

BOOKS FOR OUR TIME: DISCUSSION

The Books

1. THE HUMAN SITUATION
W. Macneile Dixon
Longmans, 1937 (MANAS Review, Feb. 4)
2. PSYCHOANALYSIS AND RELIGION
Erich Fromm
Yale University Press, 1950 (Review, March 18)
3. THE NEUROTIC PERSONALITY OF OUR TIME
Karen Horney
Norton, 1937 (Review, May 6)
4. RICHER BY ASIA, Edmond Taylor
Houghton Mifflin, 1947 (Review, June 17)
5. THE HIGHER LEARNING IN AMERICA
Robert M. Hutchins
Yale University Press, 1936 (Review, July 22)
6. TO THE FINLAND STATION
Edmund Wilson
Harcourt, Brace, 1940, & Anchor, 1953 (Review, Sept. 2)
7. THE ROOT IS MAN
Dwight Macdonald
Cunningham Press, 1953 (Review, Oct. 14)
8. THE REACH OF THE MIND
J. B. Rhine
William Sloane Associates, 1947 (Review, Nov. 25)

These books, discussed in the MANAS "Books for Our Time" series, are listed with the dates of the series review articles for easy reference. It is hoped that the evaluation of the series presented this week will provoke comment from readers.

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ONE of the original purposes of this series was to draw attention to common elements in books which seem to us to speak with great clarity to the condition of the modern world. And since nearly a year—the series began last February 4—is a long time for any reader to remember themes and points of emphasis stressed in our reviews, it seems appropriate to devote space to recalling some of them to mind.

During the course of publication of these review articles, we have felt a growing sense of

the relatedness of the books chosen. One common denominator is that they all, with two possible exceptions, give expression to the somewhat unorthodox, even radical, opinions, of the authors. Another bond between them is their affirmative tone in respect to the nature of man. An "upward and onward" conviction seems to animate each volume, although callow optimism and progressive clichés are foreign to their contents.

Further, all the books are explorations of "man the unknown." The authors seem convinced, moreover, that a further *emergence* of man's capacities may be on the way, so that a study of this emergence may be a project of great importance. Because, perhaps, they find in the development of further perceptive capacities the great hope of the present as well as of the future, these writers have also shown extraordinarily keen insight in describing the factors in history which have accomplished the *submergence* of man. Thus the criticism of dogmatism in religion, presumption in science, shallow thinking in psychology and philosophy, has been sharp and effective, even though it is the optimistic quality of the volumes, as well as their critical excellence, which has led us to feel that they belong in a very special class.

It occurs to us, also, that publication of this series has helped to supply background for reply to the query, "What does MANAS stand for?" Analysis of these volumes seemed to provide one excellent answer. Brief, limiting discussions concerned with defining a "credo" might easily misrepresent the editorial outlook by oversimplification and generalization. Credos, like creeds, are historically proved to be dangerous things, since they sometimes encourage closed mindedness. The beliefs and persuasions out of which creeds often grow, however, are vital to the existence of man.

Perhaps the trick is to preserve the intellectual elements from which creeds frequently grow, in a state of constant flux, so that while we retain these ingredients at all times, we do not succumb to tight formulations of belief.

There are many points of departure for discussion of these books. For one thing, the attempt to illustrate a particular intellectual and moral climate by recommending a few books above all others is a fairly novel idea. As book lists get long, there is perhaps more hope of avoiding criticism, but since criticism as well as evaluation is what we are after, the shorter the list the better for us. The "Hundred Great Books" of Dr. Hutchins and Dr. Adler, for instance, provide valuable background, but so fathomless a background that one may float around in a veritable sea of learning. So, as Macneile Dixon once put it: "Let each man cast his spear and leave the issue to the immortal gods." All good books are usable, but we think each man can find a few volumes more educative and inspiring than any others. Actually, the Hundred Great Books represent a schematic approach to the life of the mind—their "design for education" is only less obvious than the simpler and perhaps more daring assumptions involved in the MANAS selection of Books for Our Time. So, while we must indicate our awareness of how presumptuous—even absurd—it may seem to single out for special study eight more or less contemporary books, our reasons are, we hope, a fair justification.

It is natural, when mentioning the Great Books, to wonder how discussion groups would fare with Books for Our Time as subject-matter. The Great Books Seminars occasionally take a sort of summer holiday from the "classics," discussing books chosen by the members. We suspect that if a "vacation special" could be arranged by a Great Books group, in which some or all of the Books for Our Time would be considered, the result would be exciting for all. Further, minds widened by Plato and Aristotle might appreciate more fully the excellence of these contemporary volumes, while we are sure

that the benefits would work in the other direction as well.

