VOLUME V, NO. 26
JUNE 25, 1952

A THEORY OF ILLUSIONS

ONE of the great problems of life, it seems, lies in learning how to get along with illusions—our own as well as other people's. No one who has in any important degree gone through the experience of "growing up" can claim to be without illusions. He knows that the process of moving toward maturity—again, a relative thing—involves the continuous reform, discard, and reinterpretation of ideas previously held. If his sense of the meaning of things is not developing, then *he* is not developing, for what is left of a man when you leave out his ideas and feelings about the meaning of life?

Some such view as this, doubtless, was behind Socrates' profession of "ignorance." And when the Oracle of Delphi declared that no man was wiser than Socrates, the barefoot philosopher of Athens assumed that this was because he was always ready, given sufficient reason, to change his mind. Moreover, Socrates *searched* for reasons for changing his mind, on the ground that growth in mind is essential to the life of human beings.

For many people, including the Athenian jury which condemned Socrates to death, this is a disturbing idea. "Disturbing" is hardly the word, for the Socratic theory of knowledge and of the good life for human beings seems to threaten the very ground of moral conviction and social stability for all those who have acquired the habit of worshipping the wrong kind of "Absolutes." The offense of Socrates was that he adopted another kind of "Absolutes"—a necessary kind, however, it seems to us, and the only kind worth having. And when he compared, in public, his absolutes with those of others, the result was so plain that Socrates became a hated man.

The absolutes of Socrates are necessary for the reason that, without them, it is impossible to live successfully with our illusions. Unlike Socrates, the Athenians made their illusions into absolutes, and when he applied his first principles, his absolutes—which were, in brief, the intellectual and moral tools of human growth—to the absolutes of the Athenian populace, the latter crumpled away to nothing. Socrates seemed to attack "the Gods," and to introduce new "Gods." He did not, of course. He exhibited the dynamics of impartiality and the Gods suffered to exactly the extent that they should have.

This, at any rate, is a major lesson to be learned from Plato's Socratic dialogues, whether or not you agree with Socrates' own opinions—"illusions," if you will—about the nature of things. It is the lesson found stated over and over again in the spirited defenses of the scientific method that have been appearing in the serious books and magazines for the past century or so. The only absolutes that can be publicly acknowledged, with universal assent, are principles of method in the search for truth.

At some later date in human evolution, perhaps, we shall be wise enough to agree upon the ends to which impartial means inevitably lead; but this "far-off divine event" is surely nowhere in sight for the present generation—a generation which hardly recognizes or admits that agreement upon means is both possible and desirable.

Getting down to cases: which are the "bad" absolutes? Obviously, they are the absolutes which deny or interfere with impartial means of inquiry. It seems fair to argue that all absolutes which do this are no more than dogmas manufactured out of illusions. When the learned doctor of the Church told Galileo that he would not look through the astronomer's telescope to see the spots on the sun, because Aristotle had not mentioned them and, therefore, they could not

possibly be there, the pious churchman had made rigid dogmas of his illusions (*a*) that the Ptolemaic system correctly represented the arrangement of the heavenly bodies; (*b*) that the Church displayed infallible wisdom in adopting Aristotle as "Master of them that know"; and (*c*) that no subsequent discoveries could alter the then accepted notions of how the world was made.

As another and contrasting "bad" absolute, readers may recall the psychologist who told Joseph Jastrow (quoted in the *American Scholar*, Winter 1938-39) that he refused to accept extra sensory perception (telepathy, clairvoyance, etc.) as a fact because he felt that this would oblige him to "give up the body of scientific knowledge so painfully acquired during the last 300 years." Perhaps we ought not to press the parallel, for a scientist, unlike a theologian, is supposed to be wary of doctrines or theories he has not personally proved. However, a scientist is also supposed to be willing to undertake proof of even unpopular propositions. That this psychologist, along with a number of others, resisted the investigation of ESP after a large volume of evidence in its favor had been assembled makes him at least an intellectual "cousin" of the Aristotelian cleric.

A much more profound and understanding comment was given in the nineteenth century to William Crookes, an eminent physicist who also conducted some rather remarkable experiments in psychic research. Crookes had laid his factual findings before this scientist, a close friend, who made this response:

> Any *intellectual* reply to your facts I cannot see. Yet it is a curious fact that even I, . . . with all my faith in your power of observing and your thorough truthfulness, feel as if I wanted to see for myself; and it is quite painful to me to think how much more proof I want. Painful, I say, because I see that it is not reason which convinces a man, unless a fact is repeated so frequently that the impression becomes like a habit of mind, an old acquaintance, a thing known so long that it cannot be doubted. This is a curious phase of man's mind, and it is remarkably strong in scientific men—stronger than in others, I think. For this reason we must not always call a man dishonest because he does not yield to evidence for a long time. The old wall of belief must be broken down by much battering.

