. But such is the absurdity of wheat fields lying between enemy trenches.

It may make us sad that Silone, like Tolstoy, is obliged to turn to the simple peasantry for examples of that reverence for primary truth which the sophisticated world has either lost sight of or fears to admit openly. How far down must we be dragged by the revolution of nihilism before we no longer think the old woman's reply "absurd," and the neutral wheat fields irrelevant to our problem? It is a question, perhaps, of whether

we shall be *reduced* to the recognition of truth, or make some attempt to meet it half way.

Another question occurs. The comparison of the present with the period of break-up of the Roman Empire is a familiar one, but Rome was not the center of a technological civilization. Of course, atomic and thermo-nuclear weapons may abolish this difference, but, on the whole, it is difficult to imagine the replacement of our industrial society by a collection of isolated agricultural communities such as prevailed during the Middle Ages. And the propensity for system-building is too characteristic of modern industrialism to be erased without the destruction of industrialism itself.

The attitude of the simple peasant, in other words, may in principle illustrate our need, but this attitude requires development with reference to more complex situations.

We shall have need of the service of our systems, both technical and legislative, and ought to be able to make them serve us well, so long as we avoid the delusion that our salvation lies in the "correct" system. So, at the outset of looking forward to a revival of the Eternal Verities—the verities repeated by Gandhi, by Silone and some others—we have also to anticipate the habit of the ideologists and the system-builders to capture the new-old truths and embed them in a system of "controls" for "the greatest good of the greatest number." The persistent sin of the system-builders is in the sacrifice of an immediate "truth" for the sake of some distant realization of a "larger" truth which is defined by the system as the Highest Good. The systems, in other words, must always be held suspect as the potential enemies of the truths which should be closest to our hearts. It is the "truth" of some system—in this case the war system—which insists upon trying an old woman for the crime of helping another woman's son. Press what the old woman did to its logical conclusion, and it becomes the foundation of a subversive movement which would sweep all modern States into the discard.

Could there be a "system" which would never frown upon such behavior? Perhaps; but it would be difficult to describe such a system in familiar terms. Questions of this sort may have to be faced seriously before we can even envision an order of society in which the Eternal Verities would be able to take root and grow.

Letter from **GERMANY**

FRANKFURT.—Near this city rise the Taunus mountains, making a pleasant skyline which is visible for about ten miles. Right at the foot of the mountains lies Oberursel—a town with a long history and beautiful old buildings (Oberursel gained municipal rights in 1440). The history of a large residence in Oberursel for the past fifty years is of interest as illustrating the social and political changes in Germany during this period.

The castle-like building was constructed at the turn of the century. Its owner, a certain Gans, was the inventor of an important serum for animals, and he received as reward the patent of nobility from late German Emperor William II. Only five persons lived in the huge house with its seventy rooms. In 1928 Gans was no longer able to pay the high taxes and he passed building and surrounding park to a group of banks. The house remained empty until the Nazis took over and made it a training school for their Fascist Labor Corporation. The infamous Robert Ley had his own room in the school. During the war it became a military hospital until the final defeat. After the war the Allies used it successively as a GI country club, a British mess, and as a resort for American Youth Activities with camping grounds.

Now the picture changes again and German Trade Unions (DOB) have acquired the building and park to make it into a school for young Trade Union officials. The title of right comes from the fact that the Nazis in 1933 completely dispossessed the German Trade Unions of their resources. Now restitution takes place.

Inside the building we find a black cast iron plate with bas relief pictures showing the use of violence against ancient German inhabitants (the Saxons) when Christianity was introduced under the German Emperor Charlemagne (782). This iron plate was installed by the Nazis, who had the same struggle with the church, as now the Soviets

have in Eastern Germany. (I do not think that the iron plate will hang there much longer.)

No inscription on the building repeats the Latin tag, *Sic transit gloria mundi*; but the atmosphere whispers this idea in all the rooms. You can almost hear it.