We find that, by pleasant and encouraging coincidence, the *Saturday Review* has sponsored a reading list of its own, prepared by Mrs. Bonaro Overstreet, which might also be appropriately titled "Books for Our Time." This list has thirty-seven volumes, many of which MANAS could easily endorse since a number of these books have already been discussed in these pages. What we are most interested in, however, in speaking of Mrs. Overstreet's five-foot shelf, is her reason for attempting to compile it, and the *Saturday Review's* reasons for printing it. The "five-foot" part derives, of course, from the Harvard Classics. Mrs. Overstreet, like many another thoughtful reader, never became a devotee of President Eliot's "austerely uniform volumes." "Yet," she writes, "I suppose I must even now owe them some peculiar debt; for the old image of them patterns a new dream of my own. It is a different sort of dream about what it might mean if I and my fellow Americans could broadly agree on a "shelf" of basic books and out of the reading of them build a common reference store of knowledge and insight with which to think about the world in which we live."

What Mrs. Overstreet says about her list comes close enough to what was in mind in our own list to be of present interest:

This dream has recurrently haunted me through more than twenty years of work in the fields of adult education and human relations years that have made me well aware of how often our efforts to reason together are confounded by our lack of shared materials from which to do our reasoning. So I make my long postponed bow to President Eliot—not by belatedly taking in hand volume after volume of his Five-Foot Shelf, but by purloining his idea in the service of a modified definition of culture. The books I visualize on this new "shelf" would, in this age of our lonely wandering, be more like maps and manuals than masterpieces though some of them may well stand the test of the years. I would not pronounce them classics. I would not demand for them in the human tradition any place of serene, immutable importance. They would be replaceable as new researches made them obsolete or as better books

came from the press. I would want them simply to be the best books to date—the most accurate and readable books—in certain fields of knowledge where we can no longer afford to be ignorant or misinformed.

They would be books for the layman, not the specialist; yet they would be on a level of competent and responsible scholarship that the specialist—himself a layman in all fields but his own—would recognize and respect. They would not be watered down or prettied up. Their simplicity would come from the fact that their authors knew their materials well enough to impose meaningful order upon them; and also from the fact that those authors knew how to write—how to put words, sentences, and paragraphs together to encourage clarity rather than obfuscation.

The books would not pretend to add up, in the broad sense, to a liberal education. They would orient us with respect to the critical "foreground" of our human experience rather than to its rich and intricate background.

Another reason for sallying forth with our eight books is that these volumes have seemed excellent starting points for more extended reading in various fields. For instance, Lange's venerable *History of Materialism* and Windelband's *History of Philosophy* can, we think, be better appreciated after a reading of Dixon's *The Human Situation*. Dixon, incidentally, is surprisingly amplified by Erich Fromm's *The Forgotten Language*, while the former's approach to science gains methodical support from E. A. Burtt's *Metaphysical Foundations of Physical Science*.

To accompany Karen Horney's *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time*, we recommend Charles B. Thompson's *Our Common Neurosis*, Horney's own *Neurosis and Human Growth*, and Harry Overstreet's *The Mature Mind*.

In relation to Erich Fromm's psychoanalysis of traditional Christianity in *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, we would call particular attention to Shailer Mathew's *Is God Emeritus?*, John Haynes Holmes' *Rethinking Religion*, and Fromm's own *Man For Himself*.

With Taylor's *Richer By Asia*, in large part a psychological study of typical cultural and

national delusions, we recommend Nehru's great autobiography, *Toward Freedom*; also an unfortunately hard-to-get-hold-of book written many years ago by an English Army officer, Fielding Hall, entitled *The Soul Of A People*. William O. Douglas' *Strange Lands and Friendly People* extends many of Taylor's arguments effectively.

We think that the best supplement for Hutchins' *The Higher Learning In America* is likely to be provided by his own immediately forthcoming *The University of Utopia*, although Gordon Keith Chalmers' *The Republic and The Person* serves excellently for this purpose.

With Edmund Wilson's *To the Finland Station* we bracket V. F. Calverton's *Where Angels Dared to Tread*, while Macdonald's *Root Is Man* adds dimensions to various of Wilson's historical perspectives.

For Macdonald's *Root*, we suggest Fromm's *Escape From Freedom*, Albert Jay Nock's *Our Enemy the State*, Ortega's *Revolt Of The Masses* and Simone Weil's *The Need For Roots*. Along with Rhine's *Reach of The Mind* we call attention to J. W. Dunne's famous *An Experiment With Time*, and Raynor Johnson's current *The Imprisoned Splendour*.