Crookes' experiments, it should be noted, were in the field of Spiritualism, as distinguished from the more general area of psychic research, and no one who has read his reports of the investigations can fail to realize that the results he obtained could hardly be duplicated at will. It is perhaps fortunate that these experiments were, so to say, "privileged," for it is appalling to think what might happen if a casual curiosity in "the psychic" could produce such astounding consequences. However, the point of the observations of Crookes' friend touches the heart of the matter. *The overcoming of illusions is a laborious and painful process, seriously undertaken by only courageous and devoted men.*

By this time, we may have earned the comment, "Why so ponderous about all this? *We* are quite willing to accept Galileo, and Newton and Einstein (with whatever he means), as well. And we bow to no man in our appreciation of Dr. Rhine's interesting program of psychic research at Duke University."

Well, we are not talking about yesterday's illusions, but the illusions of today and tomorrow. To take pride in being free from the illusions of our fathers is little more than a way of revealing our subjection to illusions of our own. There are thousands of "illusions" we no longer believe in, but to regard the intellectual debris of the past (it may not be *all* debris) as evidence of our present high attainments neglects the primary reality that illusion is a constant condition of life. Illusions change, but illusion is continuous.

The foregoing may sound a bit like a patient submission to failure, but this effect results from a special use of the word "illusion." A better word, probably, would be the Indian *Maya*, signifying "appearance," or the old philosophical term, "phænomena," suggesting the same idea, as contrasted with its opposite, "noumena," which was used to represent the inner reality behind

appearances—that which we seek to discover by penetrating illusion after illusion.

But what is to be said to the man who proposes that there is no "reality" behind the tissue of external illusions, and that search for it is only a vain dream?

The only thing we can think of to say to this, beyond the fact that the quest for reality seems a primal instinct of the human mind, is that some men are wiser than others—much wiser—and wise men, whatever they have found behind the veil of appearance, give evidence that the search for reality is worth the struggle it takes.

Further, the way in which we—some of us, at least—outgrow illusions suggests the possibility of getting closer and closer to the real in human experience. And if a man is able to read the Sermon on the Mount, Plato's *Phaedo,* the *Bhagavad-Gita,* certain of the Upanishads, Emerson's Essays, and even our old friend Walt Whitman—and still maintain that reality exists not—then we shall have nothing more to say to him.

But if this sense of the real was possible thousands of years ago—as possible as it is today—what about "progress"? Is there any?

The realities of life, it seems to us, have to be recognized in each of their successive emergences. The spectacle of existence sometimes seems like a kaleidoscope, of which each turn on its axis discloses a new pattern to be understood. The "truth" behind the pattern may be transcendental and unchanging, but each age of mankind must learn to read it anew. Each age must learn the secret of "non-attachment," each epoch must proclaim for itself, in its own idiom, the rights and the dignity of man.

Each age has to face the question of Pontius Pilate, "What is Truth?", and make some sort of answer. In a recent issue of the *Nation,* Joseph Wood Krutch, for whom we have considerable respect, discusses the *Partisan Review Series* No. Three, a symposium on "Religion and the Intellectuals," now issued as a separate publication (reprinting articles from *PR* for February and March, 1950). Mr. Krutch makes points which ought to have been made in these pages when the symposium was first published, so that we now borrow from him briefly.

This is a theme to which *PR* returned in 1950, after a seven-year interval since publication of an earlier symposium, conceived in a somewhat different spirit—"The Failure of Nerve," dealing with the tendency, already evident in 1943, of a number of scholars and intellectuals to seek a haven from their anxieties in a return to religion. Several of the tough-minded greats of the modern spirit contributed articles on the Failure of Nerve, among them Sidney Hook, John Dewey, and Ernest Nagel. Most notable in these discussions was the failure of these eminent men to make any important distinction between dogmatic religion and metaphysical idealism—both were arraigned, tried, and condemned as bad, *all* bad.

A new current appears in the 1950 symposium. The contributors are different, to be sure—more "literary," in fact—yet the choice of writers may represent a proper editorial instinct on the part of the *PR.* Mr. Krutch's generalizations are to the point. One of the contributors, R. P. Blackmur, had written:

> I should not suppose that the revival of religion is in any way a result of the failure of radical politics, nor that religion could remedy any breakdown in the organization of society. I should prefer to believe the political failure and breakdown in organization resulted from prior or parallel failure of response to religious experience.