GERMAN CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW

THE ALAN PATON TRAGEDIES

LITERARY critics of all schools have agreed that Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country* is an unusually fine book. This unanimity seems to us to have a valid, rational base, for Mr. Paton wrote a gripping "race" novel without bitterness or frenzy even without the usual sensationalism of "blood and thunder" variety. Paton is gentle and passionate at the same time, factual yet psychological, analytically observant while also intensely sympathetic to every human being caught in the web of his plots.

Reading the reviews of Paton's *Too Late the Phalarope*, we note an effort on the part of some critics to establish the fact that this novel is essentially "different" from *Cry, the Beloved Country*. For instance, John Barkham, in the *Saturday Review*, writes:

Unlike its predecessor, "Too Late the Phalarope" is not concerned with large-scale social problems. It treats not of peoples, but of persons. Its actors are not symbols of a greater struggle, as the two fathers in "Cry, the Beloved Country" personified their two races, and to that extent it may be said that the new novel is a work of smaller scope than the earlier book.

With such a summary we cannot agree. It seems rather that Mr. Paton is simply enlarging and deepening the insights of his earlier book. In a sense he is addressing himself to the question "What is morality?", as if in recognition that all of the "social" and "racial" issues and conditions have their roots in someone's conviction that he and his peers know *how* to define morality. The South Africans are still, as they have long been, a "God-fearing people," a strong and violent people whose violence has found expression in many ways—not the least of which was in the combined Spartanism and puritanical rigidity of their mores. Many men and women, all psychologists tell us, at least during certain periods of their lives, are similarly afflicted, chained like Prometheus to a rock, but by links of their own making.

Mr. Paton's book is a tragedy in the ancient Grecian sense, for as *Nemesis* descends on the leading character and sends him tumbling from a

social pinnacle, both he and his friends, and all readers of his story, learn a great deal that can make them wise. In such a context the *meaning* of the drama somehow becomes more important, even to the participants, than its outcome, although those who suffer the most naturally find this lesson the hardest to learn.

Pieter Van Vlaanderen stands out in his district as a leader of men. His Achilles' heel, one he is long in discovering and still longer in understanding, is his inability to feel the proclaimed gulf between Afrikaner and African. A giant of a man, a respected police lieutenant and a famous Rugby athlete, there is nonetheless much of the feminine in Pieter, and as an outgrowth of a delicate psychological balance which failed to fit the rigid mold of his society, he could not *feel* the barrier between the races as others felt them. A too puritanical wife and a dusky woman from the other world drew him finally to a violation of the most rigid of Afrikaner customs. His maiden aunt, who loved and understood Pieter better than anyone else, narrates the story, and at its conclusion we find her musing on all the subtleties which Paton has woven into the plot. It is, indeed, a "tragic" man who "breaks the iron law." The society in which he lives is his real nemesis from which he could buy escape only through a temperamentally impossible identification with the typical attitudes of his time and place. A strong man and a sensitive man may often be unable to do this, and, sooner or later, circumstances lead him "beyond the pale." Pieter, who was a god to his young nephew, becomes an object of loathing; then, for the nephew, too, the beginnings of new attitudes and choices are dangerously possible. But let us quote the last page of *Too Late the Phalarope*, where Pieter's aunt describes her feelings:

My grief can still come back to me, when I read of some tragic man who has broken the iron law. Was he two men, one brave and gentle, and one tormented? And has he friends, or will he suffer his whole life long? And was there one perhaps, who knew why he had barred the door of his soul and should have hammered on it and cried out not ceasing?

And I grieve for him, and the house he has made to fall with him, not as with Samson the house

of his enemies, but the house of his own flesh and blood. And I grieve for the nation which gave him birth, that left the trodden and the known for the vast and secret continent, and made there songs of *heimwee* and longing, and the iron laws. And now the Lord has turned our captivity, I pray we shall not walk arrogant, remembering Herod whom an Angel of the Lord struck down, for that he made himself a god.