Our list becomes a bit pretentious, of course, if too many claims are made on its behalf. If praise has waxed extravagant here or there, this is but evidence of the frailties of enthusiastic human nature and need not commit MANAS to any rigid sort of literary obeisance. We candidly declare, however, an abundant enthusiasm for these volumes, heaped up, pressed down, and occasionally running over. And our liking for them arises from considerably more than a minimum common metaphysic concerning the nature of man that we have discovered in them. They may have common assumptions, but their variety and their extremely un-uniform directions of development help to maintain the feeling that ours is an infinitely open world with infinite possibilities.

In short, these books, we think, have stirred up currents which may one day unite to bring to birth another "heroic age" in human thought and action. This is a large claim, perhaps, but a claim would have to be large to concern so great an objective. We have the feeling that there may be discerned in the work of these writers of the twentieth century a revival of the ancient Greek spirit and attitude toward life. Why Greek? The adjective may be limiting or ill-chosen, yet how else, for the West, may be characterized the sense of wonderment, of generous and imaginative rationalism of which we learn by study of Hellenic genius?

As, years ago, William A. Heidel put it in *The Heroic Age of Science*:

The Greek seems to have felt, as did Wordsworth, that "the world is too much with us"; its very jostlings gave him a sense of being an alien until he could, as it were, keep it at arm's length long enough to glimpse its meaning. Its significance and relations fascinated him—if he could discover these, the brute facts interested him little. That many of his guesses went wide of the mark, means only that he was human; that he returned again and again to the attack, and never gave up the attempt to read the hidden meaning of the world by the light of his limited experience, proves that he possessed the spirit of the scientist and the philosopher. Once one realizes this irrepressible urge of the ancient Greek, his very enterprise acquires an interest for the thoughtful student, who values the idea more highly than the material in which it may chance to be embodied. Where the pioneers with the light heart of youth and inexperience thought to clear at a leap abysses which the ages have not sufficed to bridge, one must have grown old indeed if one fails to admire their adventurous spirit. May it not be in that spirit, informing everything they attempted, there is to be found the richest legacy which a highly endowed race has bequeathed to the modern world?

After the Greeks, the world moved to the cult of blind beliefs; and then, following a series of multiform disillusionments, it adopted the credo of "brute facts." We have now had enough of these, too—more than enough, or at least more than we know how to handle or control. Is it possible that the world may now have reached the vestibule of a cycle of *philosophy*?

The thought may sound ponderous, yet its attractions are great. The philosopher, if he does nothing else, declares for the competence of man. This was a Greek attitude, too. The Greeks were not afraid to think; they never felt that thinking could be futile. They did not, it is true, live in the shadow of enormous "systems"—there was no mass industrial society to darken the horizon, no leaden dogmas of ideological assumption to weigh their minds to earth. But a man who thinks is a man who discovers in himself the power to destroy dogmas. If nothing else, our authors demonstrate this. Dixon wears away the prejudices and conceits of centuries as might an artist, or a poet with the intangible might of a song whose beauty cannot be denied. Macdonald declares that we need a new political vocabulary, and the devastation left behind his analysis is so complete that most conscientious readers are likely to rearrange their political conceptions, if not their political values, forthwith. Rhine patiently assembles evidence attesting that mind is more than matter, much more, and soberly describes the significance of this conclusion for psychology, for science, for religion. Fromm discovers in the clinic and the consultation chamber the depths of human identity to be very like the Self of the ancient Upanishads, and a meaning for morality such as Buddhist thinkers once declared.

The great question, at any decisive moment, is: Where lies the creative energy of the time? What is its direction? At any given moment there are of course various energies to be discerned. There is the clattering, downhill roll of forces which represent the unleashed irresponsibilities of the time. Alarums and irruptions haunt the present as they presided over the decline and fall of Rome. The social disintegration of today is peculiarly ominous in that its processes are strangely rationalized and even sugar-coated by the petty though impressive skills of technology. The minor logics of an acquisitive society are as rigorous in their discipline as were Calvin's Institutes, and equally irrelevant to the natural ends of man.

But, unlike the dying age of Classicism, which had only Boethius' *Consolations of Philosophy* to make a mournful epitaph, our own decline is attended by portents which suggest that there are men abroad in the land who will refuse to add to the dirge of modern civilization. They are busy creating the foundations of a new culture of man.

We by no means suggest that our eight authors are plotters of Utopia. Rather, it seems to us, the currency of their thinking is minted from the stuff of which new beginnings are always made—impartiality, originality, and a realism which is joined with high confidence in human beings. The Renaissance was formed of these ingredients, and the Greeks, let us note, were the spiritual forefathers of the Renaissance. Our authors, again, it seems to us, represent a breed of men who are captives of neither science nor religion—they are men before they are anything else, and in these terms they have overtaken and passed the famous "cultural lag" which is said to have condemned our century and time to moral and social failure.