Mr. Krutch finds in this the key to the present bewilderment of the intellectuals (*Nation,* May 17):

> What "the intellectuals" have been experiencing is less the discovery of a faith than the loss of one—the loss, that is to say, of their faith in irreligion, for late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century naturalism was a positive and not merely a negative thing, the declaration of a conviction that scientific materialism, relativism, and doubt were capable of

supplying whatever we need to live by. This so-called "revival of religion" is a loss of faith in scepticism rather than a decline of scepticism about faith. And that of course explains why the positive aspects of the "revival" are so shoddy, why "intellectuals" so often either adopt Waugh's pietist snobbery or, even more commonly, profess, not their belief in God, but their conviction that it would be a fine thing for "culture" if everybody did believe.

The kaleidoscope, in short, is turning, right now, and the illusions of the half-century from 1875 to 1925 are losing their form and substance. The results, for the student of the mental and emotional currents of our time, are extremely interesting. The *PR* symposium offers both confusion and critical profundity. To Robert Graves, for example, we owe the searching comments that "A nation can exist well enough without a positive religion so long as it preserves its rituals," and that "The concept of the supernatural is a disease of religion." The contributions run the gamut of opinion, including articles by John Dewey, Allen Tate, James Agee, and Hannah Arendt. The two last-named contributors ought not to be missed.

A final note on the troubles of "the intellectuals," who mirror the world's bewilderments and transitions. It is customary to sneer a bit at them, as a rather useless breed of people who live by cleverness with words. Let us, instead, recognize that serious intellectuals—the term is possibly inappropriate—accept a responsibility which the average man disdains or cannot fulfill at all. They try to understand the world from a disinterested point of view. If they fail, their failure is at least more admirable than the behavior of those who have not even tried.

Letter from ENGLAND

LONDON.—One of the greatest of living Englishmen, Bertrand Russell, recently celebrated his eightieth birthday. The occasion was made notable by a broadcast by this philosopher in which he gave listeners a glimpse at the two purposes which had governed his activities for more than half a century. The voice that came over the air was crisp and clear, and the words spoken gave out the authentic note of greatness. The speaker was humble, modest and most patently sincere. Two purposes, said Russell, have dominated the activities of his heart and head. There was first an attempt to ascertain whether it is possible to know anything. For twenty-three years Russell pursued this quest of knowledge, using mathematics as his medium. He finally decided that many mathematical demonstrations were fallacious. He then turned to his second, and greater, purpose—to advance the well-being of his fellow man.

Philosophers and seers and prophets seldom embark on that enterprise and escape the consequences. For man, for some reason buried in the great hinterland of his subconscious, hates those who would heal his wounds and lead on toward the Promised Land. And so it was with Russell. Perhaps, among the orthodox, his greatest offense arose from his rejection of traditional Christianity, and his unreliability even on the theistic issue. Next, though born an aristocrat and for years now an Earl, Russell cared nothing whatsoever for social distinctions and went out among his fellows with love in his heart for all, irrespective of class. When Socialism was a sort of moral bad smell, Russell became a Socialist. He denounced war and when invited to keep his views to himself in the national interest, ignored the request and suffered two years' imprisonment. Since then Russell has had other humiliations. He was found morally unfit to teach in Columbia University in New York; he was subjected, in the United States, to a venomous vendetta from mugwumps not fit to unlatch his shoes.

But time, if one waits long enough, and lives long enough, brings the wheel full circle. To-day, at eighty, Russell is regarded with considerably more veneration and affection than the Archbishop of Canterbury or any other public figure whose function predicates right living and the pursuit of good. He was recently awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, that absurd institution giving Russell its award for Literature instead of for his propaganda for peace and brotherly love among mankind.

Russell now lives at Thames-side Richmond. He has a beautiful wife many years his junior and several children, some now adult. He lives quietly and unostentatiously. He is known among a large circle of friends as Bertie; to the reading public as Bertrand Russell, and to very few as Earl Russell. He has the Order of Merit and most academic honours that are to be had. But for him these things mean less than they do to lesser men. He said a few days ago that throughout his life he had done nothing to excess—except to smoke too much.