But most I grieve for Frans and his wife who live now solitary at Buitenverwagting. The boy Koos is tall and dark, and seems to have some special mark on him of solitariness. Will they say when they meet him, *where have I heard your name?* And will that trouble him, or is he troubled already? Ah, I pray the world will let it be forgotten.

Now all that I have written here is true, for I have seen the secret book, and all the things he wrote in prison, and my sister-in-law says it is true, though parts she would have written otherwise. And I wish she could have written it, for maybe of the power of her love that never sought itself, men would have turned to the holy task of pardon, that the body of the Lord might not be wounded twice, and virtue come of our offences.

These two last paragraphs strike us as wonderfully moving. Is not "the body of the Lord wounded twice" in every punishment, whether the punishment be meted out against the guilt of criminals or simply to chastise social transgressors, making them into outcasts? And why should not "virtues come of our offences"? One of the most impressive sentences in the Declaration of Principles which sustains the Communitarian Society of France is the determination of the members to regard transgressors within the group as bringing educational opportunity to the rest—by providing an example of a mistake anyone else might make. Thus, we should think, may virtue "arise" from offenses; otherwise, every offense but generates new and different offenses in an endless cycle.

One other of Paton's passages seems to us memorable. Pieter, on his psychological "journey beyond the pale," describes just how he was always "different," even during his school days. We who read his diary congratulate him upon his distinction, but is it unlikely that, in a similar position, we would feel, as Pieter did, an envy of those who thought only

the approved thought, whose conduct inevitably expressed the accepted virtues and vices of the Afrikaners rather than strange and forbidden ones?

As I sat there my mind went back suddenly, ten, no eleven years, to Stellenbosch. I could see the very room where we were sitting, five or six of us students. Moffie de Bruyn's room with the old Vierkleur on the wall and the picture of President Kruger. We were talking of South Africa, as we always talked when it was not football or psychology or religion. We were talking of colour and race, and whether such feelings were born in us or made. and Moffie told us the story of the accident in Cape Town, how the car crashed into the telephone box, and how he had gone rushing to help, and just when he got there the door of the car opened and a woman fell backwards into his arms. It nearly knocked him over, but he was able to hold her, and let her gently to the ground. And all the time the light was going off and on in the telephone box. And just when the light went on, he saw it was a Malay woman that he had in his arms, full of jewels and rings and blood. And he could not hold her any more; he let her go in horror, not even gently, he said, and even though a crowd was there. And without a word he pushed through the crowd and went on his way. For the touch of such a person was abhorrent to him, he said, and he did not think it was learned; he thought it was deep down in him, a part of his very nature. And many Afrikaners are the same.

Why Moffie's story should come back to me then I do not know, for I cannot remember that I had ever thought of it all these eleven years. But it came back to me now, and I thought of him, and of all those like him, with a deep envy, and a longing too, that I could have been like that myself.

How we laughed at Moffie's story, partly because of the way he told it, and partly, I suppose, because we were laughing at ourselves. I do not think we were laughing at the Malay woman, nor at the way he let her fall to the ground. And I suppose there was some shame in it too. But I would take the shame, and I would be like that myself, if I could; for to have such a horror is to be safe. Therefore I envied him.

COMMENTARY WRITING ABOUT ART

FROM time to time, MANAS staff writers have presented its readers with "notes" on the subject of art, while feeling a bit inadequate whenever the discussion descends to particular questions. The trouble with writing about art is that both writer and reader need to have a special background; the writer, should he be so fortunate as to have knowledge of the history of art, may be able to offer learned and critical discussion, but unless the reader knows what the writer is talking about, the effort is largely wasted. In short, the usual sort of discussions of art are for an extremely limited audience with specialized knowledge, and MANAS is not published for this sort of audience, nor are the editors persuaded that criticism at this level is of any great importance from the MANAS viewpoint.

