VOLUME XIII, NO. 24
JUNE 15, 1960

THE NEED FOR DIRECTION

IT is natural enough, in these days of international tensions, to make the threat of nuclear war serve as the principal example of what is wrong with the human race. The growing menace of the devastating explosion of new weapons can hardly be denied, so that using this illustration of the extremity of the human situation saves a lot of argument intended to show that something *is* wrong.

Further, people with a penchant for broad diagnosis of human ills have a natural interest in addressing as large as possible an audience, and since the victims of nuclear war will doubtless include almost the entire world, what better common denominator of human ills could they find?

However, to get to the point quickly, it seems to us that this easy identification of all the problems of the modern world with the threat of nuclear war is a serious mistake. While there can be no doubt that the pressure of this threat is rapidly bringing about circumstances in which men will be forced to make some kind of decision, and that the thoughtful, if somewhat anxious, analysis of these circumstances has the effect of revealing their moral as well as their practical implications, the fact remains that the level of these considerations is set by human reactions to the prospect of sudden death. It does not make light of this prospect to point out that an expectation of death, sudden or otherwise, is not an ultimately decisive factor in human decision. Some of the greatest men in history have shown a consistent indifference to the prospect of death. After all, everyone must die sooner or later—a fact which, at the very least, leads to the conclusion that death is not a mark of human failure, and not to be feared, therefore, as much as other things.

Even if it be admitted, as it should be, that the total picture of impending nuclear war involves much more than death, there remains the possibility that the threat of war is itself a symptom of deeper ills affecting the human species, and that we have little hope of discovering what those ills are so long as our attention is focused on this obsessive symptom.

Regarding the human situation more generally, it may be said that we exist in two environments, a physical environment and a psychological environment. From the physical environment we obtain the means of continued existence. From the psychological environment we obtain our sense of meaning. It is often said that man's relations with his physical environment are primary. He must first feed, clothe, and house himself, and then, if he wishes, he may give attention to larger questions of meaning. There is an obvious truth in this claim, but it is usually much exaggerated. A man must eat in order to think, but there are many, many men who have already eaten too much, and have not yet started to think. We ought to say, instead, that unless a man regulates his relations with his physical environment by some intelligent concept of meaning, he will almost certainly distort those relationships and violate basic laws of nature. And we can say this without really knowing, precisely, what that concept of meaning ought to be, and what are the laws of nature most likely to be broken in this way. We can say this because of the gross symptoms of disorder in our lives; because, from a wide variety of evidence, we know that the human species is *very sick.*

But why should we of the present generation be able to say such things? Or why, if what we say is true, have we been overtaken by such disastrous ills?

Any attempt to answer this question presupposes the idea that a true or valid meaning of human life exists—that the doctrines of natural law and natural right are founded upon some sort of natural reality—and that in some sense the purpose of human life is to discover what that meaning *is* and to fulfill it. We do not see how there can be any serious discussion of human ills without beginning with this assumption. One need not, however, claim to *know* what the meaning of life is in order to make this assumption. Another way to put it would be to say that the search for meaning is the meaning of human life. Modern psychologists and philosophers increasingly share in this assumption.

Why, then—to return to our question—do human beings encounter the terrible frustrations of the present age?

Centuries ago, when man's relations with his physical environment were simple and direct—unmediated by technology—there was continuous symbolic instruction of the members of the human community through the analogy of nature. Mere survival, in those days, involved an almost continuous struggle with the elements. The beating heart of the world could almost be heard, while the majesty of Nature was displayed on every hand. Men loved the flowering earth, stood in awe of the raging storm, and looked upon the universe, not as a reservoir of blind forces to be tamed and harnessed, but as the theater of a sacred drama in which they, too, were players. Throughout long ages of this—perhaps the childhood—period of mankind, the prevailing doctrines of meaning expounded clear teachings of duty, obligation and responsibility for human beings. Prophets, saviors, sages, initiates and revealers of mysteries declared the laws of the community, the order of excellence, and the goals of virtue and self-realization. Scores of ancient theologies exhibit the same great themes of explanation and absolute assurance of knowledge of the meaning of life. Men were born into the protective matrix of the gnostic institutions of the community. They learned from childhood the rules which they were to follow, and the penalties they might suffer if they faltered on the path.

Of this age, it might be said that a reasonably even balance was maintained between man's use of his physical environment and the explanations and admonitions of meaning obtained from his psychological environment. It was essentially an age of simplicity in relation to physical life and an age of faith in relation to meaning.