Your correspondent met Russell but once, but the occasion—a long evening—remains a vivid and treasured memory of a gentle, kindly little man with a great shock of pure white hair and the eyes of a man still in his prime. I suppose that many great men tend to become slightly—or more—conscious of their eminence and so acquire, little by little, a pompous mien and innate consciousness of superiority. There is nothing like that about Russell. There is, of course, no yardstick by which it is possible to measure his influence upon his time, but it is fairly safe to say that few living men have influenced thought more than he. He is well aware that he has greatly influenced the lives of others and, in old age, that must be for him a source of satisfaction. For Russell has always been the apostle of gentleness, of the service of others, of the brotherhood of man. More than anything in the world, this wonderful old man hates cruelty. And who would deny it that could we purge the world—that is our own foolish hearts—of that element, the bleeding wounds of civilization would close and heal within a generation?

ENGLISH CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW
"THE GOLDEN FEAST"

The Golden Age has existed intermittently throughout the history of civilization as a tradition of poetry, a world of ideas, a dynamic urge to the reconstruction of the social fabric and an inspiration to the heart of man.

—H. W. MASSINGHAM

The review policy of MANAS has always included a declared intention to examine currently popular reading material, both fiction and non-fiction; this with the hope of encouraging constructive criticism and a study of the problems of our age in terms of the trends and attitudes reflected in widely circulated writing. Obviously, however, this is not the only obligation of a journal concerned with a "search for principles that may be capable of supporting intelligent idealism." Popular tastes and popular acclaim are by no means infallible indices of what is most worth-while. Also in need of attention are little-known authors whose works are exceptional in value. We may here reflect that the movement of constructive ideas through the world is in one sense like the movements of political reform—carried on by the members of a minority, who, while somehow innately incapable of becoming famous and powerful, may yet influence the programs and the attitudes of those in power.

One English author, Roy Walker, whose study of Shakespearian symbolism clearly speaks a universal language of psychological initiation, has been quoted approvingly here in reviews of now unobtainable books, *The Time is Free* and *The Time is Out of Joint.* Those who can recall those quotations will realize that both books were much more than "literary" studies, and will be pleased that Mr. Walker's latest volume, *The Golden Feast,* is definitely obtainable through the Macmillan Co. ($3.75). *The Golden Feast* traces the current of Utopian aspiration through the history of Greece, Rome, Medieval and Renaissance Europe, through the Puritan and Romantic eras of English literature and into our own time, chiefly in the form of poetry. Sharing a great deal of basic intent in common with such works as Erich Fromm's *The Forgotten Language,* Mr. Walker's *The Golden Feast* finds inspiration in the dynamic symbolism of myths. The Golden Age, for Mr. Walker, as for his poets, is an *experience* rather than a fantasy, and his approach cuts through the artificial distinctions that often separate literature, psychology, philosophy, sociology and religion:

> This book aspires to be a composite poetic image, and thus to convey in its many facets a single experience more widely shared by representative poets in all ages than has been recognised or acknowledged
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> Invocation of religion, philosophy and mythology is a warning that we are not dealing with amiable efforts to disguise stark reality in pretty but perishable verbal garlands, but with what often purports to be authentic vision of the human past. What must be made of such claims? Any possibility that the poetic vision of the Golden Age has immemorial natural roots must radically alter our judgment of the meaning and validity of the dream that has haunted Europe, and not only Europe, since the dawn of history. Although, as Sidney said Nature's world is brazen and "the poets only deliver a golden," between the poetic and the scientific view of Nature there may be a qualitative difference of vision rather than a disagreement about what is to be seen.
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> In some such prehistorical Golden Age not only eminent scientists but modern authors such as H. W. Massingham and Edward Carpenter have firmly and rationally believed. But the importance of the evidence from a remote past lies mainly in the conclusions we draw about essential human nature in its relationship with the total natural environment. We may prefer to leave that vexed question to the archaeologists and try instead to understand human nature here and now, only to find with Rousseau that it is virtually undiscoverable amid the habits and vices of a man-modified environment. Like those economists who once turned to hypothetical desert islands to simplify a complex problem, we may deport an imaginary Swiss Family Robinson to a fertile solitude and await the emergence of primal purity or barbarity, or both: but that is open to the opposite objection of dismissing the whole achievement of civilization as arbitrarily as the most fanatical primitivist.

> The quest is always the same, the answer of the true poet is always the same, because the truth is always the same truth. And the whole point of taking the poets seriously is that it is a truth we are not very good at discovering for ourselves, though we may recognize it when we are initiated by them. The poets adventure into a world, actually or mythically in the past, mystically or remotely present, imminent or far off in the future or beyond the grave, where there is peace of mind, peace with all men and—what we have lost to our shame and peril—peace with Nature celebrated at each day's feast.