Grace Clements' article, therefore, in this week's *Frontiers*, comes as a pleasant variation from the usual content of this department, and has the added advantage of being written by one who is herself a muralist of distinction. Miss Clements recently completed a trip around the world, during which she visited many ancient lands in order to study at first hand the art forms of centuries and even millennia ago. The insight of her article in describing art as a medium of universal symbolism surely owes much to these travels.

The material used in this article is typical of Miss Clements' weekly broadcasts from KPFA, the Bay Area's listener-sponsored station which has previously been described in these pages.

It is natural, in reading "Art and Reality," to appreciate the light it throws on forms of expression which bear little similarity to Western conventions in art. The strange and even forbidding aspects of the pre-Columbian art of Mexico and Central America—the monstrous shapes of Eastern pantheons and demonologies—the distortions which seem typical of so much of so-called "primitive" art—all these bear graphic

witness to the attempts of ancient artists and craftsmen to generalize some facet of universal reality. Our own recollections were almost forcibly directed to the illustration sometimes found opposite the title page of *The Bhagavad-Gita*, showing the God, Krishna, as virtually a Noah's Ark of all existence—the entire tide of life flowing in and around the spirit of the Universe, typified by the male-female form of Krishna. We have never been able to feel that the picture is or was intended to be a "work of art" in the familiar meaning of this expression. Rather, it is, as Miss Clements intimates, and as W. Norman Brown put so clearly, years ago, "a reminder . . . of something abstract, spiritual in its reality beyond apprehension of the senses, an ocular reference to universal knowledge that might somehow become comprehensible to humanity."

CHILDREN ...and Ourselves

A BOOK by Robert Hutchins is, from many standpoints, hard to justify as material for review in a column bearing the above title. For though Hutchins' expression is unusually simple and lucid, he writes at the level of abstract philosophical analysis, dealing with concepts most children won't get around to manipulating even when they have grown long beards. However, a case can be made for the view that unless our discussions of "the higher learning" have an important bearing upon the education of the young, the discussions are of little value, and, conversely, that men like Hutchins, who say important things about higher education, imply important things about the education of children. At any rate, this is a view we have been pressing in this column since the beginning. While considering Hutchins' ideas here, for instance, we attempt to offer evidence that the basic elements of learning and ethics are the same for all ages.

We may not set the world on fire with this procedure, but we do have a chance to wear away a little the notion that the Education of Man is essentially different at different ages, or that all one needs to do in order to keep adequately abreast of the educational needs of a home is to read some specialist for the age-group to which one's child currently belongs. (The foregoing might be regarded, also, as a belated and incomplete comment addressed to the subscriber who, looking forward to an article on Black Mountain College in MANAS, based on material he had provided, was a little puzzled and perhaps even a little put out to discover the article in a column supposedly about children. The Black Mountain article is pertinent for another reason, since it showed that the extraordinary success of that small institution during its best days under Rice originated in an attitude of mind about the "teacher-pupil relationship," and that attitude of mind, together with Rice's conception of the function of the Arts in education, can be as

provocative for ten-year-olds as for college students.)

This rambling introduction brings us to Hutchins' newest book, *The Conflict in Education* (Harper, 1953). Based upon lectures given at the University of Upsala and the University of Toronto, the volume is hardly designed for tiny tots, yet its essential argument is a reminder of importance for all educators. Children, we are sure, are "the same" as adults in essential nature, as well as "different" in appearance, and their common humanity, no matter how embryonic in manifestation, should be our joy. Also, the issue of regimentation is a live one for all age-levels, and here the pertinence of Hutchins' comments seems clear enough; unless a better art for communicating values is developed, the children of the modern world, like its adults, are apt to be forcibly "united" without knowing how to choose the values in the name of which the "uniting" will take place. Hutchins sums up:

Since education in the West is built very largely on the doctrine of individual differences, so that the study of the individual child and his individual interests is supposed to be the principal preoccupation of his teachers from his earliest days, and premature and excessive specialization is a common characteristic of both the American college and the British public school, it will be argued that a program of liberal education for all ignores the most important thing about men, and that is that they are different. I do not ignore it; I deny it. I do not deny the fact of individual differences; I deny that it is the most important fact about men or the one on which an educational system should be erected.