We say "represent," since in developing this view, we are likely to be accused of a "hero-worship" outdoing both Carlyle and Emerson. Our writers are, we think, expositors of an emerging temper, a quality of philosophic balance and even assurance which has been increasingly evident since the last great war. Whether the shock and ugly irreconcilables of the war produced the change, or whether the sanctions of yesterday's conventional authorities had already worn thin, we cannot say; but that a new spirit in thinking about the problems of man is in evidence can hardly be denied. We hope we have chosen its most articulate advocates and exemplars.

Finally, we should like to call attention to the wealth of "raw material" for thought—not really new, but new enough for the modern world, and new in the context of our present existence and traditions—which we are challenged to work over and assimilate. Choosing, not exactly at random, since the idea attracts us, there is the disposition

of Macneile Dixon to regard most seriously the concept of palingenesis or rebirth, as bearing on the ultimate nature of man. Discussion of such a topic invites further reading, as for instance C. J. Ducasse' *Nature, Mind and Death*, John McTaggart's *On Pre-existence and Immortality*, and certain chapters in Johnson's *Imprisoned Splendour*. Some readers have perhaps by now noticed that MANAS regards this version of immortality as worthy of notice, and even of study. Similarly, the Eastern idea of "moral law," termed "Karma" by the Buddhists, is explicitly discussed by Edmond Taylor in *Richer By Asia*, and at the same time is also mentioned in Macdonald's *Root Is Man*. These are serious philosophic ideas and should, as Ducasse maintains, be treated as such. Various isolated sects of the West have shared in these concepts, as doctrines, and they have been accepted in one or another form for thousands of years in the East—by Hindus and Buddhists—but the philosophical approach removes them from the area of religious belief to that of experimental analysis.

In conclusion, we should like to return to the philosophical and psychological common denominators of our eight volumes. The books are, for the most part, as we have said, quite radical, in that they encourage views of human nature and human history plainly at variance with both scientific and religious orthodoxy. If we were to attempt to condense this aspect of the books to very brief utterance, the result might be something like this: Man is—not has—a soul, and the evolution of the soul is a series of progressive awakenings. On this view, God cannot awaken man, nor can systems of education, nor conscience, nor even "the good society," politically achieved. "Awakenings" must be self-devised. The social and political implications of this perspective are easy enough to discern. One who likes our eight books is bound to be an ardent defender of academic freedom and civil liberties, for he will place a low estimate indeed on the "conditioning method" of encouraging human heroism or wisdom. Therefore, while

none of our books has dealt with immediate political issues, we think it safe to say that the authors of all these volumes—with the strange exception of Macneile Dixon, who remained a political conservative while radical in all other fields—entertain quite radical political views. This does not mean that we believe they tend towards "communism"—quite the opposite. For the genuine radical can never join any mass orthodoxy, nor reconcile himself to the "conditioning" theory of history. The communists and the ultra conservatives are both apt to be demagogues rather than free thinkers; as such they have more in common with each other and with the devotees of authoritarian religion than they have with men such as Jefferson, Thomas Paine, Thoreau, or M. K. Gandhi.

Hereafter, further discussions of the Books for Our Time will appear on the "Frontiers" page of MANAS. Meanwhile, we have been wondering if MANAS will ever be able to reprint the "Books for Our Time" series in an inexpensive pamphlet. Whether or not this will turn out to be possible depends, of course, largely upon finances, although the interest shown by readers in the series, now that it is complete, will naturally contribute to the decision.

Letter from **GERMANY**

FRANKFORT ON THE MAIN.—Last year there was published in this city the third edition of a rather important book: *Ideology and Utopia* by Karl Mannheim. The author died during exile from the Nazis in England in 1947. This book, first published about 1925, seemed so dangerous to totalitarian ideologies that both the Nazis and the Communists put it on the "index" (of *librorum prohibitorum*). Thus, your correspondent in East Berlin could not get it in the public state library in 1951.

Karl Mannheim held a professorial chair at Frankfort until 1933; afterward he taught sociology at the London School of Economics and Political Science. In 1937, the above mentioned book was translated into English in close cooperation with the American sociologist Louis Wirth (late president of the American Sociological Society), and has since gone through five English editions—compared with three in Germany.

What does this new science teach? It says: Thoughts are not abstract results of the relation between subject and object, but are created in a social "space" and are therefore conditioned by situation. When this book first appeared in Germany, there was a strenuous conflict of ideologies after the first world war and German society was in turmoil. It was no wonder that earnest thinkers were brought to reflect upon the variety of theories offered to explain the same situation. So many writers claimed to have found "the truth," and fought bitterly against other "truths." It seemed necessary under those circumstances to study the presuppositions of human thought and to search for some accounting of all this confusion.