Here, some readers may be reminded of the closing sections of Macneile Dixon's *The Human Situation*, and of his often quoted essay, *Civilization and the Arts.* There would be a profound argument for the percipience of the poets even if it rested solely upon the contention that, just because the poets are *not* specialists in some particular field of human knowledge or investigation, they are able to roam across the boundaries of compartmentalized learning, moving freely from intuition to reason, from philosophy to religion, and across the centuries and the æons. When we say "poets," however, we really mean all those who, whether in prose, rhyme, free verse, write creatively. The first definition of a poet is supplied by what Keats called the love of beauty, and those who seek beauty in whatever direction, with the hope of passing on its fragrance to others, have earned the designation. In this sense, the great poets have been humanitarian religionists as well. It follows that the greatest religious and philosophical teachers of all times have also been poets, the cleavage ordinarily conceived between the two being perhaps a consequence of the opposition to imaginative originality established by the religions of Authority.

Mr. Walker, clearly a poet, explains his own "survey" as necessarily including a "sketch of the currents of religious or philosophical thought—Orphism, Pythagoreanism and Platonism." There are also what he calls "plunges into Hindu, Persian, Chinese, Slavonic and Celtic as well as classical mythology."

Another suggestive line of emphasis in *The Golden Feast* concerns the dream of harmony, once existent and now recoverable, between man and nature. The publisher, Macmillan, appropriately remarks that *The Golden Feast* "shows how the image and observance of a mystical banquet in which man and beast partake together in a communion of love and charity is at the heart of the creative vision of harmony between nature and the human spirit."

A passage from Aldous Huxley's *Themes and Variations* happens to have qualities which make it a good introduction to this phase of Walker's work:

> The Golden Rule is to be applied to animate and inanimate Nature as well as to our fellow men. Treat Nature with charity and understanding, and Nature will repay you with unfailing gifts. Treat Nature aggressively, with greed and violence and incomprehension: wounded Nature will turn and destroy you. Theoretically, at least, the ancients understood these truths better than ourselves. The Greeks, for example, knew very well that hubris against the essentially divine order of Nature would be followed by its appropriate nemesis. The Chinese taught that the Tao, or indwelling Logos, was present on every level from the physical and the biological up to the spiritual; and they knew that outrages against Tao, in Nature no less than in man, would lead to fatal results. We have to recapture some of this old lost wisdom. If we fail to do this—we condemn ourselves and our children to misery and deepening squalor and the despair that finds expression in the frenzies of collective violence.

Roy Walker is something of a genius in discovering correlations. The jacket-cover of *The Golden Feast* displays prints of two famous pictures. One, "The Garden of Eden," with figures of Adam and Eve by Rubens, is in sharp contrast to the other, representing "The Land of Cockaigne" or "Fool's Paradise." In the background of the Eden picture are seen the unspoiled and unexploited beauties of Nature, but in the Land of Cockaigne is seen a Nature ravished by human gluttony. Somewhere, as Walker indicates, the dream of a natural paradise became confused with a wish-fulfillment paradise

of sensuality, and even into the many religious imaginings of after-death states this potent rival intruded. But the great current of aspiration toward a higher life, as Walker shows, has flowed through the centuries in every land—responding to what Matthew Arnold called "the summons of the true life, kept for him who false puts by." The Pythagoreans at Crotona, Plato's Academy, Plotinus, Iamblichus, and the later Platonists, were among the representatives of "religious" inspiration without the usual religious forms, of a paradise the key to which is beauty rather than excitement.

It is Mr. Walker's opinion that man has lost his way in the search for happiness by dulling his sensibilities through abuse of Great Nature—Great Nature including not only the lower orders of life so thoroughly exploited by man for food, but also the stuff and substance of his own physical and emotional nature. Mr. Walker is an ascetic, yet an ascetic whose philosophy, one finds, is as sensible and revealing as it is inspiring. MANAS readers who are familiar with Arthur Morgan's *Nowhere Was Somewhere* will find in *The Golden Feast* a number of correlations with Dr. Morgan's study of the Utopian dream.

COMMENTARY
IMPARTIALITY IS DIFFICULT

THE letter from a subscriber discussed in this week's "Children . . . and Ourselves" makes an occasion for noting the difficulties of editorial impartiality in conducting a magazine which attempts evaluation of social conditions and trends. It would be extremely simple, and triumphantly virtuous (from one point of view), as the "Children" editor intimates, to start out with the assumption that anything which appears in the *Saturday Evening Post* is irredeemably tainted by "Capitalist" apologetics. If we adopted this assumption, we could still quote the *Post*, needing to protect ourselves from criticism only by introducing whatever we quote with a little apology of our own, to the effect that even if the *Post* is issued by "paid hirelings of the bosses," something worth reading occasionally gets into its pages.