Men are different. They are also the same. And at least in the present state of civilization the respects in which they are the same are more important than those in which they are different. Politics, the architectonic science, teaches us that we are remorselessly headed toward the unification of the world. The only question is whether that unification will be achieved by conquest or consent. And this can be done only by the unremitting effort to move toward world community and world organization. The liberal arts are the arts of communication. The great productions of the human mind are the common heritage of all mankind. They supply the framework

through which we understand one another and without which all factual data and area studies and exchanges of persons among countries are trivial and futile. They are the voices in the Great Conversation that constitutes the civilization of the dialogue. Now, if ever, we need an education that is designed to bring out our common humanity rather than to indulge our individuality. Our individual differences mean that our individual development must vary. If we all struggle to make the most of our individual human powers, the results will be different, because our powers differ. But the difference is one of degree, and not of kind.

If children and adults share precious innate qualities, as idealistic thinkers of all ages have believed, *they*—the children—need to know that this is true and why it is true. They need to know that men have dreamed of unified understanding and a universal brotherhood of humanity since the beginning of time that Important Men, in the past, have dreamed far different dreams than the sort that result in wars, bombs and jets. Not only that, but men like Buddha and Christ, Socrates and Gandhi said the same things—labored together, as it were, to attain the goal of a humanity united by mutual understanding and aspiration.

"Liberal education," in Hutchins' view, helps to show men that their noblest dreams are held in common, and only men whose sense of this remarkable heritage has been awakened through "liberal education" can pass it on to their children. One finds, too, that the dream of humanity's nobility derives not only from inspired ethical teachers such as those mentioned, but also from those in every century who have kept alive a free life of the mind, and thus provided means for the most important kind of communication of all.

Of course it is not all as simple as this. The reason why the life of the mind is, in part, a life of logic, analysis and discipline, is that the great ethical truths are paradoxical, and it takes a mind schooled in subtleties to grasp the implications of paradox. The greatest paradox, and the one of which we presently need most to be reminded, is that human brotherhood is never discovered by those who submerge themselves in their

environments. Leaders in the great liberal tradition, which stands for unity through understanding, have always fought for the life of liberalism *against* the orthodox and invariably provincial attitudes of their times. There is no unity to be found, in other words, in prejudices and preconceptions. Hutchins puts it this way:

Let us remember that Socrates and Gandhi did not seek to adapt themselves to society as they found it. They attempted to re-make society, and the fact that they died in the attempt in no way detracts from their glory or from their value as examples to other men. Kant said, "Parents usually educate their children merely in such a manner that, however bad the world may be, they may adapt themselves to its present conditions." This may suggest to us that the doctrine of adaptation is not so new as its proponents would have us believe. Kant goes on: "But they ought to give them an education so much better than this, that a better condition of things may thereby be brought about in the future." The pressure in America, especially intense now in this period of the cold war, is toward a flat conformity of life and thought.

A child may not be threatened directly by Sen. McCarthy's machinations, but many agencies—most of them within the home—conspire to ensure the orthodoxy of his behavior. And he is not apt to comprehend the Great Liberal Tradition in later years unless his parents come to understand something of that Great Truth which affirms a potential universal brotherhood of creative thought among men, a brotherhood which allows and encourages personal differences of emphasis and opinion, yet never condones ethical insularity.

FRONTIERS

Art and Reality

MAN, not being perfect, longs for perfection—he longs to find himself—the Self which is his Source. This is not mere conjecture on my part. I am only reading the evidence—the evidence provided by man's art and myths and religions. From these you will find that man is born with some kind of awareness that he has come from a place of Perfection—a Garden of Eden—and somehow knowing it to be a place of bliss, he seeks to return to it. We have evidence of this urge even today—when we are so far from perfection—in such things as the effort to prove the existence of a lost continent, a Motherland, now supposedly submerged at the bottom of one or another ocean. . . .