Continuing the rational penetration of Max Weber, Karl Mannheim searches into different styles and methods of human thinking and finally sets up models of socio-political thought—Conservative, Liberal, Sectarian, Socialist

ideologies (or, with Mannheim, "utopias"). He thinks that—comparable to different styles of art—various styles of thought are possible and have to be brought into relationship with the circumstances under which they have developed. The objection that this leads to general relativism and the impossibility thereby of finding truth altogether is countered with the indication of the role of a "socially freely floating" intelligentsia—not class bound—which allows for objective truth-finding.

Mannheim's book is packed with thoughtful and honest reflections. Your correspondent sees especial value in its refutation of Kant's ancient theory of knowledge with its pessimism—conditioned, itself, as Mannheim explains, by the then limited knowledge in natural sciences. What strongly supports Mannheim's theory of thought is modern psychological experience with its acknowledgement of the important role of the subconscious and its influence on rational thinking. Thus, we have by modern theory at least two main springs which influence human thought: (1) the subconscious sphere, and (2) the social situation of the actual human being.

This new cognition leads necessarily to the disturbance of old conceptions about the freedom of thought (better: the shaking up of ancient social institutions in Europe after 1918 leads to the changing of basic ideas). Inevitably, the consequence is rigid determinism on the one hand, helpless relativism on the other—both symptoms of perplexity of mind after a heavy shock. With cool deliberation, Mannheim tries to avoid undesirable results and leads the way to an enlarged and better founded position than we had before.

However, it seems questionable to your correspondent that the social position of the intelligentsia can be placed as Mannheim placed it, for the reason that it seems almost impossible to draw a picture of "the" objective thinker. Or do the sociologists, a rather small and esoteric circle, alone belong to the free republic of those with the deepest and most unprejudiced insights?

Best fitted, we think, for clear perception of our present society and of the probable course of its changes to other cultural forms, is the mind which has gone through study of how much prevailing ideas (taught in school and college, by books, newspapers, TV, etc.) are bound up with existing conditions and rigid traditions. This mind might be that of an intellectual, but also that of another individual led by personal and social experience through the stages of positive and critical attitude with regard to existing society. Generally speaking—and this Mannheim might underline it is more the negative, and not the affirmative view, which leads to better and deeper results in social research; yet a negative attitude without positive aims is, of course, nihilistic. Unfortunately, individual views, when isolated, are not socially influential. The best insight will therefore—in seeking social change try to combine with positive aims and with a group of people numerous enough to arrive at practical results. Such groups spring up and into life of their own when the "time is ripe"—as historic experience shows.

GERMAN CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW

AN "INSTITUTION" FOR FREE THOUGHT

ROBERT HUTCHINS new book, *The University of Utopia*, is this month available through the University of Chicago Press, and we plan to give space to its consideration when a review copy arrives. In the meantime, there is opportunity to discuss some of its contentions, since the *Saturday Review* for Oct. 17 published excerpts from the *Utopia* manuscript. As usual, Dr. Hutchins makes it clear that he is somewhat more than a hot-potato man.

Consistently, since the 30's, Hutchins has maintained that Communist ideologists should be encouraged to express themselves fully in university discussions, so that students will have the benefit of contrasting ideas and the inevitable debates which result. At present, this question is bound to bring disapproval from many quarters. To make matters worse, Dr. Hutchins now challenges the right of Congressional committees, or even that of a board of trustees, to inquire into the political affiliations of faculty members. His reason for this position, as the *Saturday Review* article makes clear, is that such investigations easily obscure the importance of one of the main functions of a university—the stimulation of enlightening controversy, as contrasted with the conditioning of students to accept without question the political values of the *status quo*. To say that any teachers favoring Communism will inevitably be biased is beside the point here; so are all other teachers, and the more extreme the bias, the easier its detection and discounting by students.

An example of the sort of disapproval to be expected from conservative quarters, as Hutchins' ideas are circulated, is provided by a Los Angeles *Times* editorial of Oct. 20. The following paragraphs are grandly titled "Fallacious Position," and reflect the annoyance of the editor at Hutchins' refusal to qualify his case for freedom of thought:

Statements, made in the *Saturday Review*, seem to indicate either that Dr. Hutchins does not understand current events or willfully misinterprets them. The first alternative is almost incredible in the case of a man of such vast learning. The second is almost unthinkable in the case of a man of Dr. Hutchins' reputation.