It would be another pleasant release from editorial responsibility to be able to assume that the Labor Movement is guided by ruthless Machiavellians who will stop at nothing to gain power over the processes of manufacture and distribution of goods. Then, when we find someone like Walter Reuther offering, in the interests of world peace, a far-reaching program of national policy for the United States (see MANAS for Oct. 11, 1950), we could still refer to it with approval provided we added some caustic observations about the irresponsibility of labor leaders in general.

These attitudes, however, it seem to us, would represent timidity and fear of criticism, rather than genuine editorial impartiality. They would signify a sort of partisanship which MANAS, since it began publication, has striven to avoid, even at the cost of the friendliness of some of our readers.

Our policy, in short, is something like the policy adopted by the American Civil Liberties Union. Just as the ACLU operates on the principle of defending the constitutional rights of *everyone*, of even avowed fascists and communists, so we endeavor to avoid all stereotyped judgments of men and methods: when what a man says seems good, or what he does seems wise, we endeavor to say so, instead of assuming the hypocrisy of an ulterior motive. If evidence of bias is present, we hope to recognize it, and make appropriate qualification. If not, then we see no reason to adopt a darkly suspicious attitude. If liberals reject the "guilt-by-association'! method of attack by their critics, they ought never to practice it themselves.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

WE have a well-worded letter from a subscriber criticizing our quotation on Mexican village life from-a *Satevepost* article by Thomas S. Sutherland (in connection with our review of Steinbeck's *The Pearl, MANAS,* April 16). Sutherland wondered if what seems to us "the abject poverty" of the Mexican villagers was not related to the "enrichment of their lives with spiritual qualities." Our correspondent, obviously reacting against the general *pro status quo,* "all's right with big business" position with which the *Satevepost* has become identified, is annoyed by Sutherland's suggestion that there may be values in "abject poverty." She asks:

> How can "abject poverty" become a "normal way of life"? Perhaps an aware adult may make a conscious choice. One can still cherish the preposterous notion that one must totally deny the body in order to feed the mind and soul, as if it were possible for such a rigid duality to actually exist. But when we speak of "folk" we speak of fathers and mothers and children. And no mother, whether human or animal, can accept denial for her children—can observe the hunger of her children, and still maintain a "superior understanding of love, friendship, beauty and death."
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> There is no denying that a persistent preoccupation with materialistic attitudes toward existence must of necessity rule out the richness that an awareness of spirituality brings to living, but to wholly negate one for the other is a fallacy in thought.
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> In the past the fiction was more easily maintained that simple, guileless peoples, not having our notions of having adequate food and satisfactory conditions for shelter, did not only not require them, but could still gaily sing and be warm and friendly. It is an unintelligent idealization that has enabled nations to enslave such simple peoples with no thought of the wrongs involved, and to perpetrate such simplification is dangerous. I wonder how much love of life Mr. Sutherland could possess, how much spirituality he could maintain, under the conditions he idealizes for the Mexican villagers.

Interesting issues seem to be involved, here. First of all, it has been MANAS policy to maintain that a good statement stands by itself, regardless of the character of the author and his political or religious inclinations. Mr. Sutherland may indeed be a double-dyed reactionary, an apologist for leaving "backward" peoples backward. He may even, conceivably, be one of those who would argue that there is no use in attempting to improve the housing conditions of migrant laborers since there are authenticated cases of such laborers breaking up beds and furniture for stove wood and sleeping on the floor—an argument that is both puerile and, in connection with certain political attitudes, vicious in its apathy. Naturally, those who have lived in abject poverty can only gradually learn to enrich their physical lives through the advantages of sanitation, better food and shelter, and to assume that "poor people" are somehow incapable of appreciating the basic improvements of civilization is arrogant and egotistical. But Mr. Sutherland did not say this. He simply said that since the Mexicans were forced to live in what we call "abject poverty," and since they fail to recognize or consider it as such, their lives seem free of the neurotic tensions which are typical in the richest of all cultures, the North American. Since there was little opportunity of "getting ahead" for the Mexican villagers to become concerned about, they tended to value honor and dignity more than getting ahead. This, actually, is an indictment of American civilization rather than praise of poverty.