Symbolic expressions of the search for this Perfection are not necessarily beautiful. Those who adhere to the idea of art as representing aesthetic beauty alone, have found some of these expressions at the very least strange, often repelling and ugly, if not altogether frightening, as a nightmare is frightening. They are likely to say: "This may be a picture of a man's mind, but do you call that *art!*" . . . No, it isn't art, not if you think that art is merely making aesthetically beautiful things. But what is beauty? Beauty is one element in the world of opposites. And what is the opposite of Beauty? Ugliness. But aesthetics is defined as perception by the senses, especially of the beautiful. There is only one kind of beauty which does not exist without an opposite, and that is the Archetypal Beauty in the wholeness or unity of ultimate Perfection. But this perfection contains all the opposites—all the dualities. If man is to mirror, or imitate this Perfection in his art, he must in some way include these opposites. This does not mean that he must represent these opposites by combining anything as literal or specific as beauty and ugliness, but rather he must represent the basic principle of the dualities contained in unity. Otherwise the artist only gets himself out on a limb of one extreme or

another. And this means chaos: lack of order or balance. Both the pursuit of beauty and its opposite, the cult of ugliness in art, fall wide of the mark. We have seen the idea of aesthetic beauty result in nauseating prettiness in the nineteenth century, and we have seen in our own time horrendous deformities in a great deal of modern expressionism. And so we have been proceeding from one extreme to the other, neither extreme recognizing that it has an incomplete—that is, unbalanced—view of reality.

But, one might ask, why not recognize this very fact of extremities also as an aspect of reality? Yes, of course, why not. . . . So then, chaos, lack of order, is also a reality. Surely it has its place in the hierarchy related to the *whole*.

Let me demonstrate what I mean with a greatly oversimplified illustration—as all analogies are bound to be in dealing with the complexities of life and reality. Imagine a man—at this point in the story he is unaffected by Time, and therefore a Self-contained whole standing erect and balanced on a flat surface. He has equilibrium in relation to the ground on which he stands. Vertical and horizontal balance one another. This represents the unity in duality. Then it transpires—in other words Time enters—that this man in equilibrium is not standing on solid ground but on a river which is frozen over with ice. Beneath him water is flowing, moving toward the sea. Spring is arriving and the ice begins to break up. Then suddenly our man finds himself with one foot on one piece of ice and the other foot on another piece of ice, and one is moving away from the other. It is a perilous moment. Shall the left foot join the right, or the right the left? Something has to be done to overcome this state of unbalance. The current is swift; the iceblocks are moving chaotically. Our hypothetical man is a grotesque figure slashing around—anything but an example of equilibrium or wholeness. His ground is out from under him. Then at last, one of two things happens. Either he gets both feet again on one block of ice, or he falls into the water. But in

either eventuality he achieves unity; he completes a cycle. If he has regained equilibrium on top of the ice, he has returned to the position he was in before the ice broke up. If he has fallen into the river, he also has returned to a place of origin—the non-differentiated waters of life from which he once emerged at birth. Chaos dominated only as long as the situation was *unresolved*. In relation to *reality* this chaos, this disequilibrium, lasts for a very short time, but to the man who has lost his balance, and struggles to regain it, it seems like an eternity—a whole lifetime.

And this is more or less what life is to every man born from the unity or union of opposites. Before coming into the world he was an egg—a microcosmic unity. But not for long. The ice begins to break. The identity of Self and Source—the balance between Self and Ground, is lost. Most of us sense this unity dispelled by Time. We have rightly observed that the face of a new-born babe is often like that of a wise old man. But very soon we find instead a cherub, and then an imp, and then a naughty boy, and then a youth painfully enduring adolescence, ridiculous with his first love. Long since, all trace of wisdom, which is unity, has departed. Now he must undergo the initiation to adulthood, and then he must assume responsibility in the world of action. All this while the ice floe is carrying him swiftly down stream. There's not the slightest opportunity to stop the gyrations, first on one foot then on the other. Equilibrium, balance, does not exist for him now. And then, somewhere—mid-stream—mid-life the battle subsides. Either he gives up and accepts the plunge into the river, or he finds new footing, however precariously, on one of the remaining blocks of ice. If it is the former, he finds unity in the return to the primal unconscious state; if the latter, having retained consciousness, he knows what it is to have *had, lost* and *regained* balance.