The present age represents a radical break with these ancient conditions. The complexity of the physical environment of today has for many men taken away almost entirely any intimate relationship with the forces and elements of nature. And even those who still maintain a rural existence are so saturated by the attitudes which have developed under urban conditions that they have little in common with the natural world. The towering structures of technology have replaced all natural surroundings. The rhythms of life have given way to the rhythms of machines, the sound of birds to the roar of jets. We depend more upon air-conditioning engineers than we do upon the weather. Nature has ceased to be a great being, a kind of earth-mother. Nature is now a bin of raw materials, or some dirt and rocks to be covered up with a floor, or an area of surface in which to drill some holes to get at the fuels which lie beneath. The genius of nature has been overshadowed by the technology of man; what child, nowadays, would look spontaneously to nature for a principle of order and meaning?

It is probably no accident, but some appropriate confluence of events, that brought the ancient doctrines of meaning into disrespect at the same time that the skills of technology transformed our physical environment. At any rate, it is a matter of history that the ancient religions became types of corruption of both society and the mind during just those centuries when a new spirit of meaning and the quest for meaning were giving birth to the age of science. While the early scientists called themselves

"natural philosophers," the reaction against religion was too powerful a movement, with too much provocation from the past, to make careful distinctions between metaphysics and theology. By the time the political and scientific movements had spent themselves, the old theories of meaning were all but forgotten, and the world was left by science with no more than a principle of skepticism, and by politics with a theory of meaning which had no resources outside politics itself.

The people of the present, it is fair to say, are the inheritors of a magnificent apparatus for the control and manipulation of their physical environment, while their psychological environment has been swept clean of both traditional and rational theories of meaning. Science has become a source of endless gadgets and of a completely frightening arsenal of instruments of total destruction. No sense of meaning there. Politics, in turn, in an effort to fill the vacuum left by the dying religions and outmoded philosophies, has in one case (Communism) expanded itself into a Total System of enforced belief, with results so antihuman that even many of its admirers are beginning to suspect that the only "good" kind of Communism is a Communism beneficently compromised by liberal principles. The democratic politics of the West is subject to constant temptation to adopt totalitarian methods in order to compete more successfully with Communism, while the triple alliance of Democracy, Capitalism and Technology is tortured by serious inconsistencies of theory, practice and goal.

Has the foregoing brought us any closer to a diagnosis of those "inner ills" which, it was suggested, are more to be feared than the threat of nuclear war? We can answer only that everything said thus far has been intended as prefatory to calling attention to an article in the *American Scholar* for the Spring of 1960, and in particular to a footnote which set this whole train of thought going. The writer, Kenneth Keniston, remarks in this note:

> No one argues against conformity with others in a good cause; what is opposed and seen as universal is conformity for the sake of conformity—"keeping up with the Jones," "not standing out." The problem of conformity is coextensive with the lack of good causes.

These few words make our major "inner ill" crystal clear: It is that we have exhausted our good causes, our transcendent purposes, and there is no known—at least no well-known—source to which we can turn to find new ones.

To put the matter so briefly is almost platitudinous, yet Mr. Keniston's article, "Alienation and the Decline of Utopia," has nothing of this quality. His basic point, made over and over again, concerns the decline of a feeling of ends in human life. Toward the close of his discussion is a paragraph which so well defines the intentions of MANAS that it might easily do service in the editorial box on page 4. This writer says:

> Concrete reforms, however desirable, will remain extemporizations in the absence of an explicit positive myth, ideology, faith or utopia. Indeed, no lasting or potent reform is ever possible except as men can be aroused from their disaffection and indifference by the prospect of a world more inviting than that in which they now apathetically reside. Our deepest need is not to propose specific reforms, but rather to create an intellectual and cultural atmosphere in which it is possible for men to attempt affirmation without undue fear that valid constructions will collapse through neglect, ridicule or their own inherent errors. Such an ethos can only be built slowly and piecemeal, yet it is already clear what some of its preconditions must be.

According to an editorial note, Mr. Keniston is a thirty-year-old lecturer in the department of social relations at Harvard University. He was a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford, doing work in philosophy and psychology, and has lately been studying the processes of alienation among American youth under the direction of Dr. Henry A. Murray, at Harvard. The rich fruit of this

study is soon apparent in the *American Scholar* article, which ought to be made into a manual for the use of all those seriously concerned with the contemporary problems of the human community. Many of the ideas in this discussion are by no means "new." What is new is the conclusiveness of the way the ideas are put together. Mr. Keniston writes:

> Youth culture and alienation have been characterized as a silent rebellion against the prevailing order, what it asks, and what it seems to offer. Yet one of the lessons of the study of rebellions is that they come about not because of any absolute level of misery, but because of a gap, a *felt* discrepancy, between what is and what is believed to be important, desirable and possible. Revolutions usually occur in times of increasing prosperity and well-being, and thus cannot be explained on grounds of absolute poverty or deprivation. Rather it is the *conviction, the belief,* that the present order is inadequate which produces discontent.
>
> If we distinguish between revolution, with an active and articulate program of change and reform, and rebellion, which is more random, unfocused on goals, amorphous and inarticulate, then ours is an age—in the industrial democracies of the West—of rebellion but not of revolution. The lack of program among the alienated makes true revolution unlikely. But this is, nonetheless, a time of silent rebellion, of nay-saying of a thousand kinds. And rebellions differ from revolutions not in their origins but in their articulateness. . . .
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> Young people often seem to justify their elders' criticisms of their irresponsibility or ingratitude when they protest that there is "no longer anything to protest against." This complaint at first seems absurd and childish: nothing to protest against implies a perfect world and is clearly no grounds for protest. But in fact here are many things people do protest against—many of them the things we have earlier discussed. On closer examination, "nothing to protest against" seems rather to mean "no articulate principles upon which to ground one's intuitive dislikes and rejections," and is thus joined to another common complaint, "nothing left to believe in." The lack of any positive morality upon which to ground criticism of the existing world helps to explain the absence of reform and revolutionary spirit today, . . .

These young people—and all of us—are the inheritors of a great disillusionment—a twofold disillusionment. There is first the practical failure of all the utopian dreams, including the socialist dream and the capitalist dream. Then there is the failure implicit in the completely relativist view of so-called "scientific" philosophy. For many people, a background in this sort of thinking is sufficient to sterilize any effort at practical idealism. Nor has moral conviction any place in scientific theory.

This general disillusionment has had serious effects. Mr. Keniston describes the common attitude toward affirmative thinking:

> If one articulates a set of principles, constructs a utopia or other educative myth—whether for himself or for his culture or for both—he automatically becomes in some way *responsible* to this vision. Most men consider the cynicism of not acting to promote one's avowed purposes a worse offense than the cynicism of not having any purposes at all. But to act to promote or make real a positive vision of the future is—in our current world view—to condemn oneself to certain frustration and probable failure. The thought that it may make matters worse is even more paralyzing for men of good faith. Thus, a welter of good intentions, desire not to do harm, doubt as to whether there are *any* means to promote worthy ends, and fear of frustration or failure conspire to make it far easier not to articulate any positive morality in the first place.
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> But even if a man overcomes these obstacles in himself, he must next overcome the neglect, skepticism or even active hostility of most of his fellows. I earlier argued that our most dominant ideologies were most systematically developed as instruments of deflation and debunking, and that our most powerful myths were deterrent myths which point out the probable evils that would follow certain (indeed most) courses of action. Any attempt, however tentative, to enunciate some principle of positive action or enthusiasm must thus face attack on two fronts. First, the motives of the proponent will be thoroughly and hostilely investigated, with the intent of showing that the proposals conceal "irrational," "ulterior," or other undesirable motives, interests or errors. And second, the proposals themselves will be attacked as merely leading to further evils, usually by extending some already undesirable trend. To take only one example, the World Federalist must answer charges that he is uprooted and without sound national ties, and furthermore that his proposed One

> World would merely lead to further extremes of homogenization, uniformity, legalism, bureaucratization or whatever the dominant present evils are seen to be.
>
> Many an advocate of a worthy cause, however, would be grateful for criticism, which at least acknowledges the existence of his proposals. His more common fate is neglect. As we have argued before, indifference is as great a rejection as attack: as Dostoevsky knew, the ultimate reduction of a man is to stare through him without seeing him. Whether neglect or criticism is or is not valid is not at issue here: the point is the complete predictability of such reactions makes even the most affirmative hesitate before affirming in public.

This paper shows such a thorough understanding of the present-day psychological environment, it could easily become the basis for a large variety of plans for reconstruction. The ill of our times is plain enough: a vacuum of great convictions. And it is this vacuum, we venture to say, which gives space to the horrors—the plans, intentions, and horrors—of nuclear war. People with authentic convictions and intentions of their own would never have allowed the prospect of war to become the dominating reality of their lives. By putting their convictions into practice, they would have given the world and its history an entirely different direction.

Letter from **BELGRADE**

BELGRADE.—Yugoslavia in the spring of 1960 impresses one as an odd combination of economic progress, social stagnation, and political apathy. Whether further acquaintance would support this view is of course a fair question.

Yesterday we twice came up against features of Yugoslav social life which stopped us cold. One in particular was interesting. In talking to a student about going to another country to an international seminar next summer, it became clear that he could not tell in advance whether he would be granted a passport and permission to go. Asked whether he could examine his own record and make a shrewd guess, he answered that this was impossible. Nor could he say what factors would go into making the decision. We asked who would make the decision, and he said there was no way to find out. The odd thing was that the student seemed not at all worried by this, while we who came from abroad were puzzled, incensed and frustrated.

Political apathy seems to be built into the Yugoslav system at the Federal level, so much power having been reserved to the Republics of which Yugoslavia is composed, and granted to the industrial and agricultural combines comprising the new forms of economic democracy which characterize the State. We had no extensive opportunity to examine these institutions, but it was evident that no interest could be aroused among the citizens on questions of political activity within the State. Further, a natural interest in politics outside the country seems to have been suspended by a recent speech of Marshal Tito in which there were several rather sharp criticisms of local political discussion. Tito is also said to have warned citizens to be careful in talks with foreigners, thus supporting a form of xenophobia not by any means unknown here in the past.

But in the field of economics there is progress to be seen. Since a year ago I would judge that improvements in the standard of living have been achieved, if ordinary observation is to be trusted. The number of sharply-pointed female shoes on the streets on the May 1 holiday rather exceeds the proportions seen, say, in Geneva. (Whether or not this is A Good Thing, as Pooh would say, is a question.) Oranges and lemons are widely sold from street-stands at what appear reasonable prices: this in contrast with the sky-high prices and uncertain supplies of Moscow, and the total lack of these fruits in Prague.

The distinctive contribution of Yugoslav economic policy has been to attempt to develop the Socialist planning necessary to an underdeveloped economy poorly endowed with basic resources, at the same time leaving room in the economic life for the factors thought to be important in capitalist societies, but rather pushed aside by Marxist thinkers. These considerations were described in a November 1959 session of the Central Committee of the Yugoslav Communist Party by Mijalko Todorowitsch as "the law of the market" and "the principle of material self-interest."

The distinctive contribution of Yugoslav economic activity, as opposed to theory, has been the development of forms of collective or cooperative organization, both agricultural and industrial, which are said to make maximum allowance for the operation of the above factors within a Socialist framework, and incidentally make possible a steadily-improving economic production machine without those dogmatic forms of Marxist expression previously embodied in Yugoslavia, and even now in other Socialist countries, such as forced investments, forced sales of agricultural products, communization of land and agricultural production, and on occasion arbitrary—even capricious—repression of the standard of living of masses of people.

I think this outline of the matter would be agreeable to the Yugoslavs. It is, in fact, largely

drawn from Yugoslav statements of their own intentions and accomplishments. Having gone so far, however, one is not bound to take the position that all of it has actually been achieved, or that what has been achieved is good. There are some legitimate qualifications.

For instance, the apparent economic successes must be seen against the background of a record agricultural harvest in 1959. At present grain imports, which had come to be a normal part of Yugoslav economic life, are no longer necessary. A commonly accepted figure for Yugoslav national income is $320 per capita per year, as compared with Poland's (approximate) $500 and Czechoslovakia's $900. (These figures are of Polish origin.) This doesn't make life very luxurious, even with the fairly stabilized price levels now prevailing.

One feature of Yugoslav life, at least in the urban areas, would go by the American name of "moonlighting." The phenomenon is freely discussed by the Yugoslavs themselves, who jeer at it, but sometimes with annoyance and even jealousy of those, largely in the professions, who have made the best possible thing of it. One man told me that whereas the proper salary of a doctor was D 30,000 per month, many do in fact make D 90,000 or even more. The tourist dollar equivalents are respectively $75 and $225, though this comparison may be held to mean little by reason of the many perquisites and social services woven into Socialist life. The point is not in the comparison, but in the fact that a society which allows or encourages this sort of thing hardly deserves high marks on the scale of Socialist achievement.

Inevitably, the visitor from another culture makes comparisons, and usually the wrong ones, like the dollar-equivalent exercise above. The real comparison of conditions in Yugoslavia would be with what they were before Socialism had its try at developing a new system, or what they would be if, under modern European conditions, with or without the Cold War and the Iron Curtain, Yugoslavia were able to operate economically freely in a European society of her choice. For the essence of Yugoslavia's position now is surely that she has embarked upon an effort to live between the two blocs, unaligned politically and with an economic system which Yugoslavs think merits the description "Socialist—but with a difference." A good deal of Yugoslavia's future depends upon the success of European regional politico-economic organization, and Yugoslavia's possibilities are not entirely clear. Meanwhile, the cost to people, in terms of our concept of freedom in everyday life, is pretty great: far too great, this observer thinks, than we could manage to accept.

ROVING CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW
"THE DOCTOR AND THE SOUL"

LAST November we made the acquaintance of the works and philosophy of Dr. Viktor E. Frankl in his book, *From Death-Camp to Existentialism* (Beacon). Probably a number of MANAS readers, like ourselves, would like to know more about his "third school of psychotherapy," or "logotherapy," than our review made possible. We have now an earlier volume, *Logotherapy* (first published in translation from the German in 1955, *Logotherapy* originally appeared in Vienna in 1952).

Dr. Frankl's prefatory paragraphs are a remarkably lucid statement of the dilemmas encountered by psychologists and psychotherapists:

> A well-known psychiatrist once remarked that Western humanity has turned from the priest to the doctor. Another psychiatrist complains that nowadays too many patients come to the medical man with problems which should really be put to a priest.
>
> Patients are constantly coming to us with problems such as, what is the meaning of their lives. It is not that we doctors attempt to carry philosophy over into medicine, although we are often accused of doing so; the patients themselves bring us philosophical problems. The individual doctor, confronted with such problems, may well be driven into a corner. But medicine, and psychiatry in particular, has thereby been compelled to cope with a new field.
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> The doctor can still make things easy for himself if he wishes. He can, for instance, take refuge in psychology by pretending that the spiritual distress of a human being who is looking for a meaning to his existence is nothing but a pathological symptom.
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> Man lives in three dimensions: the somatic, the mental, and the spiritual. The spiritual dimension cannot be ignored, for it is what makes us human. To be concerned about the meaning of life is not necessarily a sign of disease or of neurosis. It may be; but then again, spiritual agony may have very little connection with a disease of the psyche. The proper diagnosis can be made only by someone who can see the spiritual side of man.

Dr. Frankl feels that a hidden bias on the part of psychologists usually detracts from an adequate philosophical grasp of human nature. He finds in what he calls "psychologism" a "secret tendency. . . . towards devaluation." So much of analytic work is involved with the exposure of complexes and inferiority feelings that it becomes easy to doubt that a human being is capable of any sort of existence save that bounded by neuroses on the one side and conformity to social morality on the other. Here Dr. Frankl suggests the historical setting for the "debunking" motivations unconsciously adopted by men who have made a negative dogma of psychological exposure:

> Psychologism, then, is the favorite recourse of those with a tendency toward devaluation. Its user reveals himself as having no interest in intellectual justice or the acquisition of more knowledge. But to our mind psychologism is a partial aspect of a more comprehensive phenomenon. It is this: the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century completely distorted the picture of man by stressing all the numerous restraints placed upon him, in the grip of which he is supposedly helpless. Man has been presented as constrained by biological, by psychological, by sociological factors. Inherent human freedom, which obtains in spite of all these constraints, the freedom of the mind in spite of nature, has been overlooked. Yet it is this freedom that truly constitutes the essence of man. Thus, along with psychologism we have had biologism, and sociologism, all of which have helped set up a caricature of man. No wonder that in the course of intellectual history a reaction to this naturalistic view was forthcoming. This counter-view called attention to the fundamental facts of being human; it stressed man's freedom in the face of the obstacles imposed by nature. No wonder that the prime fact of being responsible has at last been restored to the center of our field of vision. The other prime fact, that of being conscious, was at least something that could not be slurred over by psychologism.

Various enthusiastic reviewers have identified Frankl as a Christian who seeks to revive faith in an extra-cosmic deity, but Dr. Frankl simply insists that the question of deity be regarded as an open one, saying that negative judgments tend to inhibit intuitive aspirations and discourage feelings of identity with a spiritual source. An over-

arching meaning, he suggests, can be realized only when the limitations of a merely protective physical existence are transcended.

Another way of putting the basic question as to why one seeks the "logos"—the area of *spiritual* meaning—is to consider, as did the ancient Greek philosophers, whether or not "life is asking something of us" in terms of an enlarging sense of responsibility. But the "logotherapist" is not to presume that he can define either general or specific responsibilities for someone else. If he tried this, he would become another moralist, and fail his patients:

> Responsibility is a formal ethical concept, in itself comprising no particular directives on conduct. Furthermore, responsibility is an ethically neutral concept, existing on an ethical borderline, for in itself it makes no statement about responsibility to what or for what. In this sense existential analysis also remains noncommittal on the question of "to what" a person should feel responsible—whether to his God or his conscience or his society or whatever higher power. And existential analysis equally forbears to say what a person should feel responsible for—for the realization of which values, for the fulfillment of which personal tasks, for which particular meaning to life. On the contrary, the task of existential analysis consists precisely in bringing the individual to the point where he can of his own accord discern his own proper tasks, out of the consciousness of his own responsibility, and can find the clear, no longer indeterminate, unique and singular meaning of his own life. As soon as a person has been brought to that point, he will give a concrete and creative response to the question of the meaning of existence. For then he will have come to the point where "response is called upon to be responsibility" (Dürck).

We have, according to Dr. Frankl, stylized all of our conceptions of "life-and-death" situations. Our need is to discover that life and death for the *soul* are quite literally determined by whether or not a man has the courage to pursue transcendent meaning in human existence. Reviewing *From Death-Camp to Existentialism* in the Autumn issue of the *Chicago Review,* Bruno Bettelheim writes:

> In the concentration camps the prisoners were at the mercy of a ruthless environment with virtually no power to influence it. On the other hand, they had to make decisions every moment, and each decision, even on matters that in the outside world would have made little or no difference, could and did mean life or death in the camps. Those prisoners who came to understand the nature of the conditions they lived under, also came to realize what they had not perceived before: that they still retained the last, if not the greatest, of the human freedoms: to choose their own attitude in any given circumstance. Those who understood this fully came to know that this, and only this, formed the crucial difference between retaining one's humanity (and with it often life itself) and death as a human being (or physical death): Whether one retained the freedom to choose autonomously one's attitude to extreme conditions even when they were totally beyond one's ability to influence them.

COMMENTARY
THE FREEDOM OF SLAVES?

IT would be irony indeed if it turned out that men who suffered incarceration in Nazi concentration camps and death camps, and who happened to survive, are the men who have the most important things to say to the modern world concerning freedom. Both Dr. Frankl and Dr. Bettelheim endured this ordeal, and both survived, and both are now practicing psychiatrists, Dr. Frankl in Vienna, Dr. Bettelheim in Chicago, at the Sonia Shankman Orthogenic School, University of Chicago.

Of the men in the camps, Dr. Bettelheim remarks that they (some of them) came to realize that "they still retained the last, if not the greatest, of the human freedoms: to choose their own attitude in any given circumstance."

This, for the twentieth century, is a revolutionary idea. It is revolutionary for the reason that it constitutes a reversal of the conventional idea of freedom as a purely political value. What Dr. Bettelheim terms "the last, if not the greatest, of the human freedoms" is usually minimized and even sneered at by progressive Western thinkers who call this kind of freedom the freedom of slaves—since Epictetus spoke of it—and a "mystical" or subjective sort of freedom which gives a man no external space for his behavior.

Technically, the critics are right. This inward freedom *is* non-political. And if you are writing a constitution, you may ignore it as having nothing to do with questions of law and equality and justice.

But what seems to have been overlooked, in our great determination to win and maintain the conditions of political freedom, is that none of the forms of external freedom can be of much use to men who do not value inward freedom.

And this, we suspect, is the real reason why the external freedoms were lost to so many European peoples, and why they are in obvious jeopardy, today in the United States.

We once suggested in these pages that the struggle to maintain civil liberties in the United States is a "rear-guard action." What we meant was that some of the best men in the country are fighting this battle for the general principle of liberty, without making much practical use of the principle. But the principle embodied in the idea of civil liberties cannot survive unless it is vigorously exercised for particular purposes.

The problem of civil liberty is like the problem of conformity, which is, as Kenneth Keniston says, "coextensive with the lack of good causes."

Only a strong sense of inner freedom will make the external, political freedoms seem important enough to men to assure their preservation. Only vital conceptions of human good which demand espousal have the strength to support and maintain the forms of civil liberties.

The irony lies in the fact that the thoughtful men of our time seem to have learned this lesson from experiencing conditions which represent what all agree is the absolute loss of all political freedom. Is it conceivable that the quickest way for men to lose their political freedom is by assigning to it an importance greater than it can possess?

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

DO I HAVE TO PLAY?

THERE are many signs of a growing awareness that little children, at least, are not being offered enough mental stimulation. A challenging article by Virginia Simmons in *Harper's* for April, "Why Waste Our Five-Year-Olds?" is summarized by *Time*, April 18:

> Why are so many kindergarten kids bored by kindergarten? Because that boring "play school" is woefully behind the times, says kindergarten Teacher Virginia C. Simmons in the current *Harper's.*
>
> The curriculum ("learning through play") has not changed in 100 years. But "today's fives are tired of play, they are eager and ready to begin serious work." They have been exposed to travel, nursery schools and working mothers. They visit the public library and fly in airplanes. They dial the telephone, operate hi-fi sets and read words on TV. Yet teachers persist in mindless "fun"—and leave the kids sucking their thumbs.
>
> A former public high-school teacher, Author Simmons began teaching in Cincinnati Country Day School's kindergarten eight years ago. "Contrary to the opinion of experts," she writes, "I find that fives can reason, their ears can hear phonics; their eyes can read, their muscular coordination does permit them to learn to write. . . . They are enthusiastic, curious, keenly observant, open-minded, eager to learn, receptive and imaginative. As sheer pupil stuff, they are a teacher's dream come true." . . .
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> "Why waste our five-year-olds?" asks Teacher Simmons. "The most important part of education is the beginning. . . . There is no such thing as an unimportant or expendable year in any child's life. In kindergarten, the five-year-old is just starting. The direction he is pointed and the momentum he gets may well determine his intellectual growth."

Mrs. Simmons starts out in *Harper's* with what she considers a typical illustration. Five-year-old Polly shortly abandoned the marvellous display of toys in Mrs. Simmons' school to sit at a table and attempt to spell out words with wooden blocks. She announced that since no one would teach her to read she had better get on with the job herself. When Mrs. Simmons explained that the picture books available *were* a way of learning to read and that she, Mrs. Simmons, *was* therefore teaching her, Polly considered this announcement thoughtfully and then said: "You're being awfully slow about it." Mrs. Simmons comments:

> I am convinced that Polly is right. I believe that primary education in this country is a holding-back procedure—the first official imposing of the anti-intellectualism (to use Barzun's term) that is queering our children's chance to develop the kind of ability they need to cope with our complex world. . . .
>
> My five-year-olds learn to write, count, add, subtract, divide; they learn basic geometric forms and elementary algebra; they use rulers and compasses, they learn to spell and to read fifty to seventy-five words. They understand the concept of zero, that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points, that all radii of the same circle are equal, that 3/6 and 4/8 are also 1/2, that 4/3 is 1-1/3, and that if 3 is divided by 2 it becomes 1-1/2. This year, out of a class of twenty, six subtracted and added in the hundreds and three in the thousands.
>
> In a rural setting, the children can observe birds, trees, wild flowers; at the pond's edge we watch frogs, tadpoles, and crayfish; a farm is within walking distance. Greek myths appeal to kindergarteners. Stories of Atlas, Pandora's box, Proserpina, nature myths of the clouds, stars, sun, moon, wind, and seasons lead to simple scientific explanations. The children love to use our small microscope to examine stones and small insects.

Kindergarten teachers have wide latitude in selecting the aspects of "education" they will attempt, but most of them, according to Mrs. Simmons, have had training only for nursery school or kindergarten work. As one schoolmaster remarked, "I want someone teaching our five-year-olds who knows the curriculum that comes *after* kindergarten," and Mrs. Simmons summarizes her own opinion by saying that "the teacher of five-year-olds should be able to tap just as deep sources of knowledge as the teacher of eighteen-year-olds."

Well, one might well reason that since we cannot seem to obtain many high school teachers who are able to "tap deep sources of knowledge,"

it is ridiculous to have such expectations at the kindergarten level. Yet the teacher of five-year-olds always should be able to keep up with their intellectual needs, realizing that a large percentage of the children wish to feel that they are actually learning something.

Our little boy is one who went from nursery school to kindergarten, since age requirements denied him the first grade. He liked his teacher, he liked the toys, and he liked the children—but after two weeks, unknown to us, he decided to play hookey. "It's just like nursery school," he indignantly proclaimed, "I want to learn something." Now on the first morning our little boy played hookey, he didn't learn anything of obvious significance, save if you are going to cut a path through a cactus patch on a vacant lot, you have to be prepared to pull out a great many spines afterwards. But this was something—learning through play—which he did *on his own.* It seems to us that the five-year-old of average intelligence who suffers no emotional deprivations, when he tires of controlled play, is ready for controlled work. (Here we come back to Robert Paul Smith again, recalling his humorous diatribes against adults who encroach upon youngsters' playtime with Plans and Big Brother or Big Sister smiles.)

Mrs. Simmons carries on her kindergarten activities in an ideal environment, for, as she says, in a rural setting the children learn powers of observation at a fantastic rate. Exposure to nature seems to stimulate appreciation for Greek myths on the one hand and for the use of the microscope on the other. But there is that in every child, according to our limited experience, which is responsive to myth and allegory. And it is this imaginative capacity of the young child which should not be denied sustenance. We really don't quite know what to do with our five-year-old, because we also like the teacher, the school, the children, and the toys. But in his class imagination is encouraged only within the confines of stereotyped activity.

As a cross-reference to Mrs. Simmons' experience, we call the reader's attention to "Intuition and Creativity" (MANAS, April 20) and also Clifton Fadiman's remark (MANAS, April 13) that "the best place to teach philosophy is not the university but the elementary school."

FRONTIERS

What Does "Natural" Mean?

A RECENT *Listener* presents Julian Huxley's definition of the terms he uses in his own declaration of faith—"The Faith of a Humanist." Prof. Huxley says:

> I use the word humanist to mean someone who believes that man is just as much a natural phenomenon as an animal or a plant; that his body, his mind, and his soul were not supernaturally created but are all products of evolution, and that he is not under the control or guidance of any supernatural Being or beings, but has to rely on himself and his own powers. And I use faith in the sense of a set of essentially religious beliefs.

The noted zoologist, who is also probably the world's most famous spokesman of the humanist outlook, goes on to say that there is no need for a religious man to believe in God, since "some religions are not concerned with God, and some not with any sort of supernatural beings at all."

It is obvious that, whatever else Humanism means, it involves the rejection of the conventional religious idea of God as a beneficent Creator upon whom the ultimate welfare of mankind depends; and rejection, also, of lesser supernatural forces—presumably, for one basic reason: supernatural intelligences, in Prof. Huxley's humanist lexicon, are sources of interference with man's independent action in search of the good.

The ground, then, of Humanist conviction is the ground of insistence upon man's right, necessity, and obligation to save himself, without the intrusion of extra-natural forces. Humanism's first principle is thus a moral principle. But where does Science enter the picture, since, in recent years at least, Humanism is closely allied with the scientific point of view?

Science enters as the source of reliable knowledge concerning the alternatives of human decision. Conventional accounts of Humanism usually stop here, but it ought to be pointed out that science is also called upon by humanists to define what is "supernatural" and what is not. This right of science to determine the scope of humanist inquiry and judgment is of crucial importance.

Let us look for a moment at the idea of the Supernatural. Actually, what is morally objectionable to the humanist in the supernatural is not necessarily the same as what is scientifically objectionable. In the first place, the morally objectionable is defined in abstract terms. That is, an inaccessible force which affects man's thinking or behavior unknown to himself—or, if known, affects him unpredictably by means outside his control—may fall into the rejected category of the supernatural. The Calvinist God which predestines human souls, probably the large majority of them, to eternal damnation, is such a force.

It seems likely that such a God is unpopular with the Humanists for exactly the same reasons as those which make the Government of the Union of South Africa unpopular with Humanists. This Government endeavors to predestine all men of a certain skin-color to conditions of life much worse than those available in South Africa to other men. If God had simply defined the rules by which all men must live, and if those rules were to become acceptable as wholly reliable—in the sense that the laws of nature are reliable—then it is a question whether the Humanists would have felt it necessary on moral grounds to denounce the supernatural. After all, no Humanist is interested in denouncing the fact that man's good health is most precariously balanced within a narrow band of rather precise physical conditions. So long as he is able to define those conditions and modify them somewhat, conforming to what he cannot modify, the Humanist is satisfied that his freedom has not been tampered with. He agrees with John Dewey: Freedom is knowledge of necessity.

It is even conceivable that the Humanist might be persuaded to agree with Epicurus, who said, "The Gods exist, but they are not what the rabble suppose them to be."

That is, the Humanist might join with Epicurus on moral grounds. But on scientific grounds he would probably withhold assent.

The scientific definition of the natural has far less latitude than the moral definition. The moral account of the natural, it appears, will admit anything that is presented to our minds in terms of orderly processes of cause and effect. The scientist, however, wants the substance of the thing seeking to qualify as natural to be *physical* substance.

But here we are under difficulties. The scientific account of "physical" is not a fixed affair—at least, it is not fixed in the same way that the idea of freedom is fixed. Our sense of freedom is a moral sensibility, but the coverage of the adjective "natural" changes with the progress of scientific discovery. There were those, for example, who accused Thomas Edison of planting a ventriloquist in the audience when they first heard him play his gramophone. We can only guess at what they would have said about the possibility of radio and television. Meanwhile, scientists in general are still wrestling with the question of whether or not extra-sensory perception and related phenomena can be allowed to enjoy the status of scientific facts.

Fortunately, we know where Prof. Huxley stands on this matter. Years ago he suggested that telepathy may represent a stage of human evolution comparable to man's knowledge of mathematics during the Ice Age.

So far as we can see, the most important requirement of Humanist thinkers in the present is to give immediate attention to careful study of the meanings of terms like "natural" and "supernatural." To take such meanings for granted may soon be comparable to the obscurantism of the scholastic doctors of the Middle Ages.