Another point involves the examination of the values of "poverty" *per se*. Gandhi held that the Indian people should school themselves in the advantages of *not* becoming dependent upon all the material complications of Western culture. He wanted them to be intelligent without becoming wealthy, since wealth would be apt to bind them to whatever political powers were the source of material blessings, and also to the feeling that they "cannot live without" a certain standard of physical existence. So Gandhi cautioned his schools to refuse acceptance of money from the State, and to refuse donations from wealthy well-wishers, fearing that such subsidies might lead the recipients to become accustomed to things they were not able to produce for themselves.

In the average home, parents have an opportunity to learn something of why Gandhi felt this way. The child who is given too many toys often finds it difficult to make the best use of any one of them. And the child who is consistently plied with too much food and with too many varieties seldom learns to eat well; the child

who feels that status in respect to material things is important inevitably will grow up to be a snob.

Finally, we think, the real issue turns on the attitude of mind in which we examine the life of the Mexican Indians, or any other people different in circumstances from ourselves. On this point: After Steinbeck wrote his first popularly successful book, *Tortilla Flat*, he was forced to accept along with agreeable and novel emoluments the realization that many of those who bought his book thought that his writing was "charming" because he wrote about such "quaint" people. Others, in turn, saw in the characters of *Tortilla Flat* symbols of the class struggle, and grieved over their sad lot. Whereupon Steinbeck, who himself knows a great deal about poverty and "dispossessed" people, felt moved to write a second foreword to later editions:

> When this book was written, it did not occur to me that paisanos were curious or quaint, dispossessed or underdoggish. They are people whom I know and like, people who merge successfully with their habitat. In men this is called philosophy, and it is a fine thing.
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> Had I known that these stories and these people would be considered quaint, I think I never should have written them.
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> I wrote these stories because they were true stories and because I liked them. But literary slummers have taken these people up with the vulgarity of duchesses who are amused and sorry for a peasantry. These stories are out, and I cannot recall them. But I shall never again subject to the vulgar touch of the *decent* these good people of laughter and kindness, of honest lusts and direct eyes, of courtesy beyond politeness. If I have done them harm by telling a few of their stories, I am sorry. It will not happen again.
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> Adios, Monte.
>
> John Steinbeck

Steinbeck in short, because he is at times a great artist, knows enough to look beyond social conditions to the *human* realities of growth and awareness which may exist without regard for external circumstances. This is the way in which we should like to encourage parents to view the lives of their children, so that these children, as they approach maturity, will carry something of the same philosophical perspective on into their relations with their fellows. In one sense, we need feel sorry for no one because of "his environment." If we can *change* the environment, if we can improve it in some way that he will accept, this becomes our human obligation. But if we assume without question that his conditions are "intolerable," we are apt to find that we are contributing to that very attitude of condescending pity which has often destroyed all hope of understanding between the wealthy and the poor.

These suggestions are not meant to brush aside the essential questions raised by our correspondent, but to point to other aspects of the issues discussed. While Mr. Sutherland might not be able to maintain any "spirituality" if he lived as Mexican Indians must, it is also possible that he might be able to generate a great deal more. This is an *open* question. The debate will always go on between those who overemphasize "acceptance of life as it exists" and those who overemphasize its "intolerable" aspects. To swing too far in either direction is demonstrably dangerous as political or social doctrine. In the meantime, we hope that some of the points touched upon by Mr. Sutherland and by our review of *The Pearl* may help to encourage parents and teachers to educate children away from preoccupation with either wealth or poverty.

FRONTIERS

India's Struggle: Another View

THE leading article in MANAS for May 7 compared a statement by Chester Bowles (American Ambassador to India) on India's need for economic aid and better living standards with the view of J. C. Kumarappa (editor of *Gram Udyog,* organ of the All-India Village Industries Association), that extensive help from America might reduce India to an economic dependency of the West. This comparison elicited thoughtful comment by Dr. Arthur E. Morgan, recently a visitor in India as a member of a commission of educators invited by the Indian Government to study India's educational situation and needs. Dr. Morgan's remarks illuminate questions not dealt with in our article. He writes:

* * *

The article [on India] gives an impression of distinguishing between the attitude and spirit of Ambassador Bowles and that of Gandhi. I believe such an impression from the quotations given would be erroneous. J. C. Kumarappa is quoted as though he expressed Gandhi's attitude. In fact, he represents only one attitude among the followers of the great Indian leader. J. C. Kumarappa might be called an anti-industrialist. He would hold India to primitive handicrafts. In a theoretical discussion he may seem to take a wider view, but in actual practice that is where he stands. I recall listening to a discussion between Kumarappa and one of the most intimate, devoted and intelligent of Gandhi's followers. This other person was picturing the abject poverty of the Indian Villager and his craving for things that would enlarge his life. Kumarappa was opposed to the villager having those things, if they called for industrialization before every Indian was fully employed on the primitive handicraft level.