All this may seem to be far-fetched in connection with art. Actually, what I have been saying, in sort of a parable form, is that this is what the symbol—the archetypal symbol—is

about. Man's awareness of unity, through the balance of opposites (two legs supporting a single body) is in the course of *time* thrown off balance into a morass or chaotic state, when equilibrium or unity is lost—and this is followed by the struggle to regain what has been lost. Between the unity known at the beginning and the unity which is the ultimate objective, there are obstacles to be overcome—a labyrinth to be traversed. In mythology, this is the hero-saga. In metaphysical terms, it is the process of evolution and involution—birth, growth, fruition, decay, death—and re-birth: The completion of the cycle, the microcosmic image of the macrocosmic reality as it is unfolded in the world of opposites.

It does not follow necessarily that this is what art is about. I have been describing reality in its wholeness, and as it is manifested in the processes of life. If art mirrors life, or imitates life then it will encompass or imply all these processes—from unity to duality to multiplicity to chaos, and back again. But obviously, there is nothing which compels the artist to mirror life as a whole. First you have to be aware of this wholeness, either consciously or unconsciously. If the artist is at the nadir of chaos and disequilibrium in himself, then this is what he will depict, and nothing more. He will be engrossed only with one or another of the parts—with the details, with one of the countless gyrations of the man on the ice floe, completely oblivious of why that man is doing what he is doing. Being several times removed from consciousness of the *prime* reality, he can think that he has found beauty in such a thing as the muscles of a man teetering in disequilibrium on the ice floe. And consequently, he will tell us very, very little about the reality of the whole.

My image is not as exaggerated as it may seem. During the second World War a number of American artists were sent into the various zones of combat to paint pictures of the scenes of war. *Life* magazine, in its report, called the results "Experience by Battle," a designation of dubious accuracy. I probably can best summarize this

editorial wishful-thinking by a remark made by one of the artists involved. He said: "Painting pictures of war is no different than the day in and day out painting of pictures at home." From what that group of artists brought back it was evident that this was precisely their approach. It wasn't an experience that they were depicting, but merely objects—the reality of the chair. If their model wasn't nude, as in the studios at home, it was a soldier who lay dead by the side of the road, or civilians scavenging among the ruins of their bombed streets. They have painted people at an amusement park in much the same way. Whatever their subject, such artists as these are primarily concerned with the *details* of life with which to make a "good composition." It makes no difference to the artist-reporters of phenomena, whether they paint an apple beside a wine decanter, or bombs bursting in air—anything and everything is grist for the aesthetic mill. These details of reality are far from being microscopic in nature, such as I have described characterizes the art of the traditional societies—that is, as a microcosmic reflection of the macrocosmic whole. But even as isolated fragments, these details do, of course, have a relationship to reality. They picture that aspect of reality which has made the furthest descent into multiplicity and chaos from the original state of wholeness. In other words, the reporters of phenomena paint moments in Time.

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The microcosm—that is, the little world—always contains an image of the macrocosm, or greater world. Each is a universe a unity—the one reflecting the other. The microcosm in art is first of all unity, or unity in duality; and secondly it is the double-spiraled journey through Time, from unity, through loss of unity, to repossession of unity. No segment of an apple represents the whole; only the seed holds promise of a *renewed* whole. And it is an image of *this* reality which is to be found in the art of primitives and archaic peoples of the traditional societies, and also on occasion, in some modern art.