Dr. Hutchins takes the thesis—with which we do not quarrel—that a university, and particularly the

ideal university, should be full of controversy, and that from the clash of ideas in such a place education will result. But when he goes farther and argues that since a university is a place where all ideas may be discussed freely neither the trustees nor the public as represented by Congressional committees have any right to inquire into connections of the faculty with what he calls "political movements" he goes too far.

It is not because a professor may have read Marx or speculated about Communism that he is ineligible to teach. It is because, as a member of the Communist conspiracy, he is required by party regulations, rigidly enforced, to have a dosed mind.

Even though at first glance this reasoning seems defensible, there is a catch in the last sentences. The *Times* writer, it appears, claims to possess some infallible means for determining who has a closed mind and who has not—a claim that Hutchins will always dispute. In Hutchins' utopian university, faculty members, students and trustees are supposed to help each other discover how to recognize an open mind when they see one. To *assume* that a Communist Party member has a closed mind may be correct enough most of the time, but if it were *always* true, no one would ever leave the Communist Party. Further, the fascinating work of discovering the thousand and one shades of open and closed-mindedness is the work of educating oneself in philosophy, and unless we can isolate closed-mindedness without the help of a glaring label, we are not getting much of an education.

Turning to Hutchins' *Saturday Review* article, we find several passages especially to the point:

We do not care enough about religion any more to worry about the religious views of members of university faculties. But whereas the Communist experiments in this country were once regarded as the work of harmless eccentrics, and ignored as such, now the discovery that a man has read the works of Karl Marx, or knows somebody who has, is enough to raise a question about trusting him in the classroom. Undoubtedly this attitude results from the Cold War, and when the Cold War comes to an end, as all things must, the intensity of the feeling in regard to teachers who are alleged to hold heretical political or economic views will somewhat abate.

I suggest that our trouble is more fundamental than the Cold War, that it rests on a misconception of education and of the university, and that after the present issues disappear others will arise to plague us in their turn. Unless we can figure out what education

is and what a university is, and unless we can build up a tradition in this country that supports these conceptions, education and the universities will always be at the mercy of those who honestly or for political purposes seek to make them the protagonists of their views.

A brief review is provided of the conditions surrounding the origin of universities, in the course of which it comes to light that the colleges of the Middle Ages were in some respects far more liberal than our own. Many medieval universities had no "trustees." The faculty taught as it wished, and if the community disapproved the often heretical views of the faculty and tried to restrict expression, as sometimes happened, the whole university simply got up and walked away. This sort of university had no fixed interest in any one community, and whenever teachers felt the atmosphere to be too oppressive, they could move. In contrast, the American university is anchored to one spot in many ways. It never thinks of moving, because the university is no longer just a corporation formed by teachers wanting to teach and students wanting to learn; it is a ponderous institution, and institutions always tend to identify themselves with the *status quo* in culture and politics. When either a person or a university, moreover, is identified with the *status quo*, an allergy to controversy starts to develop, and it is this dangerous psychosomatic condition which Hutchins exposes.

The following section of Hutchins' article, concerned with "controversy," gives the gist of his argument, and we think it likely that some readers will be encouraged by this discussion to obtain a copy of the Oct. 17 *SR*. Hutchins writes:

The great new term of reproach nowadays is "controversial." The dream of the public-relations man is that all the people of America will discern in his clients the perfect combination of all the popular stereotypes of the day. Hence the tendency toward flat conformity to what the public relations man discovers, through a series of careful polls, to be the prevalent opinion at the moment. Hence the elimination of men, ideas, books, and opinions that may attract unfavorable notice as differing from the prevalent opinion. In many quarters during the last political campaign a man became controversial by being for Stevenson. Professors who said they were for him were held to endanger the public relations of their universities, though those who were for Eisenhower were, of course, not controversial at all. I do not think I exaggerate when I say that in a

democratic society controversy is an end in itself. A university that is not controversial is not a university. A civilization in which there is not a continuous controversy about important issues, speculative and practical, is on the way to totalitarianism and death.

Perhaps I should not say that the drive toward social and political conformity that we are witnessing today is un-American. I will say that it is un-Utopian. In Utopia if there were a House Committee on Un-Utopian Activities, as of course there is not, it would dedicate itself to seeking out and exposing those elements in the community which were trying to put an end to difference and hence to that discussion which the Utopians regard as the essence of true Utopianism. In Utopia the rich and the conservative agree that, looking at matters only in terms of their own selfish interests something that is hard for a Utopian to do, the preservation of free discussion and criticism is the best guarantee against violent attacks upon Utopian institutions. Because the University of Utopia symbolizes the highest aspirations of Utopian civilization it naturally receives the support, the almost automatic support, of all classes of society. The only kind of university that could be popular with the Utopians is one in which the most lively controversy was continuously under way.

The award for the Most Controversial Person, which is bestowed with great ceremony on the anniversary of the day on which the Utopians declared their independence of the Philistines, is usually won by a professor of the University of Utopia.

COMMENTARY

PROSPECT FOR TRANSITION

THE question of a new political credo, discussed in *Frontiers*, is only a single phase of the broad movement toward revaluation and change in modern life. Less noticeable, perhaps, than political indecision, but even more fundamental, is the fluid condition of religious thinking.

A number of influences have contributed to open-minded inquiry in religion. First and most important has been the impact of scientific discovery and criticism. Western religion, which is to say Christianity, is so constituted that "growth" in religious thought is difficult if not impossible. "Revealed" religion cannot alter for the better except as conceptions of admittedly human origin replace the dogmatic declarations of revelation. This process wears away at faith in revelation itself, until, finally, the whole idea of supernaturalism in religion becomes suspect. That this has happened to Christianity is easily seen from the growth of the Unitarian movement, which is little more than Humanism with a Christian vocabulary, and from the tendency of the vitality in even more orthodox Christian denominations to gravitate toward fields of "social action."

Meanwhile, in the midst of the process of adjustment between scientific and religious ideas, the prestige of science has suffered great blows. Scientific utopianism, the platform of social reform and revolution in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, has largely lost its following. Disillusionment with the hopes for science set in not only because of the almost incalculable increase in the power of destruction which science contributed to modern warfare, but also because of the dread economic dislocations which seem unavoidable in a technologized society.

In other words, the modern world is wide open for new forms of thinking. Only the fears and insecurities of the present international situation hold the minds of many in subservience to various aspects of the *status quo*. If these fears

can be dispelled, or if, by some happy historical accident, some adjustment can be made between the warring ideologies of "East" and "West," we may have the pleasure of witnessing a new surge of creative activity in all these fields—politics, religion, and scientific philosophy. The seeds of new developments have been planted in many parts of the world. There are actual experiments in new ways of life already in progress, some in the United States, some in Europe, some in Asia. It may be that only the menacing shadows of old forms of belief and thinking arrest the advent of far-reaching change.

FRONTIERS The Great Illusion

WHEN Communism and angry and fearful anti-Communism—which is equally pernicious—have passed away, what then? What will fill the vacuum that is left? It is time to begin thinking of such things, for the quality of modern criticism is such that there seems little likelihood that either will last (in its present form) very much longer, and each (in its present form) is almost wholly dependent upon the survival of the other.

These questions are prompted by passages in a book review by Nicola Chiaromonte in *Partisan Review* for November-December. Chiaromonte is discussing *The Captive Mind*, by Czeslaw Milosz, which deals with the life of intellectuals who lived through the atrocities of war in Eastern Europe. The reviewer gives every reason to think that this book is extraordinarily good; here, however, we are interested in passages concerned with the evaluation of Communism in the history of Western thought. Chiaromonte says:

Proving Communism wrong and wicked is not a very interesting enterprise by now. The proof can be reached on the ground of facts and simple evidence. As for the Diamat {Dialectical Materialism}, it is, of course, as Milosz says, "nothing more than nineteenth century vulgarized to the second power." In it, "history and every branch of human creativity are presented as governed by unshakable and *already known laws*." "Centuries of human history. . . are reduced to a few generalized terms. Undoubtedly, one comes closer to the truth when one sees history as the expression of the class struggle rather than a series of private quarrels among kings and nobles. But precisely because such an analysis of history comes closer to the truth, it is more dangerous. It gives the illusion of *full knowledge*; it supplies answers to all questions, answers which simply run around in a circle. . . . What's more, the humanities get connected with the natural sciences thanks to the materialistic outlook . . . and so we see the circle closing perfectly and logically."

The impressive thing about Milosz' analysis is that it bids the reader recognize that Communism is a logical expression of the assumptions of his own cultural past—a proposition often maintained in these pages. The

Red Revolution was not an invasion from another planet. Its norms and values, its ethical claims, its declarations concerning human nature, are not new, and are not alien. The "materialism" of the Communist is not essentially different from the practical materialism of the Capitalist—it is only more deliberate, doctrinal, and outspoken. The "rugged individualist" claims that he is justified by the "survival of the fittest" to acquire as much of the goods of this world as he can. The embattled collectivist forms an alliance with others to collaborate in the same acquisitive project, in the name of the depressed classes. The point, however, that Milosz makes concerning the illusion of "full knowledge" is perhaps most important of all. Chiaromonte comments:

Why is such a simplification convincing? Why does the mind of a man "stick" to it? One obvious answer is that it offers the only comprehensive and univocal explanation of the world that can be derived from nineteenth century philosophy and science, the only one that can be vulgarized, made accessible to everybody. The Diamat is the *reductio ad absurdum* of Darwinism, Marxism, and scientific method for the sake of unity. A *reductio ad absurdum* does not prove that certain notions are wrong, but it certainly raises a question about them. In any case, it seems to imply the recognition that the need for a coherent, if not univocal and dogmatic, image of the world is a permanent need of man, not an invention of metaphysics and theologians.

One explanation, then, of the fascinations of Marxism is the longing of the human heart for unity. Complicated people like William James may be able to take pleasure in a Pluralism which deliberately resists the inward motion of the mind toward one single and capacious explanation for the phenomena of life, but the simpler souls respond more easily to the attractions of one grand System.

"The son of a worker, subjected to such an education," Milosz explains, "cannot think otherwise than as the school demands. Two times two equals four. The press, literature, painting, films, and theater, all illustrate what he learns. . . . It would be wrong to

assert that a dual set of values no longer exists. The resistance. . . is, however, emotional. It survives, but it is beaten down whenever it has to explain itself in rational terms. A man's opposition to this new philosophy of life is much like a toothache. Not only can he not express the pain in words, but he cannot even tell you which tooth is aching.

The mistake, here, or rather the omission, is that this sort of undefined and obscurely oppressive condition is by no means limited to those who live under Communist rule. The causes may be different in some respects, but the total effect is about the same. In the land of Free Enterprise, the monotone of indoctrination does not derive from an official source. It comes, instead, from the psychology of "merchandising," which has, through several decades of studied development, come very close to supplying a popular religion of acquisition. The eagerness with which everything is "sold," under the free enterprise system, is by implication the promise that all human needs may be satisfied by the purchase of the proper goods and services. Without exactly meaning it, the high priests of salesmanship convey the belief that nothing important will be left out of human life so long as you are able to buy what they have to offer.

There could be no greater deception, yet it is a more or less successful deception, and since very, very few people ever reach the point of being able to buy whatever they want, disillusionment seldom comes from having tested the doctrine to the limit. Most of us remain vulnerable targets for the propaganda of acquisition, since there is always one more thing we lack to make our "happiness" complete. Inwardly, we may suspect the whole business, but such feelings cannot be indulged. To question the system would mean to suffer a rather terrible isolation from our fellows. So the pain and the sense of betrayal continue without being explained.

From an immediately practical viewpoint, the importance of a recognition of this sort is that it washes away all resentment and fear of communism and communists, replacing these

emotions with a feeling of profound sympathy. We are all sufferers together from the same collection of lies—lies we have told to ourselves for generations and more. We begin to see that so long as we live in a society which has acquisition as its chief cultural dynamic, just so long will there be the alternatives of spurious satisfaction such as both Capitalism and Collectivism afford.

Communism, doubtless, must be opposed at the political level, since it is certainly no improvement over Capitalism—is rather an adjustment to the practical failure of Capitalism to make its illusions attractive to a sufficient number of believers. But to offer merely political opposition to Communism is to miss entirely the lesson which the history of the Communist movement has to teach. Communism is a schismatic development within the larger unity of the acquisitive society of Western civilization. The value of the movement, intellectually, lies in what we learn about ourselves by a study of its history.

Heresy, fortunately, is catching. And the more determined the defenders of the faith to preserve the purity of their beliefs, the quicker the spread of heresy. The truth which requires an imperious and threatening orthodoxy for its protection is a truth which inspires distrust. The popular mind, like a child's mind, is sensitive to the anxiety and insecurity of its rulers. And when, as has already happened in several parts of the world, and is likely to happen again, bloody wars are fought in the name of preserving the true belief, the rate of disillusionment may be expected to increase in direct proportion to human suffering and exhaustion.

But if the acquisitive dynamic finally breaks down, what other principle of striving shall we adopt to give our lives a meaning? The only way, perhaps, of obtaining a safe answer to this question is to begin by taking a careful inventory of the illusions we have already tried out and found wanting. There is no space here for such an inquiry, yet the illusion we must beware of beyond all else is the one described by Milosz as

"the illusion of *full knowledge*." This is the illusion which ends in nihilism and despair, because, as the ancients might have instructed us, "full knowledge," for human beings, is the practical claim that the end of the world has arrived, that the struggle for understanding is over.

We owe to the great Humanists of the Renaissance the idea of man as an endlessly learning and *discovering* being; this, when all else has been said, is the definition of man's essential nature. And this, we think, is the verity which should make all rival claims or assertions fall away to insignificance. It is a truth which can successfully defy all the stultifying illusions of the dogmatists and the system-builders. With it as a start, perhaps, we may be able to find a faith for living which will take the place of the outworn doctrine of acquisition.