At the headquarters of the All-India Village Industries Association, where Kumarappa's views prevailed, I saw paper being made by completely primitive methods, such as he approves. I estimated roughly that to make a pound of paper by the methods there used would take at least a hundred times as much time in "man hours," as by modern methods. Even if the pitifully low peasant wages should be paid, the resulting paper would be a luxury which only well-to-do people could afford. I purchased a pound of it, and it was probably the highest priced paper I ever bought. I checked up on a number of these production processes in India and I estimated that the time required for a unit of production would be at least a hundred times as great as by modern methods.

One of the most intelligent and sincere of Gandhi's followers is J. B. Kripalani. He resigned from the presidency of the All-Indian Congress because of his convictions. More recently he has left the Congress Party to start another because he believed the party was not sufficiently loyal to Gandhi's principles. Several months ago, in *Harijan* [a weekly founded by Gandhi], Kripalani expressed his own opinion of industrialization in India. His views were in striking contrast to those of Kumarappa, and very close, I should say, to those expressed by Chester Bowles. Kripalani believes he is true to the spirit of Gandhi, and he believes that decentralized industry, with care to see that the man does not become the servant of the machine, is in the interest of India.

About two years before Gandhi died, a friend of mine was going to India to see him. I asked this friend to get from him a first-hand expression of his attitude toward decentralized industry. The report he brought back was almost exactly like that given by Kripalani in *Harijan;* and in striking contrast to the position of Kumarappa.

In the "good old days," when India had a tenth or a quarter of its present population, and when new land was won from the forests which are so often referred to in Indian literature, the population could be sustained by primitive methods. Today, those same methods insure poverty and starvation. India as a whole knows that, and is eager for the fruits of modern industry. The question is not whether India shall

industrialize, but whether in industrializing it develops decentralized industry, and keeps the man master of the machine, and at home in human-scale communities, or whether it rushes to mass industry with wholesale growth of *Chawls* (slums) and with an industrial proletariat.

In my opinion, your quotation from Chester Bowles expresses the dominant and pervading spirit of India, and the spirit of a considerable part of Gandhi's followers, more than does the quotation from Kumarappa. Kumarappa writes in a spirit of desperate fear of a demon he calls American imperialism, which would bring India to its knees by cutting off its oil supply. That spirit of desperate fear is not one that will build a nation or a world at peace.

Under way in human affairs is a revolution as fundamental as that which occurred when men began to raise crops instead of gathering wild fruits. The chance for dense populations to survive outside that revolution is approximately *nil*. Our choice is whether to master that process so it will serve both physical and spiritual needs of men, or be mastered by it. Gandhi saw that distinction, and did not oppose industrialization so long as it should be a servant, and not a master.

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Little needs to be added to the foregoing, except, perhaps, to suggest a rereading of the article, "What Is Happening in India?" and to point out that Dr. Morgan says very little on the question of whether India might indeed, as Kumarappa fears, become more reliant on American assistance than her true welfare can afford. This, obviously, is an open question. However, the past history of the United States is not without indication that other and smaller countries have suffered in this way. The Latin American nations have their own version of the meaning of "economic assistance" from the "Giant of the North," and for those of the coming generation who incline to feel that *our* country, surely, is guiltless in these matters, we suggest a reading of Scott Nearing's thoroughly documented study, *Dollar Diplomacy,* which deals with the epoch preceding World War I.

One thing more. In defense of Mr. Kumarappa and his apparently quixotic views, it is worth remarking that he embodies a spirit of self-reliance which ought never to be overlooked by a people who are struggling to create a sound basis, psychological as well as economic, for a free way of life. It is vitally important, surely, to call attention to this principle, and we can all agree on this, while varying, perhaps, in our estimates of the way in which it is done. Kumarappa feels that too great a price will have to be paid for the assistance—too high a tribute given to the admittedly acquisitive ends which in many ways dominate the culture of the United States. Dr. Morgan and those in India to whom he refers apparently believe that this price will not—rather, need not—be exacted; that the Indian people can assimilate these material advantages naturally, and that the Americans wish only—or mostly—to do the right thing.

Well, the facts, or some of the pertinent facts, have been presented. The conclusions to be drawn, however, will depend upon individual evaluations of intangible moral factors. The only certainty is that great changes are in store for India. There is need, perhaps, to be thankful that India has articulate sons who feel that they see clearly in some directions, and articulate friends who see clearly